

**The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Hymn on the Life, Virtues and Miracles of St. Patrick,  
by active 6th century Bishop of Sletty Saint Fiech**

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A HYMN ON THE LIFE, VIRTUES AND MIRACLES OF  
ST. PATRICK \*\*\*

**A  
HYMN  
ON THE  
LIFE, VIRTUES, AND MIRACLES OF ST. PATRICK,  
COMPOSED BY HIS DISCIPLE,  
SAINT FIECH, BISHOP OF SLETTY**

As this specimen of the language spoken in Ireland about 1200 years ago, is here published, not only for the elucidation of our apostle's history, but also for the gratification of the lovers of Irish literature in general; the Irish original is accompanied, on the opposite page, with an English translation of the whole.

In this translation, the literal meaning, and idiomatic expression of the words and phrases, are adhered to in all such stanzas as the editor (with the aid of some members of the Gaelic Society, particularly conversant with subjects of this sort) could fully understand: for he acknowledges that neither he nor these gentlemen are so vain or disingenuous as to pretend that they comprehend the whole of this very ancient composition.

In order to obviate any objection which may be made against the passages in which the editor differs from the author of the version of this hymn, in Colgan's collection of our patron saint's lives, the Latin translation adopted in *his* edition, is also subjoined to the poem, at the bottom of each page.

To the hymn are added some short notes, illustrative of the subject.

*Vindication of St. Fiech's Hymn, in Answer to Dr. Ledwich's Objections.*

Respecting the authenticity and antiquity of this curious specimen of our language about the commencement of the sixth century, some doubts were entertained by the sagacious Bollandists, who, consequently, considered St. Fiech to have lived long after our saint's time. This opinion, those learned Jesuits founded on Fiech's referring to other *histories* for the truth of what he relates with regard to his master, St. Patrick, during the first sixty years of his life previously to his arrival on the mission of Ireland.

This plausible objection has been adopted and urged by Dr. Ledwich, against St. Patrick's existence, with that dogmatical tone of magisterial positiveness so conspicuous in his volume of invectives against the ancient splendour, sanctity, and literature of his native country, declaring that Fiech and Sedulius's poems on our saint "are the wretched productions of some cloistered ecclesiastic."

To this, the only remaining one of these formidable objections, adduced by the doctor against our apostle's existence, we answer, that Fiech lived and composed this hymn some time after St. Patrick's death, in the 120th year of his age, and 60th of his apostleship. Now supposing Fiech to have lived to the 84th year of his age, and to have composed this hymn in 600, seven years after his master's death, which he so circumstantially relates in the poem; Fiech must consequently have been no more than about 17 years of age when our saint commenced his mission here. Where, or whence, then, except by divine revelation, or from St. Patrick himself, or from the revelation of others, could his disciple derive his information with respect to St.

Patrick's parents and ancestors, who lived in a foreign country? or sacred Tours, in Gaul, the place of our saint's nativity? or his original name Succoth? or his voyages and travels by sea and land, after his escape from servitude in Ireland? or his insular retreats or studies under the spiritual guidance of St. German of Auxerre? &c. &c. &c.

Now, Fiech very justly informs his readers, that all these transactions, wrought before he was born, and in a foreign country, during the first 60 years of his great master's life, were ascertained in *skelair*, (STORIES,) as in the first stanza; or Fiadhaid, *testified to us*, as he says in the sixth stanza of his poem, the only two places where Fiech appeals to others for the foreign actions performed in the early period of St. Patrick's life: of whom, though there were many lives written and published during his existence, yet it is uncertain whether Fiech obtained his account from written or oral documents, for either may be denoted by the Irish word *Scealaw* (stories.) The term by which the translator of this hymn into Latin has rendered it, may also denote either oral or written information. In English, too, the word *history* often imports oral narration: thus Pope says:

"What *histories* of toil could I declare,  
But still, long-wearied nature wants repair."

## INNUIIN PATRAIC.

I.

Genair Patraic i nem Thur, (1)  
Asseadh ad fét hi scélaibh,  
Macan sé m-bliadharn decc  
An tan do bhreth fo dheraibh.

II.

