



## St. Secundinus

Bishop and confessor, b. 372 or 373; d. at Dunshaughlin, 27 Nov., 457. Son of Restitutus, a Lomard, and Liamain, sister of St. Patrick, he was one of nine brothers, eight of whom became bishops in Ireland. His early life and training is obscure, but he appears to have studied in Gaul, and to have accompanied St. Patrick to Ireland in 432. The first documentary evidence we have is an entry in the Irish Annals recording the arrival of St. Sechnall and his brother St. Auxilius "to help St. Patrick". He had much experience before his coming to assist in the conversion of the Irish. In 433 he was appointed by St. Patrick as first Bishop of Dunshaughlin (co. Meath), and so great was his reputation for learning and prudence, that he was assistant Bishop of Armagh from 434 until his death. At the commencement of his episcopal rule, the local fair (aonach) was accustomed to be held in the church enclosure, and as the people ignored the saint's denunciation as to holding a fair on hallowed ground, we read that "the earth opened and swallowed up thirteen horses, chariots and drivers, while the remainder fled". He died after an episcopate of fourteen years. The name of his see in the corrupt form, Dunshaughlin (correctly Domnach Sechnaille), testifies to the veneration in which he was held.

St. Sechnall's fame in the literary world is as the writer of the earliest Latin poem in the Irish Church, the well-known alphabetic hymn commencing "Audite omnes amantes Deum, sancta merita". This he composed in praise of his uncle, St. Patrick, and was rewarded with the promise that whoever would recite daily (morning and evening) the concluding three verses with proper disposition would obtain everlasting bliss in Heaven. It consists of twenty-three stanzas in the same metre as employed by St. Hilary in his hymn "Ymnum dicat turba fratrum, Ymnum cantus personet", and was printed by Colgan and Muratori. It was regarded as a lorica or preserver to be sung (or recited) in any great emergency, and its singing was one of the "Four honours" paid to St. Patrick, being assigned as the hymn for the feast of the national Apostle. Another beautiful hymn by St. Sechnall is "Sancti venite, Christi corpus sumite", traditionally sung by angels in the church of Dunshaughlin, and adopted for use at the reception of Holy Communion.