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TALES OF THE ELDERS OF IRELAND

A new translation of *Acallam na Senórach*
by Ann Dooley and Harry Roe



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Tales of the Elders of Ireland is the first complete translation of the late Middle Irish *Acallam na Senórach*. Dating from around the end of the twelfth century, it is the largest literary text surviving from early Ireland and contains the earliest and most comprehensive collection of Fenian stories and poetry. There is constant interaction throughout between the contemporary Christian world of Saint Patrick, with his scribes, clerics, occasional angels, and souls rescued from Hell, the earlier pagan world of the ancient, giant Fenians, with an array of Irish kings, some historical, some mythical, and the parallel, timeless Otherworld, peopled by ever-young, shape-shifting fairies. It also provides the most extensive account available of the highly cultured inhabitants of the Irish Otherworld, their music and magic, their internecine wars and their malice towards, and infatuation with, humankind, themes still featured in the storytelling of present-day Ireland.

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Tales of the Elders of Ireland

(*Acallam na Senórach*)

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by

ANN DOOLEY *and* HARRY ROE

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INTRODUCTION

EARLY in the great medieval compilation of Fenian lore called *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (*Acallam na Senórach*; hereinafter designated *Tales*, hitherto rendered as *The Colloquy of the Ancients*) St Patrick's guardian angels come to him to give him the heavenly advice he had sought. Ancient warriors, survivors from an older, more heroic and magnificent age, have presented themselves to him and he has been both fascinated and troubled by their appearance and their stories. The advice of the angels, given 'with one voice', is the following: 'Dear holy cleric, these old warriors tell you no more than a third of their stories because their memories are faulty. Have these stories written down on poets' tablets in refined language, so that the hearing of them will provide entertainment for the lords and commons of later times.'

Ever since that time tales of Finn and his famous band of warriors have enjoyed a long and varied literary life in both oral and written form. Their battles, their feasts, their great hunts, and their adventures in the Otherworld have fascinated audiences throughout the Gaelic world. By a curious turn of literary history these same stories, albeit in a somewhat diluted form, have also profoundly influenced modern European and American literature. In the 1760s the Highlander James Macpherson, at the behest of the literary Edinburgh élite of the mid-eighteenth century, collected, embellished, and published versions of Fenian narratives. As etiolated ghosts of their former robust selves, deploying a language of lofty and sublimely heroic inanity, these Macphersonese tales of 'Ossian', Finn, and their companions left a permanent mark on literary history. Fenian heroes and their stories contributed form and substance to eighteenth-century thinking about the nature of literary and epic tradition in general, and to the idea of a national British epic in particular. Fully implicated in the evolution of eighteenth-century aesthetic values, in the concept of original genius, of theories of the passions, and the cult of natural feeling, these heroic figures from a Celtic past penetrated deeply into the heart of European and American romantic and revolutionary movements.

Tales of the Elders of Ireland: *Contents*

Despite the importance of Macpherson's versions of these tales to modern literature, they exist as accidents of cultural history and tell us little about the real nature of Fenian heroic tradition in Gaelic Scotland, let alone in Ireland, its homeland. Without doubt *Tales* forms the most important literary contribution to that native tradition—indeed it is the longest original literary text in medieval Irish literature; it concerns the adventures of Finn and his companions in a heroic setting in the past as told to St Patrick by Caílte, an old *fían* (Fenian) retainer. There is a frame-narrative telling of the journeys of saint and warrior throughout the length and breadth of the early Christian Ireland of the late fifth century. There are hundreds of stories and poems in the work, representing a huge mass of medieval Irish literary traditions, from pseudo-history, myth, saga, bardic eulogy, and hagiography; these are arranged and represented in a great variety of ways. Certain grand themes are reiterated throughout the collection: the greatness of Finn as a leader of warriors, the tragic rivalry between Finn's family and the family of Goll mac Morna which constantly threatens to disrupt the well-being of the old pagan body politic; the privileged relations between the heroes of the *fían* and the inhabitants of the Irish otherworld, the people of the goddess Danu, those divine dynasties inhabitating the *síde*, or fairy residences, of Ireland; the constant insistence on the value of music, poetry, and storytelling itself; the Christian moral code which the stories involving St Patrick exemplify and the general harmonizing of the values of the warrior élites, the royal dynasties, and the Church.

Some of the individual pieces that go to make up the whole may indeed be older than the period of compilation of *Tales* but the frame device afforded by the relationship of saint and hero and the markedly clear and uniform expository prose style provide a coherent outline that makes the entire work eminently readable. The end is lacking in all the manuscript copies of the work but from the general structure of the compilation it is hardly likely that a great deal has been lost. It is not attributed to a specific author in any of the four manuscript witnesses to the work and is normally dated by scholars to the end of the twelfth century, though the present translators consider the early thirteenth century as a more likely date.

Tales: *Literary Contexts*

The lore of place-names in medieval Irish literature

Tales has often been described as a 'compilation' or 'collection', but terms such as these hardly convey accurately or do justice to the obvious care and skill which have gone into the construction of the whole work as we have it. The basic framework holding the hundreds of stories together is provided by two major literary structures, themselves of primary importance to medieval Irish literature in general. One is the extremely important genre of the *Dinnshenchas* collection, the lore of place-names and the sum of underlying stories relating to an area and its name. This is one of the most deeply embedded and persistent strands in all of Irish literature and provides the main structuring device and *raison d'être* of *Tales*. In the greatest of early Irish sagas, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), for example, many scenes are constructed on just such an aetiological model. In the period in which cycles of Fenian tales were taking shape as a viable cultural project there was already in literary circulation a considerable mass of narratives, some of it authentic tradition, some of it the invention of Irish ecclesiastical men of learning, which provided an appropriate legend to account for local place-names. By the time these place-name story cycles appear in twelfth-century manuscripts such as the *Book of Leinster*, they have taken on the character of a national onomastics-based legendary with a double prose and poetry structure. Indeed the first mention of the existence of *Tales* occurs as a note to one of these collections in the late fourteenth-/early fifteenth-century *Book of Ballymote*.

The Patrician connection

The second strand shaping the form of the compilation is that of Patrician hagiography. From the authentic *Confessio* of Patrick in the fifth century, through the various biographies of the saint from the seventh to the ninth century, through the related materials collected in the *Book of Armagh*, culminating in the more voluminous Irish *Bethu Phátraic* of the ninth century, certain Patrician hagiographical stock scenarios are repeated and embellished; these in turn furnish the basic narrative frame element of *Tales*. Of these, the most important is the missionary itinerary; Patrick's evangelizing activities as

developed by his various biographers involve him in an ever-widening circle of conversion taking in larger and larger areas of Ireland. In Muirchú's *Life* these activities are centred around the great meeting at Tara with the high king of Ireland; this is the major occasion for demonstrating the dramatic meeting of pagan and Christian world views and powers.

Frequently in Patrician and other early Irish hagiography there are encounters with particularly dangerous and lawless individuals and groups, brigand (*díberg*) types who occupy remote areas. Enshrined in Tírechán's *Life of Patrick* is a key story involving a 'good' pagan who conducts a dialogue with Patrick from beyond the grave, telling the tale of his death at the hands of a hostile band called a *fían*: 'I was the swineherd of Lugair king of Irrúaith. The *fían* of the son of Macc Con murdered me in the reign of Cairbre Nia Fer.'[1] Mention of the almost certainly mythical king, Cairbre Nia Fer, should alert us here that we are not dealing with real historical detail but with a churchman's pseudo-historical construction of the past. In Muirchú's *Life* we have an example of one of these violent men of action, the Ulsterman Macuil mocu Grecae, 'residing in a mountainous, wild and high place in Druim moccu Echach, where he daily exercised his lordship by taking up most wicked devices of violence and killing passing travellers with cruel criminality'.[2] Thus, two of the major ideas of the framing device, the journeys around Ireland and the encounter with an individual from the heroic and violent pagan past, are a contribution from Patrician hagiography.

Even given the propensity of the Fenian warriors of *Tales* to prefer the wild to the settled life, it is, nevertheless, manifestly a far cry from the barbarous *fían* figures of early hagiography to the high social status of the *Fíana* and the refined chivalric heroism of Fenian patterns of behaviour in our text. A brief account of the development of the Fenian tradition, first as a socio-historical fact, and second as a literary phenomenon, is in order if we wish to have a clear image of what such figures might have represented to a later medieval audience.

[1] Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 10 (Dublin, 1979), 154/155.

[2] Ibid. 102/103.

Fían *and* Fíanaigecht

Origins

From the earliest occurrences and usages of the term *fían* (plural *fíana*) to describe a certain group of armed men in Irish historical and legal sources, McCone, the most recent scholar to have studied the phenomenon, arrived at the following definition: 'The early Irish *fían* catered for the propertyless males of free birth who had left fosterage but had not yet inherited the property needed to settle down as full landowning members of the *túath* [i.e. the local unit of territorial self-government in early Ireland].'[3] In this socially recognized unit of the *fían* specific types of raiding-group activities were condoned. McCone has further connected *fían* behaviour with various manifestations of young warrior cults in other Indo-European areas, in particular, the close relationship between the Irish grouping and the Germanic *Männerbund*.

While it is certainly attractive to view aspects of the institution as part of a common Indo-European tradition it is more realistic to study its historical development among the Celtic peoples themselves. It is possible that Celtic warbands formed the basis of the expanding military profile of La Tène Celts in Europe from the fifth century on, and that their experiences as mercenaries in the armies of great Mediterranean empire builders such as Philip and Alexander of Macedonia provided a powerful incentive to the continuance of such institutions. Raids on the rich centres to the Mediterranean south and the opportunistic exploitation of the civilized and wealthy centre by the barbarian periphery continued to provide the historical circumstances which favoured the survival of the warband institution among the Celtic and Germanic border peoples into the Roman period.

How Ireland fitted into the common culture of the late La Tène world and the kind of contacts she had with Mediterranean culture in general, and the Roman world in particular, is still unclear. That a warband institution continued on in Ireland is most probable. It may be of some significance in this respect that many of the first mentions of *fían* bands from early Irish sources are connected with raiding expeditions directed against late and post-Roman Britain and the

[3] Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990), 205.

Continent. Such seems to be the context for the Irish traditions surrounding the continental exploits of the famous Níall Noígiallach and his immediate successors. The Irish Annals provide us with a number of early examples of raids specifically described as *fían* expeditions. A typical example is that of the *rígfhéinid*, Maelumai mac Baitáin, great-great-grandson of Níall Noígiallach, whose exploits and death are recorded in some detail at 610 by the *Annals of Tigernach*. These raiding bands seem to have had some basic internal organization with strong leader loyalty. They are usually identified as 'the *Fían* of X' and there are often fraternal and ritualized linkages as well.

The fían *and Irish law*

How these groups, who may or may not have had some mercenary soldier aspects, might fit in with the legal picture of the *fían* from the Irish law tracts is not entirely clear. Certainly in the thinking of early Irish jurists they have a recognized place in society. The phase of legally licensed delinquency for young adult aristocratic males (and sometimes females) may be of relatively brief duration if the young man comes early into a sufficient landed inheritance. It may last much longer if inheritance is blocked or too meagre to afford sufficient status. The phrase in the late Old-Irish text, *Tecosca Chormaic* (The Teachings of Cormac), expresses this succinctly: 'Everyone is a *fían* until inheritance.'

The *fían* may have achieved social respectability in other ways also. McCone suggests that they had some connection to two specific figures in the early Irish socio-legal schema, the *aire échta* ('the lord of slaughter', licensed to exact a limited vengeance in an inter-territorial blood feud) and the *fer-gniae* ('the king's champion', resolver of disputes by single combat on behalf of the king).[4] Interestingly, the *fer-gniae* also enforces the payment of a woman's bride-price when all other means have failed and this is a role which we see Finn engage in several times in *Tales*.

The fían *and the Church*

In early Irish secular society the *fían* is a tolerated institution and there is a long line of secular-wisdom literature right down to

[4] Ibid. 212.

the twelfth century endorsing the *fían* as an aspect of a healthily functioning society. But it is clear that the institution was not one favoured by the Church which during the centuries of conversion and long thereafter waged a keen struggle for the minds, hearts, and general resources of Irish aristocratic youth. A rhetorical contrast was soon established between the disruptive hooliganism of the *fían* members, the *maicc báis* ('sons of death'), and the good young Christians, *maicc bethad* ('sons of life'). In a number of Irish saints' Lives this antagonism between the saint and the brigand becomes the occasion of an impressive display of the saint's superior power and the resulting conversion of the *fían* members.[5]

Thus, it is not simply in Patrician hagiography alone that a contest, which frequently turns into a fruitful dialogue between the saint and the man of violence, becomes a staple of Irish hagiography and secular saga. One cannot discount the possibility that the Church and *fían* bands may have known dramatic encounters of a more specific kind. Monastic lands do seem, in many instances, to have been uncleared or boundary territories, and it is precisely in the monastic expansion into these marginal areas, hitherto the zone of the *dí-berg* or *fían*, that some of the tension and also the perceived affinities between the two social types may have been generated.[6]

This aspect of territorial and social marginality affected the Church and the old warband institutions during the century and a half of conversion, but the Church moved rapidly into a central and dominant role in Irish society. Once established, it also felt obliged in Ireland, as elsewhere in medieval Europe, to mediate and mitigate the effects of endemic violence in society. Thus it is likely that the Church was the major agent in the demise of the *fían* as a viable social institution. A paradox emerges when we consider the matter of *Tales*; why do we have, in the twelfth century, well after the point where the *fían* seems to have lost its social role and creditation, a literary flowering based on *fían* lore? One other related point must also be considered: if we have up to now been concerned with establishing the reality of *fíanaigecht* ('the tradition of the *fíana*') as a social institution, where do we search for the origins of the rich cast

[5] Richard Sharpe, 'Hiberno-Latin *Laicus*, Irish *Láech*, and the Devil's Men', *Ériu*, 30 (1979), 82–92.

[6] Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Boundary Association in Early Irish Society', *Studia Celtica*, 7 (1972), 12–29.

of literary characters found in the separate episodes of *Tales*? Who, exactly, are these 'old men'?

Finn

Finn and the fíana

The figure of Finn is attested in some of the earliest Irish historical sources, but he is by no means the earliest *fían* leader of note in the literary tradition. He and Caílte, the Fenian representative in *Tales*, occupy a prestigious place in Leinster genealogical tradition as the grandsons of Núadu Necht, founder of all the major Leinster dynasties. This is an obvious error. Finn's listing as the grandson of Núadu Necht is contradicted by the information also given at this point in the genealogies that Finn is *ua Baíscne*, hence grandson of another figure entirely. Our Finn is an obvious substitution for the Find File (Find the poet), great-grandson of Núadu Necht mac Rossa Rúad. The mistaken identification with Find File may have helped to give rise to one of the most persistent features of the Fenian tradition of Finn: that he is a poet who has visionary knowledge of events. This is an aspect of Finn richly represented in *Tales* and also in a text called *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn*, roughly contemporaneous with our work, which, *inter alia*, describes how he acquired his magic 'thumb of knowledge' as a young boy. This is also the tradition of Finn which we find in one of the most interesting literary Fenian pieces of the ninth century, *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* (The Poem of Fothad Canainne), the tragic story of another young *fían* leader. This poem also contains a reference to Caílte.

The references to Oisín, the son of Finn, are earlier than this, but the three figures do not appear together until the tenth century. It is at this time also that a fairly consistent patronymic, Finn mac Cumaill (occasionally Umaill) emerges, but considerable variation persists in many aspects of the emerging 'heroic biography' of Finn, with confused traditions concerning his tribal affiliation, wives, place of residence, and death-tale. By the late Old-Irish period Finn is described as one of many royal *fían* leaders appointed by the great king of Irish pseudo-historical tradition, Cormac mac Airt. By the twelfth century Finn has become his unique *taísech teglaigh* 'captain of the house troop'.

Tales of Finn

Despite Finn's popularity throughout the Gaelic world from the later Middle Ages down to our own day, few tales of Finn are found in the early literary period. Towards the end of the tenth century we see emerging the convention of a master list of tales that poets are normally required to know as part of their professional expertise. These lists provide a convenient point of reference for assessing the impact of a literary tradition of the cycle of Finn, as this tradition enters into the literary record on a more formal level. In one such list in the *Book of Leinster*, a codex from the middle of the twelfth century, we find four or five tales listed relating to Finn. Two of these are romantic stories, *Tochmarc Ailbhe* (The Wooing of Ailbhe), and *Aithed Gráinne re Díarmait* (The Elopement of Gráinne with Díarmait), and these have survived as separate prose tales in their own right. *Tochmarc Ailbhe* exists as a late Old-Irish tale and shows Finn on terms of equality with Cormac, high king of Ireland—this detail, of course, being an historical anachronism. Of the two, the latter story, dealing with the tragic love triangle between Díarmait, Gráinne, and Finn, is much the more famous, surviving as a modern Irish tale with many versions, and it has often been cited as an analogue, if not a source, for the European romance tradition of Tristan and Isolde. Another story in the list, *Uath Beinne Étair* (The Cave [or Horror] of Howth), may be an offshoot of this, an incident relating to Díarmait and Gráinne's flight, which now figures separately in the manuscript tradition. A lost tale, *Uath Dercce Ferna* (The Horror of Derc Ferna) or *Echtra Fhind i nDerc Ferna* (The Adventures of Finn in Derc Ferna), is also listed.

Whatever may be the ultimate origins and the development path of a widely dispersed Fenian tradition, it is undeniable that the largest growth seems to occur in the *Dinnshenchas* or 'lore of place-names' genre which is rapidly achieving outstanding literary popularity and elaboration in the period between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. In the *Dinnshenchas* collections such as we have them in manuscripts dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century there are numerous references to Fenian place-name associations (though none of these correlates exactly with material in *Tales*). Whether associated with the *Dinnshenchas* evolution, or for other reasons which we shall discuss presently, we can note this Fenian growth

from the observations of the twelfth-century scholar, Gilla in Choimded ua Cormaic, that in his day there were 120 stories about the *fíana* which every genuine *fili* (professional poet) could recite. We also see the inclusion of Fenian saga materials, 'The Causes of the Battle of Knock', in the great eleventh- to twelfth-century codex from the monastery of Clonmacnoise, *Lebor na hUidre* (The Book of the Dun Cow).

Fenian narrative is a growth literary industry in this period. It is generally assumed that what we are witnessing in the twelfth century in the sudden popularity of the lore of Finn and his companions is the emergence into visibility of ancient popular tradition. Other literary factors are also at work. The fact that Finn becomes the archetype of this new wave of literary heroes rather than, say, Fothad Canainne, a figure who is equally well represented in the literature of the tenth century, may owe something to the conflation of Finn with the Find File of earlier Leinster genealogical distinction. This has all the advantages and fictional leeway that a key genealogical pole position, and a pre-existing reputation for poetic knowledge, affords a Leinster composite 'Finn' to the detriment of all other *fían* heroic contenders. In addition, the use of Fenian material in the expansion of the genre of *Dinnshenchas* points to a learned process of development by ecclesiastical authors. It has been suggested that Finn's origin may lie among the vassal peoples of Leinster; such groups as the Osraige are politically prominent in the tenth century, and the ecclesiastical families of the Laígis and the Fothairt, who produced the great Leinster codex, *The Book of Leinster*, are also proud of their own family traditions. The association of Fenian adventure with the *uatha* or 'monstrous' happenings in the tale lists also points to an ecclesiastical rather than a popular impetus for the advancement of Fenian material.

The Fenian lay

By the time of the compilation of the great *Book of Leinster* in the mid-twelfth century, Fenian narratives can be seen to constitute a distinctive type and are considered worthy of collection as part of a large and important compendium of tradition. Obviously, a Leinster heroic figure is attractive for a predominantly Leinster-orientated collection. There are a number of Fenian items of a new type in the volume. The short verse-narrative form, though not unrepresented

in earlier tradition, became strongly associated with Fenian stories at this time. This form is called *laoidh*, a term found in the earliest literature for a short dramatic poem, often used as battle incitation. The plural phrase *laoithe Fiannaidheachta* ('Fenian lays') describes the form of choice of subsequent Fenian narrative tradition.

Tales itself, however, reveals no special interest in this type of narrative poem or in the *laoidh*-designated forms that preceded it, namely poems of heroic exhortation or heroic verse dialogue, well represented under this name in the Fer Diad and Cú Chulainn segment of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. 'Fenian lays' are indeed present in *Tales*—the charming story in Chapter I of Finn's miniature otherworld musician, Cnú Deróil, and his wife, is one example of a typical Fenian 'ballad' form; but what we most often find is that several stories, told mainly in prose in *Tales*, rely on pre-existing *laoithe*. Such models, it is clear, are here broken down and refashioned into stories of a different complexion, and we can only discern the older *laoidh* behind them by the occasional awkward fit between the new prose and the stray fragments of verse that are preserved to embellish the new composition. A good example of this kind of transformation is furnished by another story from Chapter I, the tale of Artúir, the British prince who stole the Fenian hounds and carried them off to Britain.

Music, storytelling, and the Fenian world

As one reads *Tales* one is struck by two aspects of the narrative which must also have been of great importance to the medieval audience of the work, namely the repeatedly expressed pleasure of the tales' listeners in the stories they are hearing and their extreme delight in the qualities of good musical performance. Patrick interests himself in both music and storytelling and we opened the Introduction with one of Patrick's many endorsements of the benefits and the aesthetic value of the Fenian tales. We know from an external contemporary witness, Gerald of Wales, that Irish musicians were renowned in Europe for their distinctive style and the subtlety of their music. The author of *Tales* is deeply interested in promoting the values of music in an aristocratic social setting. Thus music is frequently described as having an otherworldly, seductive power and its best practitioners are otherworld beings themselves. The tale of Cas Corach, the musician companion of the Fenian storyteller

protagonist Caílte, is the exemplary case. As we follow his appearances through the web of the master narrative we are brought close to what may have been the circumstances in which Fenian stories and music came together to create a new cultural genre.

When Cas Corach first presents himself to Caílte, he is described as a *scológ*, a student, though he is already endowed with prodigious otherworldly musical abilities and is the son of an *ollamh* (highest-ranking professional man of art or letters), so may himself legitimately aspire to that same high office. He says he has come to Caílte to add to his educational repertoire by learning the art of telling Fenian tales: '"This is what has brought me, a desire to learn knowledge and true lore, storytelling and the great deeds of valour of the *Fían*. . . ." Thereupon he took his dulcimer and performed music and minstrelsy for them and put them all to sleep. "Well, dear Caílte, what answer do you give me?" he asked. "You shall obtain everything you came here to request, if you have the art and skill to learn it, all the deeds of valour and of arms that the *Fían* did."'

When Caílte rejoins Patrick with Cas Corach in attendance the conjunction of storytelling and music is brought forward again. The clerics are eager to hear from Caílte: 'The clerics asked him for tales. He told them of the adventures he had had that year. "Where is Broccán the scribe?" asked Patrick, and Broccán answered. Patrick said, "Let everything that Caílte relates, from the day he parted from us at the pillar on the Hill of Usnagh until this very time, be written down and preserved by you."' Patrick then invites Cas Corach: 'Now sing for us, Cas Corach, something of your art and of your own skill.' A detailed description of his performance follows: 'He took up his dulcimer, tuned it, and played it until he brought a strain of music on it.' The audience is seduced by the music and, when he has finished, Cas Corach asks Patrick for his reward; Patrick replies: 'You shall have Heaven, and may this be one of the three arts in which one may find profit until the end in Ireland. Though a man of your art may encounter great inhospitality, if he make music and tell tales, the inhospitality will disappear. And men of your art will be bedfellows of kings through eternity, and will prosper provided they are not slothful, with but one man of a hundred of them in Hell.' As a newly minted Christian, Cas Corach, the otherworldly Fenian apprentice, is indeed rewarded in *Tales*, if not with heaven then with royal bed-sharing of another kind. He makes a most prestigious

marriage into the family symbolic of the most powerful monarchs of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Ireland.

The greatest significance of Cas Corach's achievement, however, is the witness it bears to the coming together of music and storytelling in a new genre of performance. That this new genre may have encountered some opposition is hinted at by Patrick's mention of difficulty quoted above. We know from the later thirteenth-century poem book of the Magauran family that competition for patronage between the eulogistic poets and Fenian performers was intense and may well have forced the new Fenian genre into an inferior cultural ranking in the course of the century. It may also be that Fenian performances, such as are implicit in the Cas Corach episode, travelled to Scotland at this time along with praise poetry and achieved a strong position in the less structured world of Scottish Gaelic culture. In the description of Cas Corach's act with its triple-layered musical introduction we are very close indeed to the standard twelfth-century descriptions of the performance of Breton lays, as described in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan und Isold*. The term 'lay' is generally thought to be of Celtic derivation though attested only in Irish; certainly the word came into continental use generally in the twelfth century to describe short verse-narrative pieces accompanied by music, and is used most often to designate a story of Breton origin.

Thus it would seem that we have here described in *Tales* a very significant and rich moment of cultural creativity for Irish literary tradition. The role of poets in providing praise poems for their aristocratic patrons is being formalized and practised in a vigorous new way. There is a strong scholarly agenda of preserving both existing and new narratives in a written form. Interest in and demand for the 'Matter of Finn' is growing and is already being deployed in *Dinnshenchas* and hagiographic contexts. Music and storytelling are moving into an ever closer relationship with each other. It remained for a medieval Irish author to combine learning, contemporary performance interests, and invention in order to bring together a collection of tales that might satisfy an Irish aristocratic audience on a national scale. Such ambitious 'national' projects were already being realized at this time on many levels; in the writing of the great codices themselves, in the *Dinnshenchas* verse compilations and in the national collections of Irish saints' Lives. Indeed a phase of this latter project

has clear points of contact with *Tales*. In the 'Leinster Legendary' phase of that collection, the same pool of Fenian materials is pressed into service to glorify the twelfth-century status of the south-eastern monasteries of Ferns, New Ross, Glendalough, and St Mullins.[7]

Tales of the Irish Elders

The matter of Tales

As a literary invention, nothing quite like *Tales* had appeared before in Irish literary tradition. At first reading, the structure of *Tales* seems quite simple, so simple indeed that no clear agenda or contemporary *raison d'être* other than pure entertainment seems initially to suggest itself. The old Fenians, Caílte and Oisín, find themselves the only survivors of the *fían* band of Finn mac Cumaill and, in their sadly altered state, they bid farewell to each other and begin their separate adventures. Caílte soon meets with St Patrick and thereafter, with the exception of a few adventures undertaken singly in otherworld destinations where Patrick could hardly be expected to go, he accompanies the saint on his evangelizing journeys around Ireland. There are two major circuits of Ireland and the great meeting held each year at Usnagh at which they meet with Oisín and are the guests of the high king, Díarmait mac Cerbaill. During these travels Caílte gives an account of the various place-names they encounter, thus reconstructing, in Fenian colours, an heroic legendary of Ireland.

We are given no explanation as to how Oisín and Caílte—figures who are traditionally assigned to the third century—could have survived on into the Christian fifth century to meet Patrick. The author of *Tales* also flies in the face of traditional conventions on the synchronization of Irish kings with Patrick's mission by making Díarmait mac Cerbaill (d. 565) the high king rather than Loegaire and providing fictitious names for the regional monarchs. Other recensions of *Tales* revert to the traditional alignments of kings and Patrick's mission. Díarmait is the pivotal king in Tara tradition; his reign marks the transition from pagan to Christian kingship. The

[7] The idea of a Leinster Legendary has been popularized by Richard Sharpe in *Medieval Irish Saints Lives: An Introduction to 'Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae'* (Oxford, 1991), *passim*.

change serves to emphasize the fictional status of the text and directs the reader to look for its significance in other than antiquarian, historical exactitudes and verisimilitudes. The more precise significance of this shift from the traditional Loegaire to Díarmait may well be that the author of *Tales* wished to signal a western bias to his work. Díarmait is considered as the founding patron of the great Shannon monastery of Clonmacnoise, a monastery much patronized by the kings of Connaught right down to the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Paradoxically, then, it is this cavalier treatment of the 'canonical' materials of learned tradition that releases the text and allows it to convey meanings of a more up-to-date kind, in particular, meanings that direct the reader's attention to the families and interests of the Patrician Church in the west and the Connaught kingdom in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Thus, for example, the name of the king of Connaught for much of the narrative is Áed mac Muiredaig, and by means of this unhistoric personage the reader is encouraged to consider the ambit of the Síl Muireadaigh dynastic line that provided twenty-four out of thirty kings of Connaught from the time of the founder of the line, Muiredach Muillethan (d. 702), to the death, in 1224, of Cathal Crobhdearg, the king almost certainly reigning at the time *Tales* was composed. Inevitably then, attention is drawn to this dynasty and the reader is alerted to the potential importance of all scenes involving this family. This is of considerable interest in its own right as establishing a real historical context for the work but it also reveals something of the literary strengths of the text. However much a modern reader may be attracted by aspects which scholars have characterized as 'charming', 'romantic', and 'mythical', its effectiveness is very much that of a text grappling with real social issues and deploying an impressive set of considerable literary devices to convey these concerns.

The story-cycle form generates a complex switching back and forth between the various levels of narrated action. From Patrick's initial questions to the strangers flows a series of landscape-coded reminiscences about Caílte's heroic Fenian past. These are balanced by incidents in which Caílte acts directly to demonstrate his continuing power and scenes where Patrick himself is shown in his pastoral relationship to various people whom they encounter. Human and otherwordly time and place are also spliced together, as individuals

appear who are inhabitants of the world of the old gods as construed by early Irish literati. The *Túatha Dé Danann* ('Peoples of the Goddess Danu') appear and interact with the main heroic and saintly characters.

In addition, we are constantly reminded of the central importance of the Christianization of Ireland in effecting the transition from an oral and pagan past to a literate and Christian present. Much attention is paid to this process in the text; Patrick himself, in the incident quoted at the beginning of the Introduction, is anxious about his pleasurable response to the old stories. In thanking the old men he worries: 'May victory be yours, Caílte, with my blessing. You have lightened our spirits and our mind, even though our religious life is being disrupted and our prayers neglected.' Having received the positive message of the angels, quoted above, Patrick resolves any further residual ambiguity about the value of secular storytelling by baptizing Caílte and his companions and enjoining on them submission to that superior book, the Gospel of the true God. When the angels, Aibelán and Solusbrethach, speak of the function of the tales as providing entertainment for lords and commons in later times, one must also correspondingly take into account the ways in which *Tales* as a whole may be responsive to the concerns of its contemporary audience. Many of these concerns will be reflected through the Patrician 'present' time of the collection's setting. What these concerns might be, to whom they speak, and by whom they are spoken, we shall see presently.

Methods: 'An intricate business is storytelling!' exclaimed Patrick

The sheer number of incidents, places, and characters in the work can be, at first reading, bewildering and chaotic, as Patrick's endorsement of the old saying shows. Perhaps the clearest structure in the narrative is the idea of the itinerary itself. W. Stokes, the nineteenth-century editor of the text, was disconcerted at not being able to identify any but a few of the place-names. Modern scholarship has made little advance since then, leading to the conclusion that most of the place-names, both old name and 'new' Fenian appellation, are probably themselves part of the literary fiction. There are, however, major blocks of narrative determined by the movement of the characters from province to province. The place-names in these *actual* interprovincial journeys are identifiable, so it is possible to

establish some sense of narrative order based on these regional itineraries. Once this grid is established the reader naturally then seeks to know how the subsidiary arrangements of incident and story relate to each other and to overarching thematic concerns.

In order to understand how theme and structure interact, it may be helpful to take the first significant chunk of narrative, from the time Caílte meets Patrick to the time they first separate—the Prologue and first two chapters of the text—and try to ascertain how this segment of the whole work is organized. The first part takes place in the central kingdom of Meath; the second takes place in Munster at one of the Patrician monasteries of modern County Limerick; the third sees the protagonists in the environs of the royal inauguration site of the Connaught kings, Carn Fráoich (Carnfree).

Part I

The action of Part I takes place over two days and is divided in two by the baptism of Caílte. After the introductory matter of the hospitality of the old Fenian mentor, nurse, and provider, Cáma, and after the separation of Oisín and Caílte, the latter encounters Patrick and his clerics. Saint and warrior display their complementary power: Patrick blesses the old residence of Finn, without knowing the Fenian significance of this 'Fortress of the Red Ridge', and he blesses the warriors so that their demons leave them; Caílte finds water for Patrick, furnishing the same water which will be used for his own baptism while at the same time evoking the Fenian legendary past of the spring. Thus pagan and Christian powers supplement each other appropriately. With dinner offered by the saint comes entertainment as Patrick, after sharing his meal with the Fenians, elicits from them a dazzling evocation of the generosity and splendour of old Fenian feasting.

Then comes the first true narrative, the story of Artúir's theft of Irish hounds and the recompense of British horses. As we proceed through these early poems we are given an introduction to the Fenian cast of characters and already in the story of Artúir, the young *fían* candidate, some of the ideological concerns of the work are beginning to surface. A kind of democracy of heroic excellence and mutual co-operativeness is being advocated and certain key lessons on the behaviour of the youthful members of the military caste are being inculcated. Artúir's greed is rebuked and his politically

untrustworthy (Welsh) foreignness is redeemed by the superior returns to the *fíana* of British cavalry mounts taken as recompense for his theft. This may well reflect the growing consciousness of the increased role of cavalry in twelfth-century Irish warfare and the presence of British mercenaries on the Irish military scene even before, but especially in the first years of the Anglo-Norman invasion, that is, in the period of our text.

After Caílte's baptism comes another round of stories of the past divided in two by the incident of Fulartach's appeal for Patrick's help in the recovery of his inheritance. The poem on the hunt of Arran leads off—a poem of idyllic sensuous pleasure in the innocent bounty of the natural world. It provides an example of the kind of lyric poetry which is traditionally associated with Finn the poet throughout Irish tradition and with which *Tales* is liberally sprinkled. The island is a Fenian *locus amoenus*, one of many in the work. To hunt in Arran is to have a pure *fían* experience, to know something of the untrammelled bounty of an 'other' world. This is followed by a tale where 'elsewhere' conveys a far more profound charge of social wish-fulfilment. Again it is a story about the expectations of the young: the three sons of the king of Ireland expect in the traditional course of things a share in their father's inheritance, but the father claims to hold his land by sword-right and bids them go out and similarly carve out an inheritance. Unwilling to resort to violence the brothers turn to a magical solution; wealth and adult status come to them through the generosity of the otherworld and the actual mansion which Patrick spotted is that built for them by Aengus Óc himself. The fort is abandoned after a time but the fabulous brothers live on for ever with the Túatha Dé.

The story is impossibly Utopian but for a medieval audience the fundamental message is real enough: inheritance is not guaranteed in a changing social world but one can hope, in matters of social injustice, to seek the benefit of arbitration from a higher power or enter the service of a more powerful and resource-rich patron. Thus this tale neatly sets the stage for a Patrician display of authority. In a mirror story, Fulartach, a younger brother who has had to turn to a *díberg* or *fían* state because of his brother's refusal to share the inheritance, will be helped by Patrick to gain what is rightfully his. Patrick, as he does in Tírechán's *Life*, curses the ungenerous brother and the ground swallows him.

This is an awesome display of ecclesiastical power which will be repeated in another very important context somewhat further on in the narrative. 'Pagan past and Christian present'[8] are seen to complement each other in that in both cases a general principle of Irish partitive inheritance is vindicated and the concerns of the *iuvenes* addressed.[9] As Patrick's questions elicit more information on the family of Finn, this concern with the *iuvenes* becomes specific in the story of Mac Lugach. Mac Lugach's difficulties in the *fían* and the long poem on the obligations of retainers that completes his story serve as the most convincing example yet of the author's extreme concern about the problems specific to Irish aristocratic sons to our author. As Irish kings maintain permanent standing armies in the field, as the demand for mercenaries grows, and as new land-clearance and land-conquest projects become necessary for a growing population in Ireland as elsewhere in Europe, the need for a literature to cater to these relatively new social conditions becomes manifest. In the advice to Mac Lugach we read the new chivalric code of a royal Irish household at the beginning of the thirteenth century. For such a social situation a literary 're-invention' of the old *fían* institution is necessary.

Part II

The centrepiece of Part II, the visit to Munster, is the story of Cáel and Créde. We have already pointed out the literary skill with which the two narrative levels of Fenian story and Patrician incident are juxtaposed in Part I. Here one finds a skilful narrative splicing of a different kind. The main story is embedded in a lengthy sequence on the hill of Finntulach: it is at once the old hunting ground of the *fíana* and as such passionately remembered; it is the hill from which the *Fían* of Finn set out for the battle of Ventry, hence the site where they encounter their young colleague Cáel and pick up his story;

[8] The phrase is McCone's, in his volume of the same title.

[9] We use the term in the context in which Georges Duby has popularized it (in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley, 1977), 118), as a shorthand way of referring to the specific social problems of aristocratic sons in twelfth-century Europe—problems of social fulfilment that are directly reflected in the body of contemporary European romance. It is this very social group, of which the *fíana* themselves are the Irish archetype, who are the concern of the work, and they are considered in a variety of ways which have direct relevance to early thirteenth-century Ireland.

finally, when the tragic tale of the two lovers is told we return to the hill for the staging of an exemplary hunt in Patrician time and a salutary lesson in the churches' venison-render rights, involving the young Bran, son of a king of Munster. It has been claimed that the story of Cáel and Créde is not 'authentic' in that the poems already existed as earlier bardic praise poems that are now misunderstood in their new context. But the point is surely that it is the skill involved in refitting poems from one genre and deploying them in new narrative constructs that is the real and positive literary achievement here. By such a bricolage a new sensibility is advanced; the young hero seeks his romantic destiny and, through delivery of the poem that he has learned, can be viewed as having passed a test in the art of courtly refinement and dalliance. In such terms *Tales* can be regarded as a fully fledged work of European chivalric romance where values of refined love between hero and heiress are worked out, albeit tragically, in a uniquely Irish literary fashion.

Part III

Part III is more directly structured around the idea of the journey, though there is no long distance travelled, simply a circuit from Lough Croan and Roscommon to Carnfree, the royal inauguration site. The reader is thus encouraged to focus attention on the significance of this site as it is finally revealed at the end of the section. Again there is an orderly layering and juxtaposition of story. We move through tales about the activities of Finn's immediate family and some of the more famous incidents from the battle of Mag Mucruma, already known from other saga contexts, and with which Finn came to be associated. These tales are divided up by traditional Patrician incidents of conferring heaven posthumously on the worthy pagan inhabitants of two graves found by Lough Croan. This comprises the the first half of the section.

The hinge incident between the two parts is one that will assume the highest structural importance in the entire work. Áed, the son of the king of Connaught, becomes fatally ill after a game of hurling and his distraught parents bring his body to Patrick. The saint is moved by their grief and restores the young man to life: 'A long, golden basin, filled with water, was then brought to Patrick. He blessed the water and placed it in a finely worked cup of white silver. The holy man then went and lifted the fair, purple cowl and put

three drops of water in the mouth of Áed, son of Muiredach. As the third drop reached his mouth he sat up completely cured, and put his hand over his mouth, as if waking after being with a woman or after heavy drinking, and got up from his bed.' The ongoing story of this young man, whose first appearance here is actually a flashback inserted awkwardly into the narrative by the voice of the narrator, will prove to be one of the most significant ideological threads of the narrative and we will return to his story as the narrative itself does on numerous occasions.

In the second segment of Part III further symmetrical pairings of stories for thematic purposes are evident: the story about Ráth Glais in Connaught is spliced with a story about Finn's main Leinster residence and affiliations; the chess-game quarrel, which also takes place here, is joined with a mirror story concerning Finn's other Leinster family group, the Uí Thairsig. Furthermore, just as the exemplary Fenian story of the difficult 'squire', Mac Lugach, crowns Part I and the Patrician story of the young prince Bran, rebuked for bad hunting manners, completes Part II, so now other aspects of the social problems of retainers absorb the remainder of this narrative block.

The problems of retainer responsibility, violence and self-control, and social ranking are first rehearsed in a Fenian-time tale, in the story of the famous Fenian chess game between the king of Leinster's son and a house retainer of Finn; the end resolution of the quarrel is in the quasi-legal dictum that it is better that social unequals such as a king's son and a servant never be allowed, in the apparent democracy of military apprenticeship, to forget their fundamental difference of rank. In the companion story the problematic fate of the old warrior in service receives attention in the Leinster tale of Garaid mac Morna; he is sorely provoked by the *Fían* women's insults to his masculine social identity, almost to the point of slaughtering these ladies, who should certainly have known better. The lesson of self-control inculcated here, which can be read as the purpose of this whole tale-telling session, is all the more striking in that there seems to have been an alternative tradition in which Garaid did actually burn the women, thus provoking one of the tragic quarrels which beset the relationship in Fenian tradition generally of the *Fían* of Finn and that of the family of Goll mac Morna.

What this entire section is leading up to, however, is a discourse of

far more formal significance. On the hill of Carnfree, the spot towards which the journey as a whole has been tending, there is first an extraordinary account of the old Fenians' prior moment of conversion to belief in the one true God, a conversion occasioned by a divine curse of the earth-swallowing kind on the royal retinue of the king of Tara many years before. Then comes a display of saintly and royal co-operation such as marked a number of Irish legislative occasions in the church reforms of the eleventh and twelfth century: 'Then the King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta, set out to proclaim his kingship and rule, and Patrick went off to preach the faith and religious life, to expel the demons and the druids from Ireland, to choose the holy and the righteous, to erect crosses, penitential stations, and altars, and to destroy idols and spectres, and the arts of druidism.' The phrases describing Patrick's mission are quite conventional; what is novel is the active co-operation of the two and the siting of Patrick's initiative on the very ground of the royal inauguration site itself. Beginning with the Synod of Cashel in 1101 and continuing to the patronage extended to the Decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council by Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobhair in 1217, the history of church and secular power in Ireland is *inter alia* that of a series of regional and national co-operation projects to reform the quality of Christian life in Ireland. A key aspect of the influence of this long reform movement on *Tales*—marriage law and custom—will now be considered.

The 'real' world of Tales

The controlling influence that the native Irish Church, itself the product of 'the long twelfth century' of ecclesiastical reform, wished to wield through the production and circulation of chivalric texts such as *Tales* is at its most direct in the numerous tales that enjoin monogamy on their protagonists, thus enforcing a break with what had been long-established Irish law and custom. The words of St Anselm to king Muirchertach Ua Briain at the end of the eleventh century may be taken as typical of the attitude of reforming clerics: 'It has been reported to us, that marriages are dissolved in your kingdom without any cause, and are exchanged; and that kinsmen are not ashamed to have intercourse, either under the name of marriage or in any other way, publicly and without blame, contrary to the prohibitions of canon law.'

The tone and methods of native Irish clerics are somewhat more tactful than this. Indeed *Tales* itself may be seen as an instructional tool of some subtlety in the effort to reform the social fabric. In one such story of exchanged marriage partners Patrick responds with the witticism quoted earlier, 'This is an intricate tale!' Of all these tales of romantic love the most significant are those which deal with the marriage interests of the provincial dynasties. When next we rejoin, towards the end of the work, the young man Áed, son of the king of Connaught, he has married but is in the process of falling dangerously in love. Aillenn of the Túatha Dé has sought him out and he explains to her his dilemma: that he has promised Patrick to remain monogamous and, as his royal wife is still alive, he must remain obedient to Patrick's injunction because of the old debt he owes Patrick for his resuscitation.

There is considerable pathos in the tale as the frustrated lovers movingly declare their mutual love for each other.

'Is that your final judgment?' asked Aillenn. 'That I may not be given to the king as long as that woman is with him?' 'It is indeed,' said Patrick. 'But, holy cleric,' she said, 'by the truth of your word, if the wife of the king die before I do, then will I be given to him?' 'I say in the witness of my truth,' said Patrick, 'if she die before him, you will be given to him.' Aillenn then wept copiously and heavily. 'Do you love me, dear girl?' asked the king. 'I do indeed,' she said. 'No one of the crowd of humanity is dearer to me than you,' said the king, 'but I am not able to break the agreements and defy the command of the Adze-Head [Patrick] and of God.' Aillenn went off to her *síd* [fairy mound] after that, and remained there until the story alludes to her again.

But the happy outcome is at hand near the end of the work. The first wife eventually dies and Patrick declares the lovers free to marry. Their wedding forms a virtual ending for *Tales* as we have it. Patrick solemnizes their union and, as a reward for the king's obedience to the law of the Patrician—read twelfth-century reformed—Church, proclaims a future blessing on the dynastic line. All this has the direct irony of undoubted comment on the sexual mores of Irish princes of the day. Cathal Crobhdearg, king of Connaught until 1224, is remembered by the western annalists as a man who scrupulously observed monogamy in his personal life; in a few short years, however, these same annalists condemn the whole line descended

from his brother, Ruadhrí Ó Conchobhair, the last high king of Ireland. It was his wretched adulterous habits and his defiance of the reforming church, they comment, that lost the kingship of Ireland for the western kings.

The great charm of *Tales* has always been the sheer prodigality and bounty of its storytelling couched in the deceptive simplicity of its prose. As readers we can have an emotional rapport with the old hero, Caílte, to a degree not possible with the heroes of earlier saga tradition, because his tears of remembrance bind us with him to a nobler, deeply felt past. The very names of places and people dissolve into an unlimited and seductive promise of story within story within story. Every part of Ireland is a kind of palimpsest manifesting various levels of a legendary past. Its imaginative allure should not, however, blind us to the very real concerns refracted through the distant mirrors of the world of the old heroes and the old gods. Through these reflective surfaces and through the grid of a Patrician lore of holy as well as legendary places, there is a clear space of the present thirteenth century, of a real Ireland facing a new century of unknowable challenge. For all its romanticism and heroic nostalgia, the text presents itself as an instrument of vital engagement with a very real world.

NOTE ON THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

THERE are in all four manuscript witnesses to *Tales*. Three of these are from the fifteenth century, namely: MS Laud 610, Bodleian Library, Oxford; The Book of Lismore, Library of the Duke of Devonshire; and MS Rawlinson B 487, Bodleian Library, Oxford, and also a copy of MS A IV, Killiney from the sixteenth century. Of these texts the most complete is that contained in the Book of Lismore, a southern manuscript, though the Laud text is probably to be dated somewhat earlier (*c.*1450). Laud contains material allegedly drawn, according to some marginalia, from a now lost Book of the Prebend of Cong, an important western Cistercian foundation much patronized by the O'Connor kings of Connaught. Rawlinson B 487 was written for Sadhbh O'Malley, wife of the Sligo chieftain of that name, and is hence also a western text. The manuscript contains a copy of *Cath Fionntrágha* (The Battle of Ventry) one of the great battles supposedly fought by Finn and his men against a foreign invader and referred to in the *Acallam*. The Franciscan manuscript copy is also western in provenance; its text has been influenced by the expansive, alliterative prose style typical of early modern Irish tales. It is thus markedly different from and probably younger than the other three manuscript versions, and although it shares some features in common with a later medieval recension described below, it can hardly be said to amount to a second recension of the work.

Lismore also contains the only copy of yet another *Acallam* in which the principal characters are Patrick and Oisín rather than the Patrick and Caílte of our text. This is normally called the *Acallam Bec*, 'The Little Colloquy', to distinguish it from *Tales*, 'The Great Colloquy', and is probably to be dated a little later. At some further point, probably in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, yet another *Acallam* was assembled from both the earlier ones. This version included also a richer selection of those short narrative poems that subsequently became the generic norm for the transmission of Fenian story tradition. It is this later *Acallam* which was copied repeatedly in the paper manuscripts of the modern period.

This translation is based on the readings of the main manuscripts of *Tales*. We have checked the text against the facsimile edition

of the Book of Lismore and against microfilms of the Bodleian Library manuscripts. It proved impossible to obtain a microfilm of the Franciscan Library manuscript. The work of O'Grady and Stokes, the scholarly giants of the last century who worked on the text, has been, of course, indispensable, as has the current work being produced by a number of scholarly fellow Celticists. We are indebted to their insights and to the helpful suggestions of many friends.

In presenting this text we have tried to offer a faithful translation of the prose contents of the work. This has been both easy and difficult: difficult, because the syntactical arrangement of the narrative in a relaxed paratactic style makes it necessary to break down this prose continuum into more manageable English units, thus running the danger of breaking the inimitable flow of the original Irish text; easy, because the prose style of *Tales* is clear and lucid by contrast with the florid and exaggerated hyper-alliterative language which, at the time *Tales* was written, was fast becoming the standard of Irish literary prose narratives. Some of these rhetorical tendencies already appear in the Franciscan manuscript version. We think it important to present the prose of *Tales* as faithfully as we can for two reasons: first, because it reveals something of the strong tradition of beautifully functional prose-writing in Ireland stretching from the earliest extant sagas to the magisterial power of Geoffrey Keating's great history of Ireland, *Forus Feasa ar Érinn* (An Encyclopedia of Ireland), in the seventeenth century. It is Keating's prose which has dominated a modern consciousness of a 'serious' prose style for modern Ireland and so it is good to be reminded that this clear and dignified sense of language has roots in the medieval period. Second, the only existing translation of the bulk of the work, that of O'Grady, suffers from the excesses of what was the fashionable translation style of heroic material in the nineteenth century. It is always entertaining but often inaccurate and impossibly pseudo-medieval in its posturing.

The poetry of *Tales* has been largely neglected by editors and translators except for the scholarly re-edition and retranslation of some of the poetic gems in the early part of the work. We cannot make exaggerated claims for the poetic brilliance of the bulk of the poems; medieval Irish poetry suffers from an excess of conventional phrasing, especially from the filling up of lines with trite tags for the

sake of metrical completion. We have tried to present a readable version of all the poems, with a prudent reduction where necessary of these repetitive line-fillers. We have omitted only those poems (four in number) which occur only in the Franciscan manuscript and about which we have doubts as to their proper placement and appropriateness. Near the end of the Franciscan text there is a fragment stemming from another Fenian tale; this too we have omitted.

The profusion of personal names and of place-names constitutes a major attraction of the text and also poses a problem to translators. Are these people and places real? The answer is mainly no for the people, partly yes for some form of the place-names. We have translated the place-names—whether real or imaginary—because of their variousness and their evocative beauty. To identify all the places found in *Tales* is beyond the scope of this translation; where a place is significant or very well known, or marks a clear phase of a journey, we have added its modern Anglicized equivalent in square brackets. We have also translated the personal epithets; we have, however, left intact after their first translated citation the names and epithets of the significant figures who are always thus known in Irish saga or pseudo-history. Notes on many of these places and people is provided in the Explanatory Notes.

GUIDE TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF IRISH NAMES

Consonants

Initial 'p' and 't' are pronounced approximately as in English and initial 'c' is always pronounced as in 'cat'. Non-initial 'c', 'p', and 't', are usually pronounced as English 'g', 'b', and 'd'. Initial 'b' and 'm' are as in English, but in other positions are often pronounced as 'v'. Initial 'd' and 'g' are as in English, otherwise often as 'th' in 'other' ('dh' in the phonetic transcription) and 'gh', a sound like the 'g' in German 'Tage'. The digraphs 'ph' and 'th' correspond to 'ph' as in 'philosophy' and 'th' as in 'thin'. The digraph 'ch' corresponds to the 'ch' in German 'machen'. Consonants followed by 'i' or 'e' are palatalized, i.e., followed by a 'y'-sound, as 'p' in 'pure', vs. 'p' in 'poor'. Final '-y' following a consonant is not a vowel sound, but simply indicates that the consonant is palatalized. The name *Ailill* (alyily), for example, has only two syllables.

Vowels

There is no simple correspondence of Irish to English vowels. Irish vowels, for example, may simply indicate that a neighbouring consonant is or is not palatalized, much as the 'e' in English 'cane', as opposed to 'can', merely indicates the quality of the preceding vowel. In the rough phonetic transcription supplied with the list of names the following equivalences apply: 'a' as in 'father' when stressed, as in 'woman' when unstressed; 'e' as in 'pet' when stressed, as in 'mother' when unstressed; 'i' as in 'pit'; 'o' as in 'pot'; 'u' as in 'put'; 'uw' as in 'mood'; 'ow' as in 'sown'; 'aw' as in 'saw'; 'ey' as in 'they'; 'ee' as in 'feed'; 'oy' as in 'boy'.

All Irish names are stressed on the first syllable. The names listed below form but a small percentage of the names in the text, and the reconstructed pronunciations are approximate. The modern pronunciation is given in cases in which there has been substantial phonetic change.

Personal names

Áed (eydh; mod. ey)
Áedán (eydhawn; mod. eyawn)
Aengus Óc (eynghus owg)
Aibelán (eevyelawn)
Aífe Fholtfhinn (eefye oltyin)
Ailill Ólamm (alyily owlam)
Aillbe Rúad (alyvye ruwadh)
Aillén (alyeyn)
Áine (anye)
Airnélach (arnyeylach)
Aithirne (athyirnye)
Amairgen (avyirghyeny)
Artúir (artuwry)
Bé Binn (byey vyiny)
Becán Bóaire (byegawn bowirye)
Benén Mór (byenyeyn mowr)
Bláthnait (blawthnity; mod. blawnity)
Bodb Derg (bodhv dyergh)
Bricriu (bryikryu)
Broccán (brokawn)
Cáel (keyl)
Caílte (keeltye)
Cairbre (karybrye)
Cerball (kyerval)
Cíabán (kyeeavawn)
Cleitech (klyeydyech)
Clidna (klyidhna; mod. klyeena)
Cnú Deróil (knuw dyerowly)
Colmán Éla (kolmawn eyla)
Conaire (konirye)
Conall (konal)
Conn Cétchathach (kon kyeydchathach)
Créde (kryeydhye; mod. kyrey)
Dagda (daghdha)
Derg Díanscothach (dyergh dyeeanskothach)
Díarmait (dyeearmidy)
Dínertach (dyeenyertach)

Díthrubach (dyithruvach)
Dubán (duvawn)
Duibne (divnye)
Éirge (eyrgye)
Eithne (ethnye; mod. ehnye)
Eochaid (eochidhy; mod. ochee)
Eogabál (eoghabhawl)
Eógan (eowghan)
Étaín (eydeeny)
Fáelán (feylawn)
Femen (fyevyen)
Ferdoman (fyerdovan)
Fergus (fyerghus)
Fiacha (fyiacha)
Finn mac Cumaill (fyin mak kuvaly)
Finnchad (fyinchadh)
Gabrán (gavrawn)
Garad (garadh)
Garb (garv)
Gúaire (guwarye)
Labráid (lavridy)
Lí Bán (lyee vawn)
Liaman (lyiavan)
Lir (lyir)
Lóegaire (leyghirye)
Lug (lugh)
Lugaid (lughidy; mod. luwee)
Mael Dúin (meyl duwny)
Maine (manye)
Manannán (mananawn)
Medb (myedhv; mod. myev)
Midir (myidhyir)
Míl (myeel)
Modarn (modharn)
Morna (morna)
Muiredach (miryedhach; mod. miryeech)
Núadu (nuwadhu)
Oisín (osyeeny)
Oscar (oskar)

Rónán (rownawn)
Sadb (sadhv)
Scothníam (skothnyeeav)
Sechnall (syechnal)
Suibne (sivynye)
Tadg (tadhg)
Trén (tryeyn)
Uchtdelb (uchtdyelv)

Place-names

Alba (alba)
Almu (alvu)
Baile (balye)
Benn Étair (byen eydary)
Brega (bryegha)
Bruig (brughy)
Dál nAraide (dawl naridhye)
Druimm Caín (drumy keen)
Dún ar Sléib (duwn ar slyeyvy)
Loch Linngáeth (loch lyingeyth)
Lochlann (lochlan)
Macha (macha)

Assorted

Cenél Conaill (kyenyeyl gonily)
Érainn (eyrany)
fían (fyian)
fidchell (fyidhchyel)
geis (gyeys)
Lía Fáil (lyeea foyly)
Lugnasad (lughnasadh)
Samain (savany)
síd (syeedh)
Trogan (troghan)
Túatha Dé Danann (tuwatha dey danan)

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1400–1650

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1650–present

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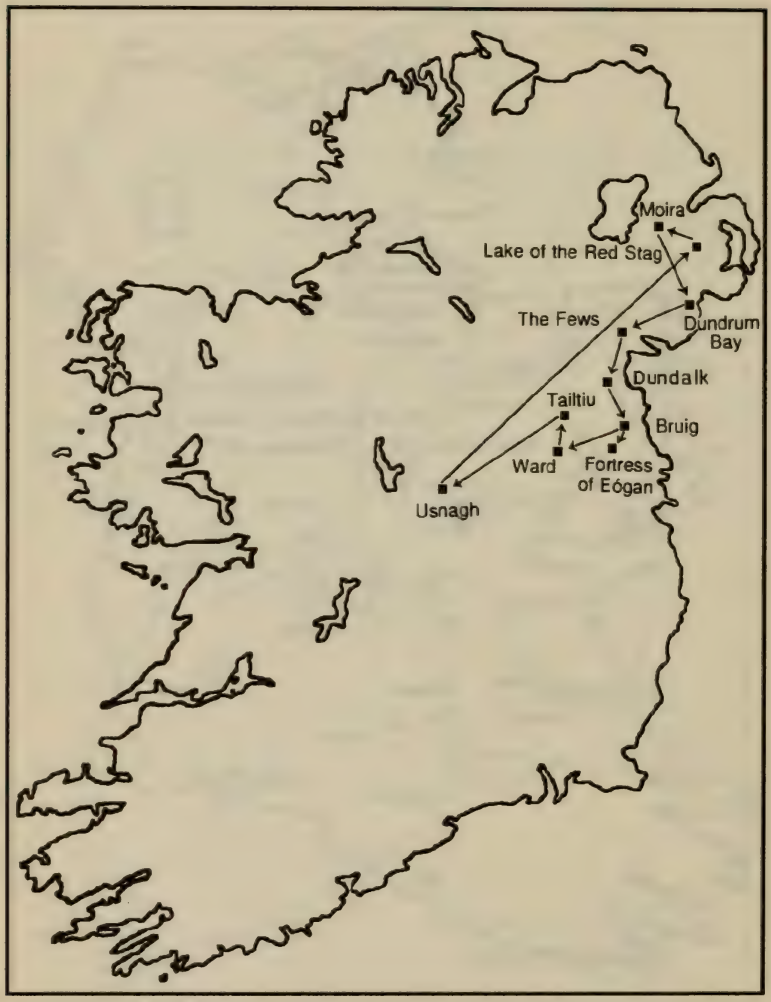
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MAP I. PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES



MAP 2. APPEARANCE OF THE FENIANS. CAÍLTE JOINS PATRICK AND TRAVELS WITH HIM TO CARNFREE. CAÍLTE TRAVELS TO ASSAROE



MAP 3. CAÍLTE MEETS PATRICK AT USNAGH AND THEY TRAVEL TO MOIRA AND TO THE 'FORTRESS OF EÓGAN'



MAP 4. CAÍLTE AND PATRICK TRAVEL NORTH TO THE 'VALLEY OF THE HERO' AND THEN WEST TO SLIEVE MISH



MAP 5. CAÍLTE TRAVELS FROM BENBULBEN TO ASSAROE AND THEN MEETS PATRICK AT THE 'GRAVE OF THE DRUID'. CAÍLTE AND OISÍN TRAVEL TO TARA

TALES OF THE ELDERS OF IRELAND

(*ACALLAM NA SENÓRACH*)

PROLOGUE

AFTER the battles of *Commar*, *Gabair*, and *Ollarba*,* the *Fían* was destroyed. The survivors scattered, in small bands, across Ireland and, by the time our story begins, only two of the nobles of this ancient *Fían* were still alive: Oisín, the son of Finn mac Cumaill 'the son of Cumall', and Caílte, the son of Crundchú, son of Rónán.* By this time their earlier fighting abilities were much reduced. Sixteen of the *Fían* warriors travelled with them across the wooded and flower-covered slopes of the Fews. By evening they had reached the Bright Herb Gardens, now called Louth,* and sat down there, at the setting of the sun, in great sorrow and despair.

