

The importance of order in their connubial alliances appears to have impressed the minds of the legislators of the ancient Irish so powerfully, that they had a court set apart for the proper adjustment of everything connected with the marriage bond, in the great Aonach, or assembly of the nation at Tara.*

It is manifest, however, that Polygamy, which was common in every heathen land, was sanctioned by the laws of this court,† and that the thorough reformation of this abuse of a divine ordinance was reserved for the influence of the Christian religion.

But, notwithstanding the care taken by the legislature to regulate the circumstances connected with the marriage contract, illegitimate children enjoyed every rank and dignity in the state to which they were entitled by blood,‡ notwithstanding the criminality of their parents, or the contempt shown by the latter for the established laws of society. Marriage indeed appears to have become a subject of legislation amongst the Ethnic Irish merely for the adjustment of the personal interests of the contracting parties; but had little effect upon their immediate issue, as it was deemed unjust that the children should be visited with pains and penalties, or even disabilities, for crimes in which they had no actual participation.

The predilection which the Irish entertained for music and poetry, above that which was evinced by most other nations, is also universally acknowledged. The nervous, pathetic, and figurative style of their language has been

* Ogyg. Domest., p. 304.

† O'Con. Dissert., p. 121.

‡ O'Hall., Vol. II, p. 171.