Succat a ainm hitrubhradh  
Cidh a atair ba fisse,  
Mac calpuirn mic Otide  
Ho Deocain Odise. (2)

III.

Baisé bliadhna bi foghnamh  
Maise doine nís tomledh  
Bitar le cothraighe, (3)  
Ceathar trebha dia fognadh.

IV.

As bert Uictor fri gniadh  
Milcon, teseadh far tonna  
Forruibh a chois for sind leic  
Maraidh dia aes ni bronna.

V.

Do faidh tar ealpa uile (4)  
De mhuir, bo hamhra reatha  
Comdh fargaibh la *Gearman*  
Andeas an deiscort leatha.

VI.

An-innsibh mara toirrian  
Ainis indibh, ad rimhe,  
Léghais cannóin la *Gearman*  
Is eadh ad fiadhaid line.

VII.

Do cum n-Ereann dod fetis  
Aingil *de* hi fithis,  
Menic it chithe ifisibh  
Dos mcfed arithisi.

VIII.

Ro po cobhair don D-Eren  
Tichta Patraic for Oclat:  
Ro clos cian son an garma  
Macraidhi caille fochlad.

IX.

Gadhadair co tiseadh in noebh  
Ar a nimthised lethu,  
Ar atin taradh o cloean  
Tuath a h-Eren do bheathu.

X.

Tuata h-Eren Tairchantais  
Dos nicfead Sithlaith nua,  
Meraidh co ti amartaige  
Bidh fás tír temhrach.

XI.

A Dhruidh ar Laoghaire  
Tichta Patraic ni cheiltis,  
Ro firad ind aitsine,  
Ina flatha as beirtis.

XII.

Ba léir Patraic cumbebha,  
Ba sabh innarba cloeni,  
Ised duargoibh a Eua  
Suas de sech threbhah doeani

XIII.

Immuin agus Apocapalips,  
Na tri coicat nos canad  
Pritchad, batset, arniged,  
Do moladh Dé in anad.

XIV.

Ni con Gebéd fuacht sine  
Do shess aidche hillinnibh  
For nim consena a Righe,  
Pritcais fri de indindaibh.

XV.

Hi slán tuaith benna-bairche  
Nis gebhe Dhtart, na lia  
Canadh Céad psalm cech naidhehe  
Do Righ aingel fo Gnia.

XVI.

Foidh for luim iaramh,  
Ochus cuilche fhliuchimme,  
Ba coirthe a rithadart  
*Ni leic a corp e timme.*

XVII.

Pritcadh sóscela do cäch  
Do gnih mór fearta i Leathu  
Iccaid luscu la trusca  
Mairbh dos fuisceadh beathu.

XVIII.

Padraic priotcais do Scotuibh  
Ro cheas mór seath i Leathu  
Immi co tísat do brath  
In cäch dos fiüc do beathu.

XIX.

Meic Eimhir, meich Eirimoin

Lotar huile la ciseal,  
Fos Zolaic in tarmchosal  
Is in mórchathe nisel.

XX.

Conda tanic in T-apstal  
Do faith gidh gaethe dëne  
Pritchais tri fichte bliadhnâ,  
Cröich crist do thuathaibh Fene.

XXI.

For thuath h-Ereann bai temnei  
Tuata adhorta idhla,  
Ni chraitsed in Fhirdheacht  
In i *Trinoite* fire.

XXII.

In Ardmacha fil righi  
Is cian do reracht Emhain,  
Is cell mor Dun-leth-glaisse  
Num dil cidh dithribh Temhair.

XXIII.

Patraic dia mboi illolhra  
Ad cobra dol do Mhache  
Do lluidh Aingeve ar a cenn  
For sed a meadhon laithe.

XXIV.

Do faith fa dheos do Uictor  
Ba he arid ralastur,  
Lassais immuine imbai,  
Asan tein ad galastar.

XXV.

As bert ordan do Mache,  
Do Crist atlaighthe buidhe  
Do chum nimhe mor raga,  
Ro ratha duit do guidhe.

XXVI.

Immon do roeghu it biu  
Bid luirech didin do chach,  
Immuit illathiu mesa  
Regait fir n-Erend do brath.