Caílte then said to Oisín, 'Well, good Oisín, where shall we go, before day's end, to find some hospitality for the night?' 'That I do not know,' said Oisín, 'since, of the elders of the *Fían*, the old companions of Finn mac Cumaill, only the three of us remain; you, Caílte, and I, and the Lady and Guardian Cáma,* who watched over Finn from his boyhood until the very day of his death.' 'We can certainly expect hospitality from her tonight,' said Caílte, 'for no one could count or describe the gifts and treasures that Finn, the Lord of the *Fían*, gave to her. He even gave her the drinking-horn *Angalach*, one of the three best treasures that ever came to him, given to him by Móriath, the daughter of the King of the Sea of the Greeks.'

Cáma gave them lodging for the night and asked them who they might be. When they told her their names she shed long and bitter tears. Each asked the other about the many years that had passed since their last meeting; afterwards the *Fían* went to the guest hall she had provided. The Lady Cáma, the old guardian of Finn mac Cumaill, had the freshest of foods brought to them, with the oldest of wines. She knew well how such men had been fed in the old days, and also the great quantity of food that Oisín and Caílte required. Weak and infirm though she was, she spoke with them of the *Fían* and of Finn mac Cumaill, likewise of Oscar, son of Oisín, of Mac Lugach, the battle of *Gabair*, and other matters. These reminiscences caused a great silence to fall on them. Caílte then said, 'Just as painful for us as these memories is the fact that the eighteen of us, the only survivors of that great and noble fellowship, must now part

from one another.' Oisín replied, 'I swear there will be little fight or strength left in me when the others have gone.' And though they were manly warriors, they, together with Lady Cáma, wept deeply and disconsolately. They received their fill of food and drink there, and stayed on for three days and nights. As they took leave of Cáma, Oisín recited the following lines:

'Cáma is weary today, she is at the end of her journey;
Childless, heirless, old age is upon her.'

They went outside onto the grassy lawn to take counsel and decided that they must now part, one from the other, and their parting was as the parting of the soul from its body. Oisín went to the *Síd* of the Breast of Cleitech,* where his mother, Blaí, daughter of Derg Díanscothach 'the Quick of Speech', lived. Caílte went to the Estuary of Bec the Exile, now the site of the monastery of Drogheda.* It had been named after Bec the Exile who died there. He was the son of Airist, King of the Romans. He had come to conquer Ireland, but a great wave drowned him at that place. From the estuary Caílte went on to the Pool of Fíacc,* on the bright-flowing Boyne, then southwards across the Old Plain of *Brega* to the Fortress of the Red Ridge, where Patrick, son of Calpurn,* then happened to be.

CHAPTER I

PATRICK was chanting the service of the Lord and praising the Creator. He also placed a blessing on the Fortress of the Red Ridge where Finn mac Cumaill had lived. His priests, seeing Caílte and his men approaching, were seized with fear and horror at the sight of these enormous men, the warriors of an earlier age, together with their great dogs.* Then Patrick, the son of Calpurn, the salmon of Heaven, the pillar of dignity and the angel on earth, he who was apostle to the Irish, arose and sprinkled holy water on these great men, for, until that day, a thousand legions of demons had been above their heads. The demons fled from them in all directions, into the hills and rock-clefts and off to the far reaches of the country. The great men then sat down.

'Well, my friend,' said Patrick to Caílte, 'what name do you bear?' He answered, 'I am Caílte, son of Crundchú, the son of Rónán, of the retinue of Finn mac Cumaill.' The priests kept staring in astonishment at these warriors, for the tallest of the clerics came only to the waist or the shoulder-tops of these great men, who were already sitting down. 'There is something I would ask of you, Caílte,' said Patrick. Caílte replied, 'If my strength and power suffice, it will be granted. Tell me what you wish.' Patrick answered, 'Could you find us a well of pure water close by, so that we might baptize the peoples of *Brega*, Meath, and Usnagh?' 'I shall indeed find one for you, noble and righteous one,' said Caílte. He took Patrick by the hand and together they went over the ramparts of the fortress. Just nine steps from the portal they saw a lovely crystal-clear spring and were amazed at the thick growths of watercress and brooklime surrounding it. Caílte recited these lines on the appearance and qualities of the spring:

'O spring of *Tráig Dá Ban*,* lovely your bright cress sprigs;
Since your pruning was neglected, your brooklime has multiplied.

'Trout off your banks, wild swine in your wood recesses;
Deer on the rocks for hunting, and dappled, red-breasted fawns.

'Mast on your trees' branches, fish in your river estuary,
Lovely your stalks of arum, O green-wooded stream.

'From you the *Fían* set out, when generous Coinchenn was slain,
When Finn's *Fían* was slaughtered, in the morning above *Maelglenn*.

'From you went Fothad of the feasting, a warrior who suffered sorrow;
He found a grave in the east, when slain at the battle of *Clárach*.

'Blaí came to the head of the spring, the daughter of Derg the eloquent;
With wailing cry and lament, after the battle of *Confaite*.

'After the slaughter of dogs and men, after the wounding of shining warriors,
Garad's cry was heard at night beside the spring.'

'Well,' said Patrick, 'have our food and provisions arrived yet?' 'They have indeed,' said Bishop Sechnall.* 'Then serve us our dinner,' said Patrick, 'and give their share to those nine great warriors there, the last survivors of the *Fían*.' His bishops, priests, and psalmodists came and blessed the food so that all might have their fill of food and drink for the comfort of their souls. Then Patrick asked, 'Was Finn mac Cumaill, your former lord, a good man?' Caílte, in reply, gave this short eulogy:

'Were the dark leaves gold, that the trees discard,
And the white wave silver, Finn would give away all.'

'What has kept you warriors alive for all these years?' asked Patrick. Caílte replied, 'The truth of our hearts, the strength of our arms, and the constancy of our tongues.' 'Tell me, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'were there drinking-horns or goblets, or cups of crystal and shining gold in the houses in which you stayed in the old days?' Caílte answered thus:

'Twelve horns and three hundred, the golden horns of Finn,
Oceans of ale they held, at the feasting of his men.'

'If our religious life were not being disrupted, our prayers neglected, and our communion with the King of Heaven and Earth disturbed, we would enjoy conversing with you, good warrior,' said

Patrick. Caílte recited another verse, naming the various chieftains and lords with whom they had been, and their drinking-horns:

'I remember their names, the horns at the house of Finn,
Echo and *Grugán Gann*,* Women's Horn and Stately.

'Best of Horns was Aillbe's horn, vast was its bowl,
From hand to hand through the crowd, its ebbing slower than its flood.

'Díarmait had Little Horn, whose noble liquid went to women.
Its contents would, I swear, suffice for forty-eight.

'The two horns of Mac Lugach, Gold-Bright and gold *Odrán*.
Brimming Gold-Bright, dear to men, fair conversation's foe.

'A drinking of great renown, when Finn's men met,
Echo in my hand, Díarmait with dear *Mudán*.
Finn of the *Fían* had *Grugán*, their own horn for the women.

'Forty draughts in Echo, the Women's Horn held sixty.
Eighty draughts in *Mudán*, and *Grugán Glan* one hundred.

'Fair-Youth was the horn Oscar brought to the feast,
He, whom many girls smiled on, was also the joy of men's eyes.

'Stripling, great its beauty, was Aillenn's splendid horn,
From white-fingered Gothán's hand, Finn brought it to his lips.

'At the raising of curved cups, great was the cheer of the Earl,
Given in his drinking house, by Finn to Dubán, Dubnóin's son.

'Finn's horn, the Green Man, we had with us as well,
No trifle at our drinking, ale for thirty men.

'This was the least at our drinking, O son of Calpurn, at our house,
Man of Increase of Glas, son of Gnáthal, you have not its like.

'Sacred to men was *Dobrón*, horn of Mac Rethi, with terror,
Finn's men were wary, when at *Cromglenn*.

'Great the bowl of Speckled Red, crystal cup of Caílte,
For it Finn made fierce attack, at the death of Lugaid Trí Rém.

'Fair Head, horn of Alba's King, against whom we wildly wandered,
The horn of the chieftain Rónán, much mead from it we drank.

'Though Finn return no more, there is no cause for raiding.
No king, however blessed, has such horns as these.'

'May victory and blessing be yours, Caílte,' said Patrick, 'for you have lightened both our spirits and our minds.'

'Tell us another of these glorious tales.' 'I shall,' said Caílte. 'I shall tell you whatever story you desire.' 'Did you in the *Fían* have horses and chariot-teams?' asked Patrick. 'We had many indeed,' said Caílte, 'one hundred and fifty colts from the same mare, and by the same stallion.' 'Where were they acquired?' said Patrick. 'My friend, I will tell you the true story,' said Caílte. 'There was in the *Fían*, at that time, a warrior named Artúir. He was the son of Benne Brit* "of the Britons" and had a retinue of twenty-seven. Finn had arranged a hunt on the Hill of Étar [the Hill of Howth*] and it was most successful. The hounds were set loose and Finn himself sat at the Cairn of the *Fían*-Warrior, between Howth and the sea, and revelled in the sounds of the frenzied deer swiftly brought down by the hounds of the *Fían*. Artúir, son of Benne of the Britons, was stationed on the coast, between the hunt and the sea, so that the deer might not escape by swimming away, and, while he was out by the edge of the water, he saw three of Finn's hounds,* Bran, Sceolaing, and Adnúall. Artúir, son of Benne, decided then upon a plan. He, with his twenty-seven companions, would cross over the sea and take the hounds with them to their own land. They carried this out and, together with the three hounds, crossed the expanse of the sea. They took land at the Estuary of the Sandy Shoal, in the territory of the Britons, and went ashore. They then went off to the Mountain of Lodán, son of Lir and hunted there. The *Fían*, in the meantime, having ceased their hunting, made camp at the Hill of Étar, son of Étgáeth the Warrior, and began their customary tally of the hounds of Finn's household, so that not a hound would be left behind in a thicket or on a mountain, or in any wood or hollow of the five great provinces of Ireland. Great was the number of the hounds, as the poet, Fergus Fínbél 'Wine-Mouth', said:

'Finn's hounds, as many as the branches of a tree,
A pack of three hundred, with two hundred young.'

'Great was the number who owned them,' said Patrick. 'You are

right about that,' said Caílte, 'for this was their number in the house of Finn:

'In Finn's house, thrice fifty chiefs of handsome bands,
Two hundred fosterlings, three hundred servants.

'When they counted the hounds they discovered a great loss, that of Bran, Sceolaing, and Adnúall, and this was reported to Finn and he ordered the three companies of the *Fían* to search for them. Though a search was made, the hounds were not found. A narrow basin of bright gold was then brought to Finn. He washed his royal face and put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom* so that the truth of the matter appeared to him. "It was Artúir, son of the King of the Britons," he said, "who took your hounds from you. Take nine men and go after them." Nine were chosen, and these were their names:* Díarmait, son of Donn, son of Donnchad, son of Dubán, of the *Érainn* from Munster in the south; and Goll, son of Morna.' 'Was Goll the son of a king,' asked Patrick, 'or the son of a warrior?' 'The son of a king,' answered Caílte, and recited the following lines:

'The son of Tadg, son of Morna from the plain, son of Fáelán, son of Feradach,
Son of Fiacha, son of Art from the plain, son of Muiredach, son of Eógan.

'A warrior skilled at magic was also in household of Finn, Cáel Cródae Cétguinech "the Brave and Quick-Wounding", the descendant of Nemnán. The strength of his magic was such that he never missed a cast, and any man that his hand bloodied died within nine days, if not at once, and no man he killed ever escaped from the house of Hell.

'O Cáel, do not cast your spear, its shaft against me in the trees.
Each is powerless before it, his posterity tastes no food.

'My Tooth of Wisdom spoke to me, the first day you came.
He whose blood you shed, comes not again from Hell.

'Likewise Finn's own son, Oisín, who never refused hospitality to anyone with a mouth for eating or legs for travelling.' 'This is great praise, Caílte,' said Patrick. 'It is true all the same,' said Caílte, and recited the following lines:

'Oisín never refused any man gold, silver or food,
And never asked a favour of those as great as kings.

'There also was Oisín's son, Oscar, the king's son who was the greatest man in Ireland in agility and weapon-handling, and Ferdoman, son of Bodb Derg "the Red", son of the Dagda,* Finn's other sons, Raigne Rosclethan "the Wide-Eyed" and Caince Corcairderg "the Purple-Red", Glas, son of Aencherd Bérra, Mac Lugach and I,' said Caílte. 'We were, Patrick, in our own estimation, such that, from Ceylon in the east to the Gardens of the Hesperides* in the western part of the world, one could not find four hundred warriors that we would not trounce in battle or in combat. A white shield on each shoulder, a helmet on each head, and two thrusting spears, with thongs of sturdy rope on their shafts, in each right hand.

'We continued on our journey until we came to the Mountain of Lodán, son of Lir, and before long heard voices close by of men hunting on the plain. Artúir, son of Benne of the Britons, was sitting there on his hunting mound with his retinue. We attacked them at once and killed all of his men, but Oscar with his two hands seized Artúir and spared him. We also recovered our three hounds. Then Goll, son of Morna, looked around him and saw a dappled stallion, lustrous black, with a gold-ornamented bridle. To his left he saw a spirited, chestnut mare with a bridle of bright silver, textured and refined, and a bit made of gold. Goll captured both horses and entrusted them to Oisín, who gave them in turn to Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne. After celebrating our victory and triumph we returned with our hounds and horses, the heads of the twenty-seven retainers, and with Artúir himself as a captive to the Hill of Howth. From there we went to meet Finn at the Old Plain of the Flocks of Étar [Clontarf*] and entered the chieftain's tent.' Caílte recited the following lines to Patrick:

'We brought Artúir here to make his peace with Finn.
He remained Finn's warrior till the day he died.

'We presented the two horses, both stallion and mare, to Finn, and from this stock have come all of the horses of the *Fían* who had no horses before. The mare had eight foalings and bore eight foals on each occasion. These foals were given to the warriors and nobles of the *Fían*, who then built chariots.' 'May victory be yours, Caílte,

with my blessing,' said Patrick. 'Tell us the names of the nobles and warriors who had these horses.' Caílte then made the following enumeration:

'These are the horses of the *Fían*, though at the gracious assembly
At Teltown,* with its gentle hills, other stories may be heard.

'Wolf-Head of Eochaid, son of Lir, beloved Díarmait's Sprightly,
Finnchad of the Battles' Triumph, Dark Flame of Mac Lugach.

'Brave Mac Lugach's Scald Crow, Shapely, the steed of Conán,
For Bresal's grandson, Finn Bán, the Woman from the Isle of Man.

'Fearsome, Oscar's lucky horse, Black of Leg of Dubán,
Steed of Woe of Scál at Large, Wild Man, horse of Mac Sidmaill.

'Frenchman and Agile, with bridle, for the masters of horse of the *Fíana*,
Scuirín had Agile, fury to chieftains, Frenchman, the steed of Dub Drummann.

'Golden Gelding, Silver Gelding, together the chariots ran,
They, the horses of Aillbe, daughter of the High King of Ireland.

'Black Stream and Black Wave, warlike Aengus' steeds,
Caílte and Oisín together, rode to each assembly.

'The horse of Goll, son of Morna, the watchman in Moinmoy,
Through mountains and plains, swift as the winds of spring.

'A horse whom nothing ran before, hounds, nor beasts, nor deer,
Was Wolf-Head of Finn of the Feasts, brought from the Saxon lands.

'The Grey of Galway, great in valour, better than any hundred steeds,
Carried Finn, with steady pace, into the midst of each great host.

'A thousand men, without a lie, and two hundred and eighty,
The cavalry of Finn of *Almu*, brilliant on each occasion.'

'May victory be yours, Caílte, with my blessing,' said Patrick. 'You have lightened our spirits and our mind, even though our religious life is being disrupted and our prayers neglected.' They were there until the following morning, when Patrick put on his robes and set

out onto the lawn together with sixty priests, sixty psalmodists, and sixty holy bishops in order to spread the faith and the religious life across Ireland. Aibelán and Solusbrethach, his two guardian angels, then came to Patrick and he asked them if it were the will of the King of Heaven and Earth that he be listening to the tales of the *Fían*. They answered him with one voice. 'Dear holy cleric,' they said, 'these old warriors tell you no more than a third of their stories, because their memories are faulty. Have these stories written down on poets' tablets in refined language, so that the hearing of them will provide entertainment for the lords and commons of later times.' The angels then left them.

Patrick sent for Caílte, and asked him to bring along the band of warriors who were with him. These were their names:* Failbe, son of Flann; Eógan Airmderg 'of the Red Weapons', son of the King of Ulster; Flann, son of Fergus, the King of the *Cenél Conaill* 'the Kindred of Conall'; Conall Coscarach 'the Victorious', son of Aengus, the King of Connaught; Scannlán, son of Ailill,the King of Ossory; Baetán, son of Garb, the King of the *Corcu Duibne*; Luaimnech, son of Lenn, the King of *Érainn* of Munster; Áed Lethderg 'the Red-Sided', son of Eógan, the King of North Munster; Failbe and Úancenn, the two sons of the King of *Dál nAraide* in the north; and Fulartach, son of Fíngen, the King of the Kingdoms of *Brega* and Meath. 'Do you know why you have all been brought to speak with me?' asked Patrick. 'Indeed we do not,' replied Caílte. 'So that you might submit to the Gospel of the King of Heaven and Earth, the true and glorious God.' Patrick, the head of baptism and faith of the men of Ireland, poured on them the waters of the baptism of Christ and Caílte put his hand to the rim of his shield and gave Patrick, in payment for his baptism and that of his companions, a block of ribbed, red, flamelike gold, weighing one hundred and fifty ounces, from the lands of Arabia. 'This was my last gift from Finn the Chieftain,' said Caílte, 'and I give it to you, Patrick, for the good of my soul, and the soul of the chief of the Fían.' This block of gold reached from the end of Patrick's middle finger to the top of his shoulder, and was the size of a man's forearm both in width and in thickness. This is the gold that was later used for the canonical bells of the Adze-Head,* and on psalters and missals.

Patrick then asked, 'Tell me, dear Caílte, what was the best hunt, whether in Ireland or in Scotland, that the *Fían* ever took part in?'

'That would be the hunt on Arran,'* said Caílte. 'Where is that place?' asked Patrick. 'It is between Scotland and the land of the Picts,' said Caílte. 'In the month of *Trogan*, or *Lugnasad** [1 August] we of the *Fían* used to go there with three battallions and have our fill of hunting until the cuckoo called from the treetops of Ireland. No music can match the sweet sounds of the bird flocks rising up from the waves, and from the shores of this island. There were one hundred and fifty flocks around it, all of bright colours, deep and clear blues, greens and yellows.' Caílte then recited the following verse:

'Arran blessed with stags, encircled by the sea,
Island that fed hosts, where black spears turn crimson.

'Carefree deer on its peaks, branches of tender berries,
Streams of icy water, dark oaks decked with mast.

'Greyhounds here and beagles, blackberries, fruit of sloe,
Trees thick with blackthorns, deer spread about the oaks.

'Rocks with purple lichen, meadows rich with grass,
A fine fortress of crags, the leaping of fawns and trout.

'Gentle meadows and plump swine, gardens pleasant beyond belief,
Nuts on the boughs of hazel, and longships sailing by.

'Lovely in fair weather, trout beneath its banks,
Gulls scream from the cliffs, Arran ever lovely.'

'May victory be yours, dear Caílte, with my blessing,' said Patrick. 'We are beholden for ever to you and to your stories.' Patrick then saw a fort and fine dwelling directly to the south. 'Caílte, what place is that?' he asked. 'That', said Caílte, 'is the proudest place I have ever been, whether in Ireland or in Scotland.' 'Who lived there then?' asked Patrick. 'The three sons of the King of Ireland, Lugaid Menn "the Stammerer", son of Aengus. Their names were Ruide, Fiacha, and Eochaid.' 'How did they acquire such a great estate?' asked Patrick. 'On one occasion they went to talk with their father at the Grave of the Druids to the northwest of Tara.* "Where have you young men come from?" he asked. "From the Stable of the Lamentation of Women in the south," they said, "from the house of our fosterparents." They were dressed in bright and handsome cloaks.

Ruide, the eldest, wore a dark green cloak, Fiacha, a cloak with a fringe of marvellous wool from *Tír Tairngire* "the Land of Promise",* and Eochaid, a deep-blue garment with a border of pure white silver, with a gold brooch in the cloak, above his breast. "What has brought you young men here?" asked the King of Ireland. "To ask you for land and territory," they said. The king was silent at first, and then said, "My land and territory came not from my father, but from my own good fortune and brilliance. Win land for yourselves, for I will give you none." They then rose up together and went to the green of the dew-covered, shimmering *Bruig* of the Boyne [Newgrange*], and there sat down. "What plan do you have this night?" asked Ruide. "This is our plan," said his brothers, "to make a fast before the *Túatha Dé Danann** in order to acquire from them a gift of territory and patrimony, of land and enormous treasure." Soon after they saw a young man of pleasing and wondrous appearance approaching them. He had a brown, two-forked beard and lovely curly hair of light-yellow gold coming down over his shoulders. His long golden hair was held by fastenings of thin gold thread, lest the stormy coastal wind blow it before his face or eyes. He had a sandal of bright silver on his foot, and his sandalled foot, where it touched the ground, did not disturb the dewdrops on the ends of the blades of grass. He greeted the sons of the King of Ireland and they responded in this way, "Who are you, young man, and where have you come from?" "From the dew-covered, shimmering *Bruig* close by," said the young man. "What is your name?" they asked. "Bodb Derg 'the Red', the son of the Dagda," he replied. "It was revealed to the *Túatha Dé Danann* that you would come to make your fast here tonight so that you might acquire land and great wealth. Come along with me, young warriors." They arose together and went into the *Bruig* and chairs of bright crystal were placed on the floor of the *síd* for them. Food was also brought to them, but they did not eat it. Bodb asked why they would not eat any food and they answered, "Since our father, the King of Ireland, has refused us land and territory, and, since there are but two aristocracies of equal merit in Ireland, the Sons of Míl* and the *Túatha Dé Danann*, we have come to seek out the other of the two, that is, to you."

'Bodb then arose with a goblet of smooth buffalo horn in his hand and said, "Let all be silent." All the people in the mound fell silent, holding in their hands cups and horns and goblets of bright gold and

silver. The *Túatha Dé Danann* then took counsel to decide what they would do for the sons of the King of Ireland. The noblest and most exalted of this assembly was the Dagda's son, Midir Mongbuide "of the Yellow Hair", who said, "Let three women be given to the young men there, for fortune, good or ill, comes from women." Doirenn, Aífe, and Aillbe, the three daughters of Midir, were given to them. "Tell us, Bodb," said Midir, "what wealth shall be given to these young men here." "I shall answer," said Bodb, "that we are one hundred and fifty king's sons here in this mound. Let one hundred and fifty ounces of red gold be given to these young men from each son of a king, and I myself shall give them one hundred and fifty garments of many excellent hues." "They shall also have a gift from me," said Áed, son of Áed na nAmsach "of the Mercenaries". He was a young man of the *Túatha Dé Danann* from the Hill of Ardmoll, now called Rathlin, far off on the sea. "I shall give them a drinking horn and a vat," he said, "and if the vat be filled with clear spring water, it will be changed into an excellent and potent mead. If brackish salt water be put in the horn, it will immediately become wine." "They shall have a gift from me," said Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad, "one hundred and fifty swords, and a like number of tall, riveted spears." "And a gift from me," said Aengus Óc "the Young", son of the Dagda, "a fortress and stronghold and great royal estate, enclosed by long and high palisades, with bright luminous sun-rooms and great, lofty buildings, wherever they desire between the Fort of Cobthach and Tara." "I shall also give them a gift," said Áine, the daughter of Modarn, "my cook, who is forbidden by a *geis* to refuse anyone food, for whatever she distributes comes back to her." "My gift", said Bodb Derg, "is my good musician, whose name is Fer Tuinne, son of Trogan. Though warriors do battle, or women endure childbirth, or soldiers slash at each other, his beguiling music puts them all to sleep. Though he be a musician for the fortress he is as well for the people of the surrounding region." The sons of the King of Ireland remained in the *síd* for three days and three nights.

'Aengus also told them to take three apple-trees with them from the Wood of Omna, one in bloom, one with falling blossoms, and one with ripe fruit. The three then set off for the fortress that had been prepared for them and stayed there for one hundred and fifty years, until destruction visited them. Because of their kinship and their

alliance, they then returned to the *Túatha Dé Danann* and remained there ever after. This is the origin of the fortress that you asked about, dear Patrick,' said Caílte. He then recited the following verse:*

'Three waves came from Ruide's high fortress,
Waves of youths and horses and greyhounds of Lugaid's sons.

'Three sounds for the kings, blessed with great fortune,
Sounds of harps and dulcimers, and the chanting of Fer Tuinne.

'Three cries one could hear, at no time lacking,
The cry of sheep on the grass, and cries of cows and horses.

'Yet other cries were heard from Daig's broad-loined swine,
From his host on the green cries of mirth and of mead.

'Three fruit-laden branches, the familiar sequence,
Buds, full blooms, fruit ripe for picking.

'The three sons of Lugaid, great their achievement,
Ruide, broad Lugaid's son, Eochaid, and brave Fiacha.

'I shall tell you of Eochaid, whose foot never fled,
No night without music, no day without ale.

'I shall tell you of Fiacha, first in the onslaught,
The gentlest in speech, the fiercest in war.

'I shall tell you of Ruide, to whom three waves came,
No man was ever refused, none ever implored.

'Thirty kings and thirty nobles, thirty champions for a king,
This was the great host's number, thirty times three hundred.'

'May victory be yours, Caílte, with my blessing,' said Patrick, 'for you have lightened our spirits and our minds.' It was not long after that that they saw a young man of handsome appearance approaching them from the south. He was wearing a purple cloak with a gold brooch, and had a yellow silk shirt next to his skin. He was carrying an armful of yellow-headed nuts and beautiful golden apples which he put on the ground in front of Patrick. 'Where do these come from, young man?' asked Patrick. 'From the flourishing Wood of a River-Branch,' he said. 'What is your name?' asked Patrick. 'I am Fulartach, son of Fergus,' he said. 'What is your inheritance?' asked Patrick. 'The kingship of *Brega* and Meath, and of the *Déisi* of Tara descends upon me,' the young man said, 'but I am now a plunderer

and marauder.' 'Whom do you plunder?' asked Patrick. 'My own brother, Becán, son of Fergus.' 'May you receive your inheritance shortly,' said Patrick. 'Set the time, holy cleric,' said the young man. 'Within the year,' said Patrick, 'but where do these nuts come from?' 'I know where he has brought them from,' said Caílte. 'They come from the Forest of the Son of Trén [New Ross], called the Wood of a River-Branch. This was the hunting park owned by Mac Lugach the Strong and Keenly Destructive, a trusted warrior of Finn mac Cumaill.' 'My dear soul,' said Patrick, 'a good man of my company, and my chaplain, Cessán, the son of the King of Scotland, dwells there.' 'The *Fían* hunted there as well,' said Caílte. 'Whenever they found a shortage of game in Ireland or Scotland, there was plenty of hunting for three days and three nights at the Forest of the Son of Trén.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'The famous Grove of Cessán,* beloved by Mac Lugach,
Dear Wood of the son of Trén, after Patrick came.

'Though now the psalms are sung in turn, in the grove of Cessán of the priests,
I have seen the flowering glade filled with stout red deer.

'Though there are sermons by the lake, it was not then an empty wood,
Feast of apples, fish in the stream, tribute of the garlicky grove.

'As the warrior foretold, clerics in Cessán's grove.
"Sacred to holy angels," said open-handed Finn.

'Often with hunting-dogs, we chased the proud, young deer,
Our warriors and our hounds, hunted the pleasant grove.

'Sixty were the queens, following in my wake,
In truth I was a rogue, and yet I pleased them all.'

'What time of day is it now?' asked Patrick. 'It is now close to evening,' said Benén.* 'Has our dinner not yet arrived?' asked Patrick. 'Not yet,' said Benén. 'My dear, holy Patrick,' said Fulartach, son of Fergus, 'I shall tell you of a place where you might get dinner and refreshment tonight.' 'What place is that?' asked Patrick. 'At the house of my brother Becán, among the Kingdoms of *Brega* and Meath.' Priests then went off to Becán's house and Benén asked him for lodging for Patrick. Becán had eight score milch-herds, and yet

he refused them an evening meal. Benén and the clerics then returned and told their tale to Patrick. Patrick said, 'Let not one of his livestock or of his household survive until tomorrow.'* This indeed happened, just as Patrick said:

'Becán, may his herd be small,
As long as the sun shall cross the sky, poor be the heirs of Becán.'

At that very moment the earth swallowed up Becán, together with his household and his goods, both animals and people. 'I shall provide hospitality for you tonight, holy cleric,' said Fulartach, son of Fergus. 'I have had up to now twenty-nine cows to support my warriors while plundering and pillaging.' 'You shall have the kingship tomorrow at the middle of the day,' said Patrick, 'and your race after you, unless you turn against the Church.' In this way Becán was buried and Patrick gave the kingship to Fulartach. This story is called 'The Destruction of Becán'. Patrick then asked of Caílte, 'How many brothers did Finn have?' 'He had two brothers,' said Caílte, 'Fíthal and Cithramach Féinnid "the Champion".'* Caílte then recited these lines:

'Obscure were our scholars in this, to tell of Cumall's three sons,
Finn and Cithramach the Strong, Fíthal whom the poets loved.'

'Who were the parents of Mac Lugach, whom I asked about last night?' asked Patrick. 'It would be a problem for another man,' said Caílte, 'but not for me. He was the son of Finn's son, Dáire Derg "the Red",' said Caílte, 'and of Finn's daughter Lugach,* who was herself of doubtful legitimacy. However the women all swore that she was Finn's own daughter. Her own brother slept with her after drinking ale at Tara in *Lúachair* [Taurmore], and begot a son, Mac Lugach, on her. Great struggles and pains came upon her after nine months of pregnancy and she gave birth to an infant boy. On the evening she bore the child Finn came to Taurmore to see her. He came with three cohorts of the *Fían*, and with Daire Derg, the father of the child. They were told of the birth and Finn then said, "It is blessing that it was a boy. Had she given birth to a girl by her own brother, it would have been evil." All said, "May you have victory, chieftain, and blessing. The name you have given him, Gaíne 'Blessing' is a fortunate one." As the poet said:

'Blessing, fierce Mac Lugach's name, his father, Dáire of great renown,
Wolf of the Field, Mac Rethi's name, Briuin, Dairethe's son.

'Finn then took the boy to his bosom and put him in the lap of his wife, Mongfinn, daughter of Dubán, who had reared eight hundred shield-bearers for the *Fían*. She looked after the boy until he was twelve, and then gave him a full set of arms and martial attire. He then set off for the Rock of Dog-Droppings on top of the Mount of Smól, son of Edleacar, now called Slieve Bloom, where Finn and the *Fían* then were, and came before the chief of the *Fían*. Finn gave him a warm welcome and the boy made his suretyship and service with Finn, and gave Finn his hand on it. He was with the *Fían* for a year and in that time caused them great distress. When this youth was present, nine men of the *Fían* were hard put to kill a single boar or a deer, because of his mistreatment of their hounds and their servants. The *Fían* then went towards the Forest of the *Fían*-Warrior on the shore of rippling waters of the Lakes of Killarney in the south. When their three battalions had arrived there they complained of Mac Lugach to Finn. The three battalions of the *Fían* said to him, "You must make your choice, to have us or just Mac Lugach." Mac Lugach was then brought to talk with Finn, and Finn asked him, "My dear Mac Lugach, what evil have you done that all the *Fían* dislike you?" "I give you my word," he answered, "I do not know what the cause might be unless they are displeased by my agility and skill with weapons." The chief of the *Fían* then gave counsel to Mac Lugach, and it was good counsel, for Finn possessed three virtues. One of those virtues was that whoever was given counsel by Finn would have every success. The counsel that Finn gave to Mac Lugach remained with him until death. Finn then recited the following poem:*

"O Mac Lugach, impetuous one, if you wish to be in vassalage;
Be peaceable in a great man's household, be hardy in the wilderness.

"Do not beat your hound without cause, nor libel your wife without proof;
Avoid the fool in battle, though he be frenzied, Mac Lugach.

"Do not mock the holy man, nor be involved in quarrels;
Keep well away from these two, the witch and the evil man.

"Two thirds of your courtesy to women and the household servants,
Be kind to poets, makers of art, and to the common soldiery.

"Do not take the best seat away from friends and advisers;
Avoid false and crooked oaths, do not welcome everybody.

"Do not boast overmuch, nor offer what you cannot rightly give;
For grand words are shameful, if nothing result.

"Do not forsake your overlord for as long as you live;
For gold, silver, or wealth, do not betray your guarantor.

"Avoid blustering complaint to a lord about his household;
A good man has no business libelling retainers to their lord.

"Keep from constant gossip and lies, and from impetuous speech;
Though you be generous, deride none in public.

"Do not frequent ale-houses, nor be unkind to an old man;
Listen to words of good counsel, have no truck with the rabble.

"Be a listener in the forest, a watcher on the plain;
For you do not know — this matters — if your enemy lies in wait for you.

"Do not be mean with provisions, or be a miser's friend;
Do not impose yourself on a lord, do not speak ill of great men.

"Have your armour and weapons ready for the outbreak of sudden battle;
Do not be mean with your wealth, be constant in your courtliness, Mac Lugach."'

'May you have victory and blessing,' said Patrick, 'for this is a fine tale that you have told us. Where is Broccán,* our scribe?' 'Here, holy cleric,' said Broccán. 'Get your book, your inkhorn and pen and copy out this story.' Broccán did so at once. Then Patrick asked of Caílte, 'Were there musicians with the *Fían*?' 'Of course,' said Caílte, 'the very musician who was the finest in Ireland and in Scotland.' 'What was his name?' asked Patrick. 'Cnú Deróil "the Little",'* said Caílte. 'Where did you find him?' asked Patrick. 'Between the Mounds of Clíu [Galtee Mountains] and the *Síd* of the Fair Women [Slievenamon] in the south,' said Caílte. 'What did he look like?' asked Patrick. 'He himself was four hand-widths of Finn in height, and the

instrument that he played was three hands long, and the jealousy of the musicians of the *Túatha Dé Danann* had driven him from the *síd*.

'One day Finn went west to Slievenamon for hunting and sport, and sat there on an earthen mound. The chieftain looked about and saw on the grass nearby a tiny man, with long, light-blond hair coming down to his bottom, playing wonderful music on his harp. When he saw Finn he came over to him and gave him his hand. Finn was the first person he had seen since leaving the *síd*. He sat between Finn's two white thighs and played his harp for a long time, until the *Fían* came. After their arrival they also listened to this beguiling music. "Surely, Finn," said the men of the *Fían*, "that man over there is one of the three best discoveries that you have ever made." Cnú Deróil remained with Finn until he died.' Caílte then recited this poem:

'The dwarf that Finn discovered, so fine was his memory,
That all he heard from west to east, was instantly retained.

'Cnú Deróil the fellow's name, famous in all Ireland;
Clever musician, dear child, "Nutlet" little Cnú

'I will tell you all the tale, how Finn found the dwarf;
A lucky child was found there, the unique son of Lug mac Eithlenn.

'We were in Finn's company, between Galtee and Slievenamon;
When we heard exquisite music, all around us in the grass.

'There we sat and listened, to the perfect melody;
We were lulled by the music, so tremulous yet so glorious.

'Finn mac Cumaill of *Almu*, the king, then asked of him,
"Whence have you come, my little one, who plays the harp so well?"

"From Slievenamon I came, where ale and mead is drunk;
For this I come to you, in truth, to be with you for a while."

"Wealth and treasures shall you have, fine gold and retainers;
Since this meeting pleases me, you will be my friend."

'He gave Finn his hand on that, and we were all delighted;
We carried him away with us, our sweet little foundling.

'Four hands in height he was, three hands his dear sweet harp;
Swelling, yet smooth and gentle, the harp's melodious sound.

'The *Fían*'s five musicians were brought to him together;
To learn that fairy sound, tunefully from Cnú

'These were the son of Senach, Senach himself, and two Daigres;
There was also Cúán, all studied diligently.

'But Finn still had one problem, his little man had no wife;
The brave lad had no liking for the big stout women.

'Then Finn, the great lord, said, he would give silver and gold,
To him who would find in Ireland, a woman of Cnú's size.

'Then Scí, Eógan's son, spoke up, a lion-spirited man;
"I will tell you the fortunate news, a place where his match may be."

"I thank you! now bestir yourself, O son of Eógan of Munster;
But tell us, for this interests us, the place to which you refer."

"Go to Munster's House of Donn,* O Finn, of valour and victory;
There you will find your wish, a woman whose name is Bláthnait."

'Then we journeyed swiftly, with the brave lord of the *Fían*;
To seek the girl in the House of Donn, our spirits high in the quest.

'Bláthnait we found in the *síd*, and carried her clean away;
They slept together in the hall, Bláthnait and Cnú the Little.

'Each of us gave an ounce of gold, one for each of the *Fíana*;
As dowry for the faultless woman, who was married to the dwarf.

'Four hands in height he was, three hands his dear sweet harp;
The wife was taller than the man, dear the white-handed couple.

'Her stitching was the finest on earth, perfect work in silver and gold;
His great attainment was this, music for the hosts of the world.

'There was not a queen of the *Fían*, a chieftain or lord of good sense;
Who did not love and reward the highly gifted couple.

'When a heavy storm would blow, catching the *Fíana* in straits;
Finn sheltered in his cloak Bláthnait and the little man.

'When good was in store for the *Fían*, cleverly Bláthnait revealed it;
And when evil approached, the dwarf did not conceal it.

'There was no music on earth, that the heart might desire,
But, at the feast, sounded mean, compared to little Cnú's.

'Three the best findings of the generous lord Finn;
The great hounds Bran and Sceolaing, fair Bláthnait and her dwarf.'

Not long after that they saw seven young men approaching them, all of great size. 'Where do you young men come from?' asked Patrick. 'And who might you be?' 'We have come, holy Patrick, to escort you to the King of the two provinces of Munster, to Eógan Lethderg "the Red-Sided", son of Aengus.'* 'We shall go to him,' said Patrick, 'for it is fitting that we accept services in the place where they are offered.' 'What shall I and my nine warriors do?' asked Caílte. 'You are welcome to spend a month, a season, or a year with me,' said Patrick. Then Patrick set off,* and on the way he went by the Wood of a River-Branch and the Ridge of Clay [Drumcree], now called the Church of the Oak [Kildare], across the river-pool at Durrow, across the ever-green River Barrow, and over the Causeway of Líag, daughter of Cúarnatán, where, at the Bloody Onset, Líag died by the hand of Conall, and into the Old Plain of Roiche, the daughter of Dían, son of Díliu, now called the Red Plain of Roiche [Morett], and into the Old Plain of Salmon, now called the Plain of Láisse, across the salmon-filled Nore, and to Aghaboe, and onto the Road of Dala, son of Úmór, to the Wood of the Hero, now called the fair Wood of Cré [Roscrea], to the left of the Puddle of the Cows of Lodán, son of Lir, now called the Plain of a Great Oak [Crannagh], and to the Pits of *Cnámchaill* [Corroge], and back to the Holly-Tree of the Descendants of Cúanach [Cullen], the place where Cuillenn, son of Morna, died at the hand of Finn, and to the Leap of the *Fían*-Warrior, and to the Assembly of Cuile, the wife of Nechtán, now called the Rich Assembly of the Old Stronghold, and across the Rain-Short Ford, now called the Great Ford [Ballymoe], to the Top of the Eyelid of the Mountain of Caín [Feefin Mountain] to the south, and to the Mound of the *Fían*, now called the Height of Saint Patrick [Ardpatrick], where the King of the two provinces of

Munster, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, waited, surrounded by the nobles of Munster.

A tent was then erected for Patrick, and the king came with the nobles of his household, and put his head in Patrick's lap and did homage to him. Patrick stayed there for a week, raising the dead and curing sickness and disease and ailments of every kind. When Patrick was given what he considered to be just, Eógan Lethderg went off to *Rosach* of the Kings [Rossa], his own stronghold, and the nobles of Munster returned to their own fortresses and manors.

'My dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'why is the hill on which we stand called Fair Hill?' 'I shall tell you the truth,' said Caílte, 'It was from here that we went, in our three battalions, to fight the Battle of the Fair Shore [Ventry*]. Our javelins had been brought to us, and magic rings put on their shafts, when Finn looked about the hill and said, "This is a lovely hill." "And what better name", said his men, "could it have than Fair Hill?" ' Caílte then recited the following verse:

'O high and pleasant hill, where once the *Fíana* came;
Renowned and spacious campsite, filled with fine young men.

'This was our portion, on the height of the green;
Shiny whitethorn berries, nuts from the headland's hazels.

'Thorny shoots of bramble, fine sprigs of gentian;
Every May Day we feasted on shoots and tips of cress.

'Birds from the sheltering oaks, were roasted by the *Fían*,
Spotted martens from *Berramain*, small nests from the heights.

'The swift salmon of *Linnmuine*, eels of the noble Shannon,
The woodcocks of *Fidrind*, otters from the glades of the Deel.

'The fish of the salty sea, from the coasts of Bantry and Beare,
Sea-nymph from glistening *Fáide*, dulse from *Clére*'s shores.

'Swimming the flowing *Loinges*, was Mac Lugach's constant sport,
When our company, great in numbers, came on the slope of this hill.

'Together with Oisín the splendid, in a coracle on the green sea,
In peril we sat suspended, between the waves and hills.

'We set off from there to fight the battle of Ventry, and along the way we met with a warrior of Finn's retinue, Cáel Códae Cétgui-

nech "the Brave and Quick-Wounding", the descendant of Nemnán. "Cáel, where have you come from?" asked Finn. "From the dew-covered *Bruig* in the north," said Cáel. "What were you doing there?" asked Finn. "Speaking with my foster-mother, Muirenn, the daughter of Derg." "For what reason?" asked Finn. "Because of my lover from the *síd* and my bride, and a dream that came to me." "I shall tell you this of her," said Finn. "She is Créde, the daughter of Cairbre Cnesbán 'of the White Skin', a king of the uplands of Kerry." "Do you not know, Cáel," said Finn, "that she is the most deceiving woman in Ireland, for there are few good treasures in Ireland or in Scotland that she has not spirited away to her palace." "And do you not know what demand she has placed on each suitor?" asked Cáel. "I do," said Finn, "that if he have sufficient skill in poetry he must compose poems for her, describing her cups and horns and goblets, her vessels and dishes, and her great palaces." Cáel answered, "I have the poem ready. It was given to me by my own foster-mother, Muirenn, the daughter of Derg."

'We neglected the battle to make this expedition, and went off over hillsides and rocks and heights to the Lake of Hosts in the west of Ireland. We arrived at the door of the *síd* and sang the chant of the *Fían*, striking the staffs of our tall, new, gold-socketed javelins. Then gentle, young, yellow-haired girls appeared on the roofs of the sun-rooms. Créde came to talk with us, together with one hundred and fifty women, and the chief of the *Fían* said to her, "We have come to choose and to woo you," he said. The woman asked who it was who wished to court her. "Cáel Cródae Cétguinech, the descendant of Nemnán, and the son of Crimthann, the King of Leinster in the east." "We have heard tales of him," said Créde, "but have not seen him. Does he have my poem ready for me?" "I do indeed," said Cáel, and came forward and recited this poem:

"Travel I must on Friday, as a true and welcome guest,
The long way to Créde's house, on the mountain's north-east slope.

"Fate brings me there, to Créde at Anu's Breasts,
There to be well tested, four days, and four again.

"Her pleasant house is crowded, with women, men, and boys,
Druids and musicians, a guardian of doors and ale.

"A stable-boy with manners, a carver of great skill,
All of them directed, by Créde of golden hair.

"A pleasant life for me, on yielding beds of down,
And, if it pleases Créde, pleasant the journey as well.

"A bowl filled with juice of berries, for darkening her shawl,
Crystal vessels for brewing, a fine jug and goblets for wine.

"Here in her chalk-coloured palace, are rushes and beds filled with down,
Deep-blue, silken garments, horns of reddish gold.

"Her bower by the Lake of Hosts, of silver and yellow gold,
A thatched roof made of feathers, dark purple and brown.

"Two doorposts of green you see, in a gate without a flaw,
With a crossbeam, I have heard, of silver unalloyed.

"Créde's chair on your left hand, a constant delight to the eye,
With a covering of Alpine gold, placed at the foot of her bed.

"The bed brightly arrayed, stood beyond the chair,
Made in the east by Turbe,* of precious stones and gold.

"A second bed on you right hand, flawless in silver and gold,
And a canopy fair as a flower, held by rods of bronze.

"The people who dwell in her house, happy the day they were born,
Their clothes are not worn or faded, fair and curly their hair.

"Though covered with wounds and bleeding, a man would be put to sleep,
By the sounds of the wondrous birds singing, from the sun-filled bowers above.

"If I find favour with Créde, for whom the cuckoo sings,
Many the lays I would provide, if for this she pays the fee.

"If Cairbre's daughter be content, let her cause me no delay,
But let her tell me here and now, 'Your coming brought me joy.'

"One hundred paces is Créde's house, measured on each side,
And her portals, high and grand, twenty paces wide.

"The thatching of her roof, bird feathers, yellow and blue,
Of carbuncle and glass, the space close by the well.

"About each bed four pillars, of well-wrought silver and gold,
Topped with a ball of crystal, a pleasure to the eye.

"A vat of red enamel, a source of pleasing malt,
Shaded by an apple-tree, replete with heavy fruit.

"Whenever Créde's horn is filled, with mead from this fine vat,
Four of the apples, all at once, fall into her cup.

"The men just counted, begin dispensing ale,
And with the ale an apple, they give to each of four.

"She who possesses all of this, from ebb-tide to the flood,
Créde of the three-peaked hills, unrivalled in the land.

"This poem is no artful treasure, nor compliment done to form,
Just my song for comely Créde, that my journey earn her love."

'The couple passed that night in a well-appointed bed and we of the *Fían* were there for seven days, drinking and amusing ourselves, with no shortage of ale or food, though Finn was troubled by the presence of the foreigners at Ventry. Créde gave each one of us a valuable cloak and we took leave of one another. "Have the woman come with us," said Finn, "so that we may learn which of us may get good or evil from this journey." Créde brought great numbers of cattle with her to attend to the people who were sick and wounded. We fought the battle of Ventry for seventeen days, and throughout this time Créde supplied us all with fresh milk, and she looked after the sick and wounded of the *Fían*. Just as this woman surpassed the women of the *Fían* in bestowing wealth and treasure, so did her husband, in this battle, outdo the three companies of the *Fían* in valour and prowess. On the last day of the battle a tragedy occurred; Cáel was drowned, chasing his opponent into the sea. Other poor wild creatures of the same age as Cáel died grieving for him. After he had drowned he was washed ashore. His wife and the nobles of the *Fían* found him and carried him to the southern shore, the one south of Ventry, called the Shore of Cáel and the Grave of Cáel to the present day. Créde came and lay down beside him with great mourning and lamentation. "Why should I not die here," she said, "mourning for my husband, when wild

creatures recklessly die in sorrow?" She then recited the following poem:

"A roar rises from the great flood of Reenverc.
The youth from Two Hound Lake has drowned, the waves along the shore lament.

"The crane's clear song from the marsh of *Druimm nDá Thrén*,
She who cannot save her young from the jaws of the two-coloured fox.

"Sad as well is the cry of the thrush on *Druimm Caín*,
And no less sad the strains of the blackbird of *Leittir Láeig*.

"Sorrowful the sound of the stag on *Druimm nDá Leis*,
A mighty lament for the death of the doe of *Druimm Silenn*.

"I grieve for the warrior's death, for the one who lay with me,
The son of the woman of *Daire Dá Doss*. A cross above his head.

"I grieve for the death of Cáel, now lifeless by my side.
The tide flows over his pale side, its beauty still affects me.

"Sad is the cry of the wave, striking against the shore.
I weep that the noble youth ever encountered the sea.

"Sad is the sound of the wave against the northern shore,
Encircling the glistening rocks, lamenting the death of Cáel.

"Sad is the crash of the wave against the southern coast,
And I, whose time has come, am now destroyed by grief.

"Swelling is the song of the wave of *Druimm nDá Leis*.
My treasure is no more since I heard its roaring boast.

"Since the son of Crimthann died, no love remains for me.
Many a chieftain he killed. His shield in battle screamed."

'Créde then lay down beside Cáel and died of sorrow. They were buried together in a single grave,' said Caílte, 'and it was I who raised the stone above their grave, still called the Grave of Cáel and Créde.' 'May you have victory, Caílte, and blessing,' said Patrick. 'The story you have told is a good one. Where is Broccán, our scribe?' 'Here,' said Broccán. 'Then write down everything that Caílte recited.' And he did.

Not long afterwards they saw a great and well-armed host of men coming towards them, surrounded by a wall of dark-purple shields;

the many tall, gold-socketed spears on their shoulders looked like a sacred grove. They entered Patrick's tent and their lord put his head in Patrick's lap and all did homage to him. 'Who are you, young man?' asked Patrick. 'I am Bran, son of Derg,' the young man answered, 'the son of a king of Munster.' 'And why have you come here?' asked Patrick. 'I wish to learn the lore of the *Fían*, holy cleric. I have heard that a warrior of Finn's retinue is with you, and I wish to learn from him the chanting of the *Fían*.' 'Do you hear that, my dear Caílte?' asked Patrick. 'I do,' he said. 'Well now, Bran,' said Caílte, 'what is your method of hunting?' 'We surround a hill or a mound or a high, level wood with our hounds, our servants and warriors, and spend the whole day chasing the game. At times we kill some game, but at other times it gets away.' On hearing this Caílte, in the presence of Patrick, wept tearfully and sorrowfully until both his shirt and his chest were wet. Then Patrick and Caílte and all who were with them went up to the Ballyhowra Mountains. This was the appearance of the place to which they came. A mountain surrounded by three valleys and a lake. The Lake of Cows was the name of the lake and *Osmetal* the name of the mountain. To the west of the lake was the Hill of the Satire, where Conán Mael 'the Shorn', son of Morna lived, and to the east the hill named *Findinis*, where Fergus Fínbél, son of Finn, and Ferdoman, son of Bodb Derg had once been, with the hunting hounds of Finn. 'The Hill of Maine', said Caílte, 'was the name of the hill in the north where a noble youth of Finn's retinue lived, who held the sovereignty of the Half of Cúarán [Dublin*]. A treacherous stag dwelt there, called *Líath na trí mBenn* "the Grey One of the Three Points". For twenty-seven years he eluded the *Fían*, both the men and their hounds, until a warrior of the *Fían* killed him. I was that warrior, and I do not say it in boast.'

After that Caílte set out and placed his men to the east and west, and to the north and south of the lake. Patrick sat down in his chair, and that place on the Ballyhowra Mountains has since been called the Seat of Patrick [Ardpatrick]. Caílte loudly raised his cries of hunting and game and slaughter, and three war-cries of anger came from him, so that there was no game at large in the vicinity or near to him, in the field or on the moor, or on the high ground or in the woods that did not go dashing in a great frenzy. To refresh themselves after their exertions they went into the mighty Lake of Cows before the eyes of the men nearby. The men were struck with horror

and terror and fright at all the thrashing about and at the great roar from the stags and the red, nimble does and the heavy-sided boars who had almost perished from their running and their lack of breath. The host encircled the lake and not one of the hunted animals escaped alive. They divided up the hunt and it totalled eight hundred animals.

'A tenth of the hunt should be given to us,' said Benén. But Bran, son of Derg, was unwilling to divide his share with anyone. The son of the King of Munster was then struck down by abdominal pain. 'Put your hand on the pain,' said Bran to Patrick. 'By my word,' said Caílte, 'until you pay his fee he will not.' 'What fee?' asked Bran. 'Since the sickness is in your belly,' said Caílte, 'you must give the belly of every cow and every pig and every sheep to Patrick and to the Holy Church henceforth.' 'I shall do that,' said Bran, 'and my son after me.' From that time on this custom prevailed among the men of Ireland. Patrick put his hand upon the stomach of Bran, son of Derg, and he was cured at once. 'We must now depart,'* said Caílte. 'Where are you going?' asked Patrick. 'I remember the time, holy Patrick, when a host or an army did not dare to encamp on these three hills from fear of the *Túatha Dé Danann*.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'I recall three hills, without age or decay,
Three-pointed *Líath* ran, through all the region.

'I recall three churches, mighty strongholds,
No bell rang within, a druid's spell without.

'I am that same Caílte, chief of the shining *Fían*.
We never hurried, crossing this valley.

'Warlike Finn, in those days, never could abide
The bellow of a wanton stag, above his sprawling camp.

'I and Flann, son of Failbe, many from Leinster we bloodied,
And many, by my faith, are the battles I recall.'

'May you have victory and blessing,' said Patrick, 'for you have lightened our minds and spirits.' The host then departed carrying their spoils with them up to the camp of the *Fían* on the Ballyhowra Mountains. Looking at the mountain to his left, Caílte saw a stronghold and a fine town. 'By my faith,' he said, 'we never knew of a

stronghold in that place. Let us go there.' Caílte and his men went off to the stronghold and were surprised to find no host or army there, but only nine female slaves and three male slaves. They came to a secluded bower in the town and found there two women in weeping and lamention. One of them wore a fringed purple cloak with a silver brooch, and had an ornament of yellow gold on her forehead; the other wore a mantle of deep green with a gold brooch fastened above her breast. The men were welcomed and well received by the women, and their travelling clothes were taken from them. Caílte asked the women, 'What is the stronghold in which we find ourselves?' The women answered, 'This is the stronghold of Lochán and Eógan, the two sons of the King of the *Fir Maige* "the Men of the Plain" [Fermoy].' 'Why are you sad and grieving?' asked Caílte. 'We have good cause and reason,' they said. 'We are married to these two brothers, and we ourselves are sisters, but our husbands have gone off tonight to get themselves other women. We can only stay in this stronghold until our husbands return with their new wives.'

Caílte then cast a glance into the far end of the hall and saw a huge stone which had belonged to one of Finn's trusted warriors, Senach, son of Maelcró, of the old retinue of Finn mac Cumaill. This is the significance of the stone, that all of the wages which Finn had given Senach, one hundred and fifty ounces of gold, one hundred and fifty ounces of silver, one hundred and fifty ounces of gold alloy and one hundred and fifty of cloth of gold, had been buried under this stone. Caílte then said to the women, 'What reward will you give me if I come to your aid and assistance, and bring your husbands back to you?' 'If we had anywhere a reward which pleased you,' they said, 'we would give it to you.' 'You have indeed,' said Caílte, 'the great stone at the very end of the hall.' 'Woe to you for saying this!' they said. 'It took a great host of the region to place it where it is, and it was a great feat to do it, though you think you may be able to deal with it on your own.' 'It is I who am deceived,' said Caílte, 'if I am unable to do it.' 'Then have it with our blessing,' said the women.

He went away from this place and filled his right hand with fine, magic herbs, that he knew were used by the queens and noble ladies of the *Fían*. He gave these herbs to the two women, who bathed with them. This caused their husbands to love them, and they forsook the

women they had brought back with them. The stone was given to Caílte and he recited the following poem:

'O stone of the Pass at Athy, many our meetings there.
The treasures of Senach, son of Maelcró, were found here, no mistake.

'Here are herbs for you, not without their charm,
There are not found in the whole world, women more pleasing to men.

'I shall tell you of it, my prophecy is true,
All who know me know this, dear to me this stone.'

Caílte remained there for the night and was well cared for and entertained. Early the next morning he pulled the stone from the earth.

Then they went back to Fair Hill, now called Ardpatrick, where Patrick was staying, and Patrick asked, 'Caílte, where were you last night?' Caílte told him the tale from beginning to end. Not long after this they saw seven men coming towards them. 'Where do you come from, lads?' asked Patrick. 'From the province of Connaught in the north,' they said. 'Why have you come?' asked Patrick. 'Holy cleric, we have come to you from the nobles of Connaught, that we, both our women and our men, may be brought to your Gospel.' Patrick said, 'The Church must spread its seed.'

CHAPTER II

PATRICK set off together with his followers and went north from the Great *Mairtine* of Munster in the south to Limerick of the Ulstermen, through the Wood of the Packs, now called *Cretsalach*, to the Mount of the Egg of the King, to the Mountain of Echtga, the daughter of Núadu Argatlám 'of the Silver Arm' [Slieve Aughty], and to the Post of Cepán on Slieve Aughty, where Cepán, son of Morna, had died. From there they went to the Lake of the Short Cow, now called the Lake of Grían, daughter of Finn, to the Speckled Land, now called the Land of Maine, and to *Loch Linngáeth*, now called Lough Croan. The King of Connaught, Muiredach Mór 'the Great', son of Finnachta,* was waiting there for Patrick. A tent was set up for Patrick and his clerics, and the nobles of the province of Connaught approached and did homage to Patrick, putting their heads in his lap.

