

# SPEECH BY RUAIDRÍ UA CONCHOBAIR TO THE MEN OF IRELAND.

**Taken from Giraldus Cambrensis's *The Conquest of Ireland*,  
translated by Thomas Forester and edited by Thomas Wright,  
published 1863.**

Right noble and valiant defenders of your country and liberty, let us consider with what nations and for what causes we are now about to wage battle. That enemy of his country, that tyrant of his people, and foe of all men, who was formerly driven out of the land, is now returned with the support of foreign troops, and bent on the general ruin of the state. Envious of his country's welfare, he has brought in a foreign race, that, by the aid of a fierce and detested nation, he may be able to inflict upon us the mischief to which his own strength was unequal. Himself an enemy, he has called in our greatest national enemy; a people who have long aimed at being lords over him as well as over all of us, and give out that the dominion of our land justly belongs to them, and is even destined to them by ancient prophecies. Nay, he has so universally diffused his venom that, while all are contaminated with it, he has not even spared himself. O cruel, and far more, cruel than ever beast was! For to satisfy his insatiable malice in the blood of his own people, he spares neither himself nor his country, nor sex, nor age. This is he who formerly was a most cruel tyrant over his own subjects, this is he who, supported by bands of armed foreigners, is preparing to revel in the blood of us all. He deserves therefore to be treated as a public enemy, who proves himself to be the enemy of all.

Mark, my countrymen, mark well, how most states have been overthrown in this way; I mean by civil discord. Julius Caesar, after having twice shewn his back to the Britons, returned the third time, and subdued the country on the invitation of Androgius, who was a victim to his own thirst for revenge. This same Julius, after having, at length, conquered the western parts of the world, ambitious of

supreme power, did not hesitate to bring foreign nations to shed the blood of the Roman people, in a worse than civil war. To come to examples nearer home and our own times, we find Gurmund the terror of the isles, bringing in the Saxons for the subjugation of the Britons, though it turned out to his own ruin and humiliation. Soon afterwards, Isembard, the king of the Franks, but the enemy of his people, called in the aid of Gurmund to conquer France, but without success. Let us then, following the example of the Franks, and fighting bravely for our country, rush against our enemies; and, as these foreigners have come over few in numbers, let us crush them by a general attack. Fire, while it only sparkles, may be speedily quenched; but when it has burst into a flame, being fed with fresh materials, its power increases with their bulk, and it cannot be easily extinguished. It is always best to meet difficulties half-way, and check the first approaches of disease; for,

“—sero medicina paratur,  
Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.”

Wherefore, defending our country and liberty, and acquiring for ourselves eternal renown, let us by a resolute attack and the extermination of our enemies, though they are but few in number, strike terror into many, and by their fate for ever deter foreign nations from such nefarious attempts.