

movement he called a Mithal Tuatha, or "meeting of the freeholders" of the tribe to take counsel with them; if a yet greater chief—the "chief of kindred," or Aire-Fine—wished to have the support of the householders of his kindred for measures of defence, for the consideration of certain acts of the king or decisions of the court, he would summon an important assembly called the Mathluagh. Again, there was the Dal, or assembly of all the "Flaith," or heads of septs, without whose consent no taxation could be carried out, and finally there was the great Aenach, or Fair, held every three years at Tara, or Teltown, in Meath; at Carman, in Wexford; at Aileach or Armagh, in Ulster, summoned and presided over by Ard-Righ or High King, King of all Ireland. There the High King and lesser kings, the nobles, judges, poets and scholars met to discuss national affairs.

In Mrs. Bryant's charming volume on "Celtic Ireland" she describes one of these Assemblies in a vivid way:

"All new laws were promulgated at the fair in the hearing of the people, while also old laws were rehearsed, proclamations made, genealogies recited, the people being thus kept acquainted with the institutions and traditions under which they lived. This was the political side of the Aenach; but it was also an occasion of literary, artistic and social enjoyment, and an opportunity for the selling and buying of wares. Recitation of poetry, music, dancing, feats at arms, horse-racing, athletic sports—all these took place; and prizes were awarded by the king, who had charge of the fair, to the best competitor in each accomplishment. The bards came to the Aenach, and used it, not only as a literary stimulus, but also as an occasion for the interchange and comparison of