Patrick then left the tent and sat on an earthen mound. Caílte went with him and said, 'On this spot, holy Patrick, Oscar, the son of Oisín, fought his first battle.' 'For what reason?' asked Patrick. 'Because of his love for Níam,* the daughter of Áed Donn "the Dark", the King of Ulster, the son of Fergus Finn "the Fair",' said Caílte. 'She had been betrothed to Áed, the son of the King of Connaught, who was Fidach, son of Finntan, and was married off to him. Áed lacked sufficient troops to give battle to Oscar, or to the *Fían*, so he asked the King of Ireland, Cormac,* the grandson of Conn, for reinforcements. Cormac brought the four provinces of Ireland with him to do battle against the *Fían* and the battle for that woman was fought here on this plain. Oscar's first exploits occurred in that battle, as Finn said in this poem:

"Rise up, Oscar, and show them who you are,
Though heroes stand before you, a hundred keep at bay.

"Charge back and forth, till their necks be headless.
Seize your fine green shield, grasp your sharpened sword.

"Take shield and javelins from the warrior you have slain.
Take a cuirass to shield you, that your onset may not fail.

"A great event for me, with witnesses at hand.
The giving of my child, at the age of nine.

"One shall never come, better of hand or oath.
No spearshaft that further shall penetrate a man.

'Woe to the man to whom he bears his sharpened sword.
When angrily his arm strikes in fierce attack."'

Then Caílte recited the following poem:

'Oscar's first victories, Ulster's haughty ruler,
Then the King of Leinster, and Connaught's valiant lord.

'Áed, son of Fidach, son of Finntan, came next to the attack.
Oscar left him headless, after a lengthy struggle.

'Áed Donn, King of Ulster, fierce son of Fergus Finn,
With shield and cruel sword, likewise by Oscar slain.

'Brave Baetán, son of Fer Narb, Leinster's mighty king,
Despite his ample valour, quickly met his death.

'The wise and dear companion of Oscar, royal and fair,
Bold Linne, Ligne's son, Oscar, in error, slew.

'Brightly attired Níam came to view the strife,
The fierce battle's tide turned on the radiant queen.

'I shall tell you of her champion, her hero of swift blows,
No more generous hero bestrode a horse.

'I shall tell you of him, dear Patrick, a true account,
Great was his royal fury, his early deeds not small.'

'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Patrick, 'and where is Broccán? Let the story be written out by him, so that it may entertain the chieftains of later times.' Broccán wrote the story down. 'Well, good Caílte,' said Patrick, 'whose grave lies in the hill on which we are standing?' 'It is the grave of a warrior of the *Fíana* of Ireland who died here,' said Caílte, 'Airnélach, who was the son of Admallán, King of Leinster. A poet came here with a verse for him and recited it. "My dear poet," said Airnélach, "grant me a delay until I may have my treasure and wealth brought here." "By no means," said the poet. "I will not grant it, but will satirize and slander you if I am not given payment on this very day." When

Airnélach heard that he put his face to the earth and did not raise it again, and thus died from shame. This green-clad mound was raised over him, and the stone against which, holy Patrick, you now rest your back was placed above his head.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'The grave under Lodán's stone, the grave of a man of proud birth,
Small grave of a glorious soldier, Airnélach, son of Admallán.'

'May he gain Heaven through me,' said Patrick, 'as a recompense for his shame, and may he be taken from punishment.' His soul was released from suffering at that very moment and he appeared as a white dove on the stone column above Patrick's head. 'Who, Caílte,' asked Patrick, 'is buried in the southern end of this mound?' 'Sálbuide, who was the son of Feidlecar, King of Munster, died here, together with thirty hounds, thirty boys, and thirty warriors, while pursuing a deer of the *síd*, and this mound was raised over them.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'Buried in this southern end, is Sálbuide of the poets.
With fifty chains of silver, not a small amount.'

'We would be most happy', said Benén,' to get his treasure.' 'You shall have it,' said Caílte, and he opened the grave. It was full of arm-rings as far down as his spearshaft could reach. 'You gave Heaven to a man for his honour just now,' said Benén, 'give this other man Heaven for his treasure.' 'It shall be done,' said Patrick.*

It was then that Patrick asked Caílte, 'What caused the destruction of all your *Fían*?' 'The two battles that we fought at the end,' said Caílte, 'the battle of *Gabair* and the battle of *Ollarba*. We came in our three battalions to give battle at the Estuary of *Ollarba*, and only six hundred of us came away. Until then Finn had always had confidence in the *Fían*, whether in battle or combat, but on this occasion he was struck by the loss of the chiefs, lords, and champions, and the soldiers and retainers that fell in these battles.' Caílte then recited the poem of Finn:

'Tally up our numbers, no harm for you to know.
Here we shall have a fine battle, whether we win or lose.

'Unjust of Fothad to fight me, a good day when he makes peace.
Not by the will of Lugaid mac Con does Fothad now oppose me.

'Slowly I go to battle, even though I must.
Glorious my progress to *Dubthír* in *Dál nAraide*.

'Six score and eight men, each was worthy of me,
Were killed at Lisardowlin, with Donngus, son of Lánamain.

'The *Fían* waged three hundred battles from north to south to west,
But never yet fought a battle mixed with such great sorrow.

'The host who come from us, its two numbers would find us,
If they held the field today, Fothad would not be found.'

'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said Patrick. 'You have told us in this poem much that is good. Write it down, Broccán,' said Patrick. And he did. Then Cainén, son of Failbe, son of Fergus, son of Eógan Mór 'the Great', asked of Caílte, 'Where did Ailill Ólamm "the Bare-Eared", the son of Mug Núadat,* die?' Caílte answered, 'He died on the top of the Mount of Cláire in the south from great loss of blood.' 'And where did Sadb, daughter of Conn, die?' 'Sadb, daughter of Conn, died in Tara of the Kings,' said Caílte, 'grieving for her well-loved son, Mac Con.' 'Where did Ferchis the Poet, son of Comán, die?' asked Cainén. Caílte said, 'Ferchis was killed on the top of the Galtee Mountains by the hard, holly spear that Áel, son of Dergdub, threw at a deer.' 'And the seven handsome sons of Ailill,' asked Cainén, son of Failbe, 'where did they die?' Caílte answered, 'It was Benne Brit who killed them in the great battle of the Plain of *Mucrama*, as they fled from the host of Mac Con.'

'Why is the ford on this great, level plain called the Ford of the Fall?' asked Cainén. Caílte answered, 'Connla Derg "the Red" from the the Hill of Dían there killed Fiacha Muillethan "of the Broad Crown", son of Eógan, and for that reason is it called the Ford of the Fall.' Caílte recited the following lines:

'The ford is the Ford of the Fall, that all might know the cause,
That Connla there struck down, good Fiacha of the Broad Crown.'

'And the battle of *Samain*,' asked Cainén, 'who fought and perished there?' 'Cormac Cas "the Curly", son of Ailill Ólamm "the

Bare-Eared", attacked Eochaid Abratrúad "of the Red Eyelashes", the King of Ulster in the north. Eochaid died there, and Cormac Cas was wounded and remained ill for thirteen years. His brains were leaking, but he held the kingship of Munster during this time. A stronghold and a fine residence* were built for him at *Dún ar Sléib* "the Fortress on the Mountain". This fortress had a clear and pleasant natural well in its foundations and a great royal dwelling was built for him around it. Three stone pillars were erected around this well, and the king's bed was placed within them, with its head to the east. A trusted household warrior kept bathing his wound with water from a cup or a basin. He died there afterwards and was buried in a vault under the fortress. For this reason it is also called *Dún Trí Liacc* "the Fortress of the Three Pillars" [Duntryleague].' Caílte then said, 'Cainén, this is the tale you asked of me.' Then Caílte recited the following verse:

'A pleasant fortress in the east, now called *Dún Eochair*.
More pleasant still, at break of day, are Sadb's and Ailill's graves.

'Sadb died grieving her son, Mac Con, slain by Ferchis' cast.
From the band about him, Ailill from sickness died.

'Faultless Eógan Mór was killed at *Mucrama*, a sad event.
A blade flashed in combat, Cormac Cas was slain.

'And Fiacha, Eógan's son, suffered worthy wounds,
Struck down by Connla, cruelly at Athlone.

'Here the battle of *Samain* was, then the Ulstermen took flight.
Cormac perished in this fight, slaughtered was Ulster's king.

'And many wounds afflicted there the son of the King of *Fid Findlis*,
And yet his fame will not soon die, cold water soothed his heavy pains.

'Each day to the stream he came, the son of Ailill, Cormac Cas,
The benefit was pleasant for him, the journey to clear Field Stream.

'He went from there to *Dún ar Sléib* to mend at his father's fort.
Three columns of stone were erected there to ease the pain of his fair head.

'*Dún Trí Liacc* from these three stones, the fortress now is named.
This is its name for ever more, after Cormac, chief of Clare.

'The son of the King of Munster died from his wounds and in great pain.
His cold and pleasant bed was laid within that fortress, bright and fair.'

The King of Connaught at that time was Muiredach, son of Finnachta, and he had a beloved son named Áed.* The boys of the province of Connaught had organized a hurling match, and Áed, all by himself, scored six goals against the other boys. He then sat down and was struck by a severe attack of a fatal illness and died on the spot. This was told to his family and to his mother, Aífe, the daughter of the King of Ulster. The women of the province made a great lament for the death of this little boy, and his mother said that the child should be put in the arms of Patrick, to whom God had entrusted the whole of Ireland, with the power to cure all of its inhabitants. 'I would consider that a great disgrace,' said the King of Connaught, 'should he be unwilling.'

Patrick was sent for and the king remained in his tent, together with his retainers and the dead boy, wrapped in a down quilt and a fringed blanket with a fair purple cowl over his face. When Saint Patrick heard that his mother, his foster-brothers, and his own sister had said that they would die of grief, he felt great pity and his heart went out to them. A long golden basin, filled with water, was then brought to Patrick. He blessed the water and placed it in a finely worked cup of white silver. The holy man then went and lifted the fair purple cowl and put three drops of water in the mouth of Áed, son of Muiredach. As the third drop reached his mouth he sat up completely cured, and put his hand over his mouth, as if waking after being with a woman or after heavy drinking, and got up from his bed. All were overjoyed and put their trust in God. Laying their heads in Patrick's lap, they gave their treasures and their goods, their riches and their plunder, their cattle-herds, horses and their horse-teams, their arm-rings and their other wealth into the power of Patrick.

The host stayed there for the night and on the following morning they all went to the Poor Field, now called the Plain of Finn, and then to the Causeway of the Troop of Women, now called the Causeway of Finn. From there they continued to the south of the

Wood of the Kin-Slaying, now called the Forest of Commán [Roscommon*], where the nine sons of Úar, son of Indast, had killed each other, for which reason it was called the Wood of Kin-Slaying. They then continued on to the Fort of Glas, now called the Fort of Brénainn [Rathbrennan]. A tent was erected there for the King of Connaught, and Patrick and Caílte went and sat on an earthen mound by the perimeter of the fort. The King of Connaught came with a number of his men and sat close to them. Muiredach, son of Finnachta, then asked Caílte, 'Why is this fort called the Fort of Glas?' 'I shall tell you,' said Caílte. 'Glas, who was the son of Drecán, King of *Lochlann** in the north, came here with twenty-five battalions to seize the Kingship of Ireland. They arrived at the Castle of the Mighty Stag, now called the Fortress of Rosarach. Finn mac Cumaill was at that time at *Almu* [the Hill of Allen] in Leinster.'

Muiredach, son of Finnachta, then asked Caílte, 'Why is it called *Almu*?'* Caílte answered, 'Bracan, a warrior of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, dwelt in the dew-covered and dappled *Bruig* and had a virgin daughter, Alma by name. Cumall, son of Trénmór, wed her and she died bearing his son. This green-surfaced mound was raised over her, and from her is the mound named. It was previously called the Mound of the Surveying. Or Alma was the name of the one who held it in the time of Neimed. Or else Núadu Drúi "the Druid" built a fort and stronghold there, and took a herd (*alma*) from the fort, so that it is called Alma from this.' Caílte then recited this verse:

'*Almu* in Leinster, the *Fían*'s stronghold, familiar spot to generous Finn.
This, according to every sage, is the reason for its name.

'*Almu* the name of its master, in Neimed's time with mighty fame.
He died yonder on the green hill, quickly of a sudden plague.

'A clever *Fir Bolg** warrior, Iuchna, the fellow's name.
The fort was full, both east and west, of his cattle and his herds.

'His cattle with their thirst went to drink from a spring.
Thirst drove them to battling and they left behind their horns.

'The horns of the white and brown cattle were scattered about the spring.
From these the place is named, the Horns of the Great Cows of Iuchna.

'There were five daughters of Iuchna, of the warrior, fierce and skilful.
From these are named the lands that they possessed.

'Carman in rugged *Carman*, with whom bards briefly dwelled,
Treg's wife in his mighty house, generous with all.

'The Liffey Plain, of the colour of gold, went to the great and skilful woman.
For me the story is not false, and *Almu*, the fifth of these.

'Núadu Drúi, fearsome man, by him a firm, high fort was made,
In *Almu* here with crystal bright, as rampart for his mighty fort.

'Pure white the fort, through fierce attacks, as though all Ireland's lime were used.
From the herd he brought from his house, from this the name of *Almu* springs.'

'Well have you told that story, Caílte,' said Muiredach, son of Finnachta. 'We were there,' said Caílte, 'in *Almu* in Leinster when news of this fleet came to us. Spréd Aithinne "Firebrand" was the one who brought the news, the daughter of Mugna Mianchráesach "the Eagerly Greedy". She was the Horse-Messenger of the King of Ireland who sent her to Finn. Finn at once sent envoys and messengers to assemble the *Fíana* of Ireland and Scotland. Cormac, the grandson of Conn, gathered together the tribes of Tara and the hosts of *Brega*, and the great host of the men of Ireland. They came in twenty-five battalions to this plain, and lots were cast between the *Fían* and the landholders to determine which of them should first give battle to the foreigners. It fell to the *Fían* to give battle.* The battle went on for seven days and fifteen hundred were killed, of the foreigners and of the Irish. After that a final battle took place and Glas was slain by Finn mac Cumaill, and his seven sons were killed by the *Fían*. One hundred and fifty of us went with Finn to fight that battle and each of us slew fifty. Three of us from the *Fían* went with Finn into the tent of Glas, son of Drecán. We found there nine pillars of gold, the smallest of which was as large as an ox-yoke. We hid them in the red moor to the north of the fort.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'O Fortress of Glas, where many an hour we passed,
Nine golden pillars I hid in the moor by your northern wall,

'We were three who hid them, by our own account.
Finn and Oisín, sturdy Caílte, we hid them all without delay,

'Three fifties of us came, in grand array with Finn.
Fifty we killed each day below thy walls, *Ráth Glais*.

'Glas, son of Drecán, was buried there, and for this reason the fort is called the Fort of Glas.' 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Patrick, 'this is a fine tale you have told us. Come, Broccán. Write down this tale.' He did so.

They were there that night and rose early in the morning. They went off to the Chariot Course of Fergus,* now called the Ridge of the Son of Connra, and to the Hill of the Kings, now called the Spring of Garad,* and set up camp there. They set up a tent for Patrick, the head of the faith of the Irish, and he performed his hours and adoration. He blessed the choice, fair-sided hill, and said, 'This is one of the eighteen burial places that will be dear to me in Ireland.' 'There is the difficulty', said the King of Connaught, 'that no water is nearby.' 'If it be the will of the Lord,' said Patrick, 'water will be here.' Patrick went off toward a prominent rock that he saw in the distance. Singing a prayer over it, he thrust his staff into the rock, penetrating both gravel and bed-rock, and three streams of clear water sprang up. 'Put a blessing on the well, holy Patrick,' said Benén. 'Protection for a while on anyone who drinks its water,' said Patrick, 'and if it be one who is to die, he shall have the Heaven of the Lord. Though all of the water of Ireland be destroyed at the end of the world, through the will of the Lord, yet shall Ireland be maintained from this well, and if this water be given three times to a sick man, there is no suffering it will not cure.'

'Tell us another story, Caílte,' said Patrick. 'I shall tell you this story,' said Caílte, 'how the *Fían* of Ireland nearly perished, man and hound, on the very hill on which you stand. Gúaire Goll "the One-Eyed" and Flaithius Fáebrach "the Keen-Edged" were the two bearers of Finn's *fidchell*-board. A warrior, Finn Bán "the White", who was the son of Bresal, King of Leinster, came to play *fidchell** on this hill with Gúaire. "I shall make a wager with you," said Gúaire Goll. "What sort of wager?" asked Finn. "Three ounces of gold

from each of us for three days' play," said Gúaire. Finn Bán was one of the four best players of *fidchell* in the *Fían*, together with Finn mac Cumaill, Díarmait ua Duibne "the descendant of Duibne", and Flaithius Fáebrach, bearer of the *fidchell*-board. On this occasion Oisín recited these lines:

'Finn's boy, Flaithius Fáebrach, wonderful at *fidchell*.
Above the board no better hand at making moves.'

'These two played for three days and Gúaire did not win a game, and lost his wager. He heaped insult and reproach on Finn Bán, saying that he was not a good retainer, nor a decent warrior, nor well-skilled with weapons. Finn Bán raised his arm and struck Gúaire with his fist and knocked three front teeth from his upper gum and three from his lower gum. Gúaire collapsed on top of the *fidchell*-board. Finn mac Cumaill, the chief of the *Fían*, was told of this and said, "You, Áed Mórtrén 'the Great and Strong', dear son of the Steward of Tara, find out the reason for this great tumult in the encampment of the *Fían*." The boy went off to investigate and learned what had happened. When Finn heard of it he said, "Let Finn Bán, son of Bresal, be killed, together with his followers." "By no means", said Oisín, "shall he be killed. Rather let Caílte and Díarmait ua Duibne, and Fergus Fínbél 'Wine-Mouth', the Sage of the *Fían*, judge for you." These three made their judgment, and said to Finn, "Wherever you meet the servant of Finn Bán, you may strike him with your fist, and you shall receive a gift of an ounce of gold from every leader of a *Fían* of the *Fíana* of Ireland." In this way peace was made.

'Twenty years later we went to the Forest of the Guarding in the region of the *Uí Thairsig* "the Descendants of Tairsiu" of Leinster, now called the Ridge of Clay [Drumcree*]. The *Fían* went off to hunting and left behind a warrior of the *Fían* to guard the women. His name was Garad, son of Morna. He was at that time well advanced in years and all of his kin were dead. The women said to him, "Well, dear Garad, do you want to play *fidchell* with us?" "No, I do not," he said. "Why not?" they asked. He answered, "One day, when we were at the Mound of the Kings, by the Lake of the Bird in the province of Connaught . . ." And he told them this very story, holy Patrick. Then one of the women said, "Was Garad not left behind with us to light a fire for us and play *fidchell* with us, because

he is past fighting and the weakness of age is upon him?" "By my faith," said Garad, "that is the speech of hostile women, and though I should long accompany the *Fían*, they would never be true friends." Then he lit a great fire in the hall and bolted its seven doors.* He himself went off, taking his weapons, and recited this old verse:

"Lovely women of the *Fían*, play your *fidchell* yourselves.
Young ladies of the clever king, I am old, likewise my play.

"Age will soon destroy me, being as old as your fathers.
The young thorns are the sharpest, I am too old for our play.

"I recall the day at the Lake of the Bird, an old man must tell a tale,
When all were almost slaughtered because of a single game.

"There was Gúaire, Finn's servant, playing a skilful game,
Against Finn Bán mac Bresail, from which the quarrel came.

"Finn Bán was a better player than Gúaire from Berra's Stream.
Finn Bán was four times winner, Gúaire won only once.

"Great wrath grew in Gúaire towards Bresail's green-clad son.
He cast insults on Finn Bán despite his proper play.

"Great was Finn Bán's shame. He quickly raised his arm.
The fist of the son of Bresal struck Gúaire's angry mouth.

"Then the famous *Fían* rose, noble, warlike, and brave,
Displeased that their chieftain's servant was struck because of a game.

"Then rose Finn Bán's *Fían* and the *Fían* of Cumall's son,
And those of Caílte and Conán fair, and Oisín and Ferdoman.

"Then spoke Finn the chieftain, 'Look outside, my sturdy son.
Why are the *Fían* angry? What has stirred them up?'

"Finn, your servant Gúaire, the bearer of your board,
'Because of a game of *fidchell*, was struck by Bresal's son.'

"Finn said, 'Take the son of Bresal, no ransom for his head.
Let none seek to shield him, Díarmait nor Oisín nor Caílte.'

'By your hand, most glorious Finn, by your dignity and right,
The son of Bresal shall not die despite the bitter feud.

'Father, son of Cumall, hold to wisdom,' Oisín said.
'A prince must keep right judgment and not make groundless threats.

'If we should act unwisely, you must give good advice.
Let your Tooth of Wisdom chew your thumb that your judgment might be fair.

'Take Fáelchú, son of Fer Crom, Finn Bán's dark-haired lad.
If he slew Gúaire, your servant, let his be slain by you.'

"We then went after Finn Bán, from Finn of fair repute.
We brought the son of Bresal to the chief of Ireland's bands.

"Finn mac Cumaill of *Almu* questioned the other Finn.
'What was the crime of Gúaire that brought your wrath on him?'

'Finn, your servant Gúaire, the one who carried your board,
Came in the early morning to challenge me to play.

'I took four games from Gúaire, Beobartach's son.
Insults he cast upon me, angry at his loss.

'Amidst the bands of Ireland grievous charges were made,
That I was a bad retainer, a clumsy coward as well.

'Then without hesitation I raised my straight right arm,
And drove my fist against his mouth. This is the simple truth.'

'A blessing on your mighty arm,' said Oisín. 'No mistake.
The striking of your servant, Finn, was done with ample cause.

'If you now forgive the blow, you shall have, noble prince,
A scruple of gold from each of us, it is best to hear our plea.

'Indeed if you should wish to check your servants' shameful ways,
Gúaire, Comán, Saltrán Seng, who slander Ireland's bands.

'Finn the White reviled by Gúaire, Comán insulted Glas,
Most evil tales did Saltrán tell of Ferdoman.

'Finn of *Ráth Chró*, Bresal's son, his fist struck your servant.
Strike, lord of handsome horns, the servant of Finn Bán.'

'Carry my blessing to your home,' said Finn to Bresal's son,
'A just reward for Gúaire's speech, harsh words deserve harsh blows.'

'This is the boon I ask of you, Lord of the bare-bladed band,
That servants keep, from this day on, their tongues from better men.'

"We took an oath there, one and all, the *Fían* of Cumall's son,
That servants lacking manners would quickly feel our wrath.

"It is I who am servant to you tonight, ladies, my deep respect.
As a warrior I have sworn an oath not to battle with women.

"Though we be long together, women of *Almu*'s Finn,
I shall not play with you, women, as long as I may live."'

'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Patrick, 'good is the knowledge and lore you have told us.' The host then went to the Cairn of the Reckoning, now called the Cairn of Fráech, son of Fidach [Carnfree]. Patrick went up onto the hill and said, 'Dear Caílte, did all of the *Fían* believe in the King of Heaven and Earth, or did you know of His existence at all?' Caílte answered, 'The chief and warrior knew, for he was a wizard, a seer, and a prince. And we all understood from the destruction that we saw one night that there was a God.' 'What destruction was this?' asked Patrick. 'The King of Ireland, Cormac, son of Art, had a great household numbering two hundred, and each was the son of a king and of a queen. They were staying at the Wood of the Kings to the north-east of Tara.' 'What wood is that?' asked Patrick. 'The Wood of the Forest,' said Caílte. 'There were a thousand of each kind of tree there, and a great royal hall for these sons of kings. Their food was not prepared there, but was brought to them from Tara. They were there one evening after feasting and pleasure. Their beds were prepared for them and they stayed there for the night. Then Binne, the Chief Steward of Tara, came to speak with the son of the King of Ireland who was in the hall. He looked about the hall and saw that all were dead. We understood from that that there was indeed a True God, someone who had direction and power over us all.' Then Caílte recited this verse:

'Town of the kings, in Tara's wood, a crowded household there,
A host of troops and horses covered its smooth-faced sides.

'Two hundred noble kings' sons were of this honoured house,
An equal number of women dwelled on the white-faced hill.

'I have not seen ruin like this, O Patrick, noble and pure,
All of them perished together, all those who lived in the town.

'These two hundred men and two hundred women were buried in the hill, so that the name of the hill has ever since been the Hill of the Slaughter. And as for the trees that were there, the earth swallowed the whole wood before our eyes, and we became aware through this of the existence of the King of Heaven and Earth,' said Caílte. 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Patrick.

Then Caílte said, 'I must leave tomorrow, good and holy Patrick.' 'Where are you going?' asked Patrick. 'To search out the hills and mounds and the heights where my companions and foster-brothers, the prince-warriors and nobles of the *Fían* once were with me, for I am tired of being in one place.'

They stayed there that night. In the morning the whole host arose, and Caílte got up and put his head in Patrick's lap. Patrick said, 'You shall have Heaven from me, wherever be the place, indoors or out, where God puts his hand on you.' Then the King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta, set out to proclaim his kingship and rule, and Patrick went off to preach the faith and the religious life, to expel the demons and the druids from Ireland, to choose the holy and the righteous, to erect crosses, penitential stations, and altars, and to destroy idols and spectres, and the arts of druidism.

CHAPTER III

MEANWHILE Caílte went north to the broad Plain of the Track of the Dagda, across the Pointed Mountain of the *Fían* [Curlew Mountains], now called the Cataract of the Sons of Erc [Assylin], then north to the Mountain of Segais, the descendant of Ébricc, to the Gap of the Hundred, now called Keshcorran, and out onto the Level Plain of Corran. Here it was that he and his men heard a great noise and tumult approaching them, and Caílte looked and saw nine fierce wild stags. They threw nine casts at them and killed them all, so that they had food for the evening. They put them on their shoulders and brought them to the Cataract of the Son of Modarn, now called the Cataract of the Oak [Ballysadare*], and went into the Territory of the Contention, now called the Territory of Cairbre, and to the Promontory of Eba, daughter of Geibtine, son of Morna [Maugherow], the place where a tidal wave drowned her. They then went to the Red Ridge, now called the Ridge of Baskets [Drumcliff], and to the Ford of the Encounter, now called the Ford of the Grey Stag. From there they went to the Tomb of the Sow on the Peak of Gulban [Benbulben], the place where the boar killed Díarmait ua Duibne, and to the top of the green-surfaced hill that contained the Bed of Díarmait. There Caílte put his weapons on the ground and lay down on the grave and tomb of his foster-brother and beloved comrade, Díarmait ua Duibne. He wept flowing tears of true sorrow until both his shirt and chest were wet, and said, 'Sad it is that my comrade and foster-brother has gone from me!' They were there from the middle of the day until close to sunset. 'Sad it is, friends,' he said, 'that I would never wish to leave this grave in my grief for Díarmait and his children.' 'What?' said Flann, son of Failbe. 'Did Díarmait have sons?' 'Indeed he did,' said Caílte, 'and these are their names:

'The sons of brown-haired Díarmait by the daughter of Cormac ua Cuinn,
Donnchad, Illann, and Úath, Selbach, Sercach, and Irúath.'

The Ford of the Grey Stag, that we mentioned, was the place where Caílte Coscair Ríg 'the Slaughter of Kings' fought with

Díthrubach, the son of the King of Munster, Scál mac Eógain, and of Alma, the mother of Finn. Then Caílte recited this poem:

'Together they fought a fierce battle, viewed by a great, fine host.
They tore up trees in their anger, on the path above the Ford of the Grey Stag.

'The first cast was made by Caílte of a swift and deadly spear,
As soon as it had left his hand, a javelin pierced him.

'The right hand and the left foot, he then cut from Díthrubach,
Fierce Caílte left his head on the north slope of Drumcliff.'

From there they went to the Forest of the Hosts, now called the Forest of Muadnatán [Keelty], across the Peak of Gulban Guirt 'of a Field', son of Maelgarb [Benbulben], and to the Rugged Forest, now called the Oakwood of the Deer. There they made a long and spacious cooking-hut, and roofed it, from ridge-pole to tie-beam, with rushes, green on top and white at the bottom. They did their cooking and roasting there that evening. 'Is there any water nearby?' asked one of them. 'There is indeed,' said Caílte, 'the Spring of Oisín.' 'It is a dark night,' said the warriors. 'It is not dark for me,' said Caílte, 'for there is no place where one might get a cupful of water, whether from a cliff, a river, or an estuary, in the five great provinces of Ireland that I am not familiar with, by day or by night. He then took a finely worked cup of white silver in one hand and his heavy and well-socketed spears in the other and went off to the well. When he arrived he heard something snuffling and splashing about, a slender-sided boar drinking the water. He put a finger into the thong of his riveted, long-bladed spear and, casting it at the boar, killed him. Holding the cup of water in his hand he carried the boar off on his shoulder.

They stayed there for the night, and in the morning went across the Cataract of Rúad, son of Modarn [Assaroe] to the *Síd* of Áed of the Cataract of Rúad [Mullaghshee]. Arriving there they saw a warrior on the green-clad hill waiting for them. He wore a fringed purple cloak with a silver brooch above the breast and carried a white shield with interlaced animals of red gold. His hair was held by a curved fastening. With one hand he held two hunting-hounds on twisted chains of old silver; in his other hand he held strong and heavy blue weapons. When Caílte drew near, the warrior gave him

three kisses, loving and fervent, and sat down on the mound by him.

'Who are you, warrior?' asked Caílte. 'Derg Díanscothach "of the Hasty Words",* son of Eógan, of the people of far Usnagh, and your own foster-brother.' 'How is your life with the family of your mother?' asked Caílte. 'We have no lack of food or of clothing,' said Derg, 'but I would rather be living the lives of the three who had the worst life in the *Fían*, Ligarne Licon, Semenn Sacaire "the Poet-aster" and Bec, the servant of the clan of Brodmuc, than the life I live in the *síd*.' 'Although today you are hunting alone,' said Caílte, 'I have seen you surrounded by many people, by fifteen hundred warriors, fifteen hundred boys, and fifteen hundred women in the Ford of the Meeting of the Three Rivers to the south, where the Suir, the Nore, and the Barrow flow together.' Then he recited the following lines:

'Alone you are hunting, Derg, bereft of *Fían* and friends.
Have you heard the famous tales, the violent deaths of the *Fían*?'

Derg answered:

'I have heard of valiant deeds, each place in which they fell.
Although I dwell within the *Síd*, the *Fíana* fill my mind.

'Never have I found a place, east or north or south or west,
Where the time more quickly passed, though we be few.'

'Well, my good Derg, who of the *Fían* lies in the earthen mound on which we sit?' asked Caílte. 'You and I were the ones who buried him,' said Derg, 'so you should know. It is Cuinnscleo,* who was the son of the King of the Britons, the English, and the French, Gilla, son of Annscleo.' Derg then recited the following lines:

'Cuinnscleo the servant, son of Annscleo, bore down on men in the fray.
Nine men under a leafy oak, crushed by the champion Cuinnscleo.

'Cuinnscleo more deeds than words, ready soldier in a raid.
Wherever speckled shields were split, he was not the one who fled.

'He is the one, Caílte, who lies in this earthen mound, and it is we who put him there.' 'Against whom, Derg, did you ride that quick

and difficult race?' 'Against the black horse of Díl, son of Dá Crec,' said Derg.

'Díl, son of Dá Crec, with his black horse, every race they used to run.
At the rock that stands above Lough Gur, he won the three prizes of the day.'

'What house did we spend that night in, Caílte?' asked Derg. 'That of Catháir, son of Ailill,' said Caílte, 'who had invited Finn and the *Fían* to visit. We were at his house for three days and nights with no lack of food or drink or provisions for all our host.' 'Did we give anything to him, Caílte?' asked Derg. 'Finn', said Caílte, 'gave him three hundred cows, three hundred cloaks, and three hundred ounces of gold.' Caílte then recited the following lines:

'Three hundred cows, three hundred cloaks, three hundred swords, strongly wrought,
Finn gave as payment for his ale to gracious Catháir, Ailill's son.'

'Who gave the black horse to Finn?' asked Derg. 'Was it Díl, son of Dá Crec, or Catháir, son of Ailill?' Caílte answered, 'Neither of them, but Fiacha Muillethan "of the Broad Crown", son of Eógan.' He then recited the following lines:

'"He is for you, this swift, black horse," said Fiacha to the *Fían*'s lord.
"Here as well my sword of fame and a horse from me to your charioteer."

'Finn went to test his new black horse, down to the beach by *Berramain*,
Three times I ran away from them, faster than any steed was I.

'The horse ran to the western end of the shore and died there from over-exertion. Therefore the beach which had previously been called the Shore of *Berramain*, was later called the Shore of the Black Horse. Now is the end of the day,' said Caílte, 'for the lovely bright clouds of day have left us and the dark clouds of evening are upon us.' Then Derg Díanscothach went over into the *síd* to tell Ilbrecc of Assaroe and Áed Minbrecc 'the Lightly-Freckled', son of the Dagda, about Caílte. He told them of their conversation from the time that Caílte had come to him until that very hour, and that he

had left Caílte outside the *síd*. 'He should be brought into the *síd*,' they said, 'for we have heard of his honour and his valour.' Derg went to Caílte and brought him inside together with his nine companions. They were placed in pleasant chairs of crystal on the central platform of the *síd*. This was the time when a great war* was being fought between Ilbrecc of Assaroe and Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad.

A bird with a beak of iron and a tail of fire had perched on a golden window in the *síd*, and every evening was shaking there until not a sword was left on its stand, nor a shield on its peg, nor spear in its rack, but all would rain down on the heads of the people of the *síd*. They kept casting missiles at it but every missile thrown at it would fall on the head of one of their boys or women or foster-children. Their drinking-hall was arranged that evening, and the same bird came to them and caused the same destruction. The people of the *síd* hurled missiles at it, but without result. 'How long has this bird been doing this?' asked Caílte. 'For a whole year now,' said Derg, 'since the war with the people of the other *síd* began.' Then Ilbrecc said, 'Good still for men is the hospitality of pleasant places. Not good for us this raging fury and insane destruction.'

Caílte then put his hand behind his shield and brought forth a copper wand which he threw through the bird's breast. It fell dead on the floor of the *síd* before them. 'Has anyone ever done a greater feat than that?' asked Ilbrecc. 'Was there anyone in the *Fían*', asked Áed Minbrecc of Assaroe, 'as skilful with weapons as you?' 'I give you my word,' said Caílte, 'it was not fitting for any one of them to boast beyond another, for each man of them had plenty of warlike skills. As did I.'

Ilbrecc then raised his hand above him and, taking a sharp, blue-angled spear from its rack, put it into Caílte's hand. 'Look, dear Caílte. Tell us what spear this is, and which man of the *Fíana* of Ireland owned it.' Caílte took the covering and blade-guard from the javelin, and saw the thirty rivets of Arabian gold in its socket. 'I recognize it,' said Caílte. 'It is the spear of Fiacha, son of Conga. This is the spear with which Finn mac Cumaill first took command of the *Fíana* of Ireland and of Scotland. It was brought from the green-grassed *Síd* of Finnachad.

'Aillén, son of Midgna, of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, used to come from the north to Tara from the Cairn of Finnachad. He carried a dulcimer in his hand that put anyone who heard it to sleep and he

would then send out blasts of fire from his mouth. He came to Tara each year on the same day, at the Festival of *Samain** [1 November], playing his dulcimer. All fell asleep from the magical sound that he made, and he then blew out his breath and sent out a pillar of fire from his mouth. In this way he burned up Tara with all of its treasures every year for twenty-three years. About this time the battle of *Cnucha* was fought. Cumall, son of Trénmór, fell in that battle and left behind a pregnant wife, Muirne Muincháem "of the Lovely Neck", the daughter of Tadg, son of Núadu.

'After the death of Cumall, Goll of the Mighty Deeds, son of Morna, was made chief of the *Fíana* of Ireland, and he held this position for ten years. Meanwhile Cumall's son, Finn, had been born and was, until the age of ten, an outcast engaged in scavenging. In Finn's tenth year Conn Cétchathach "of the Hundred Battles" held a feast at Tara, and the men of Ireland, drinking and enjoying themselves in *Tech Mór Midchúarta* "the Great House of Mid-Court", did not notice anything until they saw a young boy coming towards them, the broad-crowned prince, but ten years old. He sat down in the hall close to Conn Cétchathach and Goll, son of Morna, surrounded by the nobles of Ireland. A prerogative of the Feast of Tara was that no one dared give offence or take retaliation for six weeks, the time that men were drinking or feasting at the Feast of Tara. The King of Ireland looked carefully at the boy, for he was not known to him, nor to anyone else in the hall. His horn of assembly was then brought to the King of Ireland and he commanded, "Silence, men of Ireland!" And the princes fell silent on hearing the voice of Conn, the noble and High King.He then took Finn by the hand and asked him whose son he was. "I am Finn, the son of Cumall," said the boy, "the son of the warrior who previously held the command of the *Fían*, and I have come to make my friendship with you, King of Ireland." "My boy, you are the son of a friend and of a trusted retainer," said Conn. The boy then arose and made his suretyship and service with the King of Ireland. Conn took his hand and placed him beside Art, son of Conn, and for the next while they gave themselves over to drinking and enjoyment.

'Then the King of Ireland arose with the fine, polished buffalo horn in his hand, and said, "If I could find among you, you men of Ireland, one who would preserve Tara until the break of day in the morning, so that it is not burnt by Aillén, son of Midgna, I would

give him his proper patrimony, however large or small." But on hearing this the men of Ireland kept silent, for even women in labour and wounded soldiers fell asleep on hearing the beguiling music of the *síd*,* the sweet-voiced, tuneful song sung by the strange man from the *síd* who burned down Tara every year.

'Finn stood up and said to the King of Ireland, "What sureties and guarantors shall I have from you if I should accomplish this?" "The kings of the provinces of Ireland," said Conn, "and Cithrúad, son of Fer Cóecat, son of Aithirne of the Poets, together with his wizards." They all took part in this surety and Finn agreed to guard Tara and its possessions until the morning of the following day. Fiacha, son of Conga, a trusted warrior of Cumall then in the service of the King of Ireland, asked of Finn, "My dear boy," he said, "what reward will you give me if I find you a deadly, sharp, blue-edged spear, with which no bad cast has ever been made?" "What reward do you ask of me?" Finn replied. "A third of whatever your right hand gains, as well as a third of your counsel and of your plans." "You shall have it," said Finn, and he gave his word on it. Then Fiacha said, "When you hear the beguiling music of the *síd*, the sweet-stringed dulcimer and the pleasant pipes, take the blade-guard from the head of the javelin and put the steel to your forehead or to some other part of your body, and the point of the poisonous spear will keep you from falling asleep."

'Finn arose before the men of Ireland to guard Tara. Fiacha, son of Conga, gave him a shield and spear without the knowledge of the Sons of Morna or of anyone else in the hall of Tara. Finn took the shield and the spear, and Fiacha said to him, "When you hear the beguiling music of the *síd* and the sweet-stringed dulcimer and the sweet, melodious pipes, do what I have told you." Finn remembered what Fiacha had said to him. He then made a circuit of Tara, and before long he heard the plaintive music and put the point of the poisonous spear against his forehead. Aillén began to play his dulcimer, as was his custom, to put everyone to sleep before sending forth a blast of fire from his mouth to burn down Tara. Finn saw that and put the fringed purple cloak he was wearing into the path of the fire. The fire fell down from the air and the cloak, which had been folded in four, carried it twenty-six hand's-breadths into the earth. Because of this the hill was called the Height of the Fire, and the glen the Glen of the Cloak.

'When Aillén, son of Midgna, realized that his magic had been thwarted, he went back towards the *Síd* of Finnachad and to the crest of the Fews. Finn followed him to the Cairn of Finnachad and, as Aillén was going through the door of the *síd* to the other side, Finn put a finger in the thong of his spear and made a fortunate, well-aimed cast that hit Aillén in the top of the back and drove his heart through his mouth in a flood of dark blood.

'Later Aillén's mother, Tudhcha, consort of the physician Abairche, came to him, grieved for a while, and went to seek help for him.

"Come, healing Amartha, Aillén son of Midgna is slain,
By the spear of Fiacha, son of Conga, a deadly cloak and *Birga*.

"Alas, Aillén has fallen. Thrice was his blood shed.*
Here is his heart's blood mixed with the marrow of his back.

"Alas, Aillén has fallen, champion of the Peak of Boirche.
Now has death descended. From Boirche, healer come!

"Oh, but Aillén was pleasant, Midgna's son from the Fews,
Who nine times burned down Tara, ever seeking fame."

'His mother tried to take the spear from her son, but was not at all able to do it. Finn entered the *síd* and removed the spear from him. He then beheaded him and brought the head back to Tara where he put it on a baleful stake. There it remained until the King of Ireland arose, and the clear, bright sun rose in its great fiery orbit, and filled the cliffs and cataracts and estuaries of the world.

'All the men of Ireland went to meet Finn, together with their King, on the green of Tara. "Behold, my King," said Finn, "the head of the man who used to burn down Tara, there with his pipes, his dulcimer, and his musical instrument. It seems to me that Tara and its riches have been saved." They then filled the hall to take counsel and decided to give command of the *Fíana* of Ireland to Finn. "Well, Goll, son of Morna," said Conn Cétchathach, "make your choice. Leave Ireland or give your hand to Finn." "By my word," said Goll, "I shall give Finn my hand."

'The charm and omen then took effect, and the three battalions of the *Fían* rose up and took Finn by the hand. Goll first took his hand so that others of the *Fían* would feel less shame in doing so. Finn held the chieftaincy', said Caílte, 'until his death, and he died at the

Cliff of the Badgers in the Rushes of Daig [Slieve Lougher] in the west.* The spear you put in my hand, Ilbrecc, is the one with which he did that useful deed for Ireland, and with it he was always successful. *Birga* is the original name of the spear.' 'You keep the spear, Caílte,' said Ilbrecc, 'until we learn if Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad, together with his brothers, will come to avenge his bird on us.'

'They then raised their horns and cups, and devoted themselves to drinking and pleasure and to the refreshment of mind and spirit. 'Well, dear Caílte,' said Ilbrecc, 'who shall have command of the battle if Lir should come?' 'Derg Díanscothach, the one to whom Finn entrusted the command of the battle.' 'Would you accept it, Derg?' asked the people of the *síd*. 'I accept it, both the good of it and the ill,' said Derg. Thus they spent the night, and early in the morning they heard the snorting of horses and the rumbling of chariots, the crashing sound of shields and the noisy approach of a great host that surrounded the *síd*. Men were sent out of the *síd* to see how many had come there, and there were three brave battalions of considerable size. 'I dread,' said Áed Minbrecc, 'what shall happen to us now, our own death and destruction, and the seizing of our dwelling by the Children of Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad.' 'Do you not know, Áed,' said Caílte, 'that the strong, wild boar escapes from hounds and packs, and when the bellowing stag leaps he likewise comes away unscathed from the hounds.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'The boar of the hill charges the pack with his murderous blade.
The raging one attacks and scatters the red-footed hounds.

'Which opponent in the battle is the most troublesome one for you?' asked Caílte. 'The one who is the best warrior of all the *Túatha Dé Danann*,' they said, 'Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad.' 'My role in every battle', said Caílte, 'was to stand against the best man there. I shall not avoid it today.' 'And whom shall you oppose for us, Derg?' they asked. 'Who is the most troublesome after Lir?' he replied. 'Donn and Dub,' they said. 'Then I shall fight them at the same time,' said Derg. Then the hosts of the *síd* came to the battle, and each side attacked the other with long blue arrows and small pointed javelins and broad blue spears. The battle lasted from the early hours to the middle of the day. Caílte and Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad met in bloody struggle, and at the end of the fighting Lir was killed by Caílte. Two fine warriors, Dub and Donn, the sons of Éirge

Anglonnach 'the Warlike' from the Islands of Danger, then took charge of the battle, and arranged the fighting in this way, Dub in the van of the army and Donn guarding well the rear. Derg Díanscothach saw that and put his forefinger in the thong of his spear. He gave a great cast that came through the bosom of the tunic of Dub, the first man, piercing his heart in his chest. The spear then hit Donn, the man further away, in the chest, so that both were killed with the same cast. Then Ilbrecc recited this verse:

'Lir was killed by Caílte, a deed deserving praise.
Donn and Dub died likewise, slaughtered by Derg's single cast,

'The battle drifted northwards, against Lir's mighty host.
Of them, from this lovely plain, just three, with skill, escaped.'

After despoiling the enemy and celebrating their victory they went back into the *síd*, and thereafter they exercised power and domination over the *Síd* of Finnachad. 'Here is your spear, Ilbrecc,' said Caílte. 'You should not say that to me,' said Ilbrecc, 'for if Lir had no weapons but that spear, it should fall to you, for you are a proper and worthy heir to it.' They were there in the *síd* for the next three days and nights.

'Well now, dear Caílte,' said Ilbrecc of Assaroe, 'where did Finn find belief,* or did he ever?' 'He did indeed,' said Caílte. 'Where did he find it and how did he find it?' asked Ilbrecc. 'It happened at the Secluded Ridge, also called the Ridge of Two Birds, on the river Shannon, and this was the reason for his belief. Findine, the daughter of Bodb, was thought to have killed Conán, her own husband, but Conán and Ferdoman had in fact killed each other. The *Fían* came to the Wood of Fowling, now called the Secluded Ridge, and a basin of light gold was brought to Finn. He washed his white hands, sprinkled the clear water about his face, and put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom. Then the truth came to him and the lie was concealed from him. It was also revealed to him that the generous Patrick would come at a later time, and that Ciarán,* son of the Smith, would found a monastery for half of Ireland.' Then Caílte recited the following poem:

'Beloved the triumphant church whose bells will ring at river's edge.
Beloved the productive grave, a great protection of the soul.

'News of the fight of Conán and Ferdoman came to us there, and Finn found belief then and through it Heaven.'

'Woe to the warrior who heard the tale, when we came to Swim-Two-Birds,
The death of Conán Mael from *Mag*, the death of Ferdoman as well.

'Secluded Ridge, its name until the *Fían*'s time.
Then Ridge of Fowling from the fowling of Finn and the *Fían* there.

'A great birth shall take place there, through the will of the Lord of Hosts.
A worthy son of Heaven's King for whom the angels wait.

'Holy Ciarán shall be the one, his birth within a royal fort.
The son of the Smith from *Muirthemne* shall take half Ireland in his grasp.

'The spoilers of his church shall get from reddened points a sudden death,
Punishments and torments vile, merciless in Hell below.

'I shall tell you of it now, for me the prophecy is true.
I believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit at one time.

'I hope for the Realm of Heaven's King, better than any kin I know.
The King who granted me now delay will keep me from eternal woe.'

They spent the following six weeks in the *síd*. 'We must leave now,' said Caílte, 'for we have been here for some time.' 'The blessing of God and that of the people here on you,' said the people of the *síd*, 'and if you should wish to stay here with us for ever, you would receive your wish.' 'Since you are going to go,' said Ilbrecc, 'here are nine bright garments with handsome mantles, nine shields and nine spears, nine inlaid, golden swords, and nine good hunting-hounds.' They said farewell, leaving blessings and giving thanks, and though the battle had been severe for each of them, more grievous to Derg Díanscothach was the parting from his comrade and from his own foster-brother. Even the day on which he parted from Finn and the *Fían* had not been sadder than that day.

Caílte went off with his men, and stopped at the Mount of the Hosts, at the Mount of Cairbre [Slieve Carbry], and at the Mount of Meeting in the north, and then went to the Castle of the Red Stag. They had not been there long when they saw a splendid couple of fine appearance before them on the cairn, a handsome young man together with a lady of the same age. The young man asked news of Caílte and Caílte told him his tale. 'I am one of the household of Finn mac Cumaill. My name is Caílte, the son of Rónán. What is your name, young man?' asked Caílte. 'Eógan Flaithbrugaid "the Hospitaller of Chieftains" is my name,' he said, 'and I am one of the old household of Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac. Beccnait Banbrugaid "the Lady-Hospitaller" is the name of this lady, and we are of equal age. We are both two hundred years old and have been thirty years together.' 'Did you not have enormous wealth, young man?' asked Caílte. 'I did have,' he said, 'for there was not a place, from the Cataract of Rúad, son of Modarn [Assaroe], to the Hill of the Fomorian* in the north, now called *Torach* of the North of Ireland [Tory Island], where I did not have a milch-herd at every second or every third district.' 'What destroyed or carried off that wealth?' asked Caílte. 'A monster of theft destroyed us, a horrible giant and a son of ill fortune, and he plundered the seven entire cantreds* that I had, so that there is no one left to inherit patrimony or land, and he laid it all waste after its destruction. He has robbed and despoiled me until but eight score milch-herds are the last of my wealth.' 'Where is this man?' asked Caílte. 'There is a great rock to the north of us on a very wide bay. There he lives, and his family of three carry off a full ship's cargo with them, for he himself is the equal of four hundred men, his hound of three hundred, and his daughter of another three hundred. No one can do anything against them.' 'Where does he enter this bay?' asked Caílte. 'By the town on the northwest side,' said Eógan. They went into the fort with Eógan and spent the night there. They were in all respects well attended to and entertained.

On the next morning Caílte rose alone and took his shield, his sword, and two spears. He went to the impregnable rock at the side of the bay, and waited there for a while. He then saw a boat approaching with the three in it, the father and his daughter and his bitch, a coarse-haired, greyish-brown bitch with a rough iron chain around her neck. The daughter, a lump of a woman, bald and dark, like a

rocky crag from a distance, stood in the front of the boat, with a stout iron spear in her hand, and the giant stood in the stern. They came into the bay and landed close to Caílte. The sight of them brought him great fear and loathing. The huge man said to his daughter, 'Let loose the bitch,' he said, 'and send her at that big man over there so that she may eat her fill of him before we go off raiding.' The daughter let the bitch loose and a fear and terror, such as he had never experienced in battle or duel, seized Caílte. He said, 'May my Creator and holy Patrick protect me against you three,' and he cast his bronze javelin at the bitch. One prong of the javelin stuck in her palate and the other in her lower jaw blocking her mouth. She fell from the boat and died at the bottom of the sea. Later she was washed ashore.

The other two came on land to attack Caílte and fought against him boldly and resolutely. The daughter gave him thirty wounds, from the tip of his great toe to the hair of his head, and Caílte gave her a blow of his sword that caused her entrails and bowels to fall from her. Maelán the giant, the son of Mongach, hardened his battle and would have defeated Caílte in that battle, but Caílte fought even more boldly and eagerly against the huge man and cut him into three horribly mutilated pieces, the third of which was his head. He cut off the heads of all three and brought them with him back to the house of Eógan. Eógan and Caílte's companions came forward, recognized the heads and thanked Caílte for the deed. Feeble and exhausted Caílte sat down. Then he recited the following lines:

'I find myself in Eógan's land with sorely wounded heart,
I left Maelán and his dog, fearful monsters on the shore.

'I killed Maelán and his dog and his daughter of ill repute.
From morning until break of day, the fierce battle carried on.

'Wherever I wandered north or south, in the world with a mighty host,
I have not found at any time such pain as on this night.'

He was afflicted with weakness and fainting, and healing herbs were brought to him. He spent six weeks there recovering, until he was made completely well.

'We shall go tomorrow,' said Caílte, 'but we leave our blessing with you.' 'May you have victory and blessing,' said Eógan. They took

their leave of Eógan and went from there to the Mound of the Hundreds, now called the Mound of Two Horses, to the Holly Wood of the *Fían* in the north, to the Marsh of the Greyhounds, now called the Marsh of the Pack, and then north to the Hut of Nuts, the place in which the seer revealed a head to Lug of the Long Arm,* son of Eithlenn, and where Columcille,* son of Feidlimid, was born, then north to the Oakwood of Goll. When they came out of the oakwood they saw a young man with his back against a very solid stone pillar. He was wearing a fringed purple cloak with a golden brooch above the breast, and a shirt of royal silk against his skin, with a tunic of soft satin above it. He held two fine hunting hounds in his hand and a pack of hounds was nearby.

Caílte greeted the young man, and his greeting was answered. 'Of whose retinue are you?' asked the young man. 'Finn mac Cumaill, our chief and our lord, is no longer alive,' answered Caílte. Then the young man wept many tears of true grief and his shirt and breast became wet with the weeping. 'And who are you, young man?' asked Caílte. 'I shall give you my name,' he said, 'I am Donn, the son of Áed, son of Garad, son of Morna.' 'Your father was a good man,' said Caílte, and recited the following lines:

> 'Proud he was, of lasting fame, truly a warrior of great valour.
> Ever a famous, fruitful branch, seizing the treasures of the world.'

'Well, dear Caílte,' said Donn, 'do you have my father's spear?' 'Yes, and his shield and his sword as well,' said Caílte. 'By the truth of your valour and prowess,' said Donn, 'tell me the real reason why he was killed.' 'I shall,' said Caílte, 'for it is well known to me. Dub Díthre "the Landless", the chief of the *Fíana* of Ossory, was slain by your grandfather, Garad, son of Morna, and Goll, son of Morna, was under attack at the Rock of Goll in the west. The three battalions of the *Fían* besieged him for six weeks there, and his warlike skills were weakened since he had been nine days without food. Muc Smáile, son of Dub Díthre, entered the fortress and cut off Goll's head before all the *Fíana* of Ireland. He brought the head to Finn, and your father asked for justice and fairness from Muc Smáile, whatever was appropriate for a chief and a warrior.' Caílte then recited the following lines:

'He said he would not give his due to fair-skinned Áed by fortune blessed,
But face to face would there repay whatever harm his hand had done.

'Your father said that the matter should be left between him and Muc Smáile. "I shall make you an offer, Áed," said Muc Smáile. "What offer is that?" said Áed. "I shall give you", he said, "the two spears of Goll, son of Morna, the shield of Cairell, descendant of Conbrú, the horn of Dub Díthre, the sword of Muirenn of Armagh, that Goll had, and the hunting torque of Sigmall." I', said Caílte, 'carried the message, about which this poem was told:

'Send our messengers to Áed, and let them tell the noble chief.
Our pledge to him, countless feats, this will never be fulfilled.

'I offered him the hunting torque from the *Síd* of Nettles brought to Finn,
From which no stag can flee alive though none has cast a spear at him.

'I offered him Cairell's famous shield carried by him in every fight.
A pleasing treasure, the pointed shield, the dread of a hundred on its lord.

'I offered him the battle-sword that Muirenn of Armagh used to wield.
The horn of Dub the Landless I offered as well, though formerly I kept it hid.
The price of fifty foreign slaves, the gold contained in its embrace.

'I offered two spears to him, a glorious play, poised upon their yellow shafts.
For if they but scratch the skin, the injured warrior soon must die.

'And though I offered all these things, Garad's children want them not.
So great the number of their hosts, of tall and valiant, noble sons.

'By gentle Morna's children slain, was manly Finntan from Hazel Wood,
By Banb of the Shannon of the Speckled Shield, and Finn the Great, the son of Cúán.

'From fierce Mac Lugach they demand the proper fine for killing Goll.
From Caílte of the shining sword, as well from . . . from *Lúachair*.*

'A youth of the tribe of Tara in *Brega* who met in battle valiant Goll,
Headless and bloodied, manly in battle, with the name of Flaithius Truly Fair.'

Muc Smáile answered:

'If there were thrice fifty sons to white-handed, skilful Goll,
To these he would not be more dear than to me my father was.

'Dub the Landless, my own father brave, trusty warrior of the *Fían*,
Never in battle was reviled, famous for his skill in arms.

'Tell these men, it is no lie, from me no more will they obtain.
Nine hundred men await them now upon the hill to which they come.'

'By the truth of your valour and your prowess, O Caílte,' said Donn, 'give my father's weapons to me.' 'I shall indeed give them,' said Caílte, 'for he himself always responded generously to any request.' Caílte then gave him all of his father's weapons. 'Now give us directions, dear Donn,' said Caílte. 'What place are you seeking, O *Fían*-chief?' asked Donn. 'The house of Conall, son of Níall, the King of *Cenél Conaill* "the Kindred of Conall".' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'O Donn, give directions to us, without guile or malice,
For now you are indeed alone, after your *Fían* and your band.

'Gone are the Sons of Morna, cause of grief and endless sorrow,
A thousand men their number, true nobility, without unease.

'I shall tell you of it, true each thing that we say.
Besides all gold and silver, you shall have that from me, O Donn.'

'I shall go to that place before you,' said Donn, 'for he is my mother's brother, and the faithful foster-father who raised me. Though he now holds the kingship, it is I who maintain it.' Donn took his weapons and went off to the house of Conall, to the Fortress of the Ships. 'Give us news, dear Donn,' said Conall, son of Níall. Donn told him that Caílte had given him his father's weapons and that he was coming to meet the king. 'I shall allow that,' said Conall, 'because he is from the Half of Conn,* and because of the good deeds he has done.' Donn showed them the arms and weapons that Caílte had given him. 'You have received those gifts', said the nobility, 'from a good man.' 'From a good man indeed,' said Conall, 'for no one better than he has been called a "son of a warrior".' Caílte carried on across the Stream of the *Fían* to the north, across the Height of the Boys, now called the Green Height, and to the Great Wood, where he and his men saw the fortress a distance from them.

As Caílte was seen drawing near to the fortress, Conall went out with the nobles of his host and retinue to welcome him. Caílte sat down by the cairn in front of the fortress, and all the host sat down as well. Conall then asked Caílte, 'For what reason is this cairn called the Cairn of Garb Daire "of Oakwood"?' Caílte answered that question, for he had knowledge of it. 'A warrior beloved to Finn mac Cumaill dwelt in this place,' said Caílte, 'Garb Daire, who was the son of Aengus, King of the men of Munster in the south. He was hunting here one day in this place and it was a strange and mournful hunt. He killed a hundred and fifty stags, a hundred and fifty boars, and a hundred and fifty does. The local people seeing this rushed at him and took his game and his slaughter from him. Though he slew three hundred of the men who were trying to take the slaughter from him, the people of the land finally encircled him, pierced him through with many spears, and killed him. We came with three battalions of the *Fían* to avenge him, laid waste the land and killed the three kings of the country. Some escaped to nearby islands, but we left few still alive.' Then Caílte recited the following lines:

'The killing of Garb Daire on the shore by the numerous folk of Eógan.
Fifty warriors we killed, in all, in vengeance for Garb Daire.