XXVII.

Anais Tasac dia aëis (5)  
An tan do bert Comain dó  
As bert mios nic fead Patraic  
Briathra Tasaigh nir bu gó.

XXVIII.

Samh aighis crich fri aidhcei  
Ar na cate les oca:  
Co cenn bliadhna bai soilsi,  
Ba he sitlaithe foda.

XXIX.

An cath fechto i m-Beatron  
Fri tuait Canan la mac Nun,  
Assuith in grian fri Gabon  
Asseadh at fet littre dun.

XXX.

Huair assuith la h-iesue  
In ghrian fri bás ina clóen,

Ciasu threbech be huisse  
Soillse fri betsecht an noebh.

XXXI.

Clerich Erend do llotar  
Dairi Patraic as cech sét,  
Son in ceatuil fos roiare  
Con tuil cách uadhibh for set.

XXXII.

Anim Patraic fria chorp  
As iar saethaibh ro scarad,  
Angeil dé i cet aldhce  
Arid fethis ceannadh.

XXXIII.

In tan conhualai Patraic,  
Ad ella in Patraic naile,  
Is malle connucc aibhset  
Do chum hisu mac Maire.

XXXIV.

Patraic cen airae nuabhair  
Bo mör do maith ro meanuir,  
Bith ingellsine meic Maire,  
Bha sengaire in genuir. genuir.

## HYMN ON ST. PATRICK.

I.

Patrick was born at heavenly Tours,  
As it is ascertained in stories;  
A youth of sixteen years  
At the time he was brought under bondage.

II.

Succat his name at the beginning;  
Who his father *was*, be it known  
Son of Calphurn, son of Otidé,  
*Descended* from the Deacon Odissé.

III.

He was six years in servitude,  
The food of the people he eat not,  
They were all by him supported,  
Four tribes to whom he was enslaved.

IV.

Victor (the angel) said to the servant  
Of Milcho: depart over the waves,  
He (Victor) placed his foot upon a stone  
His marks after him remained.

V.

He departed over all the mountains,  
O'er sea, prosperous was his flight.  
He dwelled along with German,  
Southward of the southermost *part* of Letavia.

VI.

In the islands of the Touronian sea  
He resided, as related;  
He read his Canons with German,

As is certified to us.

VII.

Towards Ireland he proceeds,  
Warned by God's angels in apparitions,  
Often saw he in his sleep  
That he ought to return.

VIII.

Great the assistance to Eire,  
The coming of Patrick to Oclat:  
He heard the long sound of entreaties  
Of children from the wood of Foclat.

IX.

They implored the saint may come  
Upon forsaking Letavia,  
For drawing from error's propensity  
The people of Eire to life.

X.

The people of Eire prophesy  
That *there* will come new days of peace,  
Existing till the end of time;  
Desert will be in the country of Tara.

XI.

O Druid! upon Laoree,  
*The* coming of Patrick you hid not;  
Too true the prophecies  
Respecting the sovereign you predicted.

XII.

Prudent was Patrick during life;  
Pleasing was in banishing evil propensities;  
This is what extended his fame  
Up to each tribe of people.

XIII.

*He* hymns, and revelations,  
*And* the three fifties daily sung:  
*He* preached, baptized, and prayed,  
From praising God he never ceased.

XIV.

He felt not the cold of the season;  
He stayed the night in the waters,  
With heaven to be blessed as his kingdom,  
He preached through the day on the hills.

XV.

In saving the people of Benibarka  
He experienced neither drought nor hunger;  
He sang an hundred psalms each night,  
The King of angels to serve.

XVI.

He then rested on a bare stone,  
And a wet coverlid over him,  
A rock was his pillow,  
He left not his body in indolence.

XVII.

He preached the Gospel to all;  
He worked great miracles at Letavia  
He healed the blind with fasting,  
The dead he awoke to life.

## XVIII.

Patrick preached to the Scotians  
*After* he underwent great labours in Letavia,  
 That they may come to judgment,  
 Each whom he guided to life.

## XIX.

The sons of Emir, the sons of Erimor,  
 Were all following after the devil,  
 Buried was the Armament  
 In the great depths of hell.

