

niary circulating medium, such as has been sometimes ascribed to them. That the ports of Ireland were visited at an early period by the Scandinavians for the purpose of traffic, cannot be doubted; but the gold and silver that these northern traders gave to the natives for such commodities as they purchased, were not coins, but rings, necklaces, and other ornaments of a similar nature. Even the Roman money acquired by the Irish in their predatory incursions into Britain did not circulate as a medium of commerce,* but was probably manufactured into various ornaments then in use, and which have been frequently found in the bogs in Ireland, inasmuch as no Roman coins have been discovered in the island.

Little can be said respecting the agriculture of the country, in the earlier stages of its history; but, from some traces still remaining even in the greatest wilds,† it appears probable that it was carried on to a more considerable extent than is generally supposed. Whilst the wealth of the nation consisted chiefly in numerous herds of cattle, the progress of industry also produced superfluities, and these the inhabitants bartered for the commodities of the northern countries, as well as for those of Gaul, which was possessed of superior wealth.

Whilst we are thus able to take an imperfect view of some of the national characteristics of the ancient Irish, we have but little information respecting their moral and social qualities in private life. An invincible courage, contempt of death, and ardent feelings both of love and hatred, seem to have been the distinguishing features of the national character.

* See *Led. Ant.*, pp. 111, 132.

† *O'Con. Daisert.* p. 125; *O'Hal.*, Vol. I, p. 128.