'He lies in this cairn with his weapons, and with him is the chain of Lug, son of Eithlenn, that he used to guard the captives of the

Sons of Míl and of the *Túatha Dé Danann*.' 'We would like', said Conall, 'to obtain those arms and weapons.' 'If it please you,' said Caílte, 'let the cairn be dug up tonight.' 'No,' said Conall, 'let it be dug up in the morning, for it is already evening and we shall spend the night in drinking and pleasure.' They went into the great hall and Caílte was brought, together with his retinue, into a remote and secluded house where they were very well attended to. The wife of Conall was Bé Binn 'the Pleasing', the daughter of the King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta. 'Well, my dear,' said Conall, 'though Caílte may be here for a long time or a short one, give the meal of a thousand to him and his retinue every day, and have eight score cows be put to graze in a grassy field for his use. Have them milked for him every evening for his use.'

They spent the night there until the full light of the next day. They then went off to the Cairn of Garb Daire, and when the cairn was dug up, Garb Daire was found there with all his weapons. The chain of Lug, son of Eithlenn, was also found there, as well as his shield, as perfect as it was when it was placed by his side. His weapons were brought up, as was his head, and the largest man of that host could find room to sit down on the bottom of the head. 'It is a large head, my dear Caílte,' said Conall. 'Large it is,' said he, 'and noble the man on whom it sat.' Caílte gave those weapons to Conall, but he kept the chain himself to give to Saint Patrick. They closed the mound and went back to the hall, where they stayed for three days and three nights.

At that time Conall Mór 'the Great', son of Níall, said to Caílte, 'There is an island far off on this sea before us and a fort there and a great grave. We know not whose grave it is.' Caílte wept at hearing that. 'By the truth of your valour and of your prowess,' said Conall, 'come with us to see it.' 'By my faith, Conall,' said Caílte, 'it is one of the three places in Ireland I have no wish to see, since the great and noble retinue that was there has died. Even so, I shall go there tomorrow with you.' They remained there until the following morning. Conall and his wife and all the hosts of that place set off to meet with Caílte, for listening to him was for them an entertainment of the mind and of the spirit. They went over to the fort where Caílte sat on the grave. The length of the grave seemed to Conall to be thirty-six paces and its width twenty-eight. 'Well, my dear Caílte,' said Conall,

'never have I seen anything more wonderful than this grave. Tell us who lies in it?' 'I shall tell you the truth of it,' said Caílte, 'it is the grave of one of the four best women of her time that ever lay with a man.' 'Who were these four women?'* asked Conall. 'Sadb, daughter of Conn Cétchathach,' said Caílte, 'Eithne Ollamda "the Learned", daughter of Catháir Mór "the Great", Aillbe Gruadbrec "of the Freckled Cheeks", daughter of Cormac, and the woman in this grave, Berrach Brecc "the Freckled", daughter of Cas of Cooley, the King of Ulster in the north, and the beloved wife of Finn mac Cumaill. If any of those women had an excess of generosity it was Berrach, for in her house was a guesting of sages from the Monday of the beginning of *Samain* to the Monday of the beginning of *Imbolc** [1 February], and each had his choice of leaving or becoming attached to the household from then on. Anyone who did not receive sufficient weapons or clothing from another lord or lady, would receive enough from her to cover him from his toes to the hair of his head.'

'Why was she killed?' asked Conall. 'I know the cause,' said Caílte. 'The mother and father of Goll, son of Morna, raised her, and she was their only female foster-child. Finn asked her father, Cas of Cooley, the King of Ulster, for her hand. He said that he would not give her to Finn unless Goll, son of Morna, agreed. Finn then asked Goll for his foster-sister, and Goll said, "I shall give her to you on these conditions." "What conditions?" asked Finn. "That she never be abandoned," said Goll, "that she be your third wife, and that you never deny her anything she might ask of you." "I shall agree to all of that," said Finn, "for she is an excellent woman." "Who will be our guarantors?" asked Goll. "Choose your own guarantors," said Finn, and Goll gave his own three foster-sons in surety for her. These were Daigre, Garad, and Conán. She remained with Finn and bore him three sons, Fáelán, Áed Bec "the Little" and Uillenn Fáebarderg "of the Red Blade". She was beloved by Finn until her foster-brothers, the Sons of Morna, came with three thousand men to raid and plunder the territory of Finn.' Then Caílte recited the following verse:

'It is known to me the number they are the Children of Morna of the Great Ships,
And without counting of the men across each wall, across each place.

'Ten hundred on twenty hundred there of the Children of Morna, noble clan.
Fifteen hundred aside from that, the number of their kings and of their chieftains.

'The Sons of Morna went to the Oakwood of the Bull in the province of Connaught, and the three battalions of the *Fían* overtook them there before they had left their camp. Fifteen formidable men of the Sons of Morna fell in this oakwood. It was then that the great warrior, Goll, son of Morna, blocked our advance with his shield and we were unable to cause them further harm. The Sons of Morna then decided to kill all those friendly to Finn and to his *Fían*. Conán Mael "the Shorn", son of Morna, urged them on. He was the quarrelsome one of the host, the contentious one of the retinue, and the one man of the army and company promoting mutual discord. The Sons of Morna came to this grassy, green slope and considered what they should do with their own foster-sister, Berrach Brecc, daughter of Cas of Cooley. They told her that if she would bring all of her jewels, treasures, and wealth with her and leave Finn, she would have nothing to fear as long as they all were alive. "That is truly sad," said Berrach. "Do you, my dear foster-brothers, really intend to do me harm?" "We do indeed," they said, and she answered, "I shall never forsake the *Fían*-Chief of the *Fíana* of Ireland and Scotland, Finn mac Cumaill, my husband, my pleasant lover and spouse, because of you." The host of the Sons of Morna came there and encircled her dwelling, and started fires on every side. The broad-eyed queen fled the house with thirty of her womenfolk, but Art, son of Morna, saw her from the rampart of the fortress as they were hurrying to the white, sandy shore towards her ship. He put his forefinger in the thong of his spear and cast it at her. The queen heard the noise of the spear, and turned her face towards it. It struck her in the breast and broke her back in two, thus killing her. After the plundering of the fortress she was carried off by her own people and was buried in this fort. She is the one buried in this grave,' said Caílte. Then Caílte recited the following poem:

'Berrach Brecc, my love, daughter of Cas of Cooley.
A queen with golden hair. Worthy wife for a good man.

'She was killed on the shore. That was not a gentle deed.
Fire was brought into her fort, this plundering with malice.

'Three hundred shields there in her house, three hundred board games and *fidchell*,
Three hundred cups for drinking, on which had been put red gold.

'She never denied anyone, good was her form and sense.
The place in which is her famous grave, that which is called the Grave of Berrach.

'Here under you', said Caílte, 'is that woman in her grave and those are the tales about her.' Caílte then went around the town to the north and all the others followed him. He put his hand on the rock that was in the outer wall of the fort and said, 'Men, take one end of the rock and leave me the other.' The host went towards the rock but were unable to move it. 'Where', said Caílte, 'is Donn, the son of Áed, son of Garad?' 'Here,' said Donn. 'Stand opposite me,' said Caílte, 'for you are the son of a champion and of a soldier. If I find wealth under the rock, I shall give you a third of it.' They both approached it, and gave it a violent and mighty pull. They wrestled with it so strongly and powerfully that they brought it up onto the ground.

'May you have victory and blessing, my dear Donn,' said Caílte, 'you who were of greater help to me than the entire retinue of Conall. Where is the king now, and the queen, and Donn?' 'Here,' they said. 'Come over here into the pit,' said Caílte. 'There are three vats in it, one full of gold, one full of silver, and one filled with cups and drinking-horns. Do not give any of them to me but *In Cráeb Glasach* "the Greyish Wand", the great sword of Finn, and Finn's own pitcher, so that they might be brought to Patrick. The pitcher itself is ornamented with one hundred and fifty ounces of gold, one hundred and fifty ounces of silver, and one hundred fifty gems.' The three of them went into the pit, and brought from it whatever valuable things they could carry. Then all the host went into the pit and took out their fill, so that there was not a group of nine without a sufficient amount of gold and of silver.

Conall's chariot was brought to him. 'Get into the chariot, dear Caílte,' he said. 'I now have need of it,' said Caílte, 'for I am weary of

this gathering. I am now rather old to be doing such things.' They went into the chariot. Conall urged on the horses and they went west to the Shore of Conbec. Conall then asked, 'For what reason, dear Caílte, has this shore been named "the Shore of Conbec"?' 'That is not a difficult question,' said Caílte. 'Finn had a bitch named Conbec that he loved well. Any deer she was loosed against would find no shelter in Ireland, until he was driven towards the hounds and boys of the *Fíana* of Ireland. She was the only bitch that ever slept with him. Goll, son of Morna, drowned her, and the flood-wave brought her here to land. She lies under the green cairn that you see at the end of the shore.' Caílte then recited the following verse:*

'Sad for me the death of Conbec, she of the great jaws.
Never saw I a more skilful paw at chasing a boar or deer.

'Sad for me the death of Conbec, she of the rough voice.
Never saw I a more skilful paw at the killing of a hill deer.

'Sad with me the killing of Conbec, above the high green waves.
Her killing a cause of grief, her death a cause of sadness.'

They went off that evening to the Fortress of the Ships, and on the next morning Conall said to Caílte, 'There is a ridge here close to us called the Ridge of Nár. A wild sow lives there and neither dogs nor men can harm her.' 'There was a day', said Caílte, 'when I was a good hunter of boar. Where is Donn, son of Áed, now?' 'Here,' said Donn. 'Take your weapons and let us go hunting the wild sow, as many of the *Fían* as we are.' They went up to the ridge and saw the wild sow there and nine tusks in her lower jaw. The sow screamed at the sight of the hounds and the giant men and they were seized by fear and horror at the sight of her. Donn said, 'I shall deal with the sow, and it is the same to me whether I live or die.' 'The choice of a champion,' said Caílte and Donn turned toward the sow. As the sow was charging at him Caílte gave a thrust of his spear at her so that it went from one shoulder to the other and the sow was killed in that way. They were unable to move her until all the host of Conall arrived. She was then carried to Conall. 'It is an enormous sow,' said Conall. 'That is true,' said Caílte, 'for she is *In Muc Slándae* "the Sow of Healing".* Because of her, evil arose between the Sons of Morna and the Sons of Baíscne.'

They soon saw seven boys approaching them. 'Where have you

come from, young men?' asked Conall, son of Níall. 'We have come', they said, 'from Patrick, son of Calpurn, and from Oisín, son of Finn, and from Díarmait, son of Cerball,* to meet with you and with Caílte.' 'I am unable to go with them today after the hunting, dear Conall,' said Caílte, 'but you go, and take with you those gifts, Finn's pitcher for Patrick, and "the Greyish Wand", the sword of Finn, for the King of Ireland, Díarmait, son of Cerball. The sow that we killed is also for the King of Ireland, for she is the Sow of Healing. Let all see her, and let the King of Ireland divide her between nobles and commons.' Everything was done in that way, and the sword was entrusted to Donn, the son of Áed, the son of Garad, son of Morna. 'You are responsible for the sword, my boy,' said Caílte, 'until it comes to the King of Ireland.'

CHAPTER IV

CONALL himself brought the pitcher to Patrick, and slaves carried the sow. They reached the Hill of the Top of Ercc, now called the Hill of Usnagh, at the middle of the day. Patrick was at the summit of Usnagh, with Díarmait, son of Cerball, at his right hand and Oisín, son of Finn, at his left. The King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta, was next to Oisín and Eochaid Lethderg 'the Red-Sided' next to him. The King of the two provinces of Munster, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, was next to Díarmait, the King of Ireland. Conall, son of Níall, came and put his head in Patrick's lap, doing homage to him. 'Come here, Conall,' said Díarmait. 'No,' said Conall. 'I shall be in the presence of Patrick, so that it be he who will be above me in heaven and in earth.' 'You shall have kingship from me,' said Patrick, 'and thirty of your seed shall be kings. You shall have my monastery and my abbacy as well, and shall enjoy whatever I shall get from the five great provinces of Ireland.'

Conall put the golden pitcher into Patrick's hand. 'Your own friend, Caílte, son of Rónán, gave that gift to you,' said Conall. 'He is indeed a friend,' said Patrick and handed it to the King of Ireland. He looked at for a long time and said, 'Never have we seen a finer treasure than this pitcher. Look at this, Oisín. Who was its owner?' 'My own father,' said Oisín, 'Finn mac Cumaill. His wife, Berrach Brecc, daughter of Cas of Cooley, gave it to him. She was the one killed by the Sons of Morna, and I am sure', said Oisín, 'that the one who found this also found the other treasure that was the best in Ireland or in Scotland, "the Greyish Wand", the sword of Finn.' 'I have it here for the King of Ireland,' said Conall. 'You have recognized them well. Come, Donn. Bring the sword to the King of Ireland, his gift from Caílte.' The boy handed the sword to Oisín, and Donn's fist easily grasped the hilt of the sword. 'I find that strange,' said Oisín, 'that you are able to grasp the sword-hilt. Only one of the descendants of Baíscne or of Morna should be able to wield it.' 'Who are you, boy?' asked the King of Ireland. 'I am Donn, the son of Áed, the son of Garad, son of Morna.' 'By my word,' said Oisín. 'Your father and grandfather were indeed of noble stock, and though they were our enemies, we hold you dear.' Donn handed the

sword to the King of Ireland, and asked, 'What reward do I receive for the sword, O King of Ireland?' 'What reward do you want?' asked the king. 'The chieftaincy of the *Fíana* of Ireland that was held by the brother of my grandfather.' 'If Oisín agrees, it shall be yours,' said the king. 'I do agree,' said Oisín, 'as does Caílte. It is proper, for seven kings of his family have already held the *Fían*-chieftaincy of Ireland and Scotland.' 'Thus I grant it to you,' said the king, 'as it has been given to each *Fían*-chief before you, without tax or tribute from it of gold or of silver, but with the control of all the hunting of Ireland.' Donn took guarantors and sureties and held the *Fían*-chieftaincy of Ireland and Scotland for twenty-seven years, until Dub, son of Dolar, killed him in the battle of *Cuire* over in Scotland.

The sow was then brought into the presence of the King of Ireland. 'Behold,' said Conall, 'the sow that Caílte and Donn killed, and that Caílte gave to you to divide among the men of Ireland, so that they might acquire protection from their share of the Sow of Healing.' The King of Ireland divided the sow among the twenty-five battalions of the men of Ireland that were at Usnagh to their great joy and satisfaction. This was the last Sow of Healing that was divided among the men of Ireland.

At that time Conall Mór, son of Níall, said to the King of Ireland, 'What provision do you wish to make for Caílte, should he come to visit you?' 'He shall have the food of a thousand warriors,' said the king, 'and let eight score cows be put to pasture in a field to provide him and his foster-son Oisín with a drink of milk before bedtime.' They passed the night there until morning.

Meanwhile Caílte had been given Conall's horses, and his chariot was yoked for him.* He set off for the summit of the Fews, to the Rowan Tree of the Fair Women, now called the Rowan Tree of the Meadow of Two Stags. From there he went to the Height of the Prowess in the north, now called the Throwing-Place of Muirthemne [Faughart], where Cú Chulainn hurled his weapons at the Hosting of the Cattle Raid of Cooley, then north to the Ford of the Chariots, now called the Ford of Goll, then to the Stable of the Horses of Cú Chulainn, now called the Grave of the Grey One of *Macha*, between Dundalk and the sea, then south to the Mount of the Firewood, now called the Mount of *Brega*.

At that same time, on the summit of the Hill of Usnagh, a great

thirst came upon Díarmait, son of Cerball, in the presence of the noblemen of Ireland. He asked if water were nearby. All said that there was none. When Oisín heard that he said, 'Bring me a basin, and I shall go to look for water.' 'Let a boy go with you,' said Díarmait. 'No boy shall go,' said Oisín, 'nor any warrior.'

Oisín arose and put the charm of invisibility* on the path behind him so that none from the encampment of the men of Ireland could see him. He went to search for the Spring of Usnagh, called *In Finnflescach* 'the Bright and Flourishing Spring'. From the time of the battle of *Gabair* to that time none of the men of Ireland had found it. Oisín went to the gravelly edge of the spring, and saw eight speckled salmon of great beauty flourishing there, fearing nothing because of the complete seclusion of the place. He put the basin in the water with eight sprigs of watercress and eight of brooklime. When he raised it up it was filled with eight wildly struggling salmon, covered with watercress and brooklime. He returned to the Hill of Usnagh with the basin and presented it to the King of Ireland. All were amazed at that, and the tops of each of the sprigs came to Díarmait's knee. 'Let them be divided,' said Díarmait. 'One half for Patrick and the other half for us.' 'No,' said Patrick, 'you should have more, for you, High King, have a greater number of people to maintain. Let the salmon be divided into thirds, with one third, its proper share, to the Church.' It was done in this way. 'Well, O King of Ireland,' said Patrick, 'do not allow those two Fenians* to deprive you of Heaven.' 'What do you mean, holy Patrick?' asked Díarmait. 'They are of excellent parentage and they are themselves excellent men.' 'You devote too much attention to them,' said Patrick.

Caílte meanwhile went north to the green of the *Bruig*, across the Pool of Fiacc on the bright-flowing Boyne, to the right of the Hill of Tlachtga [the Hill of Ward], and to the left of the Hill of Tailtiu, the daughter of Magmór, and from the Course of the Chariots up onto the Hill of Usnagh, where the men of Ireland had gathered. Caílte entered the assembly, approached Patrick, and paid homage to him, putting his head into Patrick's lap. Mochua,* son of Lonán, an old monk of Patrick's retinue, stood up. 'Well, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'identify this Mochua for us. I wished to ask this last night of Oisín, son of the Lord Finn.' Caílte answered thus:

'Mochua, son of Lonán of the Cloaks, Senach's son whom we will not attack,
Son of Aengus of the Grey Horses, son of Mugna, son of Blat of the Freckled Fist.

'Son of Áedán, son of Blá-Áed, son of Fergus, son of Cinaed,
Son of Fiacha, son of Art from the Plain, son of Muiredach, son of Eógan.'

'What can I do,' said Mochua, 'other than remember you in the eight hours of the Church?' 'Come, Caílte, be by my side,' said Díarmait, taking him by the hand. 'I am not entitled to sit beside a king,' said Caílte, 'but merely to be in the presence of one, for I am the son of a warrior, and the one beside you is a better man than I.' 'I give my word,' said Oisín, 'no woman in the Ireland of your times bore a child of whom it could be said that he was a better man than you.'

At that time the men of Ireland gave greeting to Caílte, and the king greeted him thrice. Caílte gave three kisses to Oisín, and sat down beside him. Oisín gave the bunch of watercress and of brooklime that was in his hand to Caílte. 'This is watercress and brooklime from the Bright Flesk,' said Caílte. 'Did you find any fish in it?' 'I found eight salmon,' said Oisín, 'and we will share them.' 'By my word,' said Caílte, 'never have I shared anything pleasanter with man or with woman.'

Caílte put his hand to the rim of his shield, took from it the linen chain* of Lug, son of Eithlenn, and laid on the ground before them. 'You found the chain in the Cairn of Garb Daire,' said Oisín. 'That's where it was,' said Caílte, and gave the chain to the King of Ireland. If a host numbered twenty-five battalions, the chain enclosed them all, and eight hundred warriors found room inside it. It locked on the first man of them, and could not be unlocked until he was released.

The King of Ireland asked, 'Well, dear Caílte, were those four men that lived in Ireland at the same time, Cormac, son of Art, Finn, Cairbre Lifechair, and Oisín, noble men?' 'The warrior Cormac was a noble man,' said Caílte, 'and all know of the nobility of Finn.' Then Caílte recited the following lines:

'If he had to judge between his enemy and his son,
His virtue would compel him to be fair.'

'And, Caílte,' asked Díarmait, 'was Cormac a better man than Finn, and was Cairbre better than Oisín?' Caílte recited:

'By the King who is above my head, Cormac was not better than Finn,
Nor famous Oisín less than Cairbre Lifechair.'

Then Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, asked Caílte, 'Why is it that Finn and his *Fían* never killed the great beast that lives in the Valley of the Forest of the Fowling in the south, when you cleared Ireland of all the other monsters?' 'This is the reason,' said Caílte, 'the monster is the quarter of the brain of Messgegra* that the earth swallowed and turned into a huge beast. It was not destined for anyone to kill it before the Adze-Head arrived. A disciple of his retinue will, at a later time, bind it with a single wisp of rushes and it will remain in that bond until Judgment Day comes.'* 'Why', asked the king, 'did the *Fían* come to that lake where they and their hounds were killed by the beast?' 'Finn had a lover from the *síd*, Úaine, daughter of Modarn, but Finn rejected her because she was constantly changing herself into the shapes of different animals. One day the *Fían* came to the cairn above the head of that lake, and our quarry escaped into the lake. We followed it into the lake and the beast arose against us and killed a hundred of our men and a hundred of our hounds. At that time I asked Finn, "Will we be able to kill the beast, and, if so, should we attack it to take vengeance for our people?" Finn put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom, and true prophecy was revealed to him. He recited this poem:

"*Glenn Ruis Énaig*, ever true, ever sweet the sound of the bell.
Many red deer there, many fine treasures.

"The storm grew dark, terrible weather.
The earth trembled, mist on the swamp.

"Fowling of the *Fían*, hidden quarry, torrent against hounds,
Swelling stream, churning swamp, broken earth.

"Death of the *Fían*, the beast from the marsh, above the red leaves.
Fierce piercing, grief across points, snares above waters.

"Victorious the monster, a dragon's eye, doom to the hosts,
Gleaming sides of flashing green, before Cáemgein's binding.

"Fierce monster of the lake, followed by a wave,
Fiercely striking the men of the *Fían*.

"Twelve years now truly reckoned,
And twelve hundred to the Friday of his birth.

"Lake of Fowling, abode of swans, alas without the *Fían*.
Clerics will meet there and sing sweet hymns.

"Lake of Fowling, abode of swans, between two hills,
Now a field of assembly from end to end.

"Valley of Fowling between two hills, fairest I have seen.
A river running from the lake, full flowing to the west.

"An abode it will be of pilgrims, an abode of weak and strong,
A burial-ground for kings, when Kevin comes to the glen."'

One cannot count the number of stories that Caílte and Oisín related of the great deeds of valour and prowess they had done, or their tales of the nobles of the *Fían*, as well as the local lore of each hill and region that the men of Ireland enquired about.

Taman Trénbrugaid 'the Strong Hospitaller', son of Trén, then arrived, the victorious Lord Hospitaller of a Hundred of the King of Ireland. He came with a hundred and fifty great men, each wearing a cloak of deep blue with white-copper brooches in their cloaks above their breasts. They had brilliant, pure-white tunics and each carried a trident in his hand. They greeted the King of Ireland, and said, 'We have prepared a great feast for you, O King, two hundred vats of mead and two hundred vats of clear, intoxicating ale, together with many and varied foods.' They had brought all of this food and drink with them to the king. The king then asked Oisín, 'Will you come into the same house with the nobles of Ireland, or will you have your own house for drinking and pleasure?' 'Let us have our food and drink apart from you,' said Oisín, 'for people today are not of our generation and era.' 'How many are you?' asked the King of Ireland. 'We have eighteen men with us,' said Oisín, 'nine with me, and nine with my foster-father Caílte.' 'Let them have twenty vats full of drink and their fill of food,' said the King of Ireland. 'My dear King,' said Caílte, 'do not think that we require equal amounts of food or drink. Whenever I was given ten vats, thirty would be needed for Oisín.' Lacking neither food nor drink, they passed that night in cheer and merriment until the full light of day arrived.

That day a tent was raised on the green-clad hill for the King of Ireland, and none but a king or an heir to a throne was allowed within. Patrick and his clerics went into one side of the tent. Only a bishop or a priest or one beloved by the King of Heaven and Earth was allowed to enter. Oisín sat close to Patrick and Caílte sat near the King of Ireland. 'Which of you is the elder?' asked the King of Ireland. 'I am,' said Caílte, 'for I was already thirty years old when Oisín was born. He spent seventeen years in my bed, and, after leaving my house, took command of a *Fían* and a band of men.'

The King of Ireland then asked, 'How many kings of Ireland gave land to the *Fían*?' Caílte was able to answer that question. 'A king, named Feradach Finnfhechtnach "the Righteous",* took the kingship of Ireland. He had two sons, Túathal and Fiacha, and when Feradach died his two sons divided Ireland between them. One of them took the treasures, the jewels and wealth, the cattle and herds, the bracelets and ornaments, the forts, strongholds, and manors, and the other had the cliffs and estuaries, the mast and produce of the sea, the beautiful speckled salmon and the beautiful surface-speckled deer, the heavy-sided boars, the plump, red does and the fierce stags.' 'Where did they make this division?' asked the King of Ireland. 'The hill on which we sit is the place where the two sons of the King of Ireland divided it all between them.' 'Those two shares are not comparable,' said the nobles of the men of Ireland. 'Which share would you prefer?' asked Oisín, 'the feasts of Ireland, the houses and wealth as well, on the one hand, or the woods and wildernesses, the hunting and fishing on the other?' 'The share that was the worse, in your opinion,' said Caílte, 'we think the better.'

'Now tell us the truth of it, Caílte,' said Oisín, and recited the following lines:

'Caílte, tell us. Great is your knowledge,
When Ireland was first divided, the lands about Usnagh.

'Who gave the *Fían* land? Can you tell us, Caílte?
Who left household service? Who paid their reward?'

Caílte recited the following poem:

'I remember it all well, O son of the daughter of Derg,
When Fiacha helped the *Fían*, until you, Oisín, deposed him.

'Then ten years good sovereignty for you, Oisín,
Till Fothad deceived the *Fían* and you were abandoned.

'Fiacha Finn, Feradach's good son, next ruled the *Fían*,
With Eithne, daughter of Daire Dub, the Morrígu's* child.

'Feradach and Fiacha Finn divided Ireland strength for strength.
They ruled Ireland with fame, without strife.

'The younger chose the *Fían*-life,
Woodlands and wilderness, cliffs and streams.

'Feradach took the high-kingship of Ireland,
Her feasts and harvests, her dwellings and herds.

'Good was his kingship till Mál Mór killed him,
A king's death, red in valour, his death that night.

'Fiacha went to Tara when Feradach fell.
And took back all Ireland from Mál mac Rochraide.

'The *Fían* he gave to Morna the wise.
Four of his kinsmen held the lordship.

'Morna mac Cairbre held it for ten years,
And ten for Garad, till he lost his head.

'Daigre mac Garaid, but five years with valour.
Donn mac Morna, the last for seven.

'Eochaid mac Nárchada from Ulster ruled the *Fían*,
Under two years his reign in high-kingship.

'Cas mac Cannáin, one year he had from Ulster.
His son, Dubán, reigned another two.

'Líath of *Lúachair* and Labraid Lámderg of Munster,
Ten years of reign to each peasant's son.

'Trenmór ua Baíscne, Sétna Sithbacc's grandson,
Father of Cumall, the father of Finn.

'He seized control of the *Fíana* of Ireland,
The king north and south for seventeen years.

'Cumall took by shield and sword,
The kingship in three fierce battles.
Ten years he reigned till the battle of *Cnucha*.

'Then ruled Morna's sons, in grief and constant sorrow,
Thirty warriors surrounding Daigre, Goll, and Garad.

'Goll the Great, last son of Morna,
Held the kingship for ten good years.

'Finn mac Cumaill followed, salmon of gold,
Our generous leader, our virtuous lord.

'Two hundred years of rule and thirty more,
The long life of Finn till his leap of folly.

'Seventeen kings held the *Fían*-kingship.
Finn, *Almu*'s warrior, the best of them all.

'Five crafty druids, the best of our land,
Their tales and their magic abide with me still.

'Badbgna of *Síd Badbgna*, Cathbad, famous druid,
Stocán, Mug Ruith, and Finn from *Formael*.

'Five wealthy leeches, the best of our land,
Though long it has been, I remember them well.

'Míach and Airmed, their father Dían Cécht,
Gabrán from Britain and Finn ua Baíscne.

'Five noble poets, the best of our land.
I remember them well, their tales and their verse.

'Cairbre from afar, Amairgen, Labraid Lorc,
Ferchertne, Mug Ruith, and Finn Fáebarnocht.

'The five wisest men ever found in a single house,
Fithel and Flaithrí, Cairbre, Aillbe, and Cormac.

'The problems they set, Finn quickly solved.
The problems of Finn exceeded their wit.

'The five fiercest warriors of the land of *Elg*,
In deeds and exploits, battle and war.

'Lug, son of Cían, Cú Chulainn, and Conall,
Lugaid Lága, great his valour, and Finn mac Cumaill, fairest of all.

'The five most generous for clothing and food,
Of the race of glorious Gaels, open were their hands.

'Lug mac Eithlenn, Aengus, and Cú,
Pleasant Conaire, Mac Luchta, and Finn.

'The five best sovereigns who ruled the land,
I still remember stories of their rule.

'Érémon, son of Míl, and Iugaine,
Aengus Tuirbech, Conn, and Finn.

'A warrior in fierceness, a soldier in friendship,
A cleric in preaching, and a lord of truth.

'No fault with Finn's *Fían*, by Heaven's King,
But that they did not adore Thy Son.

'Finn and his retinue do not survive,
Nor host of chieftains about the chief.

'Better his hosts than any host,
Many the shields and rough grey warriors.

'Our king, our poet, our lord of great domain,
Our physician, our druid, sweet were his words.

'The witness that I give of Finn,
Three times the better he was than this.

'Seven times Finn of *Almu* found belief,
An old man the last time. From it came his death.

'Eógan held the Half of Mug,* Trénmór by his arm,
Cairell his cherished son, the child of Scál.'

'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Díarmait, son of Cerball. 'Where are the wise men and the historians of Ireland? Whatever Caílte and Oisín have told us of their great deeds of valour and of prowess, as well as all the knowledge, learning, and the place-name lore of Ireland, let it all be preserved on the staffs of poets, in the texts of scholars, and in the tales of sages, so that each might carry his share with him to his own native land.' Thus it was done.

Finn, son of Fáebarderg, King of *Uí Cheinnselaig* 'the Descendants of Ceinnselach',* then said, 'Tell me, Caílte, what caused the destruction of hunting in the Pine Forest of Finn?' 'The frequenting of it by the holy and the righteous,' said Caílte, 'more than any other place in the territory. Finn had a hunting preserve there, and

whenever the *Fían* could not find enough game in the eastern part of Leinster, from the Anvil of the Plain of Femen to the Hill of Howth, they would find it in the Pine Forest of Finn.'

'Well, dear Caílte,' said Finn, son of Fáebarderg, 'why is the ford on the floor of the Pine Forest called the Ford of Fern [Ferns]?' Oisín answered that. 'Goll, son of Morna, killed Fern, son of Cairell, there on a raid by the Sons of Morna. Fern was the son of the King of the *Déisi* in the south, and a warrior beloved by Finn. After he was buried in the earth, Finn put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom and truth was revealed to him, and he said, "Fern, son of Cairell, you are fortunate to be buried in this place, for a multitude of blessed little bells and of blessed books of hours, and offerings of the Body of the Lord will be made above your head." And he recited the following poem:*

"Ferns, where good Máedóc will be,
Today's hunts will be replaced by hymns.

"Ferns of the green shore, for an excellent man,
With his soul-friends, close to God.

"They will come with Máedóc across the ford,
Priests and a bishop, a man of God.

"They will come with Máedóc, the sun through showers,
Son of the ever victorious star.

"An ordained place where once the *Fían* cooked.
Happy the king who has here his grave.

"The strong boar I prophesy, the fierce flame of doom.
With Máedóc will come a wave across the ford."'

'Well indeed have you related this,' said Finn, son of Fáebarderg. 'I have another question that I would like to ask of you, Caílte.' 'What is it?' asked Caílte. 'There is a place near us where the two provinces meet, by the fast-flowing Meeting of the Three Rivers where the Shannon, the Nore, and the Barrow meet. The place is called the Forest of Badgers. I wished to learn from you who it was that held the fortress there.' 'An easy question for me,' said Caílte. 'Cellach Bráenbile "the Bloody Hero" and Moling Lúath "the Swift" of the province of Leinster, two warriors beloved by Finn mac Cumaill, lived there. Each had two hundred warriors, two

hundred boys, and two hundred hounds, and were you to search through the three battalions of the *Fían*, few pairs would be found better than they in agility or at weapon-handling. Another of their virtues was that the *Fían* could stay in their houses for years with no shortage of food or of drink.'

'We find the water of that place wondrous,' said Finn, son of Fáebarderg, 'its height and its flow down the cliff. This water heals every sickness it comes in contact with.' 'Do you know the cause of this, Finn, son of Fáebarderg?' 'I do not,' said Finn. 'Then I shall tell you the cause of that grace,' said Caílte. 'This is the first water in Ireland that the angels of God blessed and the last water in Ireland still to be blessed. *Taídiu* is the name of the river.

'Those two warriors lived there until the Sons of Morna came raiding on Finn. One evening they suddenly discovered that the Sons of Morna had surrounded them from the east and from the west. They attacked the fort for three days and nights, but were unable to achieve anything before the end of the third day when they set fire to the fort. They burned it down and plundered it. No one, man or woman, escaped the fire and slaughter to tell tales of it. When they had finished plundering the fort they set off across the shallow of the Estuary of the Black Stream and then west across the Barrow. We came to the aid of Cellach and Moling with the three battalions of the *Fían*, but were too late to help them. Finn and the three battalions of the *Fían* sat down on the green of the fort and he wept tearfully and sadly on seeing the place burning, for rarely if ever was done a deed more painful to the *Fían* than that. An oval basin of white gold was brought to the Lord Finn at that time. He washed his hands and sprinkled water on his fair, royal face, and put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom. One of the three greatest revelations that he had ever had was then revealed to him, and he said, "Four chosen seers will come to Ireland after me and will make their prophecies for the King of Heaven and Earth. One of the four, Moling, the son of Fáelán, the son of Feradach, son of Fidga, will come here. A battle will be waged in Ireland in the future, the battle of *Mag Ráth* 'the Plain of Fortresses' [Moira], and Suibne Geilt 'Mad Sweeney' will leave that battle and will be killed in this place and buried here. The mother of that cleric is a woman of Munster, and the men of Munster will never dare to cause harm to this place." He then recited this poem:

"*Ros Brocc* a place of wolves between two cliffs.
Soon the church of Moling and his saints.

"Swirling *Taídiu* at the edge of the rock,
Many will come here, travellers for God.

"Sweeney will flee here from Moira in the north,
Joy for the cleric on a fine morning.

"The house of Moling, the son of Fáelán,
An ounce of gold from each, to dwell in his church.

"The bell of Moling will be struck at the hours.
Limerick's men will spare this son of Munster.

"The best men of *Cúalu* will arrive from the north,
Ever better till Doom, the House of Moling.

"I tell you now, my prophecy is true.
Finn's soul shall rest here in Moling's wood."

'Well, dear Finn, son of Fáebarderg,' said Caílte, 'that is the question that you asked of me.'

At that time the King of Ireland said to Patrick, 'It is time for me to go to Tara now. Will you elders come with me?' asked Díarmait. 'We shall not go there,' they said, 'until the end of the year.' Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, said, 'I shall take Oisín with me for this year to the Fortress of Liaman Lenncháem "of the Lovely Cloak", the daughter of Dobrán Dubthaire "of the Wilderness". 'I shall take Caílte with me,' said Conall Mór, son of Níall, 'to the Fortress of the Ships in the north for this year.' 'I shall take Patrick with me to Tara,' said Díarmait, son of Cerball, 'to baptize and bless the men of Ireland and to instruct them in his own correctness and rule.' The men of Ireland went off to their own territories intending to meet at the end of a year in Tara.

This was 'The Converse of the Elders' by the pillar on the Hill of Usnagh, in which they transmitted all their knowledge and learning to the later men of Ireland.

CHAPTER V

CAÍLTE, meanwhile, went off together with Conall, son of Níall, to the Fort of Artrach in the north in the territories of the *Cenél Conaill* 'the Kindred of Conall'. Gentle young girls with yellow hair, small boys in green cloaks, the servants and warriors of the fortress came forward to welcome Caílte. They spent the whole night of that pleasant day in drinking and good fellowship until the sun rose in its great fiery orbit and its rays filled the cliffs and cataracts and estuaries of the earth.

Caílte and his nine warriors went with Conall and the nobles of his retinue out onto the smooth, grassy mound in front of the fortress, and Conall asked, 'Why is this fortress called *Ráth Artrach* "the Fort of Artrach", and why is the fort in the north called *Ráth Mongaig* "the Fort of Mongach", and why is this enclosure in the south called *Les na n-Éices* "the Enclosure of the Poets"?' Caílte answered, 'Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, had three sons in his sun-dappled *Bruig*, Artrach, Áed Álaind "the Fair" and Aengus. A quarrel arose between them and their father. "Well then, my sons," said Bodb Derg, "leave me the *Túatha Dé Danann* and go to Cormac, the King of Ireland and the descendant of Conn, for you have good reason to leave them. The people here do not have enough territory to support themselves, let alone the wealth that the well-loved Artrach has, and moreover Aengus, son of Bodb, has more servants and warriors than all of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and Áed Álaind of the Poets has more poets here than the poetic bands of Ireland and Scotland have."

'The three sons of Bodb went to Cormac, the King of Ireland, and he asked them why they had come. "Our own father has banished us from the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and we have come to seek land from you." "You shall have it then," said Cormac, "I shall give you four cantreds of rough land, that which is now called Tirconnell." Artrach, the eldest son, had a public guest-house with seven doors, and welcomed thrice a year any that came there. Aengus Ilclessach "of Many Feats" dwelt in the Fort of Mongach, and the sons of the Kings of Ireland and of Scotland came there to study the art of spear-throwing. Áed of the Poets dwelt in the Enclosure of the Poets and the poetic bands of Ireland and Scotland dwelt there with him.

For thirty years they enjoyed the sovereignty of Cormac, the descendant of Conn, until he died at the Fort of Spelán in *Brega*. They then returned to the *Túatha Dé Danann*. This place was then a dappled, speckled-red enclosure, with lovely trees of purple-headed nuts, fair fruit-trees and apple-trees of golden yellow beauty, even though today it is faded.' Caílte then recited the following verse:

'Faded today *Ráth Artrach*, though once it was new,
Bright on all sides, an excellent fort.

'The stone to the north, unknown to most,
One hundred fifty ounces lie beneath.

'The fine *Ráth Mongaig* here to the north,
The Fort of Áed of the Poets close by in the south.'

'Where, Caílte, is the stone', asked Conall, 'covering the gold and silver?' 'It is not difficult to find,' said Caílte, 'but to move it from the earth is.' 'That cannot be so difficult,' said Conall and went there with four hundred strong armed men. They all put their hands together on the stone, and despite their strong efforts, they were unsuccessful and unable to move it at all. 'No one here now can help move it,' said Caílte. He made a thrust under it with the shaft of his spear and raised it from the ground. Caílte put his hand where the stone had been and brought forth the stone container of Finn mac Cumaill, containing one hundred and fifty ounces of silver, one hundred and fifty ounces of red gold, and one hundred and fifty golden chains, as well as some battle-swords. Then Caílte replaced the stone. 'Well now, Caílte,' said Conall, 'divide up the treasure.' 'The swords and chains are for you,' said Caílte, 'but the stone container of red gold is for holy Patrick, for he is the Stone Container of the Belief and Faith of the Gaels.' 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Conall, 'the lore you have told us is good.'

At that time Conall Derg 'the Red', son of Níall, said to Caílte, 'There are three hills near us here and we have no knowledge of the names that they bear. One of them is called the Tomb of the Warriors, another the Mound of the Womenfolk, and the third is called the Tomb of the Boys. There is a spring on that hill and a river flows from it that is called the Stream of the Men.' 'I shall tell you about them,' said Caílte, 'though the names arise from different events. Finn took as wife Sadb, the daughter of Bodb Derg, son of

the Dagda. She demanded a very unreasonable bride-price from Lord Finn, that he sleep with her half of the time and that he give her half of his wealth. This was the reason for the demand. From Ceylon to the Garden of the Hesperides there was no better woman. She was betrothed to Finn at the *Síd* on the Plain of Femen, that is now called the *Síd* of the Fair Women [Slievenamon]. If one were to search the world over one would not find a better woman than the one who demanded this bride-price from Finn mac Cumaill. In her presence any other woman appeared no better than irons laid in a fire, and there was no better man in Ireland or in Scotland than Finn. She was betrothed to him at Slievenamon.

'After the betrothal Finn went off in pursuit of the Sons of Morna, who were engaged in plundering and raiding his territory. When he reached this fort, the Fort of Artrach, he camped here and said to his wife's brother Ferdoman, son of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, "It is tiresome for Sadb, the daughter of Bodb, that I am away. She will say it is an insult and a disgrace, and that I have neglected her for the last year. I should send messengers after her," said Finn, "and who would be more fitting to send to her than her four foster-brothers, Conaing and Cathal, the two sons of the King of Munster, Dub, son of Aengus Tírech 'the Wide-Ruling', and her other two foster-brothers, Cathal and Crimthann, the sons of Conn Cétchathach, the King of Leinster.* They are the four in Ireland that are dearest to her." Whenever there was no woman in Finn's bed,* these are the ones who were with him,' said Caílte. '"Which of you will go there?" asked Finn. "We will go," said Conaing and Cathal, the two sons of the King of Munster, "for she is in our land and territory, and she is the closest and dearest to us of the women of Ireland." Four hundred warriors and four hundred boys with their hounds went off to Slievenamon, and went over into the great, shining *síd* where a true song of welcome was sung to them, without guile and without deceit. All sorts of fresh food and fine wine were brought to them and they were there for three days and nights before they mentioned their errand. They spoke to Sadb and said, "Dear woman, we have come for you from Finn mac Cumaill." "What can I do", she said, "but go to him."

'Her women, a hundred daughters of kings and rulers, brought out travelling clothes of every colour, speckled and grey, blue and purple and yellow and green, and came as far as this hill of lovely

slopes. Their horses were unyoked and wooden hobbles attached to them as they grazed the grass down to the surface of the earth. A great thirst came upon Sadb, daughter of Bodb, and upon all her women. "I know of no water in this area," said Conaing, the son of the King of Munster, Dub, son of Aengus Tírech. There was a great stone column on the top of the hill and the men that were with them approached it. They applied a manly effort to it and moved the heavy stone from its position, and a clear, pure spring gushed forth. "The water was brought up in a manly fashion," said Sadb. "What better name could it have than *Glaise na Fer* 'the Stream of the Men'?" They then drank their fill of water.

"You promised that Finn would be here," said Sadb. "We swear that he promised to be here, but we know that he went into the famous province of Ulster after the Sons of Morna," they said, "to the Peaks of Boirche [the Mourne Mountains]." Before long they saw a hostile battle-group of eight hundred warriors swiftly coming towards them from the north. "Are they known to you?" asked Sadb. "We know them," said Conaing. "Goll of the Mighty Deeds, son of Morna, is coming towards us to kill us." The men went and yoked their chariots and put Sadb in her chariot. At that time Goll asked, "Do you know the men yonder?" "We do indeed," said Conán, son of Morna, "the two sons of the King of Munster, Dub, son of Aengus Tírech, that are dear to Finn mac Cumaill."

'Finn's retinue put knee to battle and faced the danger from Goll and his men. Each cast missiles at his opponent, and four hundred armed and sturdy men of the Sons of Morna were killed by the long blue arrows, the sharp, pointed javelins and the great, broad, grey spears of Finn's retinue, but not a one of Finn's men remained alive. The women put their faces to the ground and died of terror. Because of this the hill is called the Mound of the Womenfolk,' said Caílte.

'At that time Finn arrived at the hill with the three battalions of the *Fían* and saw the slaughter. The two sons of the King of Leinster went onto the hill, put their mouths to the ground and, grieving for their two foster-brothers, died there. When Finn saw that his weapons fell from his hands, his shield fell from his back and his sword from his neck, and he wept pitiful, flowing showers of tears so that his shirt was wet above his breast. All the *Fían* likewise wept. "Woe to the one who would go", said Finn, "to the house of Conn Cétchathach, to the *Síd* of Liaman Lenncháem 'of the Lovely

Cloak'. Evil is the tale that will be told to Dub, son of Aengus Tírech, the King of the two provinces of Munster, to the Fortress of the Mount of Cláire in the south and to the outskirts of Slieve Gua in the south, and evil the tale that will come to Bodb Derg, to Slievenamon in the south, concerning the death of his daughter." Finn went to look at the dead, but did not find Sadb. The *Fían* set to burying those four hundred men of Finn's retinue under the earth and they found each of Finn's men with one of the Sons of Morna dead underneath him. Their names were written in Ogam, bright stones were raised above their heads and their funeral games were celebrated. This is why this hill is called the Tomb of the Warriors, and the other the Mound of the Womenfolk, and the hill to the north the Tomb of the Boys, after the sons of the King of Leinster who were buried there. And this, Conall,' said Caílte, 'is what you asked of me, with the reasons for it.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'Sad the death of the two sons of Dub,
With a hundred boys and a hundred hounds.

'Many the tears by *Ráth Artrach*.
Conaing and Cathal together lie.

'Stream of the Men, long-flowing stream,
A famous tale till Judgment comes.'

Conall then asked of Caílte what sorts of *geis** restricted Finn. 'There were many,' said Caílte, 'and they did not affect him, but great fear and trembling did seize him, at that time, from putting so many of his retinue under the earth.' Caílte recited the following:

'No morning trip from Brega's moor, no flight from a poetic band;
To stay at *Dún Ráth* overnight without his host's reward.

'Not to sleep with Sadb on summer's shortest night,
Not to travel to Slievenamon at the fires of *Belltaine*.

'Finn mac Cumaill of *Almu*, excellent his sense,
Never refused a soul, cost him what it may.

'Dead are Cathal and Crimthann Cas, under the green-clad hill.
Not have I seen such slaughter wherever I have been.

'The death of Finn of the *Fían*, making his warrior-leap,
Broke my heart in three, brought all my strength to nought.'

'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Conall, 'you have imparted great knowledge to us and to our learned men to pass on to the people of later times.' They went back into the fortress then and were engaged in drinking and festivities until they took their rest. Caílte arose in the morning and said farewell to Conall the Red, son of Níall, and to all of his retinue. 'I must now go off in another direction,' he said. He journeyed to the east to *Loch nDaim Deirg* 'the Lake of a Red Stag' in *Dál nAraide*, to the place where two noble priests of the household of Patrick, Colmán Éla* and Eoganán dwelt. They were there at the Lake of a Red Stag reciting the lovely Scriptures of the Lord, and giving praise to the Creator.

The three 'sons of the Church' of the household of the clerics had put their coracle into the water to catch fish, and were, at the same time, performing their rituals and hours. Caílte saw them and listened to them and said, 'O glorious men of God,' 'I have seen a multitude of wonders that only a pen would be able to describe. I used to listen here to the chanting of noble women and of the *Fían*. Warriors with great wounds, women suffering the pangs of childbirth, and the noble, spirited soldiers suddenly wounded would fall asleep from the music that the fair women of the *Fían* chanted here.' He recited the following verse:

'Seldom have my ears heard chanting by a lake,
Though I often listened to noble ladies' songs.

'One with a pen could write of it at length.
Sad am I now, such wonders have I found.

'Slowly from Tralee* I came, and have tarried long.
Reading from books, a noble sound, seldom have I heard.'

Colmán Éla and Eoganán came outside and saw these great men holding onto their great hounds. 'It is true,' said Colmán, 'Caílte is here, he of the retinue of Finn mac Cumaill, and the last of the *Fían*. Send a boat for them,' said Colmán, 'as he is now one of the household of holy Patrick, and bring him and his twenty-seven men to our island.' They were brought to the island and placed in a remote, secluded house. There they were well looked after and were well

entertained with fine wine and a variety of fresh food. When they had finished their meal, Colmán asked of Caílte, 'Why is this lake called the Lake of a Red Stag?' 'Not difficult,' Caílte answered. 'There was a red stag on the rounded slopes of wet and dewy *Lúachair* in the south that escaped from the men and the hounds of the *Fían* three times a year. One year the *Fían* pursued him as far as this. We four of the *Fían* caught up with him here, Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne, Mac Lugach of the Warlike Hand, Glas, son of Aencherd Bérra, and I, who was the closest to him as he went to this lake. We each threw our spears at him at the same time and killed him. I took one of his antlers, and Díarmait the other. He brought it to Finn at Tara in *Lúachair* [Taurmore]. Finn put one end of the antler on his foot, and the upper end of it reached his crown, and he was the tallest man of the *Fían*. I left the other antler at the end of this island, and, if enough light remains, could likely find it.' He recited the following verse:

'*Loch nDaim Deirg*, this lake we loved,
Its fame will last till Doom.

'If there be light shining far and wide,
I shall find the antler still unharmed.

'We four came from Munster in the west,
Good our prowess and our fame until we reached the lake.'

'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Colmán. 'Great is the knowledge and the true learning* that will remain with each of us.' 'Look now, son of the Church,' said Caílte, 'has the moon yet risen in the canopy of heaven?' 'It has risen,' said the son of the Church, 'so that the lake and the land are equally lit.' Caílte went off to the far end of the island and put his hand down by the water's edge. He brought forth the antler and left it on the floor of the clerics' house. The King of Ulster at that time was Eochaid Fáebarderg 'of the Red Blade', son of Fírglinne. He was nearby on the Mound of the Weapons, now called Moira.

Colmán and Eoganán rose early in the morning, six sons of the Church in all, and brought the antler with them to show it to the King of Ulster and to the Ulstermen about him, two hundred armed men there assembled. A son of the Church brought the antler into the presence of the king, and all there could have found shelter

under it from storm and foul weather. 'Who found this antler?' asked the king of Ulster, 'and where was it found?' 'Caílte found it at the Lake of a Red Stag,' they said. 'He would be welcome,' the king said, 'if he came to me, for he would leave with us the lore of each territory and of each hill, and the distinction of each family.' Meanwhile the clerics they went back to their house, having left the antler with the King of Ulster. 'Well, my dear Colmán,' said Caílte, 'what is the reason for those eight hours for which you arise both day and night?' The holy cleric answered, 'They have great cause and reason,' said Colmán, 'for there are eight faults that adhere to the body and soul of each man, and the eight hours make atonement for them.' Then Colmán recited this poem:*

'The eight carnal faults that graze us to the ground,
The eight choice hours drive them soon away.

'Prime against gluttony, Terce against rage,
Pleasant, bright Sext keeps nagging lust at bay.

'Nones against greed, while we are on the earth.
Pleasant, cheerful Vespers save me from despair.

'Compline against sorrow and unworthy grief.
Stern, cold Nocturns combat unseemly pomp.

'Christ's merciful Matins against hard, sullen pride.
That you may save me, Jesus, from the body's sins.'

'May you have victory and blessing, Colmán Éla,' said Caílte, 'well have you answered that question. And why should I not observe those eight canonical hours now that God has preserved me until your era?'

At that time Colmán Éla asked Caílte, 'Why is the spring at the end of the lake called the Spring of the Company of Women?' Caílte answered, 'Níam, the daughter of Aengus Tírech, King of the two provinces of Munster, eloped and fled with Oisín, son of Finn, from the Fortress of the Ships in the province of Munster in the west as far as this spring. Oisín was with her for six weeks engaged in hunting and venery here in the province of Ulster, and Níam and her thirty women came each morning to wash their hands and faces in the clear blue water.

'Meanwhile Aengus Tírech, the King of Munster, was greatly

offended that his daughter had eloped and fled with Oisín. He assembled the two provinces of Munster, five great battalions, each of three thousand men. They pursued the *Fían* as far as this, and Níam and her women were washing at the spring. They saw the five battalions on the hill above them. "Sad is that!" said Níam. "Happy the one who would find death and slaughter, rather than that her foster-father and her father, her three brothers and the nobles of the two provinces of Munster would see her thus." She then put her face to the ground and died there together with her thirty women. Her heart came out through her lips in a gush of blood. This hill is called the Hill of the Slaughter from that time until now and the spring is called the Spring of the Troop of Women.' Then Caílte recited the following:

'The queen lies here avenged by a host,
Hill of the Slaughter where all have remained.

'The men of the two provinces of Munster witnessed the death of the woman, and the king said, "Evil was the crime of Finn and Oisín and the *Fían* against us. They carried my daughter from me and she died of shame with them. Follow me to the Mount of the Head of a Hound where Finn is, and let battle be announced against him in compensation for my daughter that they brought with them." They told Muirenn, the daughter of Muiresc, the messenger of his retinue, to go to Finn and announce battle against him. She went off to the Fort of the Dog's Head in *Dál nAraide*, where Finn then was, cleverly playing at *fidchell* with his grandson, Oscar, son of Oisín. Finn asked news of Muirenn. The messenger gave him her message, and recited this verse:

"We shall fight you, Finn, of the eversweet word,
At the Head of the Hound, without retreat.

"Our men of Munster, a memorable host,
Each will slay his enemy in strenuous attack.

"I shall tell you now, my prophecy is true.
Unless you get swift judgment, we shall fight you, Finn."

"Seldom before today", said Finn, "have I been challenged to battle. Go off, Garb Crónán, and tell the *Fían* to prepare for battle." Garb Crónán went off to the camp of the *Fían* and let loose three

angry calls to battle in the midst of the *Fían*. The *Fían* answered his calls for they knew that he had good reasons. The *Fían* of Finn mac Cumaill arose and formed a valiant battalion, with a wall of fine, dark-purple shields around them, and a sacred grove of new-tall, gold-socketed spears on their white shoulders. That battalion of Finn mac Cumaill, as wide as a lake and as round as a city, resembled an indestructibly strong fortress. They asked Finn, "What is the reason, chieftain, for the battle?", and Finn explained it to them.

'Then the poet of the *Fían*, Fergus Fínbél, said to Finn, "It is an unjust battle that you wage against the King of Munster. He grieves for his daughter that you have killed." Finn and the nobles of the *Fían* agreed on a plan. Finn asked, "Where is Smirgat, daughter of Ábartach?" "Here," she said. She was wearing a tunic of smooth, yellow silk next to her skin, and a dress of soft silk on top, with a golden breastplate that reached from one shoulder to the other. "Go quickly and tell Aengus Tírech and the nobles of Munster that I shall give them the judgment awarded by Cormac, the descendant of Conn, Eithne Ollamda 'the Learned', daughter of Catháir Mór, and Cithrúad, son of Fer Cóecat."

'Smirgat departed and delivered his message. The King of Munster answered her and said, "If sureties and bonds for this pledge are provided, I shall accept it." "What sureties do you wish?" asked Smirgat. "The son of the man who did harm to me, Oscar, the son of Oisín, and Ferdoman, son of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, and Díarmait, the son of Donn, son of Donnchad." Smirgat returned to Finn and he said that he would agree to those terms rather than fight a battle. The *Fían* then went to Tara together with the King of Munster. This is the judgment of the judges that were chosen there. The woman should be raised from the fair hill in which she lay, and placed on a balance-scale, and her weight in gold and in silver should be given in recompense to the King of Munster. There should also be recompense for each king's or chieftain's daughter that died there.

'Finn then said, "How should we divide the cost of that recompense, *Fíana* of Ireland?" They answered, "A third from the Children of Baíscne, and two-thirds from us of the *Fíana*." That was', said Caílte, 'the only recompense that Finn ever assessed on the *Fían*. It is also, dear cleric, the story that you asked of me, and the reason why the hill is called the Hill of the Slaughter and the spring is named the Spring of the Company of Women.'

The King of Ulster, Eochaid Fáebarderg, son of Fírglinne, sent messengers to Caílte from the Fort of Áine. They found him at the Lake of a Red Stag. When Caílte took leave of Colmán and Eoganán, they promised him salvation, and said that they would sing his requiem and pray for him to the King of Heaven and of Earth. Caílte went in the chariot of the King of Ulster to the Fort of Áine in east Ulster to meet with Eochaid Fáebarderg, son of Fírglinne. He was a noble and eminent king, for none was plundered unjustly, nor anyone's possessions taken away.

Three full battalions were with the king, and when Caílte arrived, the king, together with his hosts, came to welcome him as he descended from the chariot. 'Well, my dear Caílte,' said the king, 'what better thing could we ask of you than the lore connected with this fort of Áine?' 'I have', said Caílte, 'the information you request. Áine was the daughter of Modarn, the King of Scotland in the east. She had been long without a husband, and the men of Scotland kept asking her, "Why, O Queen, do you not wed a noble man of Scotland or of Ireland?" She replied that not a man of them, aside from Finn mac Cumaill, was worthy of her. Finn learned of this, and asked Finn Fer in Champair "the Man of the Quarrel", and Rónán Rígóclach "the Royal Warrior", two *Fían*-chieftains of Scotland, to ask her father for her hand. "What offer shall we bring with us?" they asked. "She shall have control of whatever I possess in Ireland and in Scotland." "Well, dear *Fían*-chieftain," they said, "let two of your trusted old retainers come with us so that the queen may more readily believe us." "Go, Caílte, and take Mac Lugach with you," said Finn. "However much you may promise, I shall give it to her."

'We four noble warriors went off to the Fortress of *Monad* in Scotland and were assigned to private quarters. Modarn, the King of Scotland, came into the house together with his daughter Áine, and asked the reason for our voyage and journey. We told them and identified ourselves. "Hear that, daughter," said the king, "the best man in Ireland and in Scotland seeks your hand." "I shall wed him," she said. The woman was engaged to Finn mac Cumaill, and whatever she asked of him was promised to her. We escorted her to Ireland and she brought with her an abundance of treasures. Finn came here from Taurmore with the three battalions of the *Fían* and met us at this fort. Finn made an encampment here with a stronghold, a fine, high-roofed dwelling, bright sun-bowers, enclosed by

high walls. Áine was content here, and entertained and fed the three battalions of the *Fían*, with their guests, for a year with never a shortage of food or drink.

'At the end of the year,' said Caílte, 'Mag Lugach said to Finn, "Are you content with the wealth of Áine, daughter of Modarn?" "Indeed, Mac Lugach," said Finn, "I do not know what I would look for in Ireland or in Scotland beyond what the *Fían* has found in the house of Áine." That queen stayed with Finn for six years, and the men of Ireland and of Scotland were thankful to her for that. She bore two sons to Finn, Uillenn Fáebarderg "of the Red Blade" and Áed Bec "the Little", and died herself at the birth of Áed Bec.' Then Caílte recited this poem:

'Áine's Fort is empty where warriors once laughed,
And hosts and horses strayed over its flawless slope.

'Three hundred queens within, though it is known to few,
Three hundred trusted men and fosterlings of worth.