## XX.

Till the Apostle arrived  
 Who preserved them tho' dreadful the blasts  
 He preached three score years  
 The cross of Christ to the people of the Phenians.

## XXI.

On the people of Eire was darkness,  
 People adoring idols;  
 They believed not in the Godhead  
 Nor in the true Trinity.

## XXII.

In Armagh is the seat of royalty;  
 Long has been the prerogative of Emania,  
 And of the great church at Dundaethglas,  
 Nor is it pleasant that Teamar be tribeless.

## XXIII.

Patrick being about to sicken,  
 For alleviation on going to Armagh,  
 An angel came upon his head  
 On the way, in the middle of the day.

## XXIV.

He proceeded southerly to Victor (angel)  
 It was he who sent for him,  
 Blaze does the bush in which he (Victor) was  
 Out of the blaze he him addressed.

## XXV.

There is granted rule to Armagh,  
 To Christ for this be given thanks:  
 Thou, to heaven, great shalt come,  
 To thee prosperous has been thy petition.

## XXVI.

A hymn, sung by thee, while living,  
 Will be a protecting coat of mail to all  
 In the day of judgment with thee  
 The men of Erie will go to be judged.

## XXVII.

Tassac remained after him,  
 The time he gave the communion to him,  
 He predicted that Patrick would not return  
 The sayings of Tassach were not false.

## XXVIII.

Subside does the end of the night,  
 Whereupon they had great light,  
 Till the year's end continued the lights,  
 This was the protracted day.

## XXIX.

The battle fought in Bethoron,  
Against the people of Canaan by Nun's son  
The sun sat over Gabaon,  
It is what scripture records to us.

XXX.

As then stood for Joshua,  
The sun for the death of the ill-inclined  
Why not trebly greater be this  
Light on the death of his saint.

XXXI.

The clergy of Eire they proceeded  
To wake Patrick, from every side  
The sound of the musical instrument buried  
All asleep upon the spot.

XXXII.

The soul of Patrick from his body  
After his labours, separated;  
Angels of God on the first night  
Watched around him incessantly.

XXXIII.

At the time that Patrick died  
He proceeded to the other Patrick,  
And with him ascended  
To Jesus, the son of Mary.

XXXIV.

Patrick, without a puff of pride,  
Manifold blessings produced;  
He was in subjection to Mary's son.  
And with auspicious bliss was born.

## HYMNUS SANCTO PATRICIO

I.

Natus est Patricius Nempturri  
Ut refertur in historiis,  
Fuit annorum sedecim  
Quando ductus in captivitatis ærumnas.

II.

Sucat nomen ei primo impositum erat  
Quantum ad patrem attinet sciendum fuerit.  
Filius Calfurnii filii Otidii  
Nepos Diaconi Odissii.

III.

Annis sex erat in servitute  
Escis hominum (nempe gentilium) non vescens  
Ideo Vocatus Cathraige  
Quia quatuor familiis inserviebat.

IV.

Dixit Victor angelus servo  
Milconis: ut trans mare se conferret  
Pedem imposuit supra petram  
Ibique: exinde manent impressa ejus vestigia.

V.

Profectus est trans Alpes omnes,



Trajecto mari; (quæ fuit felix expeditio)  
Et apud Germanum remansit  
In Australi parte Latii.

VI.

In insulis maris Tyrrheni  
Mansit: uti memoro  
Legit canonus apud Germanum  
Sicut testantur historiæ.

VII.

In Hiberniam venit  
Admonitus angelorum apparitionibus  
Sæpius in visionibus videbat  
Se debere denuo eo redire.

VIII.

Salutaris erat Hiberniæ  
Adventus Patricii ad Fochlaidios  
Audiebat a longe vocem invocantium  
Infantium de silvis Fochlaid.

IX.

Rogabant ut ad eos veniret sanctus  
Qui discurrebat per Latium  
Ut converteret ab errore  
Populos Hiberniæ ad viam vitæ.

X.

Vates Hiberniæ vaticinabantur  
Adventurum tempus pacis novum  
Quæ duratura sit in perpetuum  
Unde deserta foret Temorea sub silentio.