'She was the best of women, with unnumbered guests,
All those have since died, the fort is now laid waste.

'She was buried here,' said Caílte, 'and a stone was placed above her grave. Her funeral games were celebrated and her name written in Ogam.' 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said the King of Ulster. 'It is a fine story you have told us. Let the scribes write down the story on the staffs of poets, in the tales of the sages, and on the tombs of the *Fíana*.'

The King of Ulster, Eochaid Fáebarderg, son of Fírglinne, went to the Fort of the Shields above the rough Shore of Rudraige, now called the Wave of Rudraige [Dundrum Bay]. They entered the fort and Caílte was provided with private quarters and all his needs were met. They passed the night in drinking and revelry until the full light of the following day.

The King of Ulster then said to Caílte, 'There are two graves here on the Dundrum Bay. What is their history?' 'I am familiar with the story,' said Caílte. 'Art and Eógan, the two sons of Áed, the son of Fidach, son of Finntan, the King of Connaught in the west, are buried there. They were dear to Finn and to the *Fían* and this is why. No one, whether his art was great or meagre, went from them empty-handed, and they had no dispute with Finn or with the *Fían*

that they would not resolve within a year. They had been in the *Fían* for seventeen years,' said Caílte, 'and either one of them was a match for four hundred warriors. If any of the *Fíana* of Ireland were to kill a boar or an opponent before they were able to, they would give an additional reward to the poets of the *Fían*. The sons of the King of Connaught were of such worth that they might well be equated with Cormac or with Finn by the men of Ireland.

'On one occasion Finn came to the Shore of Rudraige with the three battalions of the *Fían* for the great hunt of Ireland. Finn told the two of them to keep watch, for two sons of kings, with their people, customarily kept watch for the *Fían* every evening. That evening the watch fell to Art and Eógan, the two sons of the King of Connaught. Four hundred warriors and four hundred boys set off and came to the end of this shore. They had not been there long when Conus and Conmael, two sons of the King of *Lochlann* in the north arrived. Their father had been killed over in Scotland by Finn mac Cumaill, in the battle of the Red Ridge. These two kings with two great and valiant battalions came to this shore to take vengeance for their father on Finn.

'They saw the four hundred armed men arrayed against them on the beach. Art, the son of the King of Connaught, was there with a deadly, blue-angled spear, named *In Órlasrach* "the Gold-Flaming", that Finn had given to him the year before. Finn had given another spear, named *In Muinderg* "the Red-Necked", to Eógan as well.

'The foreigners asked them, "Who guards the shore?" Art said that they were Finn's men. "Happy we are", said the foreigners, "to come upon so many of his people, for not one of you will survive." "If ever a band were in danger," said Art, "it is not we." The two great battalions came on land, and the odds were overwhelming for the eight hundred warriors facing them. They set about striking and killing each other, putting knee to valour, to prowess, and to danger, from early evening until the middle of the night. Finn, meanwhile, had a revelation and a vision. This is what he saw, two sea-grey seals sucking his two breasts. Finn awoke from his sleep and asked, "Where is Fergus Fínbél?" "Here," said Fergus. "What means this vision I have had of two seals of the sea sucking my two breasts?" "The two sons of the King of Connaught you sent to keep night-watch for the *Fían* are outnumbered by hostile foreigners," said the

poet. "Arise, men," said Finn, "what the poet has said to you is true." The *Fían* then rose as one, and went to the Shore of Rudraige. They found none of their *Fían* alive there but the two sons of the King of Connaught with the thongs of their shields about their necks holding them upright and their spears supporting them, their garments in pieces about them and their hearts like balls of string in an empty bag. No man, greater of deed, of the two battalions of foreigners that came there, was alive. Never did a pair of the *Fían* defend themselves in battle like that. The *Fían* went and stripped the ships of the Norsemen and pulled them to shore. Conus and Conmael, the two sons of the King of *Lochlann*, were buried in the earth, and Art and Eógan, the two sons of the King of Connaught, were dying. The *Fían* then raised them up above the end of the Wave of Rudraige and Finn asked them, "Can your wounds be cured, dear hearts?" "It is sad for you to say that," they said, "with your keen perception, for nine hundred warriors came about each man of us and they fell as we did. Let our grave be prepared and our stone raised about our tomb. Let the weapons, which we have used well, and which you gave us as a reward, be laid together with us." Their souls separated from their bodies and the pair of brothers was then placed under the earth. This is the reason that their fame and renown has lasted long after their death. Finn then recited the following verse:

"The Mound of Art and Eógan where they were slain.
Bravely they fought, the young, beardless boys.

"The King of Connaught's sons, many their hounds,
Many their servants, jugglers, and pets.

"I tell you now, what I say is true.
Beloved the warriors who lie in this grave."'

'By the truth of your valour and prowess, Caílte,' said the King of Ulster, 'bring the weapons up for us from this earthen grave.' 'I am reluctant to do that,' said Caílte, 'out of respect for Finn mac Cumaill, and for the great retinue that buried them.' 'We would still like to have them, chieftain,' said the men of the King of Ulster. 'If you want them,' said Caílte, 'you shall have them.' They opened the grave and brought up the weapons, the spears named *In Órlasrach* and *In Muinderg*. One of the spears was given to Aengus, the son of

the King of Ulster, and the other, *In Órlasrach*, to the King of Ulster himself. 'For this reason,' said Caílte, 'this battle is called the Battle of the Shore of Rudraige, and it is a prized bit of *Fían*-lore.

'They were placed in the grave after that, their stone was raised and their name was written on it in Ogam.' 'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said the King of Ulster, 'great is the knowledge and the lore you have left with us.' They went back into the fort and a house of drinking was set up for them. Since Caílte suffered that day from the exhaustion of old age, little knowledge or lore was written down. The rest spent the night in revelry until day came in the morning. The King of Ulster came to Caílte and sat by him on his bed. 'Well Caílte, my dear *Fían*-chieftain, how are you today?' 'If I could manage to go hunting on the Mourne Mountains, I would be better.' 'You shall go then,' said the King of Ulster, Eochaid Fáebarderg, son of Fírglinne.

Then the king's hounds and packs were collected, and he went to the Mourne Mountains in the north. Caílte went with him and arranged the hunt that day, between *Ethach* and *Cenn Con* 'the Head of a Hound' on the Mourne Mountains, so that each man went side by side with his fellow from *Ethach* to the Wave of Flood, northwards from the Mourne Mountains.

Caílte and the King of Ulster were at the Wave of Flood looking off into the distance over the sea when they saw a young woman* in the waves swimming on her back, then on her side, then paddling around. She sat before them on the top of a wave as if she were sitting on a hill or a rock. She raised her head to them and said, 'Is that not Caílte there, the son of Rónán?' 'It surely is,' said Caílte. 'Many the day we saw you sitting on that rock next to the one who was the best man in Ireland and in Scotland, Finn mac Cumaill.' 'Who are you then?' asked Caílte. 'I am Lí Bán "the White", daughter of the King of Ireland, Eochaid, the son of Eógan, son of Ailill. I drowned in this wave three hundred years ago and have been riding it to this time. The waves of Ireland and Scotland battle against me but are unable to harm me.' 'This, then,' said the King of Ulster, 'is the reason for the resounding music of the *síd* that comes from the wave.' 'It is indeed,' she said, 'for from the day that the Lord Finn died I have not put my head above this wave until today, but everyone has heard the resounding music of the *síd* that I made, that caused the warriors and the strong men of the land to nod in sleep. It

is the sight of Caílte, the best son of a warrior that a woman of Ireland ever bore, that caused me to raise my head today.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'Whence comes the Wave of Flood from the fair-haired sea?
From what land, fortune with prosperity? What brings sleep of the song?

'Is it the Wave of Rudraige the Red that comes from the south or the north?
Or the wave that subsides here that screams at Trawohelly?

'Is it the cold Wave of the Hill of Howth or the harsh Wave of the Estuary of Colba?
Or the sweet Wave of the Shore of *Baile* that is guarding Ireland?

'Is it the Wave of Clidna with victory that strikes the solid land,
Or the Wave of Dublin or that of the Shoals of the son of Dáirine?

'Whatever be this wave, more beautiful than other, beautiful its colour, full and pure.
Sweet its garbled sound in the steep inlet, but cold the song that it sings.'

After that the deer went off into the sea fleeing before the hounds. 'Lend me your spear, Caílte,' said Lí Bán, 'so that I may kill the deer with it and put them up on land for you.' Caílte placed *In Coscarach* 'the Victorious' in her hand and she killed all the deer. Lí threw Caílte's spear back up on land to him, and then left them. The greatest hunt that Finn ever made in this place was no greater than the hunting that Caílte and the King of Ulster made that day. According to the scholars, there was a boar, a stag, and a doe for every five men of the Ulstermen, and thirty wild deer went to the King of Ulster and to Caílte. They went from there to the Fort of the Shields that is now called the Fort of a Border. A drinking-house and merriment were arranged for them, and Caílte saw something in the drinking-house that amazed him, a gentle, yellow-haired woman, with pearly white teeth, sitting in the champion's seat and bestowing treasures and wealth on whatever poetry, verse, or praise was performed in the house.

Caílte asked the King of Ulster, 'Who is the woman to whom honour and dignity is given beyond all others?' 'The daughter of one of my warriors,' said the King of Ulster. 'None of his seed is alive but his daughter there, and such a one is she,' said the King of Ulster, 'that she composes half a quatrain, and no one is found in Ireland to make its match.' 'I am certainly not a poet myself,' said Caílte, 'but recite, dear woman, your half-quatrain.' She recited the first half-quatrain, and Caílte completed the verse:*

'The Fort of a Black Man, under it our blood,'

Caílte continued:

'All the *Fían* left it, Fíal stayed not behind.'

Caílte put the horn from his hand, and wept flowing, truly sorrowful tears that soaked his shirt and his breast. 'What is the meaning of the quatrain, dear Caílte?' said the king. 'I know the meaning,' said Caílte, 'though it is a sad thing for me to recall. Do you know, good King of Ulster, who the four men of greatest generosity were in Ireland and Scotland during those times?' 'I do not,' said the king. 'I shall tell you then,' said Caílte. 'Finn mac Cumaill, his son Oisín, and Dub, son of Trén of the Ulstermen, and his own son, Fíal. They had an excess of generosity beyond Finn and Oisín. If you gave them everything in Ireland and in Scotland they would give it all away, if they could find anyone to ask for it. Cormac and Finn were sad that these men had such generosity but not the great wealth it required.

'The men of Ireland, including the King of Ireland, Cormac, descendant of Conn, Finn mac Cumaill, with the three battalions of the *Fían*, and all the landholders, travelled, at that time, to the Assembly of Teltown. Dub, son of Trén, and his son Fíal arrived there and sat in the presence of the King of Ireland and his sons. The King of Ireland had not met Dub, nor his son, prior to this, but he had heard of him. Sitting to one side of Cormac was Finn mac Cumaill and Oisín sat next to Finn. Cairbre Lifechair was on Cormac's other side.*

"Well, my dear Cormac," said Finn, "are you familiar with the warrior before you?" "Not at all," said Cormac. "It is Dub, son of Trén, from the province of Ulster in the north, together with his son Fíal." "Is he the one," asked the King of Ireland, "the poor warrior of noble hospitality that we have heard spoken of?" "He is indeed,"

said Finn. The king then asked Dub, "Where is Fíal, your son?" "He is here with me," said Dub. "What is the reason for the generosity that you have, both father and son," asked the king, "since you are only simple soldiers?" "It is a sad matter for us, noble Cormac," said Fíal, the son. "We think that both of us would die if we were to refuse or deny anyone." "A sad thing it is for you, men of Ireland," said Cairbre Lifechair, "that you do not aid and help Dub, son of Trén, and his son." Finn and Cormac and the nobles of the men of Ireland heard that and said, "We shall give them the help that you ask, for whatever is given to them will be bestowed on the men of Ireland." "I shall give", said Cormac, "a hundred of each type of cattle to them every year." "Every year I shall give them the same," said Finn, and the nobles of the men of Ireland promised further wealth to them. Dub, son of Trén, went back to his fort and gave away that wealth for the next seventeen years, and it is not possible to count or relate the number of good deeds they did during that time, until death and misfortune came to Dub one evening on the green of his own fort. The phantom cavalry of the *síd* came that evening to the province of Ulster, to the Fort of Dub, son of Trén,' said Caílte, 'and asked who owned the place. Someone said to them, "It is the place of Dub, son of Trén, the one warrior who is the most generous of the Sons of Míl and of the *Túatha Dé Danann*." One of them replied, "Sad that we of the *Túatha Dé Danann* have no one to match him." Another raised his deadly spear and struck the nipple of Dub's left breast and killed him. He shed as much blood and gore on the green as a stone jug would hold. After seventeen years he was slain because of the jealousy and envy of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. His son Fíal took his place for the next seventy years. Well, dear woman,' said Caílte, 'since you asked that story of me, what is your relationship to them?' 'I am the daughter of the last warrior,' she said, 'Fíal, son of Dub, and I am the only one that you see that remains of that great family. Therefore the King of Ulster has given me control over his jewels and wealth so that I may give them away.' 'What is your name then?' asked Caílte. 'My name is Úaine, the daughter of Fíal, son of Dub,' she said. Caílte then recited the following lines:

'Úaine, Fíal's daughter, long was your father good.
A most generous warrior, friend of the poets' band.

'And this', said Caílte, 'is the meaning of the story that you asked of me, the identification of your father and your grandfather. It is fitting that the King of Ulster allows you to give away his jewels and treasure.'

Then the king, Eochaid Fáebarderg, son of Fírglinne, said to his son, Aengus, 'Wed this woman, my dear boy, for you will not find in any province in Ireland one whose father and grandfather are of greater repute.' The warrior married her after that, and she was his only wife until death. They all spent the next three days and nights in drinking and merriment.

The king then said to Caílte, 'Well, my dear Caílte, I would like to go to hunt and kill game at *Forad na Féinne* "the Meeting Place of the *Fían*" tomorrow.' 'I, as well,' said Caílte. They went off early in the morning, with three battalions, to the Meeting Place of the *Fían*, and Caílte went with them. 'I have known this', said Caílte, 'as a beautiful field, though it is now a leafy forest and a vast and sheltering thicket.' When they arrived there the nobles and Caílte went into the great enclosure that was there. When Caílte saw that place he said, 'A host indeed was satisfied from this hearth with food, drink, with poetry and art, by Finn mac Cumaill.' The King of Ulster sat down there with the nobles of his army, and Caílte together with them.

They had not been there long when they saw a young man approaching.* He wore a fair, green cloak with a pin of silver in it, a shirt of yellow silk next to his skin, and a tunic of soft silk on top of it. He had a choice dulcimer on his back with a valuable linen covering about it. 'Where do you come from, young man?' asked the King of Ulster. 'From the *Síd* of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, in the south of Ireland.' 'What brought you from the south and who are you?' asked the king. 'Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, the Sage* of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and I aspire to be a sage myself,' he said. 'This is what has brought me, a desire to learn knowledge and true lore, storytelling and the great deeds of valour of the *Fían* from Caílte, son of Rónán.' Thereupon he took his dulcimer and performed music and minstrelsy for them and put them all to sleep. 'Well, dear Caílte, what answer do you give me?' he asked. 'You shall obtain everything that you came here to request, if you have the art and skill to learn it, all the deeds of valour and of arms that the *Fían* did. There used to be a warrior in this place, named Finn mac Cumaill,

and though the place that I see now is empty, he would have given you great wealth and reward for your music.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'*Forad na Féinne* empty, where Finn once walked,
Noble *Almu* is empty, after the good man's death.

'The noble household gone and the true lord Finn,
The host without deception and their chieftains all.

'Dead are all Finn's *Fían* that went from glen to glen.
Sad my life when Conán and Díarmait have gone.

'And Goll, the son of Morna and Ailill Hundredfold,
After the death of Eógan and Conall of great renown.

'I shall tell now, my prophecy is true,
Great our loss at *Tech Drumman*, Dub Dírma having gone.

'After the death of hundreds, sad that I survived.
Travelling from border to border, full was the meeting-place.'

Then Caílte recalled the loss of the friends, the foster-brothers, and the great hosts he was formerly with, and he wept heavy, truly sorrowful tears, so that his shirt and breast were drenched. Every hill and mound and fort he would wander by, it seemed to him that two or three or four or five or a band of the *Fían* would appear, but they were only empty hills and smooth, level plains with no hound or boy or warrior on them. From there they went off to *Tulach in Trír* 'the Mound of the Three' and sat down there, the King of Ulster, Caílte, and all the rest. The King of Ulster said to Caílte, 'Fair is the mound with its choice green surface. Why is it called the Mound of the Three, and why is this river called *Abann Déisi* "the River of a Pair", and that place over there the Tomb of the Head of a Hound?' 'Though the story is not new, I shall tell you reason for it all, for I was not an old man when they received those names. There was a king in Scotland named Irúath, son of Alpin. He was the King of Scotland and had three daughters, named Muiresc, Aífe, and Aillbe, who fell in love with the three warriors in the *Fíana* of Ireland, Gér, Glas, and Guba, the three sons of Aencherd Bérra. Those warriors also fell in love with them and they all remained in love for twenty years. The women once went off as far as this hill and happened to fall asleep here. At that very time a great and horrible battle was

waged between Finn mac Cumaill and Fothad Canánn, son of Mac Con, son of Mac Niad, in the full, fair province of Leinster. Poets cannot number those of the *Fíana* that fell there nor of the people of Fothad Canánn. Those three champions of valour, the three sons of Aencherd Bérra, also died here. Meanwhile those three women awoke from their sleep, and saw three warriors of the *Fían* drawing near. They asked news of them and were told of the battle and the slaughter of the *Fían* there, and the death of the three sons of Aencherd Bérra.

'They began to weep sorrowfully on that hill, and died there, grieving for their three lovers. These women had two foster-brothers, the two sons of the King of the men of Caithness in the north, named Uillenn and Eochair, who did a strong and mighty deed after the death of their foster-sisters. They came as far as this river and it rose up against them. When they saw the embroidered, ornamented clothing on the other side, they boldly rushed into the ford and the flood of the river drowned them. They are the ones under the two green mounds yonder at the edge of the ford.'

'Why is the grave there on the other side of the ford called the Tomb of the Head of a Hound?' 'A bitch that was very dear to Finn mac Cumaill,' said Caílte, 'Adnúall by name, went off straying and wandering northwards from the hall. She had roamed three times through Ireland before she reached this ford. She then gave three yelps and died here, and it is for that reason that is called the Tomb of the Head of a Hound, after that bitch. She was, my dear King of Ulster, one of the three best hounds that Finn ever found.

'Meanwhile two chieftains of Ulster, Goll Gulban and Cas of Cooley, were hunting in this field, and saw the three yellow-haired women dead on this hill, wearing excellent clothing of every hue. Never had they seen three women alive as beautiful as these were dead. They mourned the three sisters for a long time and buried them in the earth. They then went down into the ford, and saw the youths who had drowned and buried them as well.' Then Caílte recited the following poem:

'*Tulach in Trír* from which they came.
This name upon it until Doom.

'*Abann Déisi* I remember still,
The pair here found under its banks.

'Tomb of a Hound at the head of the ford,
Adnúall, hound without deceit.

'Great hill, harsh rock, where weapons I made,
Few came from land to the Hill of the Three.'

CHAPTER VI

CAÍLTE took leave of the King of Ulster and went off over the tops of hills and rocks to the grass-green summit of the Fews, to the Rowan Tree of the Meadow of Two Stags, and then to the Race-Course of the Chariots,* the place where the Ulstermen left their chariots when they went to the battles of *Gáirech* [Garhy] and *Ilgáirech*. After Caílte had reached there, Saint Patrick came to the Race-Course of the Chariots, with one hundred and fifty bishops, one hundred and fifty priests, one hundred and fifty deacons, and one hundred and fifty psalmodists. They sat down at the end of the Race-Course of the Chariots on the very summit of the Fews and Patrick performed his hours and praised the Creator. Caílte arrived with his nine Fenians and the musician Cas Corach, son of Caincinde. They greeted Caílte and the clerics asked him for tales. He told them of the adventures he had had that year. 'Where is Broccán the scribe?' asked Patrick, and Broccán answered. Patrick said, 'Let everything that Caílte relates, from the day that he parted from us at the pillar on the Hill of Usnagh until this very time, be written down and preserved by you.'

'Well, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'who is the fair, curly-headed and dark-browed boy in the blue cloak carrying a dulcimer?' 'Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, the Sage of the *Túatha Dé Danann*,' said Caílte. 'He came to me to learn knowledge and true lore.' 'He came on a good road,' said Patrick. 'You were preserved, dear Caílte, for great goodness, for the time of belief and of the holy and the righteous, and in order to be in friendship with the King of Heaven and Earth. Now sing for us, Cas Corach, something of your art and of your own skill.' 'I shall,' said Cas Corach. 'Never has it pleased me more to perform before anyone else, holy cleric,' he said. He took up his dulcimer, tuned it, and played it until he brought a strain of music on it. The clerics had never before heard anything as melodious, except for the praise of the service of the Lord and the praise of the King of Heaven and Earth.

At that time drowsiness and sleep fell upon the clerics from the beguiling music of the *síd*. Cas Corach finished his music and said, 'Give me a reward, holy cleric, for my music.' 'What reward do you

seek?' asked Patrick. 'Heaven for myself,' he said, 'for this is the best reward, and good fortune for my art for ever, and for all the people of my art who follow me.' 'You shall have Heaven,' said Patrick, 'and may this be one of the three arts in which one may find profit until the end in Ireland. Though a man of your art may encounter great inhospitality, if he make music and tell tales, the inhospitality will disappear,' said Patrick, 'and men of your art will be bedfellows of kings through eternity, and will prosper provided they are not slothful, with but one man of a hundred of them in Hell. Let them have Heaven for their poetry and their art.' Cas Corach put his dulcimer back in its case. 'Good is the art that you have performed for us,' said Broccán. 'Good it was,' said Patrick, 'unless indeed the magical melody of the *síd* were in it. If it were not for that, there would be nothing closer to the music of the King of Heaven and Earth than that music.' 'If there is music in heaven,' said Broccán, 'why should there not also be music on earth? Thus it is not proper to banish music.' 'I did not say that at all,' said Patrick, 'but one should not put too much stock in it.'

They were not there long when they saw a seasoned, grey-haired warrior approaching them. He had a pure-white linen tunic against his skin and a bright, smooth, gleaming purple cloak about him with a pin of gold above his breast with an inlaid, gilded sword under his white throat and a long, pointed staff of white hazel in one of his hands. He put his head in Patrick's lap and did homage to him. 'What is your name, warrior?' asked Patrick. 'Eógan is my name,' said the warrior, 'the High Hospitaller of the retinue of the King of Ireland, Díarmait, son of Cerball.' 'Have we not heard that you are a man of great wealth?' said Patrick. 'I am, dear cleric,' said he. 'Shall we celebrate the Eve tonight on your land?' asked Bishop Soichell,* the Chief Steward of Patrick. 'What Eve is the eve tonight?' asked Eógan the High Hospitaller. 'The Eve of *Samain*,' said Patrick. 'You shall be welcome with me from the Eve of *Samain* to the Eve of *Belltaine* [1 May], all that you are, both guests and household,' he said. 'The tenant is fat,'* said Benén, 'the one that the cleric found.' 'He will go to serve *Macha* [Armagh] in the north,' said Patrick, 'and if he is fat his son and his grandson after him will be also.' 'And what better name could they have', said Benén, 'than the Descendants of the Fat One of *Macha*?'

They saw fifty great men approaching them with very heavy pins

of iron in their cloaks above their breasts and their cloaks folded about them. Together they bowed to Patrick. 'And who are these?' said Patrick. 'These are my hospitallers and victuallers, the people who provide for my house,' said Eógan. They all arose at once and did homage to Patrick. '*Macha* shall have your life-dues and your death-offerings for ever,' said Patrick.

A great and heavy snow fell and grievous cold descended on all the province. The snow came up to the sides of the men and the shoulders of the soldiers, and to the axles of the chariots. It twisted the branches of the russet-leaved trees like withes, so that strong men were unable to journey. Caílte said, 'A time indeed for wild stags and skittish does to seek the shelters of hills and rocks now, and a time for fair, speckled salmon to go into the cavities of river banks.' A cold storm arose then and Caílte recited the following verse:

'Cold winter, a sharp wind, a fierce red stag rises.
No warmth this night on the mountain. The stag is swift to bell.

'The stag of Slieve Aughty takes no rest,
Listening to the music of wolves.

'Dark Díarmait and I, and Oscar, keen and light,
Heard their music on a freezing night.

'Well sleeps the stag in his lair,
Shielded against the very cold night.

'Today I am old, I know but few.
On icy mornings I shook my spear.

'I thank the King of Heaven above,
That I held a host, though tonight I'm cold.'

'We must go now,' said Eógan, 'to our fortress and manor house.' They set off and saw the fortress in front of them. After their arrival the place was handed over to them, and Caílte, together with his people, was given a hidden and secluded sun-room. They enjoyed drinking and merriment there for three days and nights, except for the times that the clerics were performing their service and hours, and praising the Creator.

At that time Eógan the High Hospitaller went to speak with Patrick and told him of his misfortune that there was no water nearby and his men were weary from carrying water. The fortress

had a strange appearance that day. It was situated in a hollow of the earth with the four swellings of mountains rising above it on every side. The fort had no door in it, but for the one entrance, and the men of the world were unable to plunder or pillage it, should they so desire. Patrick asked Eógan, 'Did you find any sign that an army or a host had been here before you?' 'We found', said Eógan, 'a spear and a sword and a yew vessel here.' 'Caílte will have knowledge of it,' said Patrick. Caílte was sent for and brought to Patrick.

'Well, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'can you tell us who was in this place before Eógan?' 'It is very easy for me,' said Caílte, 'for I was one of the eight men that handed over this place to the man to whom Finn mac Cumaill gave it, the only warrior who made his friendship with Finn under duress, Conán, son of *In Líath Lúachra* "the Grey One of *Lúachair*" in the west. He had previously done great harm to Finn, killing a hound, a servant, and a warrior of the *Fían* from one *Samain* to the next, as well as killing one of the three best men of the Children of Baíscne, Áed Rind, son of Rónán, together with his three sons, Áed, Eógan, and Eóbrán. The Lord Chieftain Finn had come to the Cairn of Lugaid in the west of the province of Munster, and as he was sitting there after hunting, Conán came behind him unnoticed and grasped the Lord Chieftain across his shoulders and across his weapons, as a small boy is taken. Finn recognized who had grasped him thus and asked, "What do you wish, Conán?" "To make my bond, my alliance, and my allegiance with you, for it is seven years that I have been pillaging and plundering you, and I cannot withstand your anger against me." "Though I accept you," said Finn, "so great is the evil and wrong you have done to the *Fíana* of Ireland that I doubt that they will accept you peacefully." "Provided you accept me, royal chieftain, leave the rest between me and the *Fíana* of Ireland," said Conán. "I shall indeed accept you," said Finn, "though I do so under duress." He was received by Finn and made his bond and allegiance to him. The *Fían* then came towards them at the Cairn of Lugaid, west in the province of Munster. They came in their hosts and crowds and all that came were amazed to see Finn and Conán, the two greatest enemies in Ireland and Scotland, together in one place.

"Well, Conán," said the *Fían*, "what recompense will you make to us for the great injuries and evils you have done to us?" Conán answered that forcefully. "Every battle, every injury, and every great

wrong that you encounter, send me to deal with it, and if I fall there, you have avenged your grievances and your wrongs against me. If I do not fall, then you shall have the fame and renown of it." "Indeed," said Oisín, "we have never been given better terms than these." Peace was thus made with Conán.

"How many are with you, Conán?" asked Finn. "Five hundred warriors, five hundred boys, and five hundred hounds," he said. "Since you are that number," said Finn, "explore all of Ireland, and, whatever cantred in it that you choose for yourself, I shall give it to you." Eight of us warriors went with him', said Caílte, 'as far as the place that we are now in. Conán had no confidence, even though the *Fían* had received him in peace, until he came to this place. When he saw that this place was a hidden fort, strong and impregnable, he fell in love with it. All of his army and his people came here, and this place was held by him for thirty years. Whatever threat the *Fían* encountered during that time, he was the first of them to defend against it.'

'How did that Conán die?' asked Patrick. 'He was', said Caílte, 'one of the four men of the *Fían* to die in bed. While in the Plain of Meeting in the south of the Territory of Éile, a poisonous worm entered into his head and he died within the hour.' 'Did he have water here?' asked Patrick. 'There is a spring of pure water in this place,' said Caílte. 'But it is in a secret place,' said Eógan, 'for we have found no trace of it on the surface of the earth.' 'Few of the *Fían* knew of it,' said Caílte, 'until one of them came across it. I found it later, and after that the man of the place himself.' 'Who was the first?' asked Patrick. 'Áed, son of Finn,' said Caílte, 'and I must say that there was no place in Ireland from which a man could fill a cup or a pitcher, from a cliff or a river, from an estuary, or from an impregnable place, that he could not find in the middle of the night. He was the one who told us of the well in this place, and it is here,' said Caílte, 'in the side of the fortress of rough-headed stone under a strong, tightly fitting lid of stone. Smirgat, the daughter of Aithech Étúalaing "the Insufferable", and Dér Dub "the Black" from *Dubshlíab* "Black Mountain" found it long ago.' Then Caílte recited the following poem:

'A well lies on the south side, of benefit for you.
Water, I shall give, rising to the ground.

"No well serves the fort," said Eógan without guile,
"Unless the Son of Mary give us aid."

'Good was I in battle, facing foreign foes,
Three times fifty fell by my hand alone.

'Aithech's daughter Smirgat and Dér Dub from *Dubshlíab*,
News of our enemies they brought us from afar.

'I the shapely Caílte brought sorrow on a host,
A pair of each beast I captured on my run.

'Good were the people of Finn, little of worth remains,
A great, forceful host that travelled throughout the lands.'

'Go now,' said Patrick, 'and find the spring.' 'I am terrified of finding it,' said Caílte, 'for it took nine heroes to raise the cover from it and the same number to replace it again. I am also afraid that the water from the well will flood the place.' 'God will control the water in a fitting way,' said Patrick. Caílte went off and all followed. He grasped the huge stone on the outside wall of the fort with his two hands and pulled it towards him, and a strong torrent of fair, lively, clear-blue water surged from the rock and quickly flooded the place. Patrick then raised his fair, devout hand, that relieved every difficulty and trouble to which it was applied, and the water was swallowed back again into the mountain and into the same rock, so that there was no more water than the contents of Patrick's palm issuing from it. 'The name of the well is now the Palm of Patrick,' said Benén. 'I allow it to remain as it is,' said Patrick, 'unless there may be kin-slaying among the inhabitants of the place at a later time.'

Patrick and Caílte went out onto the green with all those who had been in the fortress. They soon saw a warrior approaching them. He was wearing a shirt of yellow silk next to his skin and had a fair green cloak about him, with a pin of gold in the cloak above his breast. He had long, fine, golden, light-yellow hair and a soft, lovely yellow ribbon behind his shoulders with fine threads of gold about each strand of the hair lest the piercing, stormy, rapacious wind blow hair in front of his eyes. He had a well-forked, light-yellow beard down to the curls of his chest hair. 'Who are you, dear warrior?' said Caílte. 'Áed, son of Áed na nAmsach "of the Mercenaries", from the Hill of Ardmoll off on the sea, now called Rathlin, and I am the favourite of

all of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. I have come to you now to ask something of you.' 'What is it you wish to ask of me, Áed?' said Caílte. 'What better thing could I ask than the reason why this cairn is called the Cairn of the Seduction of the Wife of the Son of Lir and for what reason it is called the Cairn of Manannán.'

'A warrior of the *Túatha Dé Danann*,' said Caílte, 'named Aillén, son of Eogabál, fell in love with Uchtdelb, the wife of Manannán,* son of Lir, and Manannán fell in love with Aillén's sister, Áine, daughter of Eogabál, and she was dearer to Manannán than anyone. At that time Áine asked her brother Aillén, "Why is the once great regal appearance that you had diminished?" "Indeed, woman," said Aillén, "there is not anyone alive that I would tell that to but you alone. I have fallen in love with the wife of Manannán, Uchtdelb, daughter of Aengus Finn 'the Fair'." "I can help you in this," said Áine, "for Manannán has fallen in love with me. If he gives his wife to you then, to help you, I shall sleep with him." Aillén and Áine went off,' said Caílte, 'as far as this hill, and Manannán arrived together with his wife. Áine sat on the right side of Manannán and gave him three dear and fervent kisses. Each then asked news of the other. As soon as the wife of Manannán saw Aillén she fell in love with him at once, and they told each other all of their adventures.'

Patrick then said, 'This is an intricate tale. The sister of Aillén, son of Eogabál, has fallen in love with Manannán, and the wife of Manannán has fallen in love with Aillén.' 'What word other than "intricate" could describe such a tale,' said Benén, 'given its plot?' Thus the old saying 'an intricate business is storytelling' comes from this. 'Manannán gave his own wife to Aillén, and Áine seduced Manannán,' said Caílte. 'She recited the following verse at that time:

"O son of Lir, come away with me to the oakwood of Dairbre in the heights;
Woodcock will call, a blackbird's song carry, if you but reach the Bridge of the Two Curs.

"Much music will be played for you, notes both familiar and strange;
Cuckoo song springing from the dark wood at the lead stag's belling.

"The lure of faint forest piping, woodpecker's drumming on a tree trunk,
Stags calling into the bracing wind, heather grouse in the cold night.
"Listening to such soothing music with its many-noted performance;
This, and lovely girls in our house, and all for you, son of Lir."

'Aillén brought the wife of Manannán to the *Síd* of Eogabál and Manannán brought Áine, daughter of Eogabál, with him to *Tír Tairngire* "the Land of Promise". These, dear Áed,' said Caílte, 'are the two questions you asked of me.'

They were in that fortress for a whole week. When they took their leave of Eógan the High Hospitaller, Patrick granted Heaven to him for all that he had done in accordance with his will. They then went off to the east to the Valley of the Hero, which is now called the Valley of the Household of Díucra, where Patrick had been in bondage to the King of *Dál nAraide*, Miliuc maccu Bóin.* They saw before them an agreeable church with thirty sons of the Church inside eagerly praising the Creator. Looking beyond it they saw a church by a meadow. 'We give thanks to the King of Heaven and Earth,' said Caílte. 'This used to be a place of armies and hosts, and now it is a place of the holy and the righteous.' 'Which of the *Fían* lived in this place?' asked Patrick. 'Raigne Rosclethan "of the Wide Eyes", son of Finn, lived in one of the fortresses and Caince Corcairderg "the Purple-Red", son of Finn, lived in the other,' said Caílte. 'The Sons of Morna killed Raigne, son of Finn. This is why it is called the Plain of Raigne.* They also killed the other son, and that is why it is called the Mount of Caince.'

They had not been there long when they saw a gentle, young, yellow-haired woman coming towards them. She sat close to them on an earthen mound. 'Who are you, woman?' asked Patrick. 'I am Étaín Fholtfhinn "of the Fair Hair", daughter of Baetán, the King of *Dál nAraide*,' she said. 'Why have you come here, dear woman?' asked Patrick. 'To give our life-dues and our death-offerings to you, holy Patrick,' she said, 'for none of our family survives but I myself and my brother.' She put her hand inside the linen sheet of her tunic and brought out fifty pieces of gold and fifty of silver, amounting to fifty ounces of silver and gold as a gospel scruple for Patrick, and she

did homage to him. 'What is the name of your brother?' asked Patrick. 'Loingsech, son of Baetán,' she said. 'I grant him the kingship of Ireland,' said Patrick, 'and three of his seed shall hold the kingship after him.' 'You shall forever have, holy cleric, everything of Ireland that we own,' said Étaín. She took leave of them, but they remained on the hill for a while.

Together with Patrick at that time was a warrior called Corc,* son of Dáirine, the King of the *Corcu Duibne*. He was of the retinue of the King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta. 'I wished to ask you, Caílte,' said Corc, 'why is the one wave called the Wave of Clidna, and why is the other called the Wave of Téite?' 'That story is still clear in my memory,' said Caílte. 'There was a warrior dear to Finn mac Cumaill named Cíabán, son of Eochaid Imderg "the Ruddy", the King of Ulster in the north. Such was that warrior that, as the moon in her great fifteenth surpasses the stars of heaven, that warrior, in his form and shape, surpassed the sons of the kings and chieftains of this world. The *Fíana* of Ireland were unhappy because of him, for all of their women, whether they had a man of their own or not, had fallen in love with Cíabán, son of Eochaid.

'Cíabán went off to the Shore of the Cairn, now called the Shore of the Strong Men, in the province of Ulster between the Fortress of Sobairche [Dunseverick] and the sea. He saw there a bronze boat as straight as a sword with a high prow. Two young boys were in the boat with shag mantles on their shoulders. Cíabán greeted them and they replied in kind. "Who are you, dear youths?" asked Cíabán. "I am Lodán, the son of the King of India," said one, "and the other man here is Éolus, the son of the King of the Greeks. The wave has brought us here," he said, "driven by the wind. We do not know what region or what country in the world we are in." "Would you give a berth in your boat to someone who wished to make a voyage on the sea?" asked Cíabán. "If you were alone," they answered, "we would." "Well, Cíabán," said his followers, "do you want to leave Ireland?" "I do indeed," he said, "for I find here no shelter or sanctuary." Cíabán went aboard and took leave of his followers. They parted from him with sadness and sorrow, since separation from him was for them a separation of the body from the soul. Cíabán and the young men in the boat raised sail and made their bond and friendship.

'White, boisterous waves rose against them and each wave of the sea as high as Slieve Mish or the Hill of Howth or the Mount of *Elg*.

The beautiful, surface-speckled salmon that usually dwell by the sand and the gravel were alongside the boat. The young men were seized with fear, horror, and terror as a result. "By my word," said Cíabán, "if we were on land we could at least wage a good battle." Cíabán then recited the following verse:

"We three on the wave, our life hemmed in.
Great risk that we shall not die on land.

"I and my two comrades from afar,
Would each ward off a hundred in the fray.

"Alas this southern wave keeps from us our fate.
Great is the sorrow of a pair with three."

'When they were in such great peril they saw a warrior approaching them, on a dark, glistening black horse with a gold bridle with seven tokens of gold. The warrior stayed under the sea for nine waves and on the tenth wave he surfaced on the crest with shirt and breast dry. He asked them, "What reward would you give to the one who would rescue you from this distress?" "We do not know if we possess the reward asked of us." "You do indeed," said Manannán, "that you be in sureties and friendship with the one who would help you." They agreed to that and put their hands into the hand of the warrior.

'The warrior then took the three of them from the boat onto his horse and the boat floated alongside the horse until they reached the coast of *Tír Tairngire* "the Land of Promise". They landed there and went to the Lake of Brightness, where Manannán had his castle. A drinking-house had been arranged for them, and the four warriors were then well looked after and entertained. Spigots were set into vats of dark yew and they raised their goblets, horns, and cups. Dark-browed boys of warlike beauty came with handsome buffalo horns and played sweet-stringed dulcimers and clear nine-stringed harps, filling the house with music. Then long-nosed, long-heeled, slender-shanked, ruddy and bald satirists arrived. They did tricks and feats in the house of Manannán. This is the trick they were doing. Each had nine pointed rods in his hand and, standing on one leg, would cast them with one hand to the ridge-pole of the hall and catch them again in the same manner. They were doing this to shame those of noble, high-born families who came from afar, from distant

and foreign regions. That evening one of them did that trick as he had always done it in the past. Then he went over and put the nine rods into the hand of Cíabán Casmongach "of the Curly Hair", son of Eochaid Imderg, for he was the best in shape, motion, and appearance of the *Túatha Dé Danann* and of the Sons of Míl in that house of Manannán. Cíabán arose and did that trick in the presence of Manannán and the nobles of *Tír Tairngire* as if it were a special skill he had always had. He then gave the rods to Éolus, the son of the King of the Greeks, and he performed the trick in the same manner. He, in turn, passed the rods to Lodán, the son of the King of India, and he likewise performed the trick.

'At that time in *Tír Tairngire* the noble Chief Sage to Manannán was Libra Primlíaig "the Chief Physician". He had three daughters, Clidna, Aífe, and Étaín Fholtfhinn "of the Fair Hair", who were the three storehouses of chastity and celibacy of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. There was no fear of anything killing them, apart from the fatal pains of chastity, or of anything oppressing them but their great beauty. They at once fell in love with the three young men and decided to elope with them on the first fine day. They went to the port to meet with the three warriors. Lodán, the son of the King of India, and Éolus, the son of the King of the Greeks, went into one boat, and Cíabán, son of Eochaid Imderg, and Clidna, the daughter of Libra, went into the other. They raised the silken sail to the top of the mast and sailed off from there to the Shore of Téite, daughter of Ragamnach in the south of Ireland. This is the reason why it is called the Shore of Téite. Téite Brecc "the Freckled", daughter of Ragamnach, went to the shore with a hundred and fifty women to play in the waves, and all were drowned there. For this reason it is called the Shore of Téite.

'Meanwhile Cíabán, son of Eochaid Imderg, and his company landed on that very shore. While he was hunting in the nearby woods a great wave came from the sea and Clidna was drowned. For this reason it is called the Wave of Clidna. Some people of the house of Manannán came after them, Illáthach and his two sons who had fallen in love with Clidna. They also drowned there,' said Caílte, and recited the following verse:

'Clidna the fair-haired died here on this shore.
A sad event. From grief her mother died.

'From the assembly of the men of *Tír Tairngire*,
Cíabán Casmongach took her through deceit.

'The woman named Clidna, queen of the people there,
Cíabán enticed across the ship-frequented sea.

'Going ashore, he left her on the sea.
He searched there for game, deep in the curly wood.

'Sadly for Cíabán, a great wave came towards shore.
A great distress for all, fair-haired Clidna's death.

'The Wave of the Fort of Téite, this name was on the strand,
Now the Wave of Clidna on that unhappy shore.

'To the north the Grave of Téite, slain with a great host,
To the south the Grave of Clidna, where fiercely strikes the wave.

'Close by Dorn the Yellow's *Síd*, from the heavy flood,
Vast its swelling when Clidna was drowned.

'Fifty of Manannán's ships came across the sea,
An excellent company destroyed by Clidna's Wave.

'Illáthach with two sons, by love of Clidna drowned.
The Wave had little pity for those who stayed on board.

'Moreover, at that time Cíabán Casmongach came to meet us at the Ridge of Assal, son of Úmór [Tory Hill]. That was the night that Eochaid Imderg, the King of Ulster, was killed. Finn made Cíabán Casmongach king after his father in the kingship of Ulster. And that, Corc, son of Dáire, is the story that you asked of me,' said Caílte.

Then all the army went to the Fort of Medb, and Patrick went with them. 'Who is this Medb for whom the fort is named?' asked Patrick. 'Medb, the daughter of Eochaid Feidlech "the Enduring".' answered Caílte. 'Was this the place where she dwelled?' asked Patrick. 'No indeed,' said Caílte, 'but on the Festival of *Samain* she came here to converse with her druids and her poets to learn what good or evil might happen to her that year. This is how she would arrive, in a group of nine chariots, with nine chariots before her and nine chariots following her and nine chariots on either side.' 'Why did she do that?' asked Patrick. 'So that the muddy water of the path would not reach the bridle-bits of the horses, and soil her new, clean robes.' 'That is a silly business,' said Patrick.*

'What is the name of this field, Caílte?' asked Patrick. 'It is called the Garden of the Preventing,' said Caílte. 'What "preventing" is that?' asked Patrick. 'One of Finn's warriors planned to leave him since he had not been paid for a long time. This was Druimderg Dánae "the Brave", son of Dubdechelt, of the Connaughtmen. The three battalions of the *Fían* went to dissuade him from leaving, but had no success. Finn came to prevent him for this was one of his gifts, preventing a warrior from leaving him. The gift was, if Finn composed three verses for him, he would be at peace after that. Finn recited the following lines:

"You, my brave Druimderg, famous for destruction,
Though you leave with fame, it is folly to depart.

"Three times fifty ounces I gave you at *Ráth Chró*,
The full of my goblet of silver and of gold.

"Those two women at *Ráth Nóe*, well do you recall,
I ate the nuts then, and so did you."

'After that the whole army went to the Forest of the Horse-Team, now called Elphin. This is the reason why it was called the Forest of the Horse-Team. Whenever the kings of the provinces of Ireland were drinking at *Crúachu* [Rathcroghan*] their horses were in fenced paddocks there.' 'May you have victory and blessing, Caílte,' said Patrick, 'great is the knowledge and information that you have.'

They had not been there long when they saw a woman approaching them. She wore a green cloak with a tunic of smooth, yellow silk next to her skin, and had a glistening plate of yellow gold on her brow. 'Where do you come from, dear lady?' asked Caílte. 'From the Cave of Rathcroghan,' said the woman. 'And who are you then?' asked Caílte. 'I am Scothníam, the daughter of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda,' she said. 'What is it that has brought you here?' asked Caílte. 'This is what has brought me,' said the woman, 'to seek my bride-price from you, Caílte, for you once promised it to me.' 'Why did you not come to seek it at the Cairn of Cairid in the south of the province? I promised that you would receive it there.' 'It is unjust of you to say that,' she replied, 'given the way that we parted.' 'We find it strange to see you both thus,' said Patrick, 'she a young and beautiful woman, and you, Caílte, a withered old man, bent and grey.' 'I know the reason,' said Caílte, 'our ages and lineage are not the same.

She is one of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, who are immortal, and I am one of the Sons of Míl, mortals with a short life.'

'Answer the woman, Caílte,' said Patrick. 'I shall indeed,' said Caílte. He then went off to a pleasant cairn to the northwest of Rathcroghan. Placing his left elbow against the cairn he moved it aside and put his hand under the cairn. He brought forth *In Lugbordach* 'the Hamper of Produce', a basket that was given in tax and tribute to Finn mac Cumaill. Finn had given it as a reward to Conán Mael 'the Cropped', son of Morna, and Conán hid it in the cairn. The basket was filled with gold and Caílte gave it to Scothníam as her bride-price. Patrick said, 'It was close to the road and to the chariot path that you found it.' Caílte then recited the following poem:

'Men of wealth and skill dwelt here before,
Yet few have found treasure, close though it be.

'Enough for all Ireland the hoard in the Fews,
Leaf-Red and four hundred ounces of gold.

'Four vats of gold on the top of Slieve Bloom,
The smallest of these holds two men or three.

'I tell you, holy Calpurn's son,
The treasures remain, but gone are the men.'*

After Patrick had finished his hours, his service, and his mass, Caílte was brought to him. Patrick asked, 'Why is this valley to the north called the Valley of the Hag?' 'I shall tell you, holy cleric,' said Caílte. 'Once when Finn and the *Fían* were here we saw a bow-legged, jet-black hag of a witch coming towards us. She challenged us to race against her for the customary wager of the *Fían*. These are the stakes that were agreed on there, the last to finish would have his head cut off. Three of us ran for the *Fían*, Oisín, Díarmait ua Duibne, and I. We ran to the Great Ford, now called the Ford of the Slave [Athlone], and I was the first to go westward across the ford. I turned back to face the hag and struck her with my sword and took her head from her body. The valley has been named after her ever since.'

They went into that place and it was blessed by them. After the blessing a legion of angels was above it, and they stayed there for the next six weeks. One day Patrick was reading his hours and, when he

had finished them, they heard on the hill beside them the shout of hunting and chase from *Berrobol*. 'Faint is the sound of men and hounds that we hear,' said Caílte, 'a hunt without the Lord Finn and brave Mac Lugach, without Díarmait ua Duibne, and Áed Bec "the Little", son of Finn, who was killed in the battle of *Confaite* east in England, and without Dub Dá Conn "of Two Chieftains" and Dub Díthruib "of the Wilderness", the son of the King of the Leinstermen, because of the death of Díthrubach, son of the Scál, son of Eógan, the son of the mother of Finn, who was killed by Caílte Coscair Ríg "Slaughter of Kings", the son of the King of France, and after the burial of Conán Mael, son of Morna, and of Ferdoman, son of Bodb, because of Findine, the daughter of Bodb.' Patrick said to Caílte at that time, 'Sad is your sorrowful lamentation for your departed *Fían*, but you should not trust in such things now, but in the true and glorious God who created heaven and earth.' 'Well, my holy cleric, if you had known the *Fían* you would love them as you love me, who has now become useless in martial skill and weapon-handling.'

All the host heard that and they were sad to see what had happened, the true soldier and true warrior separated from his *Fían*. 'Well, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'why do you not go to watch the hunt?*' 'I would, holy Patrick,' said Caílte. 'but I am not able to because of the bitter pains caused by the spear that Seiscenn, son of Fer Dub, cast at me in the battle of *Cenn Mara* in the south. It was his last cast, for he himself fell there, and it is to the King of Heaven and Earth that I give thanks for being to be able to hear in this place the sound of the cock.' 'Where did the spear strike you, Caílte?' asked Patrick. 'Here in my right side, holy Patrick, where my shield did not protect me.' Patrick put his right hand against the wound until the spearhead came out through the opening of the wound. It was so large that the knee of the largest man of the host could go through its socket and fitting. The one nearest to Caílte in the church was Mael Tréna, son of Dínertach. 'Dear boy,' he said, 'take my hand, for the Adze-Head has gone to watch the hunt.' After the spearhead had been removed from him, Caílte went outside and Mael Tréna, Patrick's leading student, took him by the hand to his sleeping quarters. He spent that night in great pain and lamentation.

There was a robber in that land, named Dubchraide, son of

Dubtnúthach. He raided and stole from Patrick, who chanted the following lines:

'Consent from me, little Caílte, who put warriors under mounds,
Whoever would kill Dubchraide, would get no shame.'

After which the man died.*

They stayed there for three days and nights, and then all went off to the Dale of the *Fían* on this side of Rathcroghan, and sat on the Height of Senach above the Dale of the *Fían*. 'Why is this hill called the Height of Senach, dear Caílte?' asked Patrick. 'I shall tell you,' said Caílte, 'Finn had an excellent musician named Senach, the descendant of Daigre. He died here of a sudden illness and this mound was built over him. Thus it is called the Height of Senach.' Then Caílte recited the following verse:

'Senach's fee for his music, from Finn, I still recall.
Thirty ounces of gold each season without fail.

'Each man gave fair Senach a scruple of red gold,
That he might sing their deeds then lull them fast asleep.'

'That was a great amount of wealth, dear Caílte,' said Patrick. 'It was indeed,' said Caílte. 'What he gave to women and musicians alone was itself a great amount of wealth.' 'Did he give such wealth to many women?' asked Patrick. 'He did,' said Caílte, and recited the following lines:

'Finn gave three hundred their dowries, by the King above my head,
And each received her bride-price. Great was the wealth he gave.'

'Great was the generosity of that warrior,' said Patrick. 'Great indeed,' said Caílte, 'for he left no woman without her bride-price, no servant without his proper wages, and no man without reward. He promised nothing by night that he did not fulfil by day, nor by day that he did not fulfil by night.'

They had not been there long when they saw a young and handsome warrior approaching them.* He had a shirt of royal satin against his skin and a soft satin tunic on top of it, with a golden breastplate stretching from one shoulder to the other. He was of gentle appearance, with a broad forehead, a white face, and black brows, and fifty

dark-yellow hairs from one ear to the other. As sweet as the strings of a lute played at length by expert hands was the sound and speech of his boyish voice. He had a shield with ornaments of red gold and held in his hand two five-pronged spears. About his neck hung an inlaid, gold-hilted sword the length of a beam of a graceful ship. A handsome boy in both form and dress, he sat down on a mound before them. 'Who are you, dear boy?' asked Patrick. 'Áed, son of Eochaid Lethderg, and the son of the King of Leinster in the south. We were hurling at the *Síd* of Liaman Lenncháem "of the Lovely Cloak", the daughter of Dobrán Dubthaire "of the Wilderness", and my mother and father were there at the game. My mother is Bé Binn "the Pleasing", the daughter of the King of Connaught, Cúán, son of Finntan, and I am her only child. In the hurling I scored seven goals against all the boys, and as I scored the seventh goal two shorn women in green cloaks came towards me. Their names were Slat and Mumain, the two daughters of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda. Each took one of my hands and they brought me with them to the light-dappled *Bruig*. My family lamented my loss. The people of the *síd* held me for three years until I managed to escape last night. A hundred and fifty of us boys came out of the *síd* onto the green-grassed lawn, each in fine, colourful clothing. At that time I realized how great was the danger I had been in among the people of the *síd* and came running, long and urgently, from the lawn of the *Bruig* to meet you, holy Patrick.' 'You shall have refuge here,' said Patrick, 'and their strength and power will not reach you.'

Caílte then said to Patrick, 'We should now go south to the province of Leinster to restore his son to the King of Leinster and to sow the faith among them and acquire monks and nuns there.' 'Where is Cas Corach, son of Caincinde?' asked Patrick. 'Here, holy cleric,' said the musician. 'The son of the King of Leinster will share your bed and company until we reach the province of Leinster.'

They thus went off towards the province of Leinster and came to the Grave of Roíriu, the daughter of Rónán Rúad 'the Ruddy', on the surface of the warrior-plain of Leinster. Caílte gave them the reason for the name on the grave. 'I had one sister,' said Caílte, 'Roíriu, the daughter of Rónán Rúad, and the wife of Goll, son of Morna. She died on this hill giving birth to a son who also died.' He then recited the following lines:

'Roíriu daughter of Rónán, on the grave above the green.
Long the remains of her body dwell in this mound without sin.

'I have a request for you, holy cleric,' said Caílte. 'What is that, dear soul?' said Patrick. 'Since I have acquired your fellowship and your love I ask that you bring my sister from torments.' 'You may have your mother and father and your lord Finn mac Cumaill brought from torments,' said Patrick, 'if God wills it.' Caílte thanked Patrick for this the greatest boon he had ever received.

After that they then went off to the Cairn of the Heroes, which is now called the Rough Washing among the Lands of Muiredach. 'Tell us, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'why this place is named the Rough Washing?' Caílte answered thus. 'A High King conquered Ireland, Túathal Techtmar "the Legitimate", son of Fiacha Finnfholaid "the Fair and Able", the son of Feradach Finnfechtnach "the Fair and Happy". This was the Túathal who struck their heads from the five provinces of Ireland. For this reason he was called Túathal Techtmar from the subjugation of Ireland and from forcing the provinces of Ireland to serve him at Tara of the Kings. He had two fine daughters named Fithir and Dáiríne, and the King of Leinster, Eochaid Doimlén, son of Eochaid Ainchinn, came to ask for one of them.* The King of Ireland asked, "Which of my daughters, King of Leinster, do you wish to have?" "Fithir," said the King of Leinster. "No indeed," said the King of Ireland, "I shall not give the younger daughter to a man before the elder." Thus was Dáiríne, the daughter of Túathal, given to Eochaid, the King of Leinster, and a hundred of each kind of livestock was given as her dowry. She remained with Eochaid in this place for a year, but the King of Leinster had no love for her and one evening while in bed with her he made plans to be rid of her. The daughter of the King of Ireland was to be taken deep into a distant forest. The trees there were to be cut down and a strong and secret house built. Her nine foster-sisters would be with her and her death would be announced.

'The horses of the King of Leinster were brought and his chariot harnessed. He then went off to Tara to talk with the King of Ireland, who asked news of him. "Evil tidings," said the King of Leinster, "for the good daughter that you gave to us died last night." "Why have you come to me?" asked Túathal. "For there is no story I have heard sadder than that." "I have come, dear King, to ask for your

other daughter," he said, "for I do not wish to part from your kinship." "By my word," said the King of Ireland, "there is no pleasure or joy for me in giving my daughter to you." "I was not able to save her life," said the King of Leinster. The other daughter was given to him,' said Caílte, 'and he brought her with him to the place on which we stand. When she arrived here the other daughter of the King of Ireland was still in the forest house.' Caílte then recited the following lines:

'To the ground Fithir turned her face, not a joyous match,
Then her heart broke into three and brought her strength to nought.'

'When Dáiríne saw that her sister had died thus in her presence, she died at once grieving for her sister.' Caílte recited these lines:

'Fithir and Dáiríne, daughters to King Túathal,
Fithir died of shame and Dáiríne of grief.'

'The King of Leinster had their bodies washed and said, "Rough is the washing." For this reason is this place afterwards called the Rough Washing. They were placed in a single grave in this earthen mound. Such', said Caílte, 'is the story that you asked of me, holy Patrick.' 'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'the story you have told us is a good one.'

They saw an enclosed plot of grass very near to them and, in that pasture, a fine, pleasant boy with a hundred and fifty horses. Patrick went over to the boy, who arose before him. 'May you and your successors have the support due a king, my boy,' said Patrick, 'and may you be followed by one of your own. What is your name, boy?' 'Muiredach, the son of Túathal, son of Finnachta. I am the son of the king of this land,' said the boy. 'What is the fortress that we see yonder?' asked Patrick. 'That is the fortress of Coscrach na Cét "of the Hundreds", Hospitaller of the household of the King of Leinster,' said Muiredach. 'Why does he have that name?' asked Patrick. 'His livestock and his herds can only be counted by hundreds,' answered the boy. 'May we find lodging for the evening there?' asked Patrick. 'We shall indeed,' said the boy, 'for I am the ruler of this place, when the lord is not here himself.'

CHAPTER VII

THEY went to the fortress and the boy lodged Patrick and his people in Coscrach's splendid dwelling where they were well attended to. Meanwhile Caílte went along the south side of the fortress to the Rock of the Weapons, the great stone on which the *Fían* used to sharpen their weapons every year. Standing there on top of the rock he wept flowing tears of great sadness, remembering the great people that often stood on that rock with him in earlier times. Before long he saw a warrior approaching wearing a purple cloak with a pin of gold in it. He had the appearance of a noble man and the bearing of a lord. His hair was pleasant and curly, with two clusters of purple-topped nuts of the forest stuck to the ridges and furrows of his lightly waved golden hair. Quite unexpectedly the warrior sat at the end of the rock near him. 'What is your name, warrior?' asked Caílte. 'Coscrach na Cét is my name,' he said, 'and I think I know who you are.' 'Who do you think me to be?' asked Caílte. 'It seems to me,' said Coscrach, 'that you are Caílte, son of Rónán.' 'Truly I am,' said Caílte. 'I am happy to meet with you,' said Coscrach. 'Why is that?' asked Caílte. 'I have twenty-nine ploughlands,' said Coscrach, 'and whenever it is time to reap the crop a very fierce and wild stag comes, and destroys and devastates everything so that we have no benefit of it. Dear Caílte, by the truth of your valour and prowess,' said Coscrach na Cét, 'give help and assistance to me in warding off that stag.' 'Once,' said Caílte, 'when I had dexterity and vigour, I would have warded it off from you.'

They saw a swift band of valour and battle approaching them, with a sacred grove of fresh, tall spears on their shoulders and a wall of dark, separated shields about them. 'Who comes there, dear Coscrach?' asked Caílte. 'Túathal, son of Finnachta, the king of this land,' said Coscrach and he sat down on the lawn where they were. Caílte asked Coscrach whether messengers might be found to travel to the fair Meadow of the Parish in the province of Munster and to the Oakgrove of the Kin-Slaying. 'My seven hunting-nets are in that place, and they cover seven cantreds of cliff and cataract, of river and level plain.'

The messengers went after the nets and brought them back to

Caílte and Coscrach. Caílte organized the hunt and placed a host of men and a multitude of hounds facing the direction from which he expected the stag to come, arranging his nets over the cliffs and streams and estuaries of the land. The great stag came towards them as it had every year. Caílte watched it approaching the Ford of the Stag on the Slaney. He took his spear *In Coscarach* 'the Victorious' and cast it at the stag that was caught in his net. The shaft of the spear went through him the length of a warrior's arm. 'You seem to have bloodied the stag,' said Coscrach, 'and what better name for the ford than the Ford of the Bloodying of the Stag?' This is the name of the ford ever since. They carried the chine of the stag to the Broad Ridge, now called the Red Ridge of the Herd. 'Your visit has been fortunate, Caílte,' said Coscrach na Cét.

Coscrach and Caílte went to meet with Saint Patrick, and Coscrach, with his seven sons and seven daughters, put his head in Patrick's lap and paid homage to him. He received two benefits that evening: Patrick saved his soul and Caílte protected his wealth and his grain by killing the troublesome stag that was destroying it. They spent that night in drinking and pleasure and in the morning all of the host, together with Patrick, went out from the fortress onto the lawn.

Coscrach na Cét asked Caílte, 'Why is this mighty stone here on the lawn called the Rock of the Weapons?' 'This is the rock', said Caílte, 'on which the *Fían* used to sharpen their weapons each year on the day of *Samain* and the edges that they put on them did not dull in battle, in skirmish, or in fighting. On that rock was the best token of peace that existed in Ireland and Scotland in the reigns of Conn and Art and Cormac and Cairbre Lifechair, the ribbed arm-ring containing eight score ounces of red gold. There was a hole in this rock in which the arm-ring was placed, and such was the excellence of the rule of these kings that no one dared to steal it. Such was the excellence of the knowledge of their druids that no one dared to move it, given the authority of the kings. Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac, was the last of those kings, and he fell in the battle of *Gabair*. We, the remnants of the *Fían*,' said Caílte, 'came as far as this place and I turned the stone over and put the top half of it against the ground as you now see it.' 'If we saw the hole and the sign,' said the host, 'we would believe it.' 'Give me a moment', said Caílte, 'to turn it right side up again, for impatient is the Gael.'

From this comes the saying 'impatient is the Gael'. All that were there went to the rock but were unable to move it. Caílte came, put his two forearms about it and drew it from the earth. Thus it was, with the gold arm-ring in the hole that had been underneath. Caílte took the arm-ring and divided it in two, giving half to Patrick and half to the people of the region. The Meadow of the Arm-ring is still the name of that meadow and the Stone of the Weapons the name of that rock. Caílte recited the following verse:

'Know you, Coscrach, this stone that kings embraced,
To which Finn of *Almu* frequently came?

'Whetstone of the Weapons, its hosts are all dead,
Though the stone, ever since, remains in its place.

'Great spears of destruction and warriors' swords,
By this stone well-sharpened at *Samain* each year.'

'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'the story and the knowledge you have told to us are good.'

The horses of Coscrach na Cét* were caught and his chariot harnessed. He went off eastwards to the Broad Ridge of Lóegaire, Son of Ugaine, to converse with Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, and told the people there the stories of Caílte. 'I am greatly displeased with you,' said the King of Leinster, 'that you did not tell me that Caílte was with you.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE King of Leinster set out with three great battalions to the Great Fort of the Plain of Fea, now called the Great Fort on the Plain of Leinster, to meet with Patrick and Caílte. Saint Patrick sat with his people in front of the fort, in the place now called the Seat of Patrick, and the King of Leinster sat down there with all his host. He put his head in Patrick's lap and entrusted to him his powers, both great and small. 'Though I came to meet you, dear and holy cleric,' said the King of Leinster, 'we had an important engagement elsewhere. The King of the *Déisi*, Ailill, the son of Scannlán, son of Dúngal, had challenged us to battle in the District of the Contention, that is called the Plain of Raigne. I left the territory for him to burn and came instead to converse with you and do your will.' 'You shall have in its stead the Burial Place of the Kings of Ireland,' said Patrick, 'provided that you walk around the stone on which I am sitting.' Caílte recited these lines:

'A flagstone lies at Lóegaire's Broad Ridge.
Victory to Leinster's king who travels by.'

'I decree', said Patrick, 'that wherever Ailill is on the Plain of Raigne that he be swallowed by the earth there.' Thus it was done, through the word of Saint Patrick, and not one of his successors was able to defeat the King of Leinster.

The King of Leinster said, 'Your coming would be very welcome to us, dear Caílte, though you had come alone. It is right for you to come, for your mother was Eithne, the daughter of Tadg. Can you tell us, dear friend and chief of the *Fían*,' said the King of Leinster, 'why this spring here in front of the fort is called the Spring of Scáthderc?' 'Because', said Caílte, 'Scáthderc, the daughter of Cumall, drowned here while watching the lake-monster of the Lake of Lurgu.* The rippling Lake of Lurgu with its cold pools was caused by that monster and spread from the crab-apple tree at the top of the Mount of Smól, Son of Edleacar, now called Slieve Bloom, as far as this place and across all the province as well. That was the time when Finn performed a strong and exceptional feat, the best that has ever been done. He brought a sucker from the land

of India and druids from the land of Alemanni and female champions from the lands of the English and Franks to drain that rippled lake of cold pools, so that what remains is no greater than the size of a single island.'

'That first *Fían* of Finn mac Cumaill was famous,' said the King of Leinster. 'None was worse than any of us here,' said Caílte, 'though they did not survive until your time or era. It was the diversion of shepherds and herdsmen to be here when the three battalions of the *Fían* were assmbling their weapons and attire, with Finn mac Cumaill, and Ferdoman, son of Imoman, from fair *Lathrach* in the territory of the *Gailioin* in the south of Leinster.' 'By the truth of your valour and prowess, dear Caílte,' said Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, 'tell us of the hosts and multitudes that the lake-monster of the Lake of Lurgu drowned.' Caílte answered, 'Their names were as follows: Fáelán Finnlocha "of the White Lake" from the province of Connaught in the west; Aengus and Dobarchú from the province of Leinster; Druimderg Daire "of Oakwood" and Dub Dá Dét "of Two Teeth" from Tirconnell in the north; Ibar and Aicher, Áed and Art, the four sons of the King of the District of the Contention, which is now called Ossory; Cairell and Caicher, Cormac and Cáem, the four sons of the King of *Dál nAraide* in the north; Maine, Art, and Aralt, the three sons of the King of Scotland; Eóbrán, Áed, and Eógan, the three sons of the King of Britain; Blái, the King of Islay, and his two sons, Cern and Cernabrog; the two Kings of the Hebrides in the north; Díure, Barrae, and Idae, the three sons of the King of the north of *Lochlann*; Lúath, Indell, and Eógan, the three sons of the King of the *Mairtine* of Munster in the west; Glas, Delga, and Duibne, the three sons of the King of the Tribes of *Brega* and Meath; Illann, Áed, and Eoganán, the three sons of the King of *Cenél nEógain* "the Kindred of Eógan" [Tyrone] in the north; Samaisc, Artúr, and Inber, the three sons of the King of the Irish Vikings. Those are the names of the chieftains, the lords and the men of the land, the first *Fían* of Finn mac Cumaill, that were drowned by the lake-monster of the Lake of Lurgu.' 'Though my dexterity and weapon-handling have long since departed and, since I left off swimming in the streams and estuaries of Ireland, my ability in the water, when I first saw this plain it was a cold, rippling lake of clear, bright water.' He then recited this poem:

'Water of a sparkling stream, sound of a slippery boat,
Herdsmen eyeing the dress of the *Fían*.

'The seagull glides by the stormy shore,
The marsh is soon a coursing sea.

'Ten men, ten score, ten hundred, no lie,
All brave warriors, long since dead.

'Whenever I fought I kept my oath,
And killed only men of noble birth.

'Shapeless, pale, confused, and slow,
My sense has gone, my groan remains.

'Shapeless, pale, confused, and slow,
Age has broken my heart in three.'

Caílte suddenly became aware of the absence of his *Fían* and his troops and his great followings and of his lack of dexterity and skill, and was struck with a great sorrow. 'Well, dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'you have no need for grief or sorrow, for you have fared better than any of them. I have given you, beyond any other one of the *Fían*, the goodness of the True and Glorious God, faith, piety, and cross-vigil.'

The day ended and the following night began. Coscrach of the Hundreds said to the King of Leinster, 'I have a fine banquet prepared for you, my King, eight score vats of tasty, fine ale, from the best of every malt and wort.' 'Never has a banquet been prepared that pleased me more,' said the king. All the hosts of the king went off with the clerics of Patrick to the banquet in the fortress nearby. Doormen, cupbearers, and carvers of meat were there to serve them and spigots were set in the great vats of dark yew. Young boys in green cloaks appeared carrying goblets of gold and wine-jars of bronze, and dishes of gold and silver, and all were soon furnished with food and drink.

The King of Leinster said to Patrick, 'Did we not see a minstrel with you this morning?' 'You did indeed,' said Patrick, 'Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, who is learning lore and knowledge from Caílte.' 'Where is our novice?' asked Patrick. 'Here, holy cleric,' said a son of the Church. 'Off with you,' he said. 'Fetch Áed, son of Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, who looks after the dulcimer of Cas Corach and is wearing a long dark hood.' He was brought to Patrick

and the King of Leinster. Then Cas Corach played his dulcimer, with the melodious music of the *síd*. It is said that badly wounded men would fall asleep from the beguiling music of the *síd* that he played for them. Treasure and valuables were given to the minstrel and he handed them all to his servant who distributed them to the host. 'Who yonder is the most generous?' all of them asked. 'The people who gave the treasures or the minstrel or the servant?' 'Most generous is the servant,' said the King of Leinster, 'for it is he who gives to each of you all that he receives.' 'All that I receive,' said the minstrel, 'let him give it away, for it is not to seek gain that I am in the presence of the Adze-Head and Caílte, but to acquire lore and knowledge from Caílte and to seek from Patrick heaven for my soul.' 'Where on earth did you find the boy, my dear minstrel,' asked the King of Leinster, 'who is even more generous than you are?' 'In the province of Ulster in the north,' said Cas Corach. 'What is his name?' asked the King of Leinster. 'He is a boy that we found,' said the minstrel, 'but neither his name is known nor that of his mother or father.'

The King of Leinster stood up with a horn of buffalo in his hand, and said, 'Well, my dear holy Patrick, when we were at the *Síd* of Liaman Lenncháem "of the Lovely Cloak", the daughter of Dobrán Dubthaire "of the Wilderness", in the south, two gentle, yellow-haired girls came to us, and took my only son away with them from the midst of the assembly. I do not know whether they brought him into the sky above or into the earth below, but I am like a solitary tree against the wind without my only son. I have been without him from that time to this and do not know what in the world is his fate. Well, my friend, holy Patrick,' said the king, 'I would like to learn from you whether he is alive or dead.' 'If the Creator so desires, this knowledge will be given to you.' They remained there until the time of rising in the morning when the sun arose in its fiery orbit.

The King of Leinster then said, 'Well, my friend, holy Patrick, I wish to go for hunting and chase to the Mound of Mál in the east, on the Plain of Leinster, and you should come with us. It is pleasanter than remaining here, for the hosts of the province of Leinster will come to meet us there.' Two great hosts set off, one of faith and piety with Patrick, and the other of the deeds of valour and bravery of the *Fíana* of Ireland with Caílte, son of Rónán, and the King of Leinster, and together they went to the Mound of Mál on the Plain of

Leinster, where Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, asked of Caílte, 'Why is this hill called the Mound of Mál and the one to the north called the Mound of Aífe?'

Caílte answered thus, 'A High King by the name of Ahel, son of Domnall Dubloingsech "the Black Exile", held the kingdom of Scotland. He had but one son named Mál whose wife was Aífe, daughter of Alb, son of Scoa, and the daughter of the King of *Lochlann* in the north. Mál, the son of the King of Scotland, had a fine dwelling at the Cape of the Forest in Scotland. Storytellers and poets, and people of skill of the men of Ireland were visiting there, selling their poems, songs, and tales, and those poets and storytellers were singing the praises of Finn and his *Fían* to Mál, the son of Ahel, son of Domnall, and to Aífe, the daughter of Alb, son of Scoa, the King of *Lochlann*. One of the warriors of Finn mac Cumaill was named Mac Lugach and whenever Finn was praised, whether in Ireland or Scotland, Mac Lugach was also praised. When Aífe, the daughter of Alb, son of Scoa, heard the great praise that the storytellers and poets were bestowing on Mac Lugach, she fell in love with him.

'When Mál, son of Ahel, went hunting with three hundred warriors on the great Mount of *Monad* in Scotland, Aífe made a plan in her own chamber to travel to Ireland, taking her nine foster-sisters and her choicest jewels and treasures. She went off with those nine over the tresses of the sea and over the great ocean to the Hill of Howth, where the queen, together with her nine women, went on land. Finn was hunting that day on the Hill of Howth, and the hunt reached from the Little Garden of the House of Meille, son of Lurgu Luime, at the top of Slieve Bloom to Howth, where Finn had his place and seat of hunting. With him was his pleasant, beloved fosterling, Dubrinn, son of Dubailech, son of the King of Tyrone in the north.' Caílte recited these lines:

'Dubrinn the Dark, ready for war, often I call,
My fosterling, my heart, my Dubrinn.

'This youth was looking off in the distance on every side and noticed a ship, with a wide-eyed queen at the rudder and nine women with her, coming to land on the narrow beach close by. They came to the place where Finn was sitting, bearing treasures of every kind, and the queen, Aífe, sat by his side. The Lord Finn gazed at her, for he had never seen one fairer among womankind. He asked

her the reason for her journey and she related her adventures from beginning to end, saying that she had fallen in love with Mac Lugach and had come across the tresses of the sea to search him out. Finn welcomed her because of his kinship with the offspring of his son and his daughter, the one for whom she had come.

'When the hunt ended the nobles of the *Fían*, in their hosts and in their bands, came to Finn. Each host of the *Fían* that came there asked, "Who is the wide-eyed queen, my dear Finn?" Finn gave them her name and her lineage and the reason for which she had travelled to Ireland. "Her journey is a welcome one," they said, "for there is no better man in Ireland or in Scotland, with the exception of the Lord Finn, than the man for whom she has come." Mac Lugach had been hunting off the western slope of Slieve Bloom that day, and came to us later with all of his men. Finn's tent had been raised for him by then and the queen and the nobles of the *Fían* entered it. Mac Lugach came in and sat by the side of Finn mac Cumaill, with Aífe on the other side. Mac Lugach questioned the woman, as did the nobles of the *Fíana* of Ireland, and Finn related to them her adventures from beginning to end. "She came to you," said Finn. "I give her into your hands with her battles and her conflicts, but these will be no more a burden on you than on all of the *Fían*."

'Finn returned to *Almu* that evening with the three battalions of the *Fían*. The queen and her company of women went with them, and she and Mac Lugach slept together that night in a well-appointed bed. He remained with her for a month, a season, and a year with no attempt made by her kinsmen, during that time, to find her. We were on this very hill one day,' said Caílte, 'and had not been here long when we saw three great and fierce battalions approaching. We asked who they were and they said that Mál, son of the King of Scotland, Ahel, son of Domnall Dubloingsech, had come to avenge his wife on the *Fían*. Finn replied, "He has come at a good time, for we are all here in the same place."

'The battalions joined battle. Each side attacked each other with long blue arrows and rough, purple-headed javelins. Mál, son of Ahel, the son of Domnall Dubloingsech, rose up and took his weapons and charged twelve times through the three great battalions of the *Fían*. On each charge he killed a hundred valorous warriors of the *Fían*, twelve hundred in all. He and Mac Lugach met on the field

of battle and each took four paces towards the other, going past the necks of their smooth, hard spears, and struck at his opponent with his wide-grooved sword. Though their combat was fierce and long, Mál, son of Ahel, was killed by Mac Lugach and placed under the earth in this mound.' Caílte recited this verse:

'This Mound of Mál, a hill of slaughter,
Warriors there in bloody wounds.

'Seven score ships traversed the sea.
The crew of a single boat survived.

'With shield and sword and brave attire,
For further strife Mál crossed the sea.

'On cliffs and rivers, inlets and streams,
Much slaughter and woe ere he came in this mound.

'For this reason is this hill called the Mound of Mál, and the battle called the battle of the Mound of Mál, and the hill to the north the Mound of Aífe, for she stayed on it as long as the battle lasted,' said Caílte, 'and she lived with Mac Lugach thereafter and was the mother of his children.' Patrick and all the host arose at the same time from the hill on which they were, and went off to the Mound of the Deer to the west. Caílte saw two forts on the Mound of the Deer, the Fort of Spelán and the Fort of a Great Border.

'Great are the two forts, my dear Caílte,' said the King of Leinster. 'Who dwelt in them?' 'The two Hospitallers of Cormac, the King of Ireland, and the descendant of Conn,' said Caílte. 'The hostages of the men of Ireland lived in them from the end of the month of *Trogan* or *Lugnasad* to the day of *Samain* every year, maintained by those two Hospitallers, Becán Bóaire "the Cow-Noble" and Spelán, son of Dubán.'

They then saw another hill close by to them. 'Why, Caílte, was this hill called Slender-Rib?' asked the King of Leinster. 'I recall why,' said Caílte. 'Míl, son of Trechossach, the King of the Great World, came from the east with a hundred and fifty warriors to conquer the kingdom of Ireland. He sought hostages from Finn mac Cumaill, and Finn said that of all the people in the world he would not give one as hostage or pledge, and Míl, son of Trechossach, challenged Finn to single combat. I arose then,' said Caílte, 'for I was a match for anyone in those days, and, exhausted by the battle, he fell at my

hand. The men of Ireland considered his death so remarkable that a part of him was brought to each important mound providing names for all the hills and the fortified heights. Many companies were buried in this hill and after them is named the Narrows of the Companies. Two of Míl's slender ribs were placed in this hill. Whence its name Slender-Rib. And that, my dear King of Leinster,' said Caílte, 'is the topography of the hills and of the mounds you asked of me.'

They went off to the Great Fort of the Plain of Fea, the fortress of the King of Leinster. A house of drinking and of pleasure was arranged that evening by Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster. The king said, 'Let Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, be given his dulcimer so that he may make music for us.' 'Let the boy that we found,' said Patrick, 'his own servant, bring his dulcimer to him.' The boy brought the dulcimer with him and put it into the hand of the musician. Just as the the dulcimer was put into his hand the ridge-pole of the house in which they were caught fire and they all looked up at once. The musician was about to put his dulcimer back into its case, when his servant said to him, 'Do not disturb your art nor your music. Let me look after the house.' The boy had a stone in the fold of his tunic and threw it with a mighty cast that brought both the fire and the ridge-pole far away over the enclosure. The name of the place is still the Height of a Ridge-Pole, because of the prowess of Áed, son of the King of Leinster, in extinguishing the fire. 'May you have a talent of dexterity, my boy!' said Patrick. 'And a talent of generosity and a talent of victory, and may there always be a talent of generosity, of prowess, and of victory on the King of Leinster in his house of drinking, provided that no inhospitality be done there.' All the people of the house said, 'Never have we seen a musician's servant with greater prowess or dexterity or honour than the boy yonder.' They spent that night thus until day came with its full light in the morning, and all the host went off together with Saint Patrick. They went on to the Hill of the Kings, now called *Maistiu* [Mullaghmast*], and Patrick sat down there on the summit.

Meanwhile hunting and chase had been arranged by the King of Leinster at the place now called the Height of the Boys or the Height of Scholars, and at the Enclosure of the Morrígu, now called Mullaghmast. The retinue of clerics was not near them at that time, except for the musician and his servant. The first boar and deer killed were killed by the musician and his servant, rather than by one

of the retinue of the King of Leinster, but a more abundant hunt than that had not been held since the *Fían* departed.

Patrick arose and preached a lesson and sermon to all, and the province of Leinster gave a third of its children and a third of its wealth to Saint Patrick, so that the hill is called the Hill of the Tithe from that day, and the plain is called the Plain of the Third. The hill where Patrick preached is called the Height of the Preaching.

As a result of his sermon and preaching Saint Patrick was seized with a great thirst. They saw a place near them called *Tech Cruinn* 'the House of Wood' where a great banquet had been prepared. The owner of the place, Maelán, son of Dubán, was asked to provide a drink from that banquet for Patrick and he refused. Patrick, the man of righteousness, became angry at this stingy man and said, 'No son or daughter shall be born to you, Maelán, nor shall you have kinsman or tribe, and, though every place in Leinster be settled, your place be for ever uninhabited.' And so it was. Then Patrick chanted these lines:

'You shall stay in *Tech Cruinn* without son, without wife.
God's curse and mine on all of your house.'

The host went off to the Height of Cuillenn on the Plain of Leinster. They were looking at the cliff and along the river and at the Height of Cúanaide. The King of Leinster asked Caílte, 'Why is that hill over there called the Height of Cúanaide and this one here the Height of Cuillenn?' Caílte then wept abundant tears of sorrow so that his shirt and breast were damp, and said, 'I had a foster-brother in this place named Cúanaide, the son of Lenn, son of Fáebar. He was the son of the King of Leinster, but his mother, Cuillenn, daughter of Dubthach, was not of noble birth. We were once in pursuit of the Children of Morna and we came, one hundred and fifty young warriors of the *Fíana* of Ireland, with our shields and weapons, to this place. There was not a shoulder without a shield and not a head without a helmet, nor a right fist without two great spears. We were observing the cliff and the rivers, and I told Cáel Códae Cétguinech "the Brave and the Quick-Wounding", the descendant of Nemnán, to follow this path. That warrior rose up and followed the path until he met a miller's woman talking with a young boy with dark eyebrows. He wore a shirt of royal silk against his skin, and about him was a bordered cloak of bright purple, with a pin of gold

in it. He was sitting on the wall of the terrace near her. "Well, my noble boy," said Cuillenn, daughter of Dubthach, "you should not be here talking with me. Go off now, my only son," she said, "for the Children of Morna, the true enemies of Finn, have come across the ford and over the river." Cáel Cródae came back to us,' said Caílte, 'and told us that story. We at once rose as one man and went to meet the boy, but did not, at that time, realize that he was my foster-brother Cúanaide, the son of Lenn, son of Fáebar. He turned his face against us and charged through us three times. On the third attack he cast a spear at me that went through both my knees, and whenever I run up a hill or a rock the damage caused by that spear affects my knees, and whenever I am slow it is due to the after-effects of the poison of that spear. I cast a spear back at him that went through the breast of his tunic and broke his back in two. By yonder height I killed him and it is called the Height of Cúanaide from that day until now. Thus he died,' said Caílte, 'and I cannot remember any death that was as difficult for me.'

The host, together with Patrick, then went off to the great Fort of the Plain of Fea, and entered a fine dwelling there where they spent some time drinking. 'Have your dulcimer brought to you, Cas Corach, son of Caincinde,' said the King of Leinster, and his servant brought him his dulcimer. At that time Bé Binn 'the Pleasing', the daughter of Cúán, the King of Connaught, said, 'I find it wondrous that the musician's servant, whether by day or by night, is never without his dark, long hood.' 'Perhaps his head is disfigured,' said the King of Leinster, 'though each limb that we can see is well formed.' Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, then said to Caílte, 'Well, my dear friend,' he said, 'I have a spearshaft that I wish you to provide with a magical finish, for I have heard that none in Ireland or in Scotland is better with spearshafts than you.' 'I say this to you,' said Caílte, 'if no man in Ireland were able to finish a spearshaft, I would do it.' The spearshaft was placed into Caílte's hand and he made a proper planing of it so that no spearshaft in Ireland or in Scotland had a better finish. 'Now rivet the spearhead to the shaft,' said the King of Leinster, and handed the spear to Caílte. Caílte put his foot against the solid platform of the house and thrust the head of the spear into the platform. He took the spearshaft in his hand, and gave it a mighty thrust. He aimed it with great strength so that it went into its socket and place as properly as if it had been riveted for

some time. 'Behold your spear, my dear King,' said Caílte. The king took the spear and it was excellent. 'I shall give you my two horses and my chariot, Caílte,' said the king, 'as payment for the riveting of the spear.' These are the two horses and chariot that Caílte had in later days in Ireland, and if anyone telling the tale of the journeys of Caílte be asked the names of the two horses, their names were Err and Indell.

The king held the spear in his hand and looked at it for a long time. He was troubled that he had no son to succeed him and wet tears fell on his cheeks. Saint Patrick said to him, 'Why are you in such sorrow, my King?' 'I have reason,' he said. 'What would that be?' asked Patrick. 'The loss of the son that I told you of,' said the king, 'so that I do not have a proper and legitimate heir for this spear that Caílte has set for me.' 'My dear friend,' said Patrick, 'put the spear into the hand of the musician's servant so that we may learn if his fist can hold the socket and shaft.' The king gave the spear to the boy who shook and brandished it with great bravery. 'Remove your dark, long hood now,' said Patrick, 'so that the spear of your father may be of use to you.' He took off his hood and all there recognized him. 'That is certainly the deed of a noble cleric,' said the assembly. 'Dear cleric,' said the King of Leinster, 'do not let the power of the *Túatha Dé Danann* be on the boy now, since it is they who have raised and fostered him until this time.' 'All trace of sorcery shall leave him and he shall get the death that the King of Heaven and Earth has ordained for him,' said Patrick.

The hosts and companies then rose up and gave their sureties and friendship to the boy, and the host, at the time of rising in the morning, numbered six thousand. All the host set off, together with Patrick. Caílte went into the chariot that the King of Leinster had that day given him and they went to the Height of the Hindering of the *Fían* on the River Slaney. Caílte stepped down from his chariot and they made arrangements for the hunt. 'Well, my dear Caílte,' said the King of Leinster, 'why is this hill called the Height of the Hindering of the *Fían*?' 'I recall the reason for it,' said Caílte, 'even though it happened long ago. One day when Finn mac Cumaill, with the three battalions of the *Fían*, had come as far as this ford, and we had sat ourselves down, we saw a gentle woman sitting on a rounded stone at the edge of the ford. She was wearing a dress of red gold spread against the surface of her skin, a tunic of heavy silk above it,

and a cloak of solid green about her with a pin of gold in it above her breast. She had fifty dark-yellow strands of hair extending from one ear to the other and a diadem of gold above her head as sign of queenship. She spoke to us and said, "Let a single warrior of you, the *Fíana* of Ireland, come to converse with me."

'Scíathbrecc, son of Dathcháin, answered and went over to converse with her. He asked "What is your desire, lady?" "Finn mac Cumaill," she replied and Finn went to the ford to talk with her. "Who are you, my lady, and what is it that you seek?" "I am Dairenn, daughter of Bodb Derg, the son of the Dagda," she said, "and I have come to sleep with you for a payment and a fee." "What payment and fee do you ask for this?" asked Finn. "That I be your only wife for a year," she said, "and that you share my bed half of the time after that." "I would not give that promise to any other woman in the world," said Finn, "and I will not give it to you." She then put her hand into a secret fold of her dress and brought forth from her cloak a goblet of white silver, full of fine mead, and handed it to Finn. "What is this, dear woman?" asked Finn. "Fine mead, potent and sweet," she replied. It was a *geis* to Finn to refuse drink, so he took the goblet and drank a drink from it. He was thrown into confusion by the drink he had been given and he turned his face on the *Fían* and, from the confusion that the woman had put on him, began to reproach every man of the *Fían* with every evil and fault and misfortune of battle that he knew of. The nobles of the *Fíana* of Ireland rose up and left him there. Each of them went to his own land and patrimony, so that no one was left on this hill,' said Caílte, 'but Finn and I. I went off after the *Fían* and said to them, "My friends, do not leave your lord and your chief because of the evil spell of a bewitching woman of the *síd*." Over twelve times I gathered them together on this hill and when the day came to an end and night began, the poison left Finn's tongue. When I finally dissuaded them, his sense and his reason were returning. Falling on his weapons in battle seemed preferable to him and death better than life. This was one of the two most evil days that I have experienced,' said Caílte, 'the day that I dissuaded the *Fían* and the day I freed Finn from Cormac and I brought the mixed drove to him. That is why it is called the Height of the Hindering and the Ford of the Hindering.' Caílte recited this poem:

'Ford of the Hindering of the *Fían* of Finn,
Its name ever since, I tell you true.

'Conaing died with Cathal at the end of a field,
Then fell while hunting, Bresal and Bran.

'Flann and Finn Finnabrach in *Sen-Gabar* lie.
And Áed and Congal Clidna in a single grave.

'Many of the *Fían* perished in *Ibarglenn*,
In the terrible battle of Ventry, many more.

'The battle of *Monad* and Déicell's loss,
The killing of Merge and Aillbe mac Maín.

'The battle of Clidna where Ídna died,
The angry slaughter of three hundred men.

'A thousand wounds and thirty-six I gave,
Many died, but good men all.

'I tell you of it. All is true.
My heart laments, yet I stood fast.'

'Great was the evil of the battles and conflicts that occurred at that time, my dear Caílte,' said the King of Leinster, Eochaid Lethderg, son of Aengus Finn. 'Nothing remains for us today,' said Caílte, 'but senility and old age.'

Then all the host together went with Patrick across Black Wood, now called Dark Wood, to the Mount of the Women [Slievenamon*], which is called the Mount of Aige, Son of Iugaine. They went up onto the summit of the mountain and sat there for a considerable time.

The King of Leinster asked Caílte, 'What is this mountain that we are on?' 'It is the mountain of a *síd*,' said Caílte, 'and it contains a *síd*-palace, though it has never been discovered by any one except once by Finn with six of his warriors. A fine fawn was flushed out by us,' said Caílte, 'at *Torach* of the North of Ireland [Tory Island]. We six warriors followed it from *Torach* as far as this mountain, the Mount of Aige, Son of Iugaine. The fawn went to earth here and we did not know what direction it went in after that. A great and heavy snow fell then and the tops of the trees were as twisted as withes and the terrible storm and bad weather that followed greatly restricted our movements. Finn said to me, "Caílte, can you find us shelter for the

night from this storm?" I hurried past the shoulder of the mountain to the south, and I saw a great, bright *síd* with an abundance of horns and chalices and goblets of crystal and white gold within. I stayed at the entrance of the *síd* for a long time observing, and considered what I should do, to enter the *síd* to acquire knowledge of it or to return to where I had last seen Finn when I left to seek shelter. I finally decided to go into the *síd*,' said Caílte, 'and I sat myself down on a crystal chair in the centre of the *síd*. I looked about the room and saw twenty-eight warriors on one side of the house and a fair-headed, lovely woman beside each man, and six gentle, young, yellow-haired girls on the other side of the house, with shag mantles on their shoulders. A gentle, yellow-haired woman was sitting in a chair in the centre of the house with a harp in her hand and she played many songs. The sweet sound of the girl's voice and her Gaelic were as sweet as the melodies of pipes. Each time a song was sung a horn was given to her. She took a drink from it and returned it into the hand of the man who had given it to her. They found both pleasure and enjoyment in her,' said Caílte. ' "Allow someone to attend to you, dear Caílte," said the woman. "I shall not allow it at all," said I, "for there is one close by that is nobler than I, Finn mac Cumaill, and he desires to receive a night's hospitality in this *síd*." One of the men in the front of the house said, "Return, my dear Caílte, to Finn mac Cumaill. Finn was never refused in anyone's house and he shall not be refused by us." I then returned to Finn. "You have been long away, dear Caílte," said Finn, "for, from the day I took the weapons of a warrior in my hand, I have not had a more difficult night than tonight." He recited these lines:

"Swift Caílte, help us, find us fire,
And shelter on this mountain side."

'I replied:

"Wonderful shelter have I found,
A fairer portal never seen.

"A woman in this well-stocked house,
Sweeter than harps her bright, smooth speech.

"Welcomed we were with wine and mead,
We stayed there till the year was full."

And Finn said:

"Wherever I travelled north or south,
The like of today, I have never found."'

'After that,' said Caílte, 'we six shield-carriers went over into the great, bright *síd,* Finn mac Cumaill and I, Díarmait ua Duibne and Oisín, Oscar and Mac Lugach. We sat on the music platform of the *síd*, and a gentle, young, yellow-haired girl came to attend to us. She put us in a bright crystal chair in the warrior-section of the *síd*, and we were brought a variety of the best of wines and fresh food. When our hunger and thirst had subsided, the Lord Finn asked, "From whom among you may I seek information?" he asked. "Ask whomever you wish," said the warrior who was tallest of them. "And who are you, my dear warrior?" asked Finn. "For in all of Ireland there are not such a number unknown to us as here." "The twenty-eight warriors that you see here in the *síd* have the same mother and father. They are the children of Midir Mongbuide 'of the Yellow Hair', son of the Dagda, from the Hill of a Grey One in the north," said the warrior, "and our mother is Finncháem, the daughter of the King of the *Síd* of *Monad* in the east. The *Túatha Dé Danann* made an assembly and muster thirty years ago tomorrow," said the warrior, "and gave the kingship of the *Túatha Dé Danann* to Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, at the dew-covered light-dappled *Bruig* in the north. He asked for hostages from us to the number of brothers that we are, and we said that until the *Túatha Dé Danann* would give hostages to him, we ourselves would not.

"Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, then said to our father Midir, 'Unless you give up your children,' he said, 'we will raze your *síd* on you.'" "We went off," said the warrior, "all twenty-eight brothers of us, to search for a place for a *síd.* We wandered throughout Ireland until we found this hidden and secluded place and have been here ever since," said Donn, son of Midir. "We are twenty-eight brothers here, and each of us had a thousand warriors, but all were destroyed, except for the twenty-eight of us, the children of the same mother and father." "And how were you destroyed?" asked Finn. "The *Túatha Dé Danann* came three times each year to wage battle against us on this grassy green." "What is the long new grave that we saw on the green outside?" asked Finn. "That is the Grave of Díangalach the Druid," said the warrior, "a noble druid of the *Túatha Dé*

Danann, and this was one of the three great losses that have been inflicted on the *Túatha Dé Danann*," said Donn, son of Midir. "Who killed him?" asked Finn. "It was I," said Donn, "who killed him." "And what was the second loss?" asked Finn. "I shall tell you," said Donn, "whatever treasures and valuables and precious things the *Túatha Dé Danann* had, whether horns or chalices, cups or goblets of crystal and of white gold, we took from them on one occasion." "And what was the third loss?" asked Finn. "It was Fethnaid, the daughter of Fidach, the Musician of the *Túatha Dé Danann*," said Donn, son of Midir, "she who was all their music and all their delight of spirit. They are coming here tomorrow to wage battle against us, and only we twenty-eight brothers remain to stand against them. We knew that we were in serious danger so we sent the cropped girl yonder towards you to Tory Island, in the shape of a wild fawn. You followed her until you reached this *síd*, and the young girl that you see yonder wearing a cloak of solid green and dispensing wine was the fawn," said Donn, "and the empty section of the *síd* that you see is the place of the host that the *Túatha Dé Danann* slaughtered."

'They spent the night in drinking and pleasure, and as they arose in the morning Donn, son of Midir, said to Finn, "Come outside with me onto the green so that you may see the place in which we and the *Túatha Dé Danann* do battle every year." They went outside and looked at the graves and tombs. "Here is where we meet the *Túatha Dé Danann*," said Donn. "Which of them do you meet?" asked Finn. "Bodb Derg with his seven sons, Aengus Óc 'the Young', son of the Dagda, with his seven sons, Finnbarr of *Síd Meda Síuil* with his seventeen sons, Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad with his twenty-seven sons and the rest of his family, Tadg Mór 'the Great', son of Núadu, from the beautiful *Síd* of *Almu* [the Hill of Allen], Derg, son of Bodb, with his family from the *Síd* of Dorn Buide 'the Yellow' from the Wave of Clidna in the south, Donn Ailéin 'of the Island' and Donn of *Dumach*, the two Glas from the *Síd* of Glas in the territory of Ossory, Dobrán Dubthaire from the *Síd* of Liaman Lenncháem here in the province of Leinster, Áed Ailéin 'of the Island' from Rathlin, north in the sea, Séolbrat and Side from *Sen-Gabar* in the south from the territories of the *Uí Chonaill Gabra* 'the Descendants of Conall Gabra', Uáine, Mug Duirnd, Brecc, and Buide from the *Síd* of Bricriu from the Height of the Ulstermen [Ards] in the north, Fer Ái, Aillén, Lí, and Faindle, the sons of

Eogabál from the great *Mairtine* in the middle of Munster, from the *Síd* of Eogabál, Cían, Coban, and Conn, the three sons of the King of the *Síd* of *Monad* here from Scotland, Áed Minbrecc 'of the Fine Spots' of the Cataract of Rúad [Assaroe] with his seven sons from the *Síd* of Assaroe, the children of the Morrígu, the daughter of Ernmais, with her twenty-six female-warriors and twenty-six male-warriors, that champions cannot match in warlike skills, the two Lúath from the Plain of the Liffey, Brattán, Ballgel, and Ubalrosc from the *Síd* of the Breast of Cleitech from the Plain of *Brega*, Cathal, Caithre, and Catharnach from the *Síd* of the Red Ridge in Tirconnell in the north, Derg and Drecán from the *Síd* of the Hill of Howth from the east, Sanb with his seven wives from the territories of the *Déisi* of Munster from the south, and Bodb Derg himself with his great retinue of one thousand, two hundred and ten. These are the chieftains and the lords of the land of the *Túatha Dé Danann* that come to ravage our *síd* on us every year."

'They went back into the *síd* after that, and Finn told his people of these things. "Comrades," he said, "the people with whom we are staying are in great and urgent need of assistance and this has placed you in great danger. Unless you do well in battle it is doubtful that any of you will see your *Fían* or your company again." "Where, my dear Finn, have you seen us do badly," asked Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne, "that you now give warning to us?" "I give you my word," said Finn, "if I would wander all the world over I should have no fear or terror if this number of the *Fíana* of Ireland were with me." They remained there until day arose in the morning. Then all the people of the *síd* went outside and Finn and his six warriors together with them. "Well, my dear Donn," asked Finn, "do the *Túatha Dé Danann* come to you by day or by night?" "Under the shades of nightfall," said Donn, son of Midir, "so that they might inflict even heavier injury."

'They remained there until night came. Finn then said, "Let one of you go onto the green outside and be our watch and guard so that the *Túatha Dé Danann* may not stealthily come upon us unawares." A watchman went off and had not been there long when he saw the five brave battalions coming towards him, fully arrayed with a wall of solid, dark-purple shields in the van and a sacred grove of new, tall, gold-socketed spears on their white shoulders. "It seems to me", said the watchman, "that the troops and soldiers about the Grave of the

Druid are numerous now, and they are a good match for any warriors." Finn recited the following:

"Fine warriors around the Druid's Grave,
Heroic fighters in the van of the host.

"Díarmait and Oisín are both gone,
Bright Mac Lugach and Oscar bold.

"Caílte and I join the hosts in the fort,
And close together shall all depart.

"Three fifties times three of sturdy men,
I shall ward them off from this brave host.

"I tell you of it. All is true,
If I fight in battle, all will flee.

"Where is Oscar now?" asked Finn. "Here, my dear friend," said Oscar. "Fight well now in the battle with the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and likewise Díarmait and Mac Lugach. I and Caílte and Oisín are the eldest among us," said Finn. "Leave the rest of the battle to us. As for the sons of Midir, protect them for us in this battle against the *Túatha Dé Danann*. There are few brothers left, and, having been their guests, our honour would be badly tarnished if they should come to harm."

'There we fought the battle,' said Caílte, 'from late in the afternoon to early in the morning of the next day. I must tell you that the losses of the *Túatha Dé Danann* in that battle were great, one thousand, two hundred and ten men. It was then that Bodb Derg, Midir, and Finnbarr said, "What shall we do with these dead? Let Lir of the *Síd* of Finnachad advise us, for he is the eldest of the *Túatha Dé Danann*." "I give you this advice," said Lir, "let each carry his friends and foster-brothers, with their sons and brothers each to his own *síd*, and let a wall of fire be placed on one side of us and a wall of water on the other." The *Túatha Dé Danann* carried off their slain, and did not leave enough of their dead, slaughtered on the green by the people of the *síd*, for a small raven to stand on.

'Then Finn and the *síd*-people went back into the *síd* after that, battered and bloody. Three of our men were badly wounded,' said Caílte, 'Mac Lugach, Oscar, and Díarmait. The *Túatha Dé Danann* came three times that year to attack the *síd*. We fought three battles

against them, and Conn Cruthach "the Shapely", the son of Midir, was our only loss. Though I say it myself,' said Caílte, 'we were sorely tested in that last encounter, for the venom and ferocity of the battle lay heavily on Oscar and Díarmait, and they lay in their bloody sick-beds with long, bent hoops of white hazel keeping their clothing from their wounds, while we went outside onto the green. Only four of us were free of wounds, Finn and Mac Lugach, Oisín, and I, and Oisín said at that time, "Evil is the journey that we made to the *Síd* of the Sons of Midir, to lose my fosterling and my foster-brother, Oscar and Díarmait." "And woe to the one who will face the *Fían*," said Mac Lugach, "after losing both Díarmait and Oscar, for no pair better sustained the virtues of the *Fían* than they." "Whoever will face them," said Finn, "it is not I who will bring the news."

'Donn, son of Midir, was brought to us,' said Caílte. ' "Well, my dear Donn," said Finn, "do you have knowledge or information of anything that might heal those men yonder?" "I only know," said Donn, "of a physician of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. If their spinal cords have not been severed they will get help and relief from him within nine days and be whole and healed." "With what pretext might we get him?" asked Finn. "For his people are not our true friends." "I shall tell you," said Donn, son of Midir. "He goes outside from the *Bruig* at an early hour of the day to gather herbs of healing with the dew of the morning still on them." "Find me someone, my dear Donn," said I, "who will recognize the physician and he will come with me, either alive or dead."

'Áed, son of Midir, rose up with Flann Fuilech "the Bloody", son of Midir. "Come with us, my dear Caílte," they said. They went off to the green of the dew-covered light-dappled *Bruig* and saw there a young lad wearing a cloak of ram's wool from the flock-filled *Tír Tairngire* "the Land of Promise". He had filled the bottom of his cloak with herbs of healing and of curing to apply to the sores and wounds of those people of the *Túatha Dé Danann* that were wounded in the battle of the Mount of Birds. "Who is that, my dear Áed?" I asked. "He is the young man we came for," said Áed, "but watch him well lest he escape from you into the *síd*." We quickly ran after him,' said Caílte, 'and I seized him by the shoulders. We brought him with us to the Ford of the Hindering of the *Fían* on the River Slaney in the Warrior-Plain of Leinster. A magic mist arose about us, so that we were invisible, and, when we came to the hill by the ford, we saw four

men with fringed cloaks of purple about them, and gold-hilted swords in their hands, and four lovely hunting hounds with them. We were not visible to them because of the magic mist that was about us, but they were visible to us. I recognized the four,' said Caílte. 'My sons, Colla and Fáelán, and Finn's sons, Raigne Rosclethan "of the Wide Eyes" and Caince Corcairderg "the Red-Purple". They were in conversation, and complaining that Finn mac Cumaill, their chief and lord, had been missing for the last year. I listened to the conversation of both my sons with the two sons of Finn and found it sad. This is what they said, "What will the *Fíana* of Ireland do now without their chief and their lord by them?" said Raigne Rosclethan, son of Finn. "There is nothing for us," said Colla, "but to go to Tara and then disband, or to choose there a new *Fían*-chieftain for ourselves." Those boys wept heavily and considerably because of the loss of their fathers and their lord. We left them there,' said Caílte, 'and came to the *Síd* of Two Birds, which is called the Mount of Aige, son of Iugaine. We went into the *síd*, and Finn and Donn, son of Midir, gave welcome to Libra, the physician. Oscar and Díarmait were shown to him and Donn said, "Behold my two brothers. Tell us if they are curable and healable." The physician looked at them and said, "They are curable and healable if my reward for healing be good." "It will be good indeed," said I, "how long will it take them to heal?" "Nine days," said Libra, the chief physician. "I shall indeed give a good reward," I replied, "the saving of your life. If the warriors in your care do not recover, my own hand will strike your head from you." The physician was able to heal and cure them in nine days, so that their skin was whole and their wounds rapidly healed.

'After the loss of their lord and chief, Finn mac Cumaill, a messenger came from Cormac, the King of Ireland, to the *Fían* at *Almu* to invite them to the drinking of the Feast of Tara. All the *Fíana* went with the men and women of Ireland, servants, warriors, and musicians, to the Grave of the Druids on the green of Tara, except for the six warriors that were away that year on their quest.

'Goll, son of Morna, sat on one side of the King of Ireland, for he was the most warlike and the noblest of the *Fíana* of Ireland there at that time. The five provincial kings of Ireland with their allies were also in Tara. "Great is the loss to you, *Fíana* of Ireland," said Cormac, "of your lord and chief, Finn mac Cumaill." "Great indeed,"

said Goll, son of Morna. "It is great," said Cormac, "because three losses of equal severity had been brought on Ireland before this, the loss of Lug and Conn and Conaire. This is one of the four greatest losses that has happened in Ireland, the loss of Finn mac Cumaill." "What guidance or direction will you give now, dear friend Cormac?" asked Goll, son of Morna, "to the *Fíana* of Ireland?" "I shall give", said Cormac, "the power of the hunt and of the *Fían*-hunting of the *Fíana* of Ireland to you, Goll, son of Morna, for this year," said Cormac, "until it may be known whether Finn is lost for good, and grant their choice of hunting to the Children of Baíscne, the family of Finn, for the year." The *Fíana* of Ireland agreed to that. "I shall make no claim against Finn", said Goll, "concerning the kingship of the *Fíana* of Ireland until he be missing for three years, and until not one of the men of Ireland or of Scotland holds out any hope for him." Aillbe Gruadbrec 'of the Freckled Cheeks' then said to Cormac, "What will happen to Finn's fair women, those seventeen queens?" Cormac answered, "A well-built and secluded sun-room will be constructed for each one of them, with her retinue of women, for a month, a season, and a year, until it is established whether Finn be alive or dead. For all that time they shall be fully provided with food and drink."

'The musicians of the *Fían* went before Cormac at that time, Daigre, son of Morna, Dér, the descendant of Daigre, Senach, the descendant of Daigre, Súanach, son of Senach, and Súanach, son of Senchenn, the teller of ancient tales to Finn mac Cumaill. He was the sweetest that ever in Ireland and in Scotland took a dulcimer in his hand. With them were Cnú Deróil, the dwarf, and his wife Bláthnait. Cormac said to them, "Stay in Tara, and you shall have from me half your wages, and I shall give you a payment equal to that which Finn would have given you."

'Fergus Fínbél, the poet of the *Fían*, went to meet them, and the number of them all, the poets and people of art, was a thousand. "You shall have from me the full maintenance of Ireland, a gift besides from each woman and each man of the people of Ireland, and the honour of each provincial king in Ireland as well," said Cormac, "from the Wave of Clidna to the Wave of Rudraige." The household servants of Finn went to him, led by Garb Crónán, the leader of the older servants. "Make provision for us, O King!" they said. "I shall give for your maintenance", said Cormac, "the land from broad Ford

of Loiche in the west, which is now called the broad Ford of Lúan [Athlone], to the Hill of Howth in the east."

'They went to *Tech Temrach* "the House of Tara" after that, and half of the dwelling and a third of the food was alloted to the *Fían* as long as they were there. Cormac entered *Tech Mór Midchúarta* "the great House of Mid-Court", and each man there was maintained according to the traditional rights of his father and his grandfather. Goll, son of Morna, was appointed *Fían*-chieftain, and the King of Ireland's wife, Eithne Ollamda "the Learned", the daughter of Catháir, was appointed queen, with Aillbe Gruadbrec "of the Freckled Cheeks" by her side. Maiginis, daughter of Garad Glúndub "of the Black Knee", was next to her and Finn's wife, Móriath, the daughter of the King of the Sea of the Greeks, next to her, and Crimthann Fíal "the Generous", daughter of Eógan, next to her, each with gifts and traditional rights. The great House of Mid-Court was thus arranged, and food and drink were dispensed to them without delay.

'Cormac arose with a smooth buffalo horn in his hand and said, "It would be well, men of Ireland, if one of you might discover some knowledge of Finn for us, in some cataract or estuary, cliff or river, fort or rough place, *síd* or *síd*-palace." Berngal Bóchétach "of the Cow Hundreds" from the outskirts of the Fews in the north, the man who was Lord Hospitaller to the King of Ireland, then said, "The day that the Lord Finn went north after the deer of the *síd* there were six warriors there. He put a poisonous, sharp, blue-angled spear into my hand and the collar of a hound, and told me to keep them until we would meet again in the same place." At that time Berngal of the Cow Hundreds put the spear and collar into the hand of Cormac who put them into the hand of Goll, son of Morna. All the men inspected them, and Cormac said, "It is a great loss to the men of Ireland to lose the man who owned this spear and collar."

'Cormac asked Berngal whether Finn and his companions had hounds with them. "They did," said the Hospitaller. "What hounds were they, Goll?" asked Cormac. "Bran and Sceolaing were held by Finn," said Goll, "and Adnúall and Fer Úaine by Oisín. Oscar had Iarratach and Fostad, and Díarmait Báeth and Buide. Caílte held Brecc, Lúath, and Lánbinn, and Mac Lugach had Conúall and Conrith."

"Where then is Fergus Fínbél?" asked Cormac. "Here", said Fergus. "Do you know how long it has been since the Lord Finn left us?" asked Cormac. "I know", said Fergus, "that he has now been gone for a month, a season, and a year." Fergus recited the following:

"Finn has been missing for over a year,
Today the *Fíana* must chart their course.

"A season plus a month and a year,
Since we have lost our chieftain, Finn.

"Great was brave Mac Lugach's loss,
The loss of Oscar and fair Oisín.

"Great was noble Díarmait's loss,
Now Caílte is missing, as well as Finn."

'The King of Ireland said, "Great is that loss indeed, for we have no hope of finding those six men that were best that was in Ireland and in Scotland. Cithrúad," said Cormac, "great are the treasures and the wealth the Lord Finn gave you, yet you do not tell us whether Finn is alive or dead." Cithrúad answered, "The Lord Finn is alive, but I shall not tell tales about him, for Finn himself would not wish it." All were very glad to hear that for they knew that whatever Cithrúad prophesied came to pass. "Set a limit for us," said Cormac. Cithrúad, son of Fer Cóecat, replied, "On the final evening of the Feast of the Tara the Lord Finn will be seen at the drinking." This was a question at the Converse of the Elders:

"How long were Finn and Caílte in the Mount of Birds?
Who was wounded there? Our fear is great."

'After that,' said Caílte, 'we were in the *síd* for the fortnight and a month that the drinking of the Feast of the Tara lasted, until we got hostages from the *Túatha Dé Danann* for Donn, son of Midir. Since that time the *Fíana* of Ireland have had no more dealings with the settlements of the *Túatha Dé Danann*.'

The following occurred while Caílte was telling that story to Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster. They saw a warrior approaching, with a shirt of royal silk against his skin, and a tunic of soft silk over it. He wore a fringed purple mantle, with a pin of gold in it above his breast, and had a gold-hilted sword in his hand, and a helmet of gold about his head. It was Donn, son of Midir, who had

come there. He put his head in Patrick's lap, and gave him power over the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and all did homage to Patrick. Donn, son of Midir, provided hospitality for that night to Patrick and his people, and after that all the host together with Patrick went off to the great Fort of the Plain of Fea. That evening messengers came from the King of Munster to Saint Patrick requesting that he preach the gospel. Patrick bade farewell to the King of Leinster and to all the nobles of his territory.

CHAPTER IX

PATRICK went off from there with his people to the Rampart of the Warriors, that is now called Cashel of the Kings [Cashel*]. The King of the two provinces of Munster, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, with six great battalions about him, came to meet with Saint Patrick. All the nobles of Munster did homage to Patrick, and entrusted their territory and patrimony to him, and put their land and wealth under his power.

'A gospel-fee, O High King of Munster!' said Benén, son of Áed, to Eógan. 'What fee is that, dear cleric?' said the king. 'A fee of territory and land to the cleric,' said Benén. 'This place in which he stands and in which I have found him', said the King of Munster, 'shall be at his service until his death and thenceforth at the service of his people.' At that time the King of Munster gave Cashel to Patrick, son of Calpurn. 'How shall that be given to us?' asked Benén. 'In this way,' said the king. 'The cleric himself shall go onto *Cloch na Cét* "the Stone of the Hundreds", and whatever he sees of level Munster in any direction he shall have.' Patrick went onto the Stone of the Hundreds, and the sun rose before his face so that all was bright on every side. As Patrick placed his foot on the stone eleven thousand demons sprang up from the points of the rock and fled from Saint Patrick into the heavens. Patrick blessed the stone and gave it the gift of bestowing good counsel. He put this blessing on it that an angel of the Lord would traverse it at each time of Nones, and, if nine sons of the True Lord fast on it then, on behalf of the King of Munster, he will be granted his request. On this rock is one of the three perpetual fires, along with the fire of Brigit at Kildare and the fire of Columcille,* which will be blessed at the end in Ireland.

Eógan Lethderg, the King of Munster, welcomed Caílte, as did all the nobles of Munster. 'For what reason, my dear Caílte, was this stone called the Stone of the Hundreds?' asked the King of Munster. 'I remember it well,' said Caílte. 'We had no knowledge of heaven before Finn sat on this stone and put his thumb for the first time on his Tooth of Wisdom. Heaven and earth were revealed to him and belief in the True God, and that you, dear Adze-Head, would come

to visit Ireland,' said Caílte, 'and that holy and righteous men would dwell here with belief in crosses and pious acts.' 'Who first built a fortress and palace here?' asked the King of Munster. 'Fiacha Muillethan "of the Broad Crown", son of Eógan,' said Caílte, 'and for thirty years he held the kingship of the two provinces of Munster. He had the mighty rampart put around this place, and resided here.' Patrick recited the following:

'Many will gather to *Cloch na Cét*.
A place of crosses, as all I found.

'Cashel, whose fire shall never die,
Where the knowledge of heaven will be found.

'My church will thrive in Connaught's land,
Where I leave my salmon fair.

'My place of Ulster, close to my heart,
We three will be in saintly company.

'Twelve hundred twenty, not a lie,
Of abbots and of righteous men.

'Psalms and creeds and paters will be sung,
Early, about the cairn that holds the stone.'

'May you have victory and blessing, my dear, holy Patrick,' said the King of Munster. 'Great is the knowledge and true lore you have told to all of us.'

All the host were in that place until the sun arose in its fiery orbit and filled the world with its brightness. The host went westwards to the Little Fort of the Wonders on the Plain of Femen. The King of Munster sat at one end of the fort, with the nobles of Munster all about him, and Saint Patrick and Caílte sat at the other end.

The King of Munster, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, asked Caílte, 'For what reason was this little fort called the Little Fort of the Wonders?' Caílte answered as follows:

'Finn found a wonder on this hill,
Three gifted men and a monstrous hound.

'One day,' said Caílte, 'when we of the *Fían* went in our three battalions as far as this hill we saw before us three young men with a bitch. Her size was greater than that of any other hound and there

was not a colour in the world that was not on her, the whiteness of the snow, the blackness of ravens, and the blueness of the hyacinth, with each colour thus defining the other. These young men sat down before Finn. "Where have you come from, youths?" asked Finn. "From great *Iriúaith** in the east," they said. "Why have you come?" said Finn. "To make our covenant and our friendship with you," they said. "What good may come to us from your companionship?" asked Finn. "Each of us three," they said, "has a special skill." "What skills are they?" asked Finn. "Whenever fear or terror may strike the *Fíana* of Ireland I shall take their watch, and ward danger off from every hound, servant, or member of the *Fían*," said one of them. "It is a skill with me that whatever fear of battle and combat may befall you and the *Fíana* of Ireland I shall ward it off without help from anyone else," said a second. "Tell us, young man," said Finn to the third, "what is your skill?" "I shall tell you," he said. "This is my skill: whatever great difficulty may come to my Lord, I will ward it off, and whatever is requested of you will be obtained from me," said the third. "And regarding the bitch," said the young man, "as long as wild animals may be in Ireland she will ward them off every alternate night from the *Fíana* of Ireland and on the other night I shall ward them off myself." "What request do you ask of me," asked Finn, "for providing us with these services?" "We make three conditions," they said. "What are they?" asked Finn. "That no one should ever come to our encampment from afar or from nearby once evening comes, that no division of spoils, whether great or small, be made to us, and that we be given the worst hunting of the *Fíana* of Ireland." "By your conscience," said Finn, "why do you ask that no one observe you once evening comes?" "We have good reasons," they said. "Do not ask anything else of us, though we share the same path for a long or a short time. One of the three of us that you now see will be dead every third night. For this reason we do not wish anyone to observe us, for we will be engaged in watching over him." It was a *geis* to Finn', said Caílte, 'to see a dead man who had not been killed by weapons, and thus Finn would have to avoid this little fort.' Caílte recited these lines:

'Finn's *geis*, a dead man lacking wounds,
He must avoid a visit to their fort.

'Seven poets came to Finn at that time, of the household of

Cithrúad, son of Arm, the son of Fer Cóecat, to seek a reward for a poem, one hundred and fifty ounces of gold and a like amount of silver to bring to Tara to Cithrúad. Finn did not have that at hand. "We shall help provide that," said Scannal, the descendant of Líathán, a warrior dear to Finn. "Well, my dear poets," said the warriors, "would you prefer to receive a reward for your poem tonight or tomorrow?" "We are happy to receive it tomorrow," said the poets. At that time those three young men went off with their bitch to her bed outside the Little Fort of the Wonders. In their presence the bitch vomited a hundred and fifty ounces of gold and a like amount of silver. It was given to the poets and they left. Finn then enquired,' said Caílte, '"What shall the three battalions of the *Fían* do tonight without water?" Then one of the three young men asked, "How many serving horns does Finn have?" "Finn mac Cumaill has three hundred and twelve horns," said I.