XI.

Sui Druydæ Loegario  
Adventum Patricii non cælabant  
Adimpleta sunt vaticinia  
De domino quem predicabant.

XII.

Carus erat Patricius usq. mortem  
Exhibit et strenuus in exterminandis erroribus  
Ex ninc merita ejus exaltata sunt  
Supra nationes hominum.

XIII.

Hymnos et Apocalypsin  
Et tres quinquagenas *psalmorum* in dies canenat  
Prædicabat, baptizabat, orabat,  
Et a laudibus dei non cessabat.

XIV.

Nec temporis algor impediabat  
Quo minus maneret de nocte in mediis aquis  
Ad cœli potiandum gaudium  
Prædicabat de die super collibus.

XV.

In fonte sian ad aquilonem juxta Bennaboirche  
(Qui fons nunquam deficit)  
Decantabat centum psalmos singulis noctibus  
Regi angelorum inserviando.

XVI.

Cubabat postea super nuda petra  
Cassula amictus madida

Saxum fuit ejus pulvinar  
Sic arcebat a corpore remissionem.

XVII.

Prædicabat evangelium populis,  
Multas virtutes et signa simul operatus  
Curabat cæcos et leprosos:  
Mortuos revocabat ad vitam.

XVIII.

Patricius prædicabat Scotis  
Passus multos labores in Latio  
Ut venirent in die judicii  
Quos convertit ad vitam æternam.

XIX.

Filii Emeri, Filii Erimonii,  
Omnes seducti a dæmone,  
Quos et recondidit Sathanas  
In magno puteo infernali.

XX.

Donec advenit apostolus  
Qui eos preservavit, licet turbines vehementes  
Qui prædicavit annis sexagihita  
Crucem Christi populis Feniorum.

XXI.

Super populos Hiberniæ erant tenebræ  
Populos adorantes idola  
Non credebant in veram Deitatem  
Trinitatis veræ.

XXII.

Ardmachæ est regni sedes  
Futura æterni nominis populis Emaniæ  
Et est ecclesia celebris in Dundalethglas  
Nec gratum quod Temoria deseratur.

XXIII.

Patricius quando cepit infirmari  
Desiderabat ire Ardmacham  
Sed Angelus Dei ad eum venit  
In via in medio die.

XXIV.

Venit versus Ausirum ad Victorem angelum  
(Is fuit qui eum accersivit)  
Rubus in quo angelus erat exarsit  
Et ex eo ipsum alloquebatur.

XXV.

Dixit angelus regimen sit penes Ardmacho.  
Christo propter hæc gratias age;  
Ipse ad cælos venies;  
Impetrasti adeoquæ petieras.

XXVI.

Hymnus decantatus tibi jam viventi,  
Erit lorica protectionis populis;  
In die judicii te comitabuntur  
Hiberni ad supremum judicem.

XXVII.

Remansit Tassachus post eum  
Quando ministravit communionem ipsi  
Dixit quod communicaturus esset Patricium

Nec propheta Tassachi erat falsa.

XXVIII.

Possuit tenebras nocti  
Ita quod apud eos erat indeficiens lui  
Spatio unius anni continuata lux erat  
Et ista continuata dies et prolongata erat.

XXIX.

Prælium gestum in Bethoron  
Contra populum Cananeorum per filium Nun  
In quo stetit sol contra Gabaoan  
Ut referunt sacræ litteræ nobis.

XXX.

Quandoquidem sic steterit Josuæ  
Sol ad cædendos iniquos  
Esto triplo major sit hæc  
Lux potiori jure concedenda erat in mort hujus sancti.

XXXI.

Clerici enim Hiberniæ confluebant  
Ad celebrandas exequias Patricii undique  
Sonus concentus superni  
Reddebat ipsos sopore irruenti ubi humi decumbantes.

XXXII.

Anima Patricii a corpore  
Post labores seperata est,  
Angeli dei prima nocte,  
Excubias circa ipsum protinus agebant.

XXXIII.

Quando decessit Patricius  
Venit ad Patricium alterum  
Et simul ascenderunt  
Ad Jesum filium Mariæ.