"Three hundred gold horns and twelve has Finn,
Great amounts of mead they held."

"Give me the horns," said the warrior, "and, though it be something from the *síd* that is put into them, drink it." The warrior filled them thrice for the *Fíana* of Ireland and, by the third drink that he poured for them, they were eloquently drunk.

"A wonder indeed," said Finn, "is the arrangement of this banquet." Thus the Enclosure of the Banquet is the name of the enclosure in which it was held, and the Bed of the Hound is the name of the bed. For this reason this little fort was called the Little Fort of the Wonders,' said Caílte, 'and this enclosure was called the Enclosure of the Banquet, and this other fort is the Fort of the Dog's-Head. The *Fían* remained thus for a year.'

Eógan Lethderg, the son of Aengus, son of Natfraech, went off, together with Patrick and Caílte, to the Fort of the Dog's-Head in the southern part of the Plain of Femen and to the Enclosure of the Company of Women to the south. All of the host sat down on the fort, and Caílte sat in the presence of Eógan Lethderg. 'Well, my dear Caílte,' said Eógan, 'for what reason was this fort called the Fort of the Dog's-Head and this enclosure called the Enclosure of the Company of Women?' 'A Lord Hospitaller of Hundreds was in this place, Cellach, son of Dubdét, by name, and on the occasion that his flocks and his possessions were counted the warrior-plain of the

Plain of Femen was filled with them. Though he possessed such great wealth there was not in all the world a person more contemptible or niggardly than he. We went there,' said Caílte, 'thirty men armed with shields with the *Fían*-chieftain of Ireland and of Scotland after our hunting on Slieve Gua. We sat on the music-platform there, and, before we had been properly attended to, the man of the house heaped insult and disgrace on each one of us, except for the Lord Finn. A rough man of the *Fían*, Cuinnscleo, son of Annscleo, the King of Britain in the east, addressed him and said, "Foolhardy is the yelp of a dog's head that the churl makes at the *Fíana* of Ireland." "You have put an excellent description and name on him," said Finn. "Let 'Dog's-Head' be his name for ever." That is why it is named "the Fort of the Dog's-Head".'

'And why was this fort called the Fort of the Company of Women?' asked the King of Munster. 'I know the reason well, though it is not new. The Lord Finn brought fifty women of embroidery, the best that were in Ireland, to this fort so that they might make attire and clothing for the *Fíana* of Ireland. Headship over all of them was given to the daughter of the King of Britain whose name was Dergoda, the wife of Oscar, son of Oisín. They dwelt in this place for a great number of years. This is why this fort is called the Fort of the Company of Women and the other there the Fort of the Dog's-Head.'

'And what is the very strong pillar of stone yonder in the middle of the rampart?' asked the King of Munster. 'That is the Candlestick of the Company of Women,' said Caílte, 'for they had no wish for a fire except three times each year, so that neither the ashes nor the dust and smoke of the fire might touch them or their clothing. They were in this place thus for a number of years, doing handiwork and making the clothing of the *Fían*, and that Company of Women had one great source of entertainment, the three daughters of the King of the Descendants of Ceinnselach, Finnchas, Finnruine, and Finningen by name. They had a small dulcimer with a bridge of silver and with picks of yellow gold, and women in the pangs of childbirth were lulled asleep by the beguiling music of the *síd* that those three women sang to the Company of Women.'

'What are those two great graves that we see, dear Caílte?' asked the king. 'The three warriors that made their alliance with Finn at the Little Fort of the Wonders, and their bitch with them, are the

ones who killed the two warriors in those graves, Donn and Dubán, the two sons of the King of Ulster in the north.' 'And how did they die, my dear Caílte?' asked the King of Munster. 'Those three warriors and their bitch camped apart from the *Fían*,' said Caílte. 'When evening came a wall of fire sprang up about them so that no one dared to observe them. The two sons of the King of Ulster, Donn and Dubán, were standing guard for the *Fíana* of Ireland and the *Fíana* of Scotland that night. They made three circuits of the *Fían*, and on the third circuit they saw the wall of fire. Donn, the son of the King of Ulster, said, "It is a wonder that these three warriors and their bitch with them have been here for a year now. They commanded that none should go to observe them when evening came." The sons of the King of Ulster then went off towards them. They went through the wall of fire and, putting their weapons behind them, watched, for a while, the three warriors and the bitch. That very large hound that they hunted with every day was then no greater than a ferret that sits on the lap of a queen or great noble. One of the three warriors, with a sharp, naked sword in his hand, was holding the bitch. Another of them held a cup of white silver to her mouth. Each was asking for choice liquors and these the bitch put forth from her mouth into the cup. One of them said to the bitch, "Well, dear noble and righteous Fer Mac, are you aware of the spying that the Lord Finn has put on you?" At that the bitch raised her tail and a magical wind of druidry rushed from her that caused the shields of the two sons of the King of Ulster to fall from their shoulders, their spears from their hands, and their swords from their sides, so that they were within the wall of fire before their very eyes. The three warriors then killed the two sons of the King of Ulster,' said Caílte. 'After they had been killed the bitch turned and put her breath on their bodies and made dust and ashes of them. Nothing was later found of their blood, flesh, or bones. Those,' said Caílte, 'are the two graves you asked about, and in them are their dust and ashes. Though they were opened not much would be found in them other than earth and sand.'

'No one has ever told us', said Eógan Lethderg, the King of Munster, 'a more wonderful or more curious tale than that, my dear Caílte, and what is the high pole at the side of the pillar there in the fort?' 'That is the Reward of the Company of Women,' said Caílte, 'given each year by Finn. Oscar, son of Oisín, hid the reward, thirty

score ounces of gold in all, and it is there that it was hidden under the bottom of that pillar.' The host arose at once and opened it up. They brought out the gold and a third was given to the King of Munster, another third to Saint Patrick and Caílte, and a third to the clerics. 'The gold survives,' said Caílte, 'but the Lord Finn does not, nor Oscar, son of Oisín, who hid it.' Caílte then recited this poem:

'Dog's-Head Fort survives, without a doubt,
But our dear chieftain Finn no longer lives.

'Its stone remains without a flaw,
And solid gold, though Oscar's dead.

'Donn and Dubán died in strife,
Long we sought them, all in vain.

'Finnchas and Finnruine, Finningen,
Three famous royal daughters gone.

'Beloved the dulcimer, soft to the ear,
That lulls the mighty hosts to sleep.

'The small, sweet dulcimer, with silver bridge,
Whose strings are plucked with picks of gold.

'Fifty chess-sets in the house, fifty beds and horns.
Fifty ounces of red gold, each year their reward.

'I shall tell you all about it. All of it is true.
Many passing pleasures were present in this fort.'

'Those three warriors, my dear Caílte,' said the King of Munster after that, 'did they stay with you or depart?' 'They stayed with us,' said Caílte, 'until small bands of nine men were formed from the three battalions of the *Fían* at the Little Fort of the Nine on the Warrior Plain of Leinster. These nine warriors together with nine boys went to every single haunt of the *Fían* in Ireland to search for the two sons of the King of Ulster who had fallen at the hands of these three warriors, the sons of the King of *Irúaith* in the east.

'As for Finn mac Cumaill, he went off to Tara in *Lúachair* after the *Fían* had separated from him, with none of the *Fían* escorting him but the common people and the menial servants of the *Fían*. Meanwhile those groups of nine men from the *Fíana* of Ireland that Finn had sent to search for the two sons of the King of Ulster, came

to Taurmore that same evening to meet with Finn, not knowing whether the two men were alive or dead, nor anything of their movements up to that time.'

Meanwhile Patrick and the King of Munster went off to the south to the White Peak of the Run between the Mount of Cláire and the Galtee Mountains. All the host sat down there, as did Patrick and Caílte. The King of Munster asked of Caílte, 'Why is this place called the White Peak of the Run?' Caílte gave the following answer, 'Once, when Finn mac Cumaill was on this hill with the *Fían* of Ireland about him, they saw a woman before them, wearing a purple, fringed cloak, with a pin of gold in it, and a fillet of gold yellow on her forehead. Finn asked news of her and asked her where she had come from. She answered him thus, "From the Hill of Howth in the east." "What is your name, dear woman?" asked Finn. "Étaín Fholtfhinn 'of the Fair Hair' is my name," she said, "the daughter of Áed Uchtgel 'of the White Breast', from the *Síd* of Áed at the Hill of Howth in the east." "For what reason have you come here?" asked Finn. "To challenge one of the *Fíana* of Ireland to a foot race," she said. "How is your running?" asked Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne. "It is excellent," she replied. "When I run I care not if the land or earth under my feet is short or long."' Caílte recited this poem:

'As we came to the White Peak a woman approached,
To challenge the *Fían* to a dangerous race.

'I raced up a slope above *Badamair*.
Quickly we climbed, though I with much pain.

'We ran after that over a stream,
Across hills and valleys to Dublin.

'I was first in the town, I conceal it not,
And raced past all the gathered crowd.

'Then we ran to the mound at Howth,
So all in that fair *síd* were pleased.

'We entered the *síd* and got mead and wine.
There for twenty nights we stayed.

'Broken my heart and weary my soul,
Seeing each hill after all these years.

'This was the number of us that came to the *síd* at that time,' said Caílte, 'two thousand of the *Fíana* of Ireland with Finn mac Cumaill. We sat down on the music-platform of the royal house in the *síd*, and were well attended to, our hunger sated, and our thirst assuaged. The Lord Finn saw a gentle woman with yellow hair standing in front of the vats, with a cup of white silver in her hand, dispensing drink to all. Finn said, "It seems to us that that is the woman who challenged the *Fían* to a race, from the Castle of the Galtee Mountains in the west to the Hill of Howth." "She is not at all the one who was there with you," said Áed Uchtgel, the king of the *síd*, "for she is the slowest of our women." "Who was with us then?" asked Finn. "Bé Mannair 'Woman of Destruction', the daughter of Aincél," said Áed Uchtgel, son of Aengus, the son of the Dagda, the Messenger of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. "It is she who goes in the shape of the water-spider or a whale, who transforms herself into the shape of a fly or into a person's best friend, whether male or female, so that the secrets of all are entrusted to her. She is the one who was with you from the west in the race and not the woman yonder," said Áed, "who was here in front of the vats at the drinking and at pleasure in the *síd*." "What is the name of the woman yonder?" asked Finn. "Étaín Fholtfhinn," said Áed Uchtgel, "my own daughter and the favourite of all of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. She also has a lover, by night, from the *Fíana* of Ireland." "My dear friend," said Finn, "who among us is that lover?" "Oscar, the son of Oisín," said Áed. "She is the one who sent the messenger to you to the Stronghold of the Galtee Mountains in the south, and Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac, offered to give in perpetuity the cantred that is nearest to the Kingdoms of *Brega* and Meath to the *Túatha Dé Danann* as his bride-price and wooing-gift, and give her, as well, his size and weight in gold and silver." "Why did you not yield her to the son of the King of Ireland?" asked Finn. "We did not accept him," said Áed, "for she had no particle of desire nor of feeling for him, and, because of her unwillingness, we arranged no betrothal or covenant after that." "Well," said Finn, "what terms do you seek from us?" "My dear woman," said Áed, "what terms do you ask from Oscar, the grandson of the *Fían*-chief?" Étaín answered, "That he never leave me unless I behave shamefully." "You shall certainly have that," said Oscar. "Let guarantors and sureties be given to us at this time," she said. "What guarantors do you wish?" said Oscar. "Goll,

son of Morna, of the Children of Morna, and Finn mac Cumaill of the Children of Baíscne." These guarantors were given to her, and she and Oscar slept together. We remained there for the next twenty nights. Oscar then asked Finn, "Where may I bring my wife?" "To broad, green *Almu* of Leinster," said Finn, "until the end of seven years, and you yourself provide a place from then on."

'The great battle of Howth took place after that,' said Caílte, 'and Oscar was badly wounded there. The *Fían* despaired for him and Finn did as well. One evening Étaín Fholtfhinn went into Oscar's bed and saw that his great royal form was leaving him. She turned wan and sombre, and raised on high plaintive and pitiful weeping. She took to her bed and the heart in her chest broke like a nut, dying of grief from the sight of her husband and spouse. She was brought to her own *síd*, to the *Síd* of the Hill of Howth, and was placed under a mound of earth. Thus its name is the Grave of Étaín,' said Caílte. 'Oscar left three noble sons, named Lúath, Indell, and Oscar. That is the story that you asked of me,' said Caílte, 'and it is for that reason that this place is called the White Peak of the Run.'

They spent the night there until day came with its full brightness in the morning. Saint Patrick set off with all the host and went to *Cuillenn* and to *Callann* in the lands of the *Uí Chúanach* 'the Descendants of Cúanach' [Coonagh]. Saint Patrick sat down there and that place has been called the Seat of Patrick ever since. The King of Munster sat next to Patrick and Caílte sat nearby. The King of Munster, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, then asked Caílte, 'Why was this place called *Callann* and *Cuillenn* and the hill yonder called the Grave of the Youth, and why is this rampart that is surrounding the land and territory called the Rampart of the *Fían*?' Caílte answered that question in this way, 'One day Finn mac Cumaill was at the Fort of Cuire between Dundalk and the sea at the end of the Shore of Baile, Son of Búan. On one side of Finn was the Bed of the Yew House and, on the other side, the Fort of the Horse-Team, the team of *Dubshainglenn* and the Grey One of *Macha*,* and Dundalk at our back. We were not there long,' said Caílte, 'when we saw thirty charioteers on the shore to the north coming straight towards us. The men got down from their chariots and unyoked their horse-teams. The great, wide-eyed warrior that was the oldest and noblest of them sat down next to Finn mac Cumaill, and the Lord Finn asked news of him. "Where do you come from, my dear

warrior, and who you are you?" he asked. "I am Callann, son of Fergus," said the warrior, "the son of the King of Ulster in the north. My own brother, Áed Donn 'the Dark', son of Fergus Finn 'the Fair', has banished me and does not allow me to be with Cormac, the descendant of Conn, nor to come into my inheritance. I have come to converse with you, dear *Fían*-chieftain, for ours is a noble friendship, since Mes Muingel 'of the White Neck', the daughter of Aengus, the King of Ulster, was your grandmother, the mother of Cumall, as well as the sister of my father."

"If that be the case," said Oisín, "the frenzy and the violence* that is in us comes from the Ulstermen." "It is certainly from them," said Finn. "Do you wish to acquire land in Ulster?" asked Finn. "No indeed," he said, "for we will not slaughter our kindred." "In that case," said Finn, "I shall go off tomorrow to the King of the two provinces of Munster, Eochaid Fáebarderg 'of the Red Edge', son of Finn, and ask him to give you land for the present. If I cannot obtain land from him, I shall give battle to the King of Ulster at the end of the Strand of *Baile* for your own land."

'The three battalions of the *Fían* then set off with Callann, the son of the King of Ulster, to the Castle of the Galtee Mountains, where the King of Munster then resided. The king went to meet with Finn and the *Fíana* of Ireland and said, "Welcome is your coming, my dear Finn," said the King of Munster. "We have trust in that greeting," said Finn. "It is trustworthy indeed," said the king. They went into the fortress after that, and all were well attended to, and a house for drinking was arranged for them. Goll, son of Morna, was placed on one side of Finn and the son of the King of Ulster was put on the other side.

'The King of Munster asked, "Have you ever seen among the men of Ireland or among the men of all the world any three of finer appearance than that warrior yonder sitting next to Finn mac Cumaill? Who is that warrior next to you, Finn?" Finn told the king the warrior's name and pedigree and that he had come to ask him for land and patrimony. "Certainly," said the King of Munster, "if a man as good as the one yonder had come by himself to ask for land and territory, it would be fitting to give it to him. But since you, my dear *Fían*-chieftain, request it, it is even more fitting. I shall give him two cantreds," said the King of Munster. "He shall have a third cantred for my sake and that of the *Fían*," said Finn. "A third cantred in

your honour," said the King of Munster, "and in honour of the *Fían* of Ireland." All of that was given to him, so that he possessed three cantreds of land.

"Where is the land that you are giving to him?" asked Finn. "*Breiccthír*, now called the Lands of the Descendants of Cúanach, and the Mound of the Meeting, now called *Cuillenn*," said the king. "My people are rough, with the behaviour of Ulstermen,"* said Callann, son of Fergus. "How will they react?" "I have a plan so that you may deal with that," said the King of Munster. "The *Fían*, since you trust them for security, will construct an earthen dyke and stronghold about your land so that no one may attack it." The three battalions of the *Fían* went there and finished the work in seven days and provided the stronghold with a fortified gate. After this had been done for him, Finn, with the three battalions of the *Fían*, went off together with Callann, son of Fergus, the King of Ulster, back to the Stronghold of the Galtee Mountains.

'Finn said at that time, "Well, my dear King of Munster, do you know the other errand on which we have come?" "Indeed I do not," said the king. "To ask that you give your daughter, Cuillenn, to Callann, the son of the King of Ulster." "What would be her bride-price and her wooing-gift?" asked her father. "A bride-price of hundreds," said Finn, "that is, she shall receive a hundred of each kind of cattle and of each kind of animal. You have our word on that." The nuptial agreement was made and the daughter of the King of Munster was wed that evening to the son of the King of Ulster,' said Caílte. 'Callann, the son of the King of Ulster, led his people northwards, and they went with him to claim the land that the King of Munster had given to him. He had a great fort constructed there.'

'Cuillenn bore him a distinguished and unique son, Fer Óc by name, and it was difficult to find in all of Ireland or Scotland anyone who would be equal to him in appearance, dexterity, or in weapon-handling. We came to visit this place with the three battalions of the *Fían*, and three thousand in each battalion. As we sat there we saw a tall, slender boy of snowy white appearance, with a handsome, dark apron of variegated silk covering his front, a tunic inset with gold thread against the surface of his skin, and a cloak of enveloping silk with strong, distinguished, dark-purple buttons across its scallops and curves, at play on the green with a very heavy rock in the palm of his hand. He was making great casts with it so that it went over ten

ridges. He then ran under it and caught it in mid-air in his fist. We of the three battalions of the *Fían* spent a long time observing him. "We have never seen", said Finn, "weapon-handling better than that. Who is the boy doing the weapon-handling, men?" "The son of the lord of that place," they said, "Fer Óc, son of Callann, the King of Ulster." "Never came from the Ulstermen," said Finn, "even in the time of their great and noble men, martial material better than the boy yonder." "No indeed," said all in unison. "He does another weapon-feat more difficult than that," they said. "What is that?" asked Finn. "He puts the butts of his two spears against the ground and his back against the wall, and vaults with the shafts of the spears over the fortified gate of the wall, landing on the rock on the other side with his spears in his hand. Then he jumps back over the wall with them and lands on this green."

"By the truth of your conscience, Fer Óc," said Finn, "do this feat for us." "I shall indeed," said the boy, "and it would be shameful for me to do this in the presence of the *Fíana* of Ireland, if I did not manage to do it well." He did the feat for Finn and the *Fían* as well as he had ever done it.

'At that time Callann and Cuillenn, the father and mother of the boy, came to them, and made a truly gracious welcome to Finn and to the *Fían*. "Well, dear boy," they said, "make your guarantee and your friendship to Finn." "I shall," said the boy. He arose and made his guarantee and his friendship to Finn, and put his hand into the hand of Finn. "Do you know, my dear Finn," said Oisín, "that Fer Óc has another feat that the men of Ireland or Scotland cannot match?" "What feat is that?" asked Finn. "If nine warriors cast nine tall, riveted spears at him he catches them all without a scratch or scrape on him, and if, at the same time, nine balls are cast at him he catches them all in one hand with none of them touching the ground, while holding the spears in his other hand." "By the truth of your valour and your prowess, Fer Óc," said Finn, "do that feat for us." The boy arose and performed the feat in the presence of Finn mac Cumaill. They chose two sets of nine warriors from the *Fían*. One set held nine spears in their hands and the other held nine balls, and they threw them all at once at the boy nine times without drawing blood or making a scratch on him. His mother, Cuillenn, the daughter of the King of Munster, said that she would not be present when the *Fían* were casting at his son for fear that his father,

Callann, the son of the King of Ulster, would find them thus casting at his son. The boy performed feats of weapon-handling for them, catching the nine spears that were thrown at him in his left hand and the nine balls that were thrown at him in his right hand. "If the boy should have a long life," said Finn, "he would be more famous than anyone in the *Fían* has ever been." We went into the fortress after that and spent our time in drinking and in pleasure there.

'The Lord Finn then said, "Where is Berrach, the daughter of Cas of Cooley?" "Here, my *Fían*-chieftain," she said. "Bring the great grain measure with you and fill it three times with gold and three times with silver, with a cross of gold and a cross of silver on the top of each of the measures, and give it to Fer Óc as his reward." The boy divided his reward in three, giving a third to his father, a third to his mother, and a third to the poets and sages, and to the people of note of the nobility in the presence of the *Fíana* of Ireland and the *Fíana* of Scotland. "Wisely was the reward divided," said Finn. They remained there until day came with its full brightness in the morning.

'That day the three battalions of the *Fían* were engaged in the chase and *Fían*-hunting. However, no one of the *Fíana* of Ireland made the first killing of a boar or stag while hunting with Fer Óc on that day. When they arrived back at his house after the hunt, Fer Óc was struck down by a grievous illness caused by the baleful eyes of the company and the envy of the great host. It killed him outright at the end of nine days. He was placed under the earth in the grass-covered mound yonder,' said Caílte, 'and the bright rock that used to be in his hand for play and sport is now at his head. For that reason is this hill called the Mound of the Youth.

'His mother spent a year in this place after the death of her son, and came, each day, to visit his grave. She grieved all that year and died there herself one day as a result. She was placed in this mound which now bears her name, "Cuillenn".

'This is one of the four places where the *Fíana* of Ireland put on their bright clothing and handsome cloaks,' said Caílte, 'in Tara in *Brega* and in Taurmore, in broad and great *Almu* of Leinster, and here in *Cuillenn*. It is in this place that the Lord Finn assembled the three battalions of the *Fían* each year, and warriors of valour were brought here and replacements were chosen for those of the *Fíana* of Ireland who had died. Fierce wild stags and heavy-sided boars were

brought towards us to the floor of the house of drinking and of pleasure,' said Caílte, 'and *Cuillenn* was a place of deer and game that day.' Caílte recited this poem:

'*Cuillenn* a place of hunting, the camp of a mighty king,
Fair in the hour of battle, a many-coloured place.

'What youth to whom gave Finn the gold?
How long before he died?

'None more valorous than Conán Cerr,
And Conán Mael at *Berramain*.

'No worse the valour at *Lámrach*,
Of Díarmait, Oisín, and me.

'No better valour than that of Finn,
He helped us till that day at *Ollarba*.

'It is sad what happened. Early he died.
None here today, but Oisín and I.

'I speak to you of it. It is true what I say.
Proud the host that *Cuillenn* loved.'

'May you have victory and blessing,' said Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, 'and, dear Caílte, sad is the story that that you have told to us, the story of Fer Óc.' 'Those are the things that you asked of me,' said Caílte.

They had not been there very long when they saw two companies, valiant and numerous, approaching them, eight score of them armed with shields, with a wall of dark-purple shields about them and a sacred grove of new, tall spears on their shoulders. A dark, irresistible boy, fine and lovely, was in the forefront as the leader of the company. He had a diadem of gold on his head as befits a king. The warrior in front of the other company had a bright-purple cloak about him and a helmet of gold about his head, and a hard, embossed shield with curved animals of red gold on it. They put their weapons down and did homage to Patrick, putting their heads into his lap.

'Who are you, warriors?' asked Patrick. 'Two Kings of West Munster,' one replied. 'I am Derg, the son of Dínertach, son of Mael Dúin, and Flann, the son of Flann, son of Failbe, is the other man.' 'We have a fine and great banquet prepared for you, O King of Munster,' said the warriors. 'We wish you to bring holy Patrick with

you to partake of the banquet, for we want to have our territory and our land blessed by him, and to offer our life-service and our death-service to him, for we have made a friend of no cleric but him.' 'Go before us, said the king, 'and we will arrive after you.' They remained in that place for the night until day came with its full brightness in the morning. All the host went off together with Patrick and his people to the Castle of the Hundreds in the south on the warrior-summit of Slieve Mish. The two Kings of West Munster came to meet them and gave welcome to Patrick and to the King of Munster. They brought their gospel-fee to Saint Patrick, three score ounces of gold and three score ounces of silver from each of them.

The King of Munster, Eógan Lethderg, the son of Aengus, son of Natfraech, asked Caílte, 'Why is this place called the Oakwood of the Conspiracy and why is this ridge called the Ridge of the Dead Woman, and why is this little fort in front of us to the south called the Little Fort of the Incantation?' 'I have knowledge of that,' said Caílte, 'though none of it is new.

'On one occasion when Finn mac Cumaill, with the three battalions of the *Fían*, came to this place for chase and for *Fían*-hunting. We had not been here long when we saw someone approaching us who sat down on this mound in our presence. It was a woman with a tunic of royal silk against her skin, and a bordered cloak of bright purple about her, with a pin of gold in it. She wore a splendid, loosely pleated cloak and a golden breastplate, and had a diadem of gold on her head. She could only be compared to the high-topped mainmast of a great ship, seen above a vast salt-marsh.* There was scarcely one of us who was not seized with fear and horror and trembling because of the wonderful appearance of the woman and her size. She was very much larger than anyone of our era, and we were, in comparison, year-old infants or small dwarfs. At that time Goll, son of Morna, stood to the right of Finn.' Caílte praised Goll highly to the men of the two provinces of Munster. 'He was', said Caílte, 'the upper hand, and the wave of death above fierce companies, a fierce lion, and one of the five best warriors, behind shield, sword, and spear, in Ireland or in Scotland at that time. The five best men at arms in Ireland then were Finn mac Cumaill, Lugaid Lága,* Oscar, son of Oisín, Goll, son of Morna, and by my faith,' said Caílte, 'without a word of boasting, I myself was the fifth.'

'At that time Finn said to Goll, "Have you ever seen a woman

larger than the woman yonder?" "I swear I have not," said Goll, "nor has anyone else ever seen a woman that enormous." The woman stretched her long and sinuous white arm away from her bosom. She had three rings of gold on one of her arms and two on the other. Each ring was as thick as an ox-yoke. "We should ask news of her," said Goll. "How would it be possible to do it," asked Finn, "unless we stand up, and it is doubtful that she will hear us even then."

'All the host then rose at once to their feet in order to talk and converse with her. She stood up as well. "Sit down again, dear woman," said Finn, "and put your elbow against the hill if you wish to hear or understand anything we might say to you." She lay on her side on the hill and the Lord Finn asked news of her. "Well, my dear woman, what land do you come from," asked Finn, "and what is your name?" "I have come from the Land of the Maidens in the west where the sun sets and am myself the daughter of the king of that land." "What is your name then, dear maiden?" asked Finn. "I am Bé Binn 'the Pleasing', the daughter of Trén, King of the Land of the Maidens," she said. "Why is this land referred to as the Land of the Maidens?" asked Finn. "Because there are no men there," she said, "but for my father with his three sons and the seven score and nine daughters that have been born from him. For this reason is it called the Land of the Maidens." "What land is closest to it, dear woman?" asked Finn. "The Land of the Men," she said. "And who is king of that land?" asked Finn. "Cétach Crobderg 'of the Red Hand'," she answered. "He has twenty-eight sons and a single daughter. I was betrothed to one of his sons, Áed Álaind 'the Handsome', son of Cétach Crobderg. I have been given to him three times and three times I have escaped. This is the third time." "How did you learn of this land?" asked Finn. "The wind swept along and the waves brought three fishermen of this land to us. They told us tales of this land, and said that a noble warrior lived here named Finn mac Cumaill. If you are that warrior," she said, "I have come in search of you to claim your protection." She took off her glove and took Finn by the hand. "Well, my dear woman," said Finn, "take the hand of Goll, son of Morna, as well, for the guarantee and protection of no warrior in Ireland is more fitting than his." She took Goll, son of Morna, by the hand and acquired his guarantee and protection.

'They then saw a very fierce wild stag coming towards them, followed by some of the *Fían*'s hounds. "*Fíana* of Ireland," said

Finn, "leave this stag alone, for I shall not put our trust in the hunting of our hounds tonight, but in a certain warrior of the *Fíana* of Ireland. Where is Finn, son of Cúán?" asked Finn. "Here," said the warrior. "Go off before us to your house and make arrangements for our reception and our attendance, for we are no more than a visiting company of friends, comrades, and foster-brothers, the three battalions of the *Fían* and I, your own chief," said Finn. "We owe this to you," said Finn, son of Cúán, "for I have eight score of milch-herds on the swelling-slopes of the Rushes of Daig [Slieve Lougher], and it is through you that I have acquired everything, dear Finn." It was one of the virtues of Finn mac Cumaill, that though he might give great riches to someone, he never boasted of it, day or night. Finn, son of Cúán, went off to his own fort to ensure that Finn and the *Fían* would be well attended to.

'Meanwhile Bé took her fair, strapped helmet from her head and let her long and beautiful hair with its eight score finely coloured tresses loose around her shoulders. All were amazed at the quantity of her hair when it was undone, comparable in growth to a bushy tree brought from the forest. Finn said, "O mighty and adored gods, great would be the wonder of the King of Ireland, Cormac, the descendant of Conn, and of Eithne Ollamda 'the Learned', the daughter of Catháir Mór, and of all the fair Company of Women of the *Fían* at seeing Bé Binn, the daughter of Trén!"

'The Lord Finn said to her, "Well, dear woman, what meal can I serve you, since the food of a thousand would not suffice." She leaned down toward the dwarf, Cnú Deróil, who was playing his harp for Finn, and said, "Whatever portion of food, small or great, that you give to the little man there who is playing his harp for you, will suffice for me."

'Bé Binn then asked Finn for a drink, and he said, "Where is Saltrán Sálfhota 'of the Long Heels'?" "Here, my dear *Fían*-chieftain," said the boy. "Bring me water from the ford yonder and fill the cup of Smir Tuill." This cup held enough for twenty-seven of the *Fían*. He filled the cup with water and handed it to Bé, who poured the water into her right palm, and drank three mouthfuls of it. She then raised her palm and sprinkled the water on the host. They all broke into laughter and Bé laughed with them. "By your faith, my dear woman," said Finn, "why did you not drink water from the cup?" "Never have I drunk from a cup", she said, "that was

not ornamented with gold and silver." I then looked about,' said Caílte, 'and saw a huge warrior drawing near to us. Though the woman was great in size he was larger still. I could think of nothing comparable but the tallest mountain in Ireland or Scotland, but the warrior was taller still. Each of his two hands was like the great rainbow of the heavens. He wore a cape of feathers that came across the tops of his shoulders, and he was beardless. If all the men of the world had been here together with us,' said Caílte, 'not a one of them would be fairer than he. He wore a cloak of solid green with a gold pin in it, and a tunic of royal silk against his skin, with a purple-red arabesqued shield on his upper-back, a gold-hilted sword in his hand and a poisonous, blue-angled spear in his hand.

'All the host looked at him, and there were few of us, aside from the true warriors, that were not struck with fear and terror at the sight. Finn was in good spirits,' said Caílte, 'for he was never afraid of any man, day or night. It was then that the Lord Finn said, "Let not a boy or a warrior among you say anything, nor move from his place. Do any of you know who he is?" asked Finn. "I know," said Bé, "he is the man I fled from." As she said that she arose and sat herself between Finn and Goll, son of Morna. The warrior came towards us,' said Caílte, 'and, whatever his intent, we meant him no harm. As he came level with Finn and Goll he raised his arm and gave a vicious thrust at the woman with his spear, so that it passed through her and protruded from her back the length of a warrior's arm. The warrior pulled out his spear and went off away from the host. "Look at that, men!" said Finn. "Let none of you ever think of service in the *Fían* who would not use his sword and his spear against that one until you have killed him."

'We set off at once,' said Caílte, 'the three battalions of the *Fían*, and only three were left on the hill, Finn and Goll, son of Morna, and the severely wounded woman. We pursued the warrior to the Fort of the Boys, now called the Fort of the Sheep on the Warrior-Plain of Lí in the south, westwards to the marsh of the Plain of Ulster, where the Ulstermen encamped at the siege of the Castle of the Curved Rampart when they killed Cú Roí,* son of Dáire, northwards to the Place of a Ship, where the ships of the Children of Deda had been, and from the Estuary of the Wave of Labar towards Ireland in the west, where Labar, the daughter of Míl of Spain, drowned, or the Estuary of a Noisy Wave where a wave roared

against the land, then westwards to the Spring of the Reluctant Warrior onto the Strand of Lí, son of Oidremal [Tralee], and to the Promontory of Tribute, where the foreigners each year paid their tax of tribute to Cú Roí, son of Dáire. The warrior turned away towards the very broad sea with four of us close behind,' said Caílte, 'Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne, Glas, son of Aencherd Bérra, Oscar, son of Oisín, and I myself was the fourth,' said Caílte. 'We went towards the waves and I made a direct run at him, as do does or swallows, or as an arrow from a bow, or as the swiftness of a man's thought, or as the sharp rush of a stormy wind of enchanted druidry about the top of a plateau in a day of fierce spring wind. I made a great cast at him and my spear came into the strap of his shield and into his left shoulder. The shield fell on the wave below, and I caught it with my left hand. As he put his right hand on my spear to pull it from him, I lunged at his other hand and struck his spear from it. When I attempted to hurl his own spear at him the force of the waves and the depth of the sea came between us. We watched him for a long time and then saw a mighty ship coming towards him from the west with two men aboard. He boarded the ship and after a while we heard heavy and grievous shouts coming from the ship that sailed far to the west in the stream of ocean. We do not know where they went after that.

'We came from the west as far as this hill, we three battalions of the *Fían*, and Finn asked news of us. I told him our adventures from the time that we set off until we came back,' said Caílte, 'and we put our weapons on the ground in front of him. "Good are those weapons, the shield across which no one was ever wounded and the spear with which no erring cast was ever made and that ended the life of all whose blood it drew," said Bé, "the spear named *In Toranchlessach* 'the Feat of Thunder' and the shield named *In Donnchráebach* 'the Dark-Arabesqued One'.

"Well, my dear Finn," she said, "let my mound and grave be made well, for I came on your protection to visit Ireland, and on your honour I have got death." She gave her rings to the people of art, to Cnú Deróil and his wife Bláthnait, and to Daigre the Harper. Her soul parted from her body and she was placed under the earth in this place. Because of her this ridge is called the Ridge of the Dead Woman. This is the tale that you, the King of Munster, asked of me,' said Caílte. Finn took in his hand the spear that had wounded

the woman. It only reached from his shoulder to the end of his thumb.

'For what reason is this oakwood called the Oakwood of the Conspiracy, dear Caílte?' asked the King of Munster. 'The four that I told of who were with me at the Little Fort of the Wonders, these were the three warriors and the bitch that the *Fían* conspired to kill in this place.' 'Why did they conspire against the ones who had been with them in the *Fían*?' 'The *Fían* could not comprehend their manner or their behaviour towards them. That was the cause of their conspiracy. The three had an encampment apart from the *Fían* and a wall of blazing fire surrounding them and no one could observe them through the wall of fire until morning came. Finn said, "I have no wish to kill them at all, for they are the three best men in the world in weapon-handling and agility. Because of the three great skills they have it is not fitting for the men of the world to kill them." ' Caílte said, 'If the men of the world were in sickness or illness, and one of the three would apply an herb to him, his skin would heal and his wounds rapidly mend. Whatever one requested of the second one would be obtained from him, and the third man,' said Caílte, 'whatever shortages one complained to him about, he would provide for them without fail. He also had a great gift beyond any one of them. He had a flute that would cause the men of the world, however great their illness, to fall asleep. The bitch, moreover,' said Caílte, 'if none of us managed to kill any game or animals, there would be no scarcity for us if she were there, and no lovely salmon of speckled surface, nor otters in cliff or cataract, in estuary or river, remained unkilled. At that time Finn said, "Go, Caílte, Oisín, and Oscar, to those warriors." We went to them,' said Caílte, 'and brought them with us to meet Finn mac Cumaill.

'The Lord Finn said to them, "Do you know why you have been brought to speak with me?" asked Finn. "We do not," said the warriors. "The *Fíana* of Ireland do not trust you," said Finn, "because of the skills you have been practising on them. They wish to arrange a safe journey for you and provide you with compensation." "What evil have we done," asked the warriors, "that we have been ordered to leave?" "We know no evil of you," said the *Fían*, "but such is your manner that we never saw or heard of men before you behaving thus. Since you wish no one to observe you when evening comes, you placed that wall of fire about you." "And what evil have we done to

you, Finn, that you do this to us?" said the three warriors, "for it will not harm but it will help you, each good we shall do." Finn said at that time, "That is the speech of well-born men and, by my word, I shall give you no offence or retaliation, nor shall any come from one of the *Fíana* of Ireland by day or by night. There was something that I wished to ask you," said Finn. "If we have knowledge of it," said the warriors, "it will be told to you." "What are your names?" asked Finn. "I am Dub," said the warrior who did the healing. "And I am Ág," said the second warrior. "And I am Ilar," said the third.' Caílte then recited a poem giving a description of those men and of the bitch:

'Dub, Ág, and Ilar, beloved three,
And Fer Mac, the good hound, as well.

'Their camp apart from the noble *Fían*,
Little was known of the splendid four.

'Finn did not know the four from afar,
Nor did the host know the very strange four.

'A place of their own, far from our camp,
None came to them, unless gone astray.

'About them a wall of water or fire,
They all stayed inside until morning came.

'No one was wounded of the people of Finn,
No blow of a spear that Dub would not heal.

"Go to your house," said Finn, "and as long as any man may follow me, you may, and the friendship that you have not found up to now, you shall now have." This is the reason for the naming of the Oakwood of the Conspiracy that you asked of me, O King.'

'May you have victory and blessing,' said Eógan Lethderg, the King of Munster, to Caílte. 'You have answered those two questions well, but there is a third problem for you to solve. Why is this little fort called the Little Fort of the Incantation?' 'One day when Finn was sitting in this place in the company of the three battalions of the *Fían*,' said Caílte, 'we saw three closely cropped, red-haired young men coming towards us. They held onto three red hounds and three spears.* There was poison on their weapons, on their clothing, and on their hands and feet, and the poison attached itself to everything

they touched. "Where do you come from, men?" asked Finn, "and who are you?" "We are the three sons of Úar, son of Indast," they said, "of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. A warrior of your people has killed our father in the battle of the *Túatha Dé Danann* on the Mount of Birds, now called the Mount of Aige, son of Iugaine in the east. We come to seek compensation for our father from you, Finn," they said. "Slowly have you come to seek it," said Finn. "We did not know," they said, "until you came to the Feast of Tara, that it was not the Sons of Midir that had fought that battle, and until the men of Ireland learned that it was you who took captives from the *Túatha Dé Danann* on behalf of the Sons of Midir in that battle." "Who is the warrior of my people," asked Finn, "that you charge with the killing of your father?" "Caílte, son of Rónán," they said. "Indeed," said Finn, "he was one of the five men that were with me. What are your names?" "Our names are Aincél, Dígbál, and Esbaid," they replied. "What answer do you give to us, Finn?" "None before me has given compensation for a man killed in battle, nor shall I," said Finn. "Then we shall carry out raiding and brigandage on you," they said. "What raiding would that be?" asked Finn. "We are three brothers," they said, "and we shall each of us carry out raiding." "I shall certainly cause," said Aincél, "to the three or the two or the four of the *Fían* that I come upon, that their limbs seize up on them." "And I shall cause", said Dígbál, "that not a day will pass for you without the loss of a hound or a boy or a warrior of the *Fíana* of Ireland." "And a day will not pass for you", said the third man, Esbaid, "without losing a band or a company or a leg or an arm or an eye." "If we do not find something to help us against them," said I, "there will not be a man of us alive by the end of the year."

'The Lord Finn said, "Well then, *Fíana* of Ireland, make a fort and a mansion in this place in which they have overtaken me, for I shall not flee before them throughout Ireland with them after me until we determine which of us will prevail." The *Fían* rose up and each chieftain of the *Fían* built a small fort and stronghold for himself and his company from the summit of Slieve Mish in the west as far as this place,' said Caílte. 'It seems to us,' said the King of Munster, 'that for some reason these little forts were called the Little Forts of the Nursings.' 'It is for this reason,' said Caílte, 'that they stayed in this place for a month, a season, and a year, while those three were perpetrating every ill spell and every harm against

the *Fían*. This is the place where the *Fían* were healed of their injuries.

'It was at this point in time that the three sons of the King of *Irúaith* came and were that day conversing with Finn. They took him aside to a quiet place for wise counselling, and said to him, "Well, my dear Finn," they said, "we wish to give you our bitch to keep watch about you three times a day. Though it be a host that attempts to do evil to you or to carry out a raid on you, they will not succeed from one day to the next provided there be no fire or weapon or hound in the same house with her, for this is a *geis* to her, if any of these things be in the same house with her." "Indeed there shall not be", said Finn, "any of these things in a single house with her, and the bitch shall come back to you unharmed." The bitch was left every day with Finn. She had a ribbed chain of red gold about her neck on which were fifty chains of glistening gold from the land of Arabia in the east, and she went in this manner three times around Finn and licked him three times across each white expanse of the *Fían*-chieftain. The men closest to him thought that the fragrance coming from her was like that of a vat of mead that had been strained. To others it seemed that the odour that was emanating from her, when she went into Finn's house, was that of a fragrant orchard. Those three,' said Caílte, 'made great raids on the *Fían* that year, and whatever illness or evil that Aincél inflicted on the *Fían* during the year Dub, son of the King of *Irúaith*, applied his herbs and his healing, so that all were whole by the next morning. Whoever was injured by Esbaid and Dígbál, was aided and provided with relief by Ág and Ilar.

'Cormac, the descendant of Conn, heard that these enemies were inflicting harm on Finn, and it is from them', said Caílte, 'that the famous old sayings come. Concerning one afflicted with harm or loss the proverb says then "Aincél grabs you" and, for one suffering from want or scarcity, the proverb says "Dígbál and Esbaid have caught you".

'The King of Ireland, Cormac, the descendant of Conn, gathered his forces and came to this hill with twenty-eight battalions, each of three thousand men, to aid Finn and the *Fíana* of Ireland. Finn gave welcome to Cormac and to the nobles of the men of Ireland as well, and told them of the great difficulties that he and the *Fíana* were experiencing that year, helped only by the three sons of the King of

Irúaith. Cormac asked, "Since these people of *Irúaith* have such arts, would they not be able find a charm or an omen* or anything from their art that would drive the sons of Úar from Ireland?" Cormac ordered me', said Caílte, 'to summon to him the three sons of the King of *Irúaith*. I went off and brought them with me to meet with Cormac and Finn and the nobles of the men of Ireland. When Cormac saw them he said, "Handsome are these men, and noble their form and appearance. Well, young men," he said, "could you find a charm or omen that would drive from Ireland the three wizards who are attempting to destroy the *Fíana* of Ireland?" "If we found them tomorrow near us," said the warriors, "we would order them to go and would drive them off from the men of Ireland." "Where is Ág, the son of the King of *Irúaith*?" asked Finn. "Here," said the warrior. "Where are the three wizards that would destroy Ireland?" asked Finn. "They are at the Cairn of Dáire at the end of the encampment," said Ág. "Where are Garb Crónán and Saltrán Sálfhota?" said Finn. "Here, my *Fían*-chieftain," said the servants. "Go off to those men yonder and say to them that I shall entrust the matter of their father's compensation to the King of Ireland." The servants went off to them and told them this. The men came back with the messengers to meet with Cormac and Finn, and the three of them sat down on the rampart of this fort. Cormac had his twenty-eight battalions there and we were three battalions of the *Fían*,' said Caílte.

'At that time Cormac said, "Arise, Dub, son of the King of *Irúaith*, and order these men, by charm and by spell, to leave Ireland." Dub stood up and said, "Go, by the strength of this charm and this spell, you three enemies, blind in the left eye, lame of hip, stinking-rumped, one-eyed, crooked-sided, strange, and evil spawn from the bright dwellings of Hell below, the seed of Buadnat, daughter of Herod, the daughter of the man who seized and betrayed the True God, the Glorious Ruler of all men, into the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Go away off on the bitter and deep sea, and each of you drive his sword into the head of his brother. For you have raided and plundered Finn mac Cumaill, the trustworthy and true-judging *Fían*-chieftain for long enough. Go back to your true family, that of your father and mother and grandfather, in the bright dwellings of Hell below, that fire may burn you there!" At that time the bitch raised her tail and put a foul wind underneath them, and they flew

off onto the fruitful, green-edged sea. Each of them drove his sword into the head of the other so that they were thus slain and entered into Hell.' Caílte recited these lines:

'They flew away on the billowy sea,
Striking each other, in pain they died.

'Aincél, Dígbál, and Esbaid, strange their death.
The three, with their swords, sank into the sea.

'Because of the charm,' said Caílte, 'this fort is called the Little Fort of the Incantation.'

At that time Flann, son of Flann, and Derg, son of Dínertach, said, 'It would be fitting for us to seek that charm, my dear Caílte.' 'Why is that?' asked the King of Munster. 'We each of us have eight cantreds in all of the kingship of West Munster, and whenever it is the proper time for us to reap what we have sown, three flocks of birds* come from the sea to the west of us with gnawing beaks. Breaths of fire come from their throats and the wind that comes from their wings is as cold as the wind of spring. Whenever we wish to harvest the fields they come to us,' said Flann, son of Flann. 'A bird attacks each ear of corn in our fields and each year they carry it off all at once. The second time they carry off fruit so that not an apple is left on an apple-tree, nor a nut on hazel-tree, nor a berry on rowan-tree that they do not take with them. The third time they come, they do not leave a small bird or a fawn on the ground, nor a small infant. There is nothing that they are able to lift that they do not carry off with them.' 'Where do they come from,' asked Caílte, 'or what are they, and for what reason do they come?' 'Some of us think', said Derg, son of Dínertach, 'that they come from the *síd*-palaces of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. Others think it is a bird-flock from Hell that comes to inflict evil and injury on the men of Ireland.' 'Wherever they come from,' said the warriors, 'there is nothing for us but to leave this territory and land to them, for we are not able to endure this any longer.'

Caílte then asked Patrick, 'Where is the lord of knowledge and computistics,* holy Patrick himself? I wish to question you.' 'If I have knowledge of it,' said Patrick, 'I would give it to you, for often have I asked questions of you.' 'What year is there in which there is a month without a moon,' asked Caílte, 'a moon without a month, and

a month that contains three moons?' 'The quartile year,' said Patrick, 'that occurs between two millennia, one preceding and one following. The first month of that year is the one without a moon, but the following month has a moon, but it is not a month in this instance because of the month supporting it. The third month', said Patrick, 'contains three moons, the first-moon of the first month that we counted in dealing with the question before us, and the first-moon of the quarter before us of the same month that passed, and the third moon', said Patrick, 'is the moon of the Kalends of the actual era of that month.'

'May you have victory and blessing, holy Patrick,' said Caílte, 'and happy were the men of Ireland born the day you came to meet them. For there was a demon on the bottom of every single blade of grass in Ireland before you, and there is today in Ireland an angel on the bottom of each single blade of grass. And happy the men of Ireland who will see you, and those of them that will not see you will profit from your miracles and your wonders. My dear Patrick,' said Caílte, 'when is the quartile year that you spoke to me of?' 'Last night was its first night,' said Patrick. 'And when does the month come that contains the three moons?' asked Caílte. 'It begins tomorrow evening,' said Patrick, 'and the day following.' 'And when, Derg, son of Dínertach, will your fields be ripe?' asked Caílte. 'Unless that flock of birds of bad omen has stopped, the harvest will be made by us tomorrow,' said the warrior. 'When do you expect that bird flock will come to you?' asked Caílte. 'Tomorrow certainly,' said Flann, son of Flann. 'Tomorrow is the anniversary of the day on which Dub, the son of the King of *Irúaith*, put a charm and spell on the three sons of Úar, son of Indast, when weapons killed them and the ocean waves drowned all three brothers. And why should I not then provide,' said Caílte, 'in the name of the Trinity that has not changed and will not be changed, a charm and a spell to Flann, son of Flann, and to Derg, son of Dínertach, to the two Kings of West Munster, against the flock of birds that comes to destroy their land?'

He set off early in the morning, and went with the nobles of the provinces of Munster, and Patrick together with them, up to the summit of Slieve Mish. At that time the flock of birds came to attack the fields as they had come every year, and all of the men saw them alight on the fields. Caílte said, 'Rise up, Children of Rúadmael, daughter of Rugatal, the seed of the Miller of Hell, who completely

destroys the wealth and food, the gold and silver of the world and all its many treasures, and everything that is collected and hoarded is put into the mouth of the mill and he makes dust and ashes of it all. Rise up, Children of Bolcán, son of Neimed,' said Caílte, 'the worst that is and that will be. Rise up by the strength of this charm and spell,' said Caílte, 'away onto the choice, blue-crested sea, so that each of you may kill the other, and dust and ashes be made of you. Do you not know the righteous, true-judging Apostle of the Island of the Gaels, holy Patrick, son of Calpurn, the head of piety and of faith of the Irish? Go on the mountain before us and leave Ireland to him, for it is not fitting for you to be here before his face.' Then the flock of birds rose up in response to the warning that Caílte gave to them. They went away off over the sea and each of them killed the other with their gnawing beaks and breaths of fire. Thus the rock by the sea beyond Slieve Mish is called the Rock of the Flock of Birds, and the charm is called ever since Charming the Birds from the Fields. Caílte then recited the following poem:

'Good, Derg, my journey to you from afar.
I drove the bird flock onto the sea.'

Patrick put a blessing on that region, so that no terror or witch or destruction came to it from that day forth. The host went into the fort and Patrick went with them. They were there in merriment and tranquillity until the end of the week enjoying that banquet.

CHAPTER X

THE King of Connaught at the time when the flock of birds was driven from Ireland, was Áed, the son of Muiredach, son of Finnachta. The King of Connaught was then at the Fortress of Léod the Exile [Dunboe] partaking of a great banquet there. One evening he went, at the end of the day, onto the grassy green, and, while he was there with the nobles of his household about him, he saw a gentle woman with yellow hair next to him. None of the host saw her but the king alone, so strange was her coming. 'Where have you come from, dear woman?' asked the King of Connaught. 'From the speckled, bright *bruig* in the east,' she said. 'Why have you come?' asked the king. 'Because you are my beloved,' she said. 'Whose daughter are you?' said the king, 'and what is your name?' 'I am Aillenn Fhialchorcra "of the Purple Veil",' she said, 'the daughter of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda.' 'Did you know, my dear Aillenn,' asked the king, 'that I was taken with a mortal illness and it was as if I were given drinks of sudden death by my father and mother. The Adze-Head, holy Patrick, brought me back to life and bound on me a single wife, Aífe Ilchrothach "of Many Shapes", the daughter of Eógan Lethderg, the King of Leinster. But, by my word,' said the king, 'never have I seen a woman I would rather be with than you, if it were not for the power that the cleric has over me and my fear of the King of Heaven and Earth. Well, dear woman,' said the king, 'do you wish to be seen by the nobles of the province?' 'I do indeed,' she said, 'for I am not a bewitching woman of the *síd*. Though I am of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, I have my own body about me.' Aillenn showed herself to the host, and never had they seen before or after a lovelier woman. 'What judgment do you give me, King of Connaught?' she asked. 'I shall give', said the king, 'the judgment that holy Patrick will give. I myself shall give it to you.' The king sent seven of his people to Saint Patrick at the Stronghold of the Curved Rampart in the south, to the summit of Slieve Mish. They set off and journeyed until they found Patrick there.

Patrick was at that time taking leave of the two provinces of Munster, and he left a blessing with them. He then went off with those messengers as far as the Peak of the Dumb One, now called

Benbulben, in Moinmoy. The King of Connaught, Áed, the son of Muiredach, son of Finnachta, came from Dunboe to Benbulben to meet with Saint Patrick. The King of Connaught put his head in Patrick's lap and did homage to him. He gave the power of his province, both little and great, to him, and told Patrick about Aillenn. Patrick asked her, 'Are you the woman that has fallen in love with the King of Connaught?' 'I am,' she said. 'Well, my dear woman,' said Patrick, 'good are your appearance and condition. What has kept you in such a perfection of shape and form?' 'Each one of us that was at the drinking of the Feast of Goibniu',* she said, 'is not afflicted with disease or sickness. Well now, my dear and holy cleric,' said Aillenn, 'what is your judgment on me and the King of Connaught?' 'It is a good judgment,' said Patrick. 'The king has pledged to God and to me that he would be bound to a single wife, and we may not go against that pledge.' 'And I then,' she said, 'what shall I do now?' 'Go to your home and your *síd*,' said Patrick, 'and if the daughter of the King of Leinster die before you, then you may thenceforth be the only wife of the man whom you love and cherish. But if you bring harm, by day or by night, to the king or to his wife,' said Patrick, 'I shall disfigure you so badly that your mother or your father or your foster-mother would not wish to see you.' Patrick recited this verse:

'O Aillenn of the purple veil, O daughter of Bodb;
I see no good result for you, go back to your feasting.

'Not by the direction of a fairy host will you come to *Benn Bailb*.
Not by tracking like a hunting dog will you get your reward.

'May she accept our protection gracefully, the girl from far away,
With the Gospels of mighty Christ protecting us from harm.

'I will bless this province through my wisdom and power,
So that outsiders cannot harm it without destroying themselves.

'Do not try to bribe us, O sweet, lovely girl;
Arise and take my blessing, and go now in peace.'

'Is that your final judgment,' asked Aillenn, 'that I may not be given to the king as long as that woman is with him?' 'It is indeed,' said Patrick. 'But, holy cleric,' she said, 'by the truth of your word, if

the wife of the king die before I do, then will I be given to him?' 'I say in the witness of my truth,' said Patrick, 'if she die before him, you will be given to him.'

Aillenn then wept copiously and heavily. 'Do you love me, dear girl?' asked the king. 'I do indeed,' she said. 'No one of the crowd of humanity is dearer to me than you,' said the king, 'but I am not able to break the agreements and defy the command of the Adze-Head and of God.' Aillenn went off to her *síd* after that, and remained there until the story alludes to her again.

The host, together with Patrick and Caílte, spent another three days and nights at Benbulben, and went from there as far as the Grave of Fiadmór on the Plain of the Scál, now called the Plain of Aí, son of Allguba. All the host sat down there, and Patrick as well, so that the place is called the Seat of Patrick.

The King of Connaught then welcomed Caílte and asked of him, 'Well, my dear Caílte, for what reason is this place called the Grave of Fiadmór, and why is this hill in the west called the Hill of Circall, and the hill next to it called the Hill of Congna?' Caílte answered that question, for he had knowledge of their origins.

'Finn mac Cumaill had a noble daughter that he very much loved,' said Caílte, 'named Aí Ardúallach "the High and Proud". The King of Scotland, Fiadmór, son of Airist, asked her father, Finn, for her hand, and Finn said that if she herself wanted to sleep with him he would not reject him. Aí was asked about that and she said that a man from outside Ireland would not sleep with her. Finn then said to her, "I shall give you, daughter, despite your unwillingness, to the man that you have rejected, the King of Scotland." Aí had a lover among the *Fíana* of Ireland, Aillbe Armderg "of the Red Weapons" from the Ford of an Enclosure on the outskirts of the Wood of a River-Branch. Aí Ardúallach said to him, "Well, my dear Aillbe, what shall you do for me now, since Finn is giving me, against my wishes, to the King of Scotland?" This is what Aillbe said, "Put yourself under the protection of Goll, son of Morna, and of the *Fíana* of Ireland, so that a marriage may not be forced on you." She bound her protection on the three substantial clans that were in the *Fían*, on the Children of Morna, on the Children of Baíscne, and on the Children of Nemnán. She bound her protection on all of the *Fían* and they accepted it.

'At this very time the King of Scotland, Fiadmór, son of Airist,

came with three great battalions to the Strand of Eothaile [Trawohelly], together with his two brothers, Circall and Congna. A message came from them to Finn here at the cairn demanding his wife. The woman refused him, and Fiadmór, the King of Scotland, said that if she were not given to him he would proclaim battle on the *Fían*. He said he would not leave Ireland without taking his wife with him, alive or dead, or without the head of Finn. Finn said, "Let three of you go north to the Cataract of the Birds, the Cataract of the Oak, and keep guard and watch on the foreigners that are on the fair shore of Trawohelly in the north." Three of us in the *Fían* answered that,' said Caílte, 'I myself, Díarmait, the descendant of Duibne, and Oscar, son of Oisín. As we came to the end of the shore we saw three great men coming towards us. The six of us met on the shore and we asked news of them. They said that the King of Scotland was there with two warriors, Fiadmór and his two brothers, Circall and Congna, to seek to slaughter the *Fían*. "Indeed," said I, "if you wish to inflict misfortune or loss on the *Fían* turn your face to us, and Finn would grieve at our loss." "And if you be a loss to him," said the King of Scotland, "why should we not inflict your loss on him?"

'We then began', said Caílte, 'a bloody, aggressive, truly poisonous encounter. They quickened their weapon strokes and strengthened their blows. They hardened their hearts and held their ground. We fought the battle from late afternoon until the morning of the next day. Our armour was in broken fragments about us and our bodies covered in blood. Nevertheless we prevailed in the encounter,' said Caílte, 'and on the following morning cut their three heads off. We planned simply to return carrying the three heads, but we rejected that plan, and turned back to the host on the shore. We killed three hundred of their warriors in our first assault. The three battalions arranged themselves against us and, for all the fine day until night, we fought them. When they saw their champions falling they ran back to their ships and boats. We ourselves, bloody and wounded, left the field of battle.

'The Lord Finn had become fearful on our account, and said, "Go off, *Fíana*, after the three warriors who went from you." Just as they were setting out in their three, serried battalions, we had come as far as this hill, and we placed the three heads on the ground before Finn.' Caílte then recited this verse:

'The three of us went north to meet in battle red.
Each killed a hundred on the fair, shining shore.

'I and noble Díarmait, Oscar, quick and light,
Three hundreds killed in battle, of the foreign hosts.

'Three heads we brought with us, not a weak result.
These gave the names to the three choice hills.

'I speak to you of it. It is true what we say.
I brought from the battle the head of Fiadmór.