XXXIV.

Patricius absque elationis nævo  
Multa bona excogitavit  
In servitio filii Mariæ  
Fælicibus natus est auspiciis.

St. Fiech, the author of the above Hymn, was a disciple to Duvhach, poet laureate of Laoree, monarch of Ireland. He was converted by St. Patrick, who taught him the elements of the Latin language, in which he was enabled to read the bible after fifteen days' study. Fiech was appointed bishop of Leinster by his holy master, upon which he founded a celebrated monastery, called from him *Domnach-Fiech*, on the mountain of Sletty, about a mile to the north of Carlow, in the territory of Leix, now in the barony of Slieve- Margey, and Queen's county. In this church, the remains of which still exist, he also established a college, celebrated for producing many saints, as may be seen in Colgan's Lives of Irish Saints, &c.

## NOTES.



*The figures refer to the stanzas.*

(1) In the Latin translation accompanying Colgan's edition of this Hymn *Nein Thur*, or *Holy Tours*, is rendered into *Nemthur*; as if the two words were but one, designating a place of that name. In the fifth and ninth stanzas, the word *Lethu* or *Letha*, is rendered by *Latium* or *Italy*: upon which absurd translation, Colgan, without rectifying the mistake, observes that *Nisi Germanus dicatur degisse in eis (insulis Tyrrheni maris) videtur hic preposterus ordo*; "except St. German be said here to have lived in them, (the islands of the Tyrrhenian sea,) the order of time seems preposterous." So contradictory does this appear to the Latin translator, that he has totally mistranslated the 17th and 18th verses, in which *Letha* again occurs, by his omitting the word altogether. The editor's reason for deviating from the Latin translation may be seen, at full length, in the preceding work.

(2) Colgan, from the psalter of Cashel, traces back St. Patrick's pedigree to the 17th progenitor, thus:

- Calphurnius 1
- Potitus 2
- Mercutius 3
- Oda, or Othus 4
- Oricius 5
- Muricius 6
- Muricius 7
- Oricius 8
- Leo 9
- Maximius 10
- Otrasius 11
- Ericius 12
- Pelestius 13
- Fierinius 14
- Brittanus 15
- Fergusius 16
- Nemethus 17
- &c. &c.

From the names of the above list, if they could be depended on, it would appear that St. Patrick's ancestors were of Roman origin.

(3) As Father Michael Clery, one of the annalists called the four masters was employed for fifteen years previously to the Anglo-Cromwellian invasion in collecting Irish manuscripts, and translating them into Latin for Colgan's *Lives of the Irish Saints*, it is very probable he was the translator of this Hymn into Latin at the same time. He was also the author of an Irish dictionary of difficult words. To the translation of such a scholar, made also at a time when the language was regularly studied in the seminaries of Ireland, great deference must be paid. In this third stanza, however, the editor has ventured to deviate from his version, which runs thus, according to the Latin words "St. Patrick was six years in slavery, during which he eat not

the food of the (heathenish) people. For this reason he was called Cathraige, because he served four masters." Now, as *Cothraighe* may also mean a supporter, maintainer, protector, &c. this last import of the word is adopted in the English translation.

(4) Instead of St. Patrick's running over the Italian "Alps," as the Latin translator affirms here, he travelled over all the mountains from the north to the south of Ireland, whence he took shipping for his native country; for *Ealpa uile* denotes all mountains in general.

(5) Tassach was originally a brazier and silversmith, who ornamented the celebrated crozier of St. Patrick, called the *Staff of Jesus*. Tassach was afterwards a priest.

In the 5th, 6th, 9th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 18th stanzas, the English translation will be found to differ very materially from the Latin one. Some verses of the 28th and 31st stanzas, neither the editor nor some literary friends (of whose observations he has availed himself in translating other parts of the Hymn) could make any tolerable sense; he at the same time acknowledges, that he is far from being satisfied with the Latin translation. He thinks it necessary to observe here, once for all, that the Hymn has been faithfully collated with, and printed word for word, according to Father Colgan's edition.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A HYMN ON THE LIFE, VIRTUES AND MIRACLES OF ST. PATRICK \*\*\*

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