'Great their strength and great our valour.
Whatever the blows, we warded them off.

'I was the one who killed Fiadmór, Díarmait killed Circall, and Oscar killed Congna. Those three heads were placed on these three hills and provide the names for them, and the name of that battle in the lore of the *Fían* is the battle of the Shore of Eothaile.' 'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said the King of Connaught, 'and if you would wish for treasure and wealth it will be yours.' 'It is very good of you to offer them, but I have no need of them.'

The hosts went off to Mount Brecklieve, called the Mount of Wages in Connaught, and to the Seat of Finn on the summit of the mountain. As they sat down there tears fell heavily and flowed across Caílte's cheeks, observing the place where Finn mac Cumaill used to sit. 'What causes you to weep, my dear Caílte?' asked the King of Connaught. 'Is it seeing the place where Finn used to sit and the Wages of the *Fíana*?' 'It is indeed,' said Caílte, 'for this mountain was the favourite hunting place of the regular *Fían*, and the Lake of the Does, now called the Lake of the Wages, and the Meadow of the Stags, now called the Church of the Hills, and that was the place of Conán Mael, son of Morna, and the Forest of the Horse-Team, now called the Place, where there were a throng of horses of the *Fían*, and the Fortress of Saltrán of the Long Heels, now called the Church of Caimín on the River Suck, and the Moor of the Hindering, now called the Moor of the Causeway of Conned, and the Rock of the Fomorian, now called Dunmore.'

The King of Connaught asked Caílte, 'Where did Finn mac Cumaill come from?'* 'From Leinster,' said Caílte. 'What tribe of Leinster?' asked the king. 'From the *Uí Thairsig* "the Descendants of Tairsiu" of Leinster,' said Caílte. 'From what place in that tribe?'

asked the king. 'From the Stream of Bulgán,' said Caílte. He then said, 'Finn was the son of Cumall, son of Tredorn, son of Trénmór, son of Cairbre Garbsrón "of the Rough Nose", son of Fiacha Fobrecc "the Freckled", from the Stream of Bulgán, of the *Uí Fhailge* "the Descendants of Failge".' 'Where did his mother come from then?' asked the King of Connaught. 'Muirne Muincháem "of the Lovely Neck" was the daughter of Tadg, son of Núadu, of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. Finn was the most generous man in the north-western part of the world at giving treasures and wealth and valuables, and one of the five best warriors that ever stood behind shield and sword. He was best man in the world at bestowing treasure and reward, and one of the three best men that ever came from the Island of the Gaels. He never denied a thing to anyone who had a head for eating and drinking, and legs for travelling, and never looked over his shoulder lest someone following him might think that he were afraid. And this', said Caílte, 'was the favourite hunting place of the regular *Fían* of that man.'

'Who were the members of the regular *Fían*?' asked the King of Connaught of Caílte. 'Not difficult,' he said. 'Finn mac Cumaill was the first of them; Oisín with his four sons named Oscar, Oisín, Échtach, and Ulach; Raigne Rosclethan "of the Wide Eyes", Caince Corcairderg "the Purple-Red", Uillenn Fáebarderg "of the Red Edge", Fáelán Feramail "the Manly" and Áed Bec "the Little", all sons of Finn; Finn Mór "the Great", the son of Cúán, son of Murchad, the *Fían*-chieftain of the *Fíana* of Munster; Finn, son of Temenan, the *Fían*-chieftain of the *Déisi* of Munster; Finn, son of Casurla, the *Fían*-chieftain of the *Fíana* of *Brega* and Meath; Finn, son of Urgna, the *Fían*-chieftain of the Kindred of Conall; Finn, son of Fogath, and Finn, son of Abratrúad, the two *Fían*-chieftains of *Dál nAraide* in the north; Finn Bán "the White", the descendant of Bresal, the *Fían*-chieftain of the Descendants of Ceinnselach; Finn Fer in Champair "Man of the Quarrel", the *Fían*-chieftain of Scotland; Goll Gulban and Cas of Cooley, the two *Fían*-chieftains of the *Fíana* of Ulster; the three sons of Degóc, Feth, Faeth, and Foscad; the three sons of Aencherd Bérra, Glas, Gér, and Guba; Caílte, son of Rónán, and his two sons, Fáelán and Colla; Goth Gaithe, son of Rónán, he that ran as fast as an arrow in flight; Lergan Lúath "the Swift" from *Lúachair* in the west, he that brought does to milking as one would bring his own cows; Díarmait ua Duibne, of

the men of Munster, whose feet never wearied, whose breath never failed, and who was never fatigued indoors or out; bold, strong Mac Lugach, the noble lad of the *Fíana* of Ireland and of Scotland, and weapon-rack of the valour of all the *Fían*-life; Bran Bec "the Little", the descendant of Búadachán, and the Royal Steward of the *Fíana* of Ireland and of Scotland; Scannal, the descendant of Líathán, the Chief of the Servants of the *Fíana* of Ireland and of Scotland; Scíathbrecc, son of Dathcháin, the Noble Man of Play of the *Fíana* of Ireland; Goll, son of Morna, with his thirty brothers and his fifteen hundred sons; and the three men of instrumental music from the outer edges of the flowery Fews in the north. They placed their three instruments close together, and no trouble or difficulty entered the head of anyone hearing the beguiling music of the *síd* that came from the musical instruments in the hands of these warriors.' 'What were the names of those warriors?' asked the King of Connaught. 'Lúath, Léitmech, and Lánláitir were their names,' said Caílte, 'and they were members of the regular *Fían*. Those were the names of the chiefs, the rulers, and the men of the land that were with Finn. He was attended to and provided with food-render three times each year in his own enclosure, and the humming of the *Fían* was sung to him. This, O King of Connaught, is the answer to the question that you asked of me.' Then Caílte fell down on that hill, fainting and unconscious, and stayed there for three days and nights not able to travel or follow, pining for his comrades and his joint-fosterlings. An encampment was made there for the King of Connaught and they made arrangements for the bathing of Caílte.

Following that the host went off to the Meadow of Stags, now called the Meadow of Shame, where they made an encampment. Patrick blessed the place and the King of Connaught asked Caílte, 'Why is this place called the Meadow of Stags and for what reason was it named the Meadow of Shame?' Caílte answered, 'Finn found fine hunting in this place for the three battalions of the *Fían*, a stag for each pair of the *Fíana* of Ireland and three stags for Finn. It is for this reason that it is called the Meadow of Stags. It is named the Meadow of Shame for the following reason. One time, when the Children of Morna were making raids on Finn, they were occupied with preparing and serving their food, and were not aware of us until we came, with the three battalions of the *Fían*, and went around the ridge behind them. At that time Goll, son of Morna, said, "Great is

the shame that the men have brought on us." "What better name for this place?" said Conán Mael, son of Morna, "than the Meadow of Shame?" For this reason is it called the Meadow of Shame. But we ought not conceal the worth of the Children of Morna,' said Caílte, 'for they came in their heavy, powerful battle-line through the middle of the battalion of the *Fían*, and we inflicted no bloodying or wounding on them. We sat by the fires there and a basin of white gold was brought to Finn with water in it. He washed his face and hands in it and put his thumb under his Tooth of Wisdom. The truth was revealed to him, and he prophesied that holy and righteous ones would come there, and he recited these lines:

"A peaceful church above a lake, afterwards a royal place.
At time's end a sanctuary in the Meadow of Shame." '

The hosts went off westwards into *Breiccthír* after that to the Meadow of a Chariot, now called True Yoke, for the chariot of Patrick broke there, and Saint Patrick sat down on an earthen mound, after the axle had broken. They had not been there long when they saw a chariot driving towards them with a young boy in it. His cheeks were as purple as foxglove, his royal eyes as blue as hyacinth. The rest of his body was like the new snow of a single night, and as black as berries that have been put into dark, wintry water was the tangle of curly black hair on his head. His chariot drew near to them. 'Would you be able, O man of the chariot,' said Benén, 'to help holy Patrick?' 'Who is it who is there thus?' asked the young boy. 'Patrick, son of Calpurn, is here,' said Benén, 'the head of the faith and piety of the men of Ireland.' The boy descended from his chariot, put his head into the lap of Patrick, and said, 'It is not a good chariot for sharing. 'Let Patrick have it all.' 'Grace to you without division and to your son and to your grandson,' said Patrick. 'What is your name, boy?' asked Patrick. 'I am Dub "Black", the son of Muirgius, son of Tomaltach,'* he said. 'It is true indeed,' said Benén, 'he is very black.' 'By my God of Judgment,' said Patrick, 'because of your humility your seed henceforth will be the Descendants of Rodub "Very-Black".' 'The service of my family, both living and dead, to you,' said the boy. 'This instead,' said Patrick, 'at the end of a hundred years from today, your being living or dead, for me and for God until doom.' Patrick then recited this verse:

'Rodub will enjoy great wealth and many of his seed henceforth.
From him a line victorious in mighty Connaught's land.

'Rodub's children after him here with a measure of wealth,
He shall lie here till Doom, by Fore and by *Crúachán*.

'I leave to his descendants a gift of abbots and poets.
A gift of husbandry on them, of counsel and fellowship.

'I tell you now of it. What I say is true.
All of this will profit the children of Rodub.

'It is my will', said Patrick, 'that each legal decision in every assembly, and every claim in which a man of your seed may be involved, will go his way, providing the procedure be fair. For you gave the chariot to me without hesitation.'

They soon saw another chariot coming towards them, with two great horses of the same size under it. A blood-red woman rode in the chariot, with a blood-red cloak about her with a pin of gold in it. She had a plate of yellow gold on her forehead. She got down from the chariot, put her head into Patrick's lap, and did homage to him. 'Who are you, good woman?' asked Patrick. 'I am Aífe Derg "the Red", the daughter of Conall Costudach "the Maintainer", the daughter of the King of Connaught. I have great and precious wealth and have come to you for advice on what man I should sleep with, for you are the one man who is best in Ireland.' 'Look you,' said Patrick, 'he is beside you.' 'Who is this one?' she asked. 'Dub, the son of Rodub, son of Muirgius, son of Tomaltach,' said Patrick. 'What bride-price and dowry does he have for me?' said the woman. 'What bride-price do you ask from him?' said Patrick. 'That I be an only wife to the man who will wed me,' said the girl, 'for it is not fitting that he leave or repudiate me.' 'Do you agree to that, my boy?' said Patrick. 'I agree', said the boy, 'to everything that you tell me to do.' 'If that is so, then take the woman so that your children and your race may be from her,' said Patrick, 'and allow her her request.' He married her thus by the counsel of Saint Patrick. 'But without land,' said Aífe, 'it will be difficult.' 'Where is the King of Connaught?' said Patrick. 'Here, holy cleric,' said the king. 'Give me some land for this pair,' said Patrick, 'that came to me for counsel.' 'The cantred that is due him as patrimony,' said the king, 'they shall both have together.' They parted from him in this way.

The host went off west to the Gap of the Hounds and arrived that evening. The one who was king in the land at that time was Tigernach, son of Conn Cumachtach 'the Mighty'. When he heard that that host was coming to him he was seized with niggardliness and stinginess. He left his country and his land, and went in flight from the King of Connaught and Patrick. Patrick heard of this and said, 'My prayer to God that the domination of another nobility may be on them for ever.' The host stopped at the two forts that were there, with half of the host at each one.

The King of Connaught asked Caílte, 'What are these two forts that we are in?' 'Two warriors dear to Finn mac Cumaill dwelt in them, Conall Coscarach "the Victorious" and Cobthach Cas "the Curly", the two sons of the King of the Kindred of Conall in the north. They were two champions and two battle-soldiers who could break a rank of a hundred, but they had deadly enemies in Ireland, the Children of Morna. This was the cause of their hostility, the hunting of Slieve Gamph that Finn and the *Fíana* of Ireland carried out. On that occasion Conán Mael, son of Morna, while hunting alone, met with those two men. He was the rowdy one of the retinue, the quarrelsome one of the nobility, and the contentious one of the battle-line. He never acted fairly towards a man and cursed the man who acted fairly towards him. Through the curse of Conán Mael all the Children of Morna were killed and slaughtered. A very fierce wild stag was startled by them and Conán cast his spear at it. Likewise the two sons of the King of the Kindred of Conall cast their spears at it and the spears came crossways through it. Conán said, "You men get away from that game." "We shall not leave," they replied. "You have no more killed it", said Conán, "than I, and it is I who struck it first." "Though you may have struck it," said the men, "it will not be left to you, but we shall give you the justice of Finn." Conán answered that with a curse saying, "A curse on the one who will give justice to me. I myself give justice to no one." Conall lifted his arm and gave Conán a blow with the shaft of his spear and gave him a lump and a bruise as thick as the spearshaft itself. A crowd of the *Fían* came between them and kept them apart.

'Conán, however, pursued no feud or reproach for this until the Children of Morna came raiding and plundering against Finn. The Sons of Morna were killing Finn's fosterlings and the people dear to him, and they went', said Caílte, 'to the Patrimony of the Men, now

called the Meadowland of the Town. At that time Conán said to Goll, "Do you know, Goll, my *Fían*-chieftain, that the son of the King of the Kindred of Conall gave me a blow with a spearshaft during the hunting of Slieve Gamph. I wish to avenge it on them tonight." "By my word," said Goll, "we would not wish any friend of ours to go against them, for it is 'the squealing of a brood of a single-sow' with them." "I shall go against them with four hundred warriors," said Conán. And the two sons of his brother rose up with him, Taman and Trén by name. Those four hundred warriors came towards the place in the middle of the day, and four hundred others rose to meet them,' said Caílte. 'Trén and Taman were killed by the two sons of the King of the Kindred of Conall at the beginning, but not a man escaped from that encounter to tell tales of it or to earn his reward but Conán alone with the strap of his shield about his neck. He went back to where his brothers were.

"That, Conán, was an evil expedition," said his brothers. "We have lost men on your account," they said, "and the two sons of our brother died together with the four hundred men that went with you." Those eight hundred warriors', said Caílte, 'were placed under the earth in this place, a stone was raised above their grave, and their names were written on it in Ogam.' Caílte recited this verse:

'The Forts of Conall and Cobthach Cas. Under the green-clad mound
They shall remain henceforth, resting in this Hill.

'The Mound of Aillbe and Étaín, facing *Áth Immecal*.
Soon from an evil sickness, full of grief they died.

'Great the fight, the battle, the host that caused us harm.
Broken my heart in my bosom, now that this fort I see.'

'Great is the knowledge and the true lore that you have told to us, dear Caílte,' said the King of Connaught. All the host went off, and Patrick with them, westwards to the Thicket of the Witches, now called the Spring of Patrick. Conn Cumachtach 'the Mighty', the king of the country, came to meet with Patrick. 'Tell us,' said Caílte to him, 'why is this place called the Thicket of the Witches?' Conn replied, 'Nine women were here engaged in witchcraft and they left no one, man or woman, alive. For the past twenty years they have thus despoiled the whole countryside.' Conn Cumachtach then said

to Patrick, 'Well, dear, holy cleric, free us from these witches and the troubles that are destroying the land and the countryside.'

Patrick then said, 'Where is *Mac na Tráth* "the Son of the Hours?"' 'Here I am, holy cleric,' he said. 'Go and see if there is water nearby for us.' 'I see none here,' said the cleric. Patrick then raised his arm and thrust his crozier into the earth, and a crystalline spring leaped from the earth. Patrick blessed the water and recited the following poem:

'Now we have found water, said Patrick without sin.
Famous will be to all, the brilliant, angelic spring.

'I decree', said Patrick, 'that anyone who drinks from this spring shall have protection for three days and three nights and that it will help and aid him in each trouble that comes to him.'

They had not been there long when they saw nine black and gloom-filled witches coming towards them, covered with hair from the heads of people long dead in the earth. If the dead were accustomed to rise from the earth, they would make such screams as these did around them on every side. Patrick took the water he had blessed and sprinkled it on the witches. They fled from him until they reached the Island of Weeping, now called the Island of the Shrine, on Lough Carra. Then was heard the last of their weeping and the host sat down on an earthen mound. The King of Connaught then said, 'It is a fine clerical defeat you have inflicted on the demons.'

Caílte said to Patrick, 'Do you not know of another need that I have, holy Patrick?' 'What need is that?' asked Patrick. 'I have had a great distress ever since the great battle of Howth in the east.' 'What, now, is this great distress?' asked Patrick. 'Mane, the son of the King of *Lochlann*, had a poisonous spear, and no man that was touched by it escaped without death or injury. I had a hundred very brave warriors fighting against me in that battle,' said Caílte. 'I opposed them, and Mane, the son of the King of *Lochlann*, cast his spear at me when I was in the midst of battle. I did not know who threw the spear but I heard the noise that it made as it approached. I raised up my shield to cover my head and body, but that helped me not at all. The spear came below my shield into my calf and into the sinew of my leg. It put its poison into my leg so that I was unable to move to seek help and assistance.' 'Where do you wish to go?' asked Patrick. 'North to Áed Minbrec of Assaroe,' said Caílte. 'His wife is Bé Binn,

daughter of Elcmar* of the *Bruig*, who keeps the curing and healing drink of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. She holds that which remained from the Feast of Goibniu, and it is she who distributes it to them. Short were my journeys and my paths when Finn mac Cumaill, and Oisín, Díarmait, and Oscar were alive.' Caílte recited this verse:

'A journey for me to the north to mighty Modarn's stream,
To heal my wounded leg that I might yet survive.

'I, brave Caílte, Eithne's only son,
Who held back an army, mine a warrior's life.

'Alas now without Oisín and Díarmait and Finn,
And fine and noble Oscar that my journey not be long.

'Where is Cas Corach, son of Caincinde?' asked Caílte. 'Here, my dear friend,' said Cas. 'Rise up and take your dulcimer and let us be off.' They made ready to go and a paternoster was sung about them. Patrick said to Caílte, 'The men of Ireland are meeting at the end of a year in Tara. Come join us there and meet with the men of Ireland, so that you may say something of your own deeds of valour and those of Finn mac Cumaill and the *Fíana* of Ireland.' Caílte agreed to that and said, 'Everything I have promised, I shall do.' 'It is well that you say that,' said Patrick, 'for you are dearly beloved by me.' Caílte bade farewell to Patrick and the King of Connaught and all the host.

CHAPTER XI

THE two of them went off to the *Síd* of the Ridge of Neimed, now called the *Síd* of Mounds in Leyny in Connaught. As they came to the green of the *síd* they saw a boy there. He had a green cloak about him with a pin of gold in it, and a diadem of gold on his head. The voice and speech of the boy were as sweet as the strings of lutes in the hands of a fine craftsman. Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, went up to him and gave him three kisses. 'What is the reason for your friendship? I have not known of it before now,' said Caílte. 'We have reason,' said the boy, 'we have the same mother.' 'What is your name, my boy?' asked Caílte. 'My name is Fer Maisse "Man of Beauty", son of Eogabál,' said the boy. 'It seems to us not to be a nickname,' said Caílte, 'for you are very handsome. We have never seen a man in the world more beautiful than you.' 'Come into the *síd* now,' said the boy. 'I shall not enter,' said Caílte, 'for you may be blamed if you do not first seek permission from the people of the *síd*.' The boy entered and spoke to Fergus Foltfhinn 'of the Fair Hair', son of the Dagda, and to his sister, Aífe Fholtfhinn, and to Étaín, the sister of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda. 'Go back to them,' they said. 'Bring them with you into the *síd*, for we have not heard of a son of a warrior better than Caílte during all the time that he has been alive.' They were brought into the *síd*. Caílte was given a truly gracious welcome, and was placed in a lovely, bright, crystalline chair on the warrior-platform of the *síd*. They were all well attended to and provided with every delicacy and entertainment. They remained there for the night. 'Well, my dear Caílte,' said Fergus, son of the Dagda, 'I have a sword-hilt and wish you to adjust it for me, since the *Túatha Dé Danann* have refused me.' 'Put it in my hand,' said Caílte. The sword was brought to him and he spent the whole day until evening adjusting it. He went to Fergus at the end of the day and put the finished sword into his hand. 'Do you know, my dear Caílte, the real reason why we keep that sword with us?' asked Fergus. 'Indeed I do not,' said Caílte. 'There is a warrior who has been at odds with the *Túatha Dé Danann* for some considerable time. He is the King of *Lochlann* in the north, Garb, son of Tarb, and Éolus is his brother. They come every three years with a great fleet to attack us and they

bring with them a warrior woman, called Bé Dreccain "Dragon Woman", daughter of Irúath. An enchanted woman of druidry raised her, and for that reason no *síd* of any *síd* of the *Túatha Dé Danann* holds any secret from her. With the knowledge that she has, there are no treasures or wealth or riches that she is not able to take from them. She brings her host and company into the interior of every single *síd* of the *Túatha Dé Danann* to raid and despoil them. Look well at the spear in your hand,' said Fergus, 'and rivet it well for that warrior woman.' He put the spear in Caílte's hand and Caílte riveted it. 'Here', he said, 'is a pronged javelin given into your hand. Rivet it well for another of those three.' He put the shaft into his hand, and it broke in its socket. Seven shafts were brought to him and they all broke in the socket. The eighth shaft that was put into his hand he riveted it securely and strongly. 'Happy the man', said Fergus, 'who would find a friend who would take from his hand such weapons, prepared for the purpose of killing those three.' 'What are the names of these weapons?' asked Caílte. '*Cró Coscair* "Shaft of Victory" is the name of the sword,' said Fergus, '*Ben Bodbda* "Fatal Woman" the name of the spear, and *Deoch Báis* "Drink of Death" the name of the javelin.' 'It used to be my lot', said Caílte, 'to do slaughter, if the men of Ireland and of Scotland and of the *Túatha Dé Danann* wished it, but I have not done that since my youth. Who knows if it may not be my lot today to do it again?'

'Who will die by the sword?' asked Cas Corach, son of Caincinde. 'The warrior woman,' said Fergus. 'Who will die by the javelin?' asked Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál. 'One of the kings of the world, a king of *Lochlann* or a king of Ireland,' said Fergus, son of the Dagda. 'Who will die by the spear?' asked Caílte. 'The King of *Lochlann*, Garb, son of Tarb. The *Túatha Dé Danann* have a prophecy that he will be killed by it,' said Fergus. 'Leave the spear with me,' said Caílte, 'for it was prophesied to me that I should make a single slaughter at the end of my life and era, if the men of Ireland and of Scotland and the *Túatha Dé Danann* were willing.'

They spent the next three days and nights there and bade farewell to the people of the *síd*. They took those weapons with them and Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál, the fosterling of Fergus, accompanied them. They set off for the Cataract of the Birds, now called the Cataract of the Oak [Ballysadare], thence to the Bridge of the Nine [Belladrihid], now called the Bridge of Slaughter, north to the Red

Ridge of the *Fían*, now called the Ridge of Baskets [Drumcliff], across the Ford of the Grey Stag, to the Grave of Caílte, Slaughter of a King, where Díthrubach, son of Scál Derg 'the Red', the son of the mother of Finn mac Cumaill was killed, to the District of the Contention, now called the Church of Buadnatán, to the Grave of the Champion, the place where the enchanted swine of druidry killed Díarmait ua Duibne, and north into the Plain of Céitne, son of Allguba, where the men of Ireland and those of the *Túatha Dé Danann* paid tribute to the Family of Fomorians, down to the Step of the *Fían* above Assaroe, and to the Height of the Boys, where the boys of the *Túatha Dé Danann* had their hurling every seventh year outside the *síd*. The keepers of discipline of the *síd* were on that hill that day. In front of the *síd* were Áed of Assaroe and Ilbrecc of Assaroe. They gave welcome to Caílte without guile and without deceit.

'We trust your welcome,' said Caílte. Bé Binn, daughter of Elcmar of the *Bruig*, came outside surrounded by a hundred and fifty of her fair women. She sat down on an earthen mound and, fondly and fervently, gave three kisses to both Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, and to Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál. The people of the *síd* gave welcome to Caílte and the others, and said, 'Evil is your friendship to us if you could hear of the great distress that afflicts us without coming to our aid.' 'I myself was not raised for valour,' said Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, 'but whenever the performance of music would seem appropriate or desirable to you, I would be happy to oblige you.' 'We have had little interest in brave deeds up to now,' said Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál, 'but we shall give aid to you should the need arise.' Caílte told the people of the *síd* the purpose of his journey. 'We shall provide proper healing,' they said. They then went into the *síd* and spent the next three days and nights in drinking and pleasure.

A man came to the door of the *síd* and said that the coast was covered with ships and boats, and that a huge army of thirty battalions, each with three thousand men, had landed on the nearby shore. 'It is beyond numbering,' said Caílte and recited these lines:

> 'This the number that came here, a thousand vessels in all,
> Countless foreign long-ships lie close by to the shore.'

'Well, Caílte, dear *Fían*-chieftain,' they said, 'what is there for us to do?' 'You should ask them for terms of peace,' said Caílte, 'until the *Túatha Dé Danann* gather together and assemble.' This was

done. The *Túatha Dé Danann* gathered together and formed twelve battalions on the green of the *síd* in the morning. Messengers came to them from the fleet and said to the men of Ireland, 'Let the *Túatha Dé Danann* give hostages to us.' 'How may we do that, Caílte?' said the people of the *síd* and the nobles of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. 'Let us move our twelve battalions to the end of the shore and observe them,' said Caílte. The twelve battalions went off and Caílte asked, 'Does one of you have a solid chariot?' 'I have,' said Midir Mongbuide, son of the Dagda. The chariot was brought to them and Caílte went off in it, bearing the spear 'Fatal Woman' that had been given to him. The foreigners had formed a wall of shields about them. Caílte put his left knee against the chariot and his fore-finger of valour in the loop of the spear, and made a cast at the King of *Lochlann*. The spear went through the upper part of his garment and the bosom of his tunic. It shattered his shield from rim to body, and broke his back in two. The king fell in the midst of his troops and his soul thus separated from his body. Caílte recited these lines:

'Garb was struck down quickly, there in the midst of the van.
Caílte killed him with venom, with a sure and cruel cast.'

His people carried him off to his ship and the men of his army said, 'Great was the deed that this man did, killing the best man in the world with a single cast.' For this reason is the shore called the Shore of Garb.

The warrior woman said to the men, 'Board your ships, and I myself shall fight against the *Túatha Dé Danann*.' Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, asked the *Túatha Dé Danann*, 'Do you have a strong and firm shield for me?' 'I have,' said Donn, son of Midir. 'Put it in my hand,' said Cas. The shield was brought to him. He took it and placed a sword in his hand, and went off to the place where Bé Dreccain was keeping watch and guard for her fleet. 'Well, my dear boy,' she said, 'why have you come?' 'I have come to do battle with you,' he said. 'Never before today,' said the warrior woman, 'has a man or two done battle with me. More often it was a fierce, great battalion in terror of me. You, little boy, have certainly not found a place of safety if you come to do battle with me.' They then fought bravely with bloody valour. Each had given the other thirty terrible wounds, from the feet to the hair of the head, when the boy came in close to her swiftly and suddenly, and cut her down. With a vicious

blow over the rim of her shield he struck off her head. He brought it with him to the *Túatha Dé Danann* and Caílte recited these lines:

'Cas Corach of the Hundreds slew the warrior maid.
He left her lying on the shore, facing the foaming sea.'

The host of *Lochlann* said to themselves, 'Great is the deed that this boy has done, slaying before our very eyes our champion, the one who had protected us from every danger.' The men of the fleet then made Éolus, the brother of the king, their lord and gave him the high-kingship. They then went back on land to challenge the *Túatha Dé Danann* to battle. 'We shall wage the battle,' said the *Túatha Dé Danann*, 'for it becomes easier and easier for us to fight them.'

Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál, rose at an early hour of the day, before anyone of the host, and took the pronged javelin in his hand. It was called 'pronged' because there were five prongs on it with thirty barbs on each one that would cut hairs against the stream. 'My gods,' said the boy, 'what sort of man is Éolus?' 'The fairest and handsomest warrior of the men of the world,' said a man that was nearby. 'Stay close to my side,' said the boy, 'and instruct me.'

Éolus put on his armour of combat and battle, took his weapons in his hand, and came on land beside his ship. 'There, boy,' said the man, 'is the one that you asked me to point out to you. Look at the diadem of gold on his head, and his blood-red shield, and the patterned green clothing he is wearing, covered with heathen images. Fer Maisse set his foot against a ridge of the earth, put his finger in the loop of the javelin, and cast it at him. The javelin struck the boss of the shield and went through it, breaking his back in two. It brought his heart out through his mouth in a black flow of blood, and the point of the javelin went through the side of the ship. Caílte recited this verse:

'Fair the corpse of Éolus, killed by the beautiful boy,
Who left him floating on the wave, on a cold and buoyant bed.

'That is the story of the shore, though it be I who tell.
The loss of the northern host, lamenting from *Lochlann*.'

When the host from *Lochlann* saw that those three had fallen they said they would no longer fight against the *Túatha Dé Danann* and they returned to their own country. Caílte recited these lines:

'Joyful the people of the *síd* for their escape from harm,
After their difficult battle, no tribute across the sea.'

It was told throughout Ireland that these three had fallen. The *Túatha Dé Danann* and all of the men of Ireland considered it to be a famous deed, that an army that came every seventh year to raid had been killed by their three champions.

'Where is Eógan the Prophet?' asked Caílte. 'Here,' said Eógan. 'Discover for me the true state of my existence,' said Caílte, 'for I am old and decrepit and at the end of my life.' Caílte recited these lines:

'Tell me, Eógan the Prophet, tell me of my fate.
What the number of years that remain to me on earth?'

Eógan answered with this verse:

'Seven years and ten remain to Caílte with fair fame,
Until you fall at Tara's Pool. Sad will the household be.'

'May you have victory and blessing, dear Eógan,' said Caílte. 'That is the same prophecy that was made by my lord, my chief, and my dear and loving foster-father, Finn.' 'How long', they asked, 'does Eógan the Prophet say you shall live?' 'Seventeen years,' said Caílte. 'That will be true,' they said, 'for never has he prophesied to anyone a lifetime that did not come to pass, and he told many years ago that those three would be killed by you with those weapons.' Caílte recited these lines:

'I tell you of it now. True will my story be.
What I told the Druid Eógan from you shall not be hid.

'Well now, people of the *síd*,' said Caílte, 'the reason that I came to see you: let be done my healing and my curing now. I have given you the reward for my healing. I have brought you the greatest benefit you have ever received.' 'You have truly done that,' they said, 'and we shall change your shape for you so that you may be vigorous and fully active. You shall likewise have the noble youthfulness of the *Túatha Dé Danann*.' 'It is sad', said Caílte, 'that I should take on the shape of druidry. I shall not have any shape but that which my Maker and my Creator and the glorious True God gave to me, with the faith of belief and piety of the Adze-Head, he who has come into Ireland.'

The *Túatha Dé Danann* said, 'That is the word of a true soldier and of a true warrior! What you say is good, but there will be a delay until morning for your healing.' 'What is the reason for the delay?' asked Caílte. 'Three ravens come to us from the north every Eve of *Samain*, and, when the boys of the *síd* are engaged in hurling, they descend on the boys and each raven carries one of them off with him.' Ilbrecc recited these lines:

'Three come from the sea, at the games of *Samain*'s Eve.
They carry three boys away, these nameless horrors three.'

'That is the reason for the delay, Caílte,' said the people of the *síd*. They passed that night there until day came with its full brightness in the morning. Then the *Túatha Dé Danann* went off to watch the hurling. A *fidchell*-set was brought along for every six of them, a *brandub**-board for every five, and backgammon for every four. A dulcimer was played for every twenty, harps for every hundred of them, and shrill, overpowering flutes for every nine.

At that very hour they saw in the north the three ravens flying over the depths of the sea. They came down on the sacred tree of victory that was on the green, as they had in the past, and let loose three distressing and unpleasant screams. If it were usual for the dead to come from the earth, or hairs to come from the heads of men, such screams would be heard as those three that threw all the host into confusion. Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, took a piece from a *fidchell*-set and cast it at one of the birds. It went into its mouth and throat and he killed it with a single cast. Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál, cast a piece at another of the birds and the same thing happened. Then Caílte made a cast at the third bird and killed it in the same way. Caílte recited these lines:

'Cas Corach and Fer Maisse killed two clever birds.
The master of weapons, Caílte, killed the third with his cast.'

They killed the three birds in this way and Caílte said, 'Your birds have been killed, now let me be healed.' The people of the *síd* said to him, 'Do you know, Caílte, of the great trouble that has long afflicted the *Túatha Dé Danann*?' 'What trouble is that?' asked Caílte. 'The three sons of the King of Ulster in the north, Conn, Congal, and Colla have been making raids on them.' Caílte recited this verse:

'Conn, Congal, and Colla, three champions unloved,
Heights and fields they travel to avenge their kinsman's death.

'Every year they come here, not holding to our rules.
And in unfair contest, three of us they kill.

'I will tell you of it. True all that I say.
These mighty sons of Ulster shall themselves be killed.'

'Those three come to us every year,' said Ilbrecc, 'to demand compensation for their grandfather, Eochaid Muinderg "of the Red Neck", the former King of Ulster. The *Túatha Dé Danann* killed him in the battle of the Shore of *Baile* in the north, and every year they seek combat with three from a *síd* in Ireland. It was not a fair contest the last time,' said Ilbrecc, 'for the three of us that went to the battle were killed, and the three brothers survived. This year it again falls on the people of this *síd* to fight against them.'

After raiding and despoiling the *Túatha Dé Danann* each year, the three sons of the King of Ulster stayed in the Mourne Mountains in the east of the province of Ulster. On one such occasion one of them asked, 'Which *síd* are we to attack this year?' 'The *Síd* of Ilbrecc of the Cataract of Rúad,' said his brothers. 'There is a warrior of the retinue of Finn mac Cumaill in that *síd*,' said one of their men, 'together with a pair of boys. Every battle and every ambush against them should be avoided, but it would be said, if we avoid the *síd*, that we would be avoiding battle with them and its danger.' They stayed there that night repairing their weapons and sharpening their edges, and arrived early in the morning at the Cataract of Rúad, son of Modarn. The people of the *síd* came outside, together with Caílte and the two boys, onto the grass-covered green. 'Are those men yonder', asked Caílte, 'the three that come to attack you?' 'They certainly are,' said the people of the *síd*. 'Good is their form and appearance,' said Caílte, and recited these lines:

'Conn, Congal, and Colla, fine and comely men,
Will get from us, at our meeting, justice and fair play.'

'What justice do you offer us, my dear Caílte?' asked the three, and said:

'What justice do you offer, O Caílte and Ilbrecc?
What is your host's purpose, should the battle start?'

'How long have you been fighting against the *Túatha Dé Danann*?' asked Caílte. 'We have been fighting them for a hundred years,' they said, 'and each year we kill three of them.' 'If you have,' said Caílte, 'then you have avenged your grandfather on them three times over. You are in the wrong in this matter, and if we meet in a year, it is you that will fall there, as a result.' 'We shall give compensation to you,' said Ilbrecc, 'twenty ounces of gold and twenty ounces of silver from each *síd* in Ireland. Each will give surety to the other.' Ilbrecc recited these lines:

'To the mighty heroes, twenty ounces from each *síd*,
In payment for your kinsman, avoiding further strife.'

'We accept that,' they said. They took the compensation offered for their grandfather and departed. At that very time three lovely, red does came from the outskirts of the flowery Fews to the green of this *síd*. They grazed the grass down to the gravel and to the bed-rock of flat, smooth stones. Ilbrecc recited these lines:

'Three hornless does here come, lovely, red, and fat.
Nothing for our horses where they have grazed the grass.'

'What is all this?' asked Caílte. 'The three does that come each year to us,' said Ilbrecc, 'and leave nothing on this green outside uneaten but gravel and bed-rock.' Caílte and his comrades hurled three small stones at them and killed them. 'Have victory and blessing,' they said, 'it is a good deed you have done.'

'Now it is time to heal me,' said Caílte, 'for I am weary of waiting.' 'Where is Bé Binn, daughter of Elcmar?' asked Ilbrecc. 'Here I am,' she said. 'Well, my dear woman,' said Ilbrecc, 'take Caílte, son of Rónán, with you to a remote chamber, and let him be well and properly healed, for he has put a stop to the raiding and plundering on the *Túatha Dé Danann* and on the men of Ireland. Let Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, provide him with music and minstrelsy, and let Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál, guard, protect, and look after him.'

Then Bé Binn, daughter of Elcmar, entered the armoury in the company of her two sons, and a healing bed of rushes was there laid for Caílte. An oval basin of white gold filled with water was brought to her and a vat of crystal. She put herbs in the basin, breaking them over the water, and put it into Caílte's hands. He drank a great

draught from it and brought forth a greenish vomit. 'Dear woman,' said Caílte, 'what is the cause of this vomiting?' 'A spurt of blood brought about by the cataracts and rivers, and the estuaries and early morning hunts has caused it,' she said. 'Drink a second draught.' Caílte drank again and this time brought forth a bloody stream of red vomit. 'What is this vomit, dear woman?' asked Caílte. 'Pools of blood from the poison of the spears and blades that wounded you in all of the battles and combats you have ever been in.' He took another drink from the basin and brought forth a jet-black vomit. 'What explanation do you give for this?' asked Caílte. 'It comes from your sorrow for your comrade and your joint-fosterling, your lord and your chief, Finn mac Cumaill.' He then drank a fourth drink and brought forth a yellow vomit. 'What is this vomit, dear woman?' asked Caílte. 'The remains of poison and bleeding that were still within. Drink the final mouthful,' she said. 'I am unwilling to do that,' said Caílte, 'for never in battle or attack or combat have I found anything more difficult to do, but I shall drink it all the same.' He brought forth a vomit containing traces of every colour. 'What vomit is this, dear woman?' asked Caílte. 'The combination comes from every run and every over-exertion and every deed you have ever done on every mound and hill and rock, but the blood colour on the top is the blood from your own body and flesh, and that is a sign of health.' She gave him a flask of milk from which he drank, but, as a result of the vomiting, for three days and nights after that he was feeble and miserable.

'It seems to me, my dear Caílte,' said Bé, 'you have found a cure and healing.' 'I have indeed,' said Caílte, 'but great suffering afflicts my head.' 'Flann, daughter of Flidais,* will wash your head for you,' said Bé Binn, daughter of Elcmar. 'Every head she washes suffers no pain afterwards nor balding. One who has had his head washed seven times by her can see equally well by day or by night.' His healing continued for a time and the people of the *síd* divided themselves into three groups to visit him, one of great nobles, one of boys, and one of girls, women, and poets to visit and entertain him for however long he might be mending. Whatever choice bits the people of the *síd* came upon in their hunting and chase were first given to Caílte.

Bé Binn with her two sons and Cas Corach, together with Fer Maisse, stayed with him for drinking and entertainment. On one occasion when they were thus engaged they heard the sound and

performance of music coming to them from the Cataract of Rúad, son of Modarn, and anyone hearing such music would forsake all the music of the world. When they heard it they put their harps beside the benches, and all went outside because of the music they had heard. Caílte found it wonderful and he became aware of the loss of his activity and of his weapon-handling and of his full vigour, and said, 'Though I have been in a multitude of fierce fights of victory, and have been on many expeditions, and in many battles and combats, today I have not the strength or vigour to go outside with all the rest!' Tears fell across his cheeks.

The people of the *síd* had come out to listen to the music and Caílte asked of them, 'What made that strain of music that we heard?' 'Úaine, the daughter of Buide from the *Síd* of Dorn Buide "the Yellow" in the south from the Wave of Clídna. She has with her a flock of birds of *Tír Tairngire* "the Land of Promise", for she is the Minstrel of all of the Land of Promise, and this is the year that she comes to this *síd*. Each year she visits a different *síd*,' said Bé, 'and this is her year with us, and never have you heard, my dear Caílte, music as good as that which she plays.' They all went back into the *síd* and the flock of birds perched on the corners and benches of the *síd*. Thirty birds came into the armoury in which Caílte was staying and sang a song inside. Cas Corach took his dulcimer, and each tune that he played was sung at the same time by the flock of birds. 'We have heard much music,' said Caílte, 'but never have we heard music as good as that before.'

Flann, daughter of Flidais, washed Caílte's hair, and he had no deficiency of sight or of hearing as long as he was alive. The healing that he received in the *síd* quickly cured his wounds and damaged skin, and he said, 'The reason that I came here was to have my leg healed, and that should now be done.' 'It will be fully healed tomorrow morning,' said the woman. She brought the two tubes of Binne, the daughter of Modarn, and applied them to Caílte. A female slave sucked on one of them and a male slave on the other. Not an illness or sickness or bit of bad blood remained in his leg that they did not remove from it, and he soon made a complete recovery from his wounds. They spent three days and nights there at his healing.

The people of the *síd* came outside and went to the bank of Cataract of Rúad, son of Modarn, and took off their clothing. They

then went into the river to swim, using backstroke and sidestroke, and treading water. Caílte said, 'Why should I not swim, since my health has returned? None was a better swimmer than I in lakes, icy pools, and blue-edged waters.' He then plunged into the water. Afterwards they returned into the *síd* and a house of drinking was arranged by them that evening. Caílte said goodbye to them and thanked them for the healing of his wounds. 'For I am well and healthy,' he said. 'My blessing on you.' Caílte recited this poem:

'A blessing on the people of the *síd*, their king and queen.
I have had all their service and been made completely whole.

'Good my journey to the *síd*. There I got mead and wine.
Excellent men and women, sweet the music of their birds.

'Good my journey to the *síd*, welcome without hate.
Excellent their lords and men, their colourful attire.

'A blessing on Bé the Pleasing, Elcmar's pleasant child,
Excellent her beauty, her counsel and her wit.

'I will tell you of it. True that which I say.
My strength shall now be lasting, my blessing here I leave.'

'By our word,' said the people of the *síd*, 'never have we seen on the surface of the world a better warrior than you. It seems to us that not even Finn was better than you.' 'Sad is that then!' said Caílte. 'Had you seen Finn you would have lost interest in all the rest of mankind. Now I must leave, and my blessing on the people of the *síd*. There is a meeting of the men of Ireland in Tara at the end of the year, and I must go there to converse with my comrade and joint-fosterling, Oisín, son of Finn, and because of the summons of the Adze-Head who ordered me to go there to tell the nobles of the men of Ireland, assembled there in one place, of the exploits and the great deeds of valour and prowess of the *Fían* and of Finn mac Cumaill, and of the men of Ireland as well, so that the scholars and the sages may preserve the tales that we tell them until the end of time.' 'Here is some help for you from us,' said Bé. 'What help might that be?' asked Caílte. 'A drink that we give to you to take to Tara for the remembrance of lore, so that any cataract or river or estuary that you encounter, you will remember it, together with its attendant battles and combats.' 'That is the help of friends and of a true family,' said

Caílte. 'If I had anything to give that you might desire, I would give it to you.'

'Great is the benefit you have conferred on us,' said Bé, 'for you are the one who drove off from the *Túatha Dé Danann* those who had been raiding and plundering them every seventh year. I have a tunic adorned with gold thread for you with a band of lovely silk across its hem. It will last as long as life may remain to you, and will never shred or stain or wear out, nor impede you at all. Here is a bright-purple, bordered cloak, as well, of wool from the rams of the Land of Promise, that abounds in strong and clear flocks, surrounded by a border of pale-yellow gold. Exceedingly fair at each meeting and assembly shall be the one who wears it, and any man or woman who sees him will fall in love with him, and a suitable gift for a man of your years,' said Bé, 'a fishhook named *Aicil meic Moga* "The Eagle of the Son of Mug". Whatever cataract or river you drop it in, it will return with a fish attached.'

'What will you do now, Fer Maisse, son of Eogabál?' asked Caílte. 'I shall remain in this *síd*,' he said, 'until the Feast of Tara is held, and bring along that which Bé Binn promised to you.' 'You then, Cas Corach, what will you do?' 'I shall go with you,' said Cas, 'to learn wisdom and true lore until the men of Ireland who are in Tara go their separate ways.'

Caílte and Cas then bade farewell to the people of the *síd*, and went to the Hill of the Sound. The people of the *síd* made a great sound when Caílte parted from them, so that it has been called the Hill of the Sound ever since. Caílte said, 'I shall not return to this place before the judgment of the destruction of the world.'

They went off to the Cataract of the Kin-Slaying, now called the Cataract of Crónán, son of the Balb. There had been seven brothers who quarrelled near the cataract. Each of them killed the other, and for that reason it is called the Cataract of the Kin-Slaying. Their father, Crónán, son of the Balb, lived after them, and came as far as this to grieve for his sons. His heart broke there in the middle of the night, and for this reason it is now called the Cataract of Crónán.

They had not been there long when the bright and beautiful clouds of the day left them and the great, heavy clouds of evening came towards them. They left the cataract and saw a large man in an enclosed meadow on a hill before them, and sat down in his presence. 'Where do you come from?' asked the warrior. They told him

their names, their lineages, and their adventures. 'Who are you, dear man?' they asked. 'I am Blathmac Bóaire "the Cow-Noble",' he said, 'from the outlying areas of the Mount of Lug [Slieve Lowe], from the Corner of Sight here, now called Coolavin. 'We would wish hospitality for this night from you,' said Caílte. This was the man they had met, the one in Ireland most marked by inhospitality and stinginess. 'If you paid for it,' he said, 'I would attend to you and provide you with hospitality this evening.' 'What is the cost, friend?' asked Caílte. 'There are three great rocks at one end of my farm and they are called the Pillars of the Three. We do not know what women or men are under them or why they have this name.' 'I shall explain it to you,' said Caílte, 'for I remember the event. There was a noble warrior in the *Fíana* of Ireland named Finn Bán, the descendant of Bresal, and one of the Children of Baíscne. He had three excellent daughters, and none of the Children of Baíscne was his match, but for three men, Finn mac Cumaill, Oisín, and Oscar, and those three women. The virtues of those women were comparable to the qualities of those men, for they surpassed the women of Ireland in needlework and in embroidery, and in all of Ireland there were not three women more beautiful than they. Each one who came to the Assembly of Teltown, or to the Great Meeting of Usnagh, or the Feast of Tara brought with him splendid and exquisite clothing, and none wished any clothing that had not been made by these women. Finn once said to them, "Dear women," he said, "do not sleep with any men but the men whom I and the *Fíana* of Ireland shall give you." They abided by the word of the Lord Finn thus in *Almu* of Leinster for a long time, until three of the Children of Morna came by and saw the three women at their needlework and embroidery, to the north-east on the Rock of *Almu*. Those three warriors, Conán, Art, and Meccon by name, came there and said, "Here is a good opportunity for a deed against Finn and the Children of Baíscne, for no three, apart from Finn and Oisín and Oscar, are better than these three women.' They seized them and brought them with them', said Caílte, 'as far as this hill where they met with Goll and their brothers. "Where have you brought these female captives from?" asked Goll. "From *Almu* of Leinster," said the eldest of the women. "To do such a thing to the *Fían* is a cause of war," said Goll. "By our word," said Conán, "we have not brought them here to make peace with them, but to kill them in your presence." "Our curse on

the one who kills them!" said Goll. "We shall not stay here for their killing."

'The Children of Morna then rose up together and left the hill except for those six. The women asked Conán, "Do you wish to kill us?" "We do indeed," said Conán. "We shall give you good terms," said the women, "every evil and impropriety you have committed against Finn and against the *Fían* shall be forgiven you. We shall make peace and ourselves become your only wives." They did not agree to that, but gave them three blows that cut their heads from them. They were buried here under these three stones. For this reason are the stones named thus,' said Caílte. He recited this verse:

'Painful for me that grave standing on the hill.
Beloved the three who lie there under three lovely stones.

'Great the loss of Étaín the Fair, generous to all.
Aífe Án and Aillbe Rúad, great was their renown.

'The Sons of Morna killed them, sorrowful the deed.
Beloved the three who dwell there in the Grave of Three.

'And these', he said, 'are the women that are under yonder stones.'

'May you have victory and blessing,' said the warrior, 'good is this knowledge for me and my son and my grandson. You shall have welcome for three nights, dear Caílte, for the lore that you have told to me.' They went off to the Enclosure of the Women in the Corner of Sight, now called Coolavin, and entered the fort. They were well attended to that night.

In the morning they heard the sound of three packs of the King of Leyny in Connaught, Taídlech, son of Ailill, hunting near the top of the dew-covered Slieve Lowe. 'What hunting is this, Caílte?' asked Blathmac. 'The hunting of three packs,' said Caílte, 'with three sorts of animals before them.' 'What animals are those?' asked Blathmac. 'This chief cry that they are making', said Caílte, 'is that of very fierce, wild stags and plump does.' 'And the pack after it?' asked Blathmac. 'The sweet cry of hounds after swift, gentle hares of the field,' said Caílte. 'And this third pack?' asked Blathmac. 'That is the cry of frantic, eager hounds,' said Caílte, 'chasing heavy-sided boars to quickly kill them.' 'What now is this fourth cry, dear Caílte?' asked Blathmac. 'The cry of heavy-sided, low-bellied badgers.' Then they heard the shout of the servants, those who were the quickest of the

boys, and those who were the swiftest of the warriors, and the men with the straightest of casts, and the strong slaves who carried the greatest burdens. Caílte and Blathmac were at the rear of the hunt that day, but Blathmac went off to look at them and they were as Caílte had described them. The warrior then gave Caílte a buffalo horn filled from his vat of mead and said, 'The vat is yours, dear Caílte, and though you wish to stay here for a year, you shall get your wish.' 'May you have victory and blessing,' said Caílte, 'but shall I be here just for tonight.' 'If that is the case,' said the warrior, 'there is something else that I wish to ask you. Why is this enclosure called the Enclosure of the Women?' Caílte answered, 'Nine sisters were in this place and they were of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. They had come to meet with nine warriors of the *Fíana* of Ireland. After they had arrived here the Children of Morna came upon them and killed them after their meeting with the nine from the *Fían*. This is why the enclosure that was made here is called the Enclosure of the Women,' said Caílte.

They were there that night and bade farewell in the morning. They left their blessing and then went off to the Cairn of the Kin-Slaying, now called the Barrow of the Hounds. When they arrived on this elevation they saw nine fair and gentle women on top of it and a beautiful, well-shaped queen in their midst. She wore a tunic of royal silk against her skin, and a dress of soft silk over it, and a bordered cloak of purple about her with a pin of gold in it. She was the fairest of all the women of the world. She arose when she saw Caílte and gave him a kiss. It had been a long time since a woman had kissed him. 'Who are you, woman?' asked Caílte. 'I am Échna, the daughter of the King of Connaught, Muiredach, son of Finnachta,' she said. Her women were playing *fidchell* and drinking from a container of delicious mead, and a buffalo horn sat on top of the container. When a game was won they drank a draught of mead and carried on with drinking and amusements. The queen possessed three virtues: she was the cleverest of the women of the world, the most beautiful woman in the world, and the one whose counsel brought fortune and honour. Caílte recited these lines:

'Échna, fair maiden, beauty bright above the pool.
For a month you will judge for the men of the world.'

'Where were you last night, my dear Caílte?' asked the woman.

'With Blathmac Bóaire,' said Caílte, 'in the Corner of Sight in the north in Leyny in Connaught.' 'Welcome, dear Caílte,' she said, 'it is your own path that you have come on. Take one side of the *fidchell*.' Caílte took the *fidchell*-board in his lap. 'It is a long time now,' he said, 'since I have played *fidchell*, dear woman. Neither Cormac nor Finn nor Oisín played *fidchell* with me.' After they had played for a while they put the *fidchell* from them and looked at three forts very near to them. Caílte asked the woman, 'What are these three forts?' 'They were built by me,' she said. 'Then it was a noble woman built them,' said Caílte. 'Who is that minstrel who is with you, dear Caílte?' she asked. 'Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, and the minstrel of all of the *Túatha Dé Danann*,' he said, 'and the best minstrel in all of Ireland and Scotland.' 'Good is his appearance,' she said, 'if his music were also.' 'By my word,' said Caílte, 'though his appearance be good his music is better.' 'Play your dulcimer a small while,' said the woman. Cas Corach took up his dulcimer and played it well and nobly, and the woman gave him the two bracelets that were on her arms. 'May you have victory and blessing, dear woman,' said Cas Corach, 'I have no need of them and there is no one I could give them to dearer to me than you. Keep them with my blessing.'*

The day, by that time, had ended and they entered the closest fort of the three. They were brought into a hidden and secluded house and her foster-father, Étrom, son of Lugar, rose up and welcomed Caílte. Échna came into the house afterwards and they spent the time there in drinking and pleasure. 'My dear Caílte,' said Échna, 'why is this cairn called the Cairn of the Kin-Slaying, and why is this mound outside called the Barrow of the Hounds?' 'Ben Mebla "Woman of Deceit", daughter of Rónán, and the druidess of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, fell in love with Finn mac Cumaill, but Finn said that he would not take a druidess as wife as long as he could find another woman in the world. Some hounds loosed by Finn came as far as this,' said Caílte, 'seven score and ten. That woman turned her breath on them and put them in the mound out of spite against Finn. Thus this is called the Mound of the Hounds.' 'Then the Cairn of the Kin-Slaying,' said Échna, 'why is it so named?' 'Lám Lúath "Swift Hand", son of Cummasc Debtha "Mixing of Strife", son of Dénta Comlainn "Making of Conflict", was a man of this region, and whenever there was a challenge to Cormac, the King of Ireland, or to Art or Cairbre Lifechair, Lám, his father, and his grandfather

each in turn fought against the challenger. There was a warrior in the Black Country, in the Black Wood, and in the Mount of Gúaire, now called Slieve Carbry, whose name was Borbchú, son of Trénlámach. He had a daughter, Níam, daughter of Borbchú, by name. Lám Lúath, son of Cummasc Debtha, had nine brothers, and each of them went separately to seek the hand of the girl from Borbchú, son of Trénlámach. This is what each of them said to Borbchú, "We shall kill you and your seven sons as well unless you give your daughter to us." Fearing for his life this is what Borbchú said to each one of them in turn, "You shall have her."

'One evening around that time Lám Lúath said to his brothers on this hill, "Is it true, dear brothers," said he, "that you have asked Borbchú for the woman that I have sought?" "It is true," they said. He was then struck by a pang of jealousy and rose up and took his sword. He gave a blow to the brother closest to him and killed him, and the other seven brothers who were there, seeing him slay one of his kin, put their mouths to the ground and died from grief. They were placed in this cairn, which is, for this reason, called the Cairn of the Kin-Slaying,' said Caílte, 'and, in atonement for that, he gave himself over to holy Patrick in Tara, in the presence of the men of Ireland, and said that he would strike himself with a sword if Patrick bade him do it.'*

'May you have victory and blessing, dear Caílte,' said Échna, 'great is the knowledge you have left with us. Are you aware,' she asked, 'of the distress that we suffer from, for which I find no help?' 'What distress is that?' asked Caílte. 'A headache afflicts me,' she said, 'and I get no rest or sleep unless I put cool water on my head, but there is no water near us.' 'Where is Cas Corach, son of Caincinde?' asked Caílte. 'Here I am,' said the minstrel. 'Go outside to the spring,' said Caílte, 'and carry the consecrated water with you. Sprinkle it on the spring and the druidic mist that is hiding it will disappear and there will be water for all.' That spring was the Spring of Aillbe of the Freckled Cheeks, the daughter of Cormac. Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, went off and took the consecrated water with him. He sprinkled it on the spring and it brought water to all.

'This is in payment for your welcome and for your hospitality, dear woman,' said Caílte, 'the spring to serve you and the people of the region. That spring was of use to them until two kings that ruled over the province of Connaught themselves committed kin-slaying.

Their names were Áed and Eógan, and Eógan was killed by Áed at the Flagstone of the Fomorian, now called the Flagstone of Gnáthal. On that very night', said Caílte, 'came the three shortages that were the worst that were ever inflicted on the province of Connaught. The cataract of the great salmon-run, now called the Moy, that flowed from the Estuary of the Men dried up, and the produce of the sea that came from the sea to the Galway river* and that maintained the province during each year of drought, also dried up that very same night, as did this Spring of Aillbe.

'Our departure is tomorrow,' said Caílte, 'but never have I entered into the house of a woman better than you,' said Caílte. 'There is a very urgent matter, dear Caílte, that I wish to ask you about before you leave,' said Échna. 'What matter is that?' asked Caílte. 'Who is that minstrel who is with you, and who is his mother and father?' 'He is Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, the son of the Sage of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, and he himself is a sage of the *Túatha Dé Danann*. His mother is Bé Binn, daughter of Elcmar of the *Bruig*.' 'That is sad then,' said Échna, 'that he is not a son of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, or of Aengus, or of Tadg, son of Núadu.' 'What does that matter, dear woman?' asked Caílte. 'I am very much in love with him,' said Échna, 'and never have I loved anyone before him.' 'Not one of them would be better placed in the long run than he,' said Caílte. 'Through the decree of holy Patrick he will eventually be the Chief Sage of Ireland. Patrick will put the *Túatha Dé Danann*, except for this minstrel, into the steep slopes of hills and rocks, though you may occasionally see, in an apparition,* one of the doomed visiting earth. What is your mind concerning this woman, Cas?' asked Caílte. 'This is my mind,' he said, 'I never saw any woman in the world that I would prefer to her.' 'What keeps you from going to bed together then?' asked Caílte. 'Let it be according to your will and your counsel,' she said. 'The men of Ireland will be celebrating the Feast of Tara,' said Caílte. 'You will be given there to Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, and the sage-ship of Ireland and of Scotland will be given to him as well. You will be bound to him as his only proper wife.' 'How long is it until the Feast of Tara?' said Cas Corach. 'At the end of this season,' said Caílte. Both Échna and Cas Corach agreed to that.

They bade farewell to the woman, and went south to the Hill of the Meeting, now called the Cairn of Fráech, son of Fidach

[Carnfree]. They found a large man before them at the cairn with rough and very grey hair, wearing a greyish-brown cloak. He had a hollow pin of white copper in his cloak and a fair, long rod of stripped hazel in his hand. There was a herd of cows in an enclosed meadow nearby. Caílte sat down next to him on the hill and asked, 'Who are you, my dear warrior?' 'I am Bairnech, son of Carb,' said the warrior, 'Steward to the King of Ireland, to Díarmait, son of Cerball. I own land in this territory given to me by the King of Ireland.' 'Where do you come from originally, my dear warrior?' asked Caílte. 'From *Collamair* of *Brega* in the east,' he said. 'Could you tell me, warrior,' said Caílte, 'who is the best man that ever came from *Collamair* of *Brega*?' 'I know that as do the men of Ireland and of Scotland. It was Caílte, son of Rónán,' said Bairnech. 'Do you know where that warrior is now?' 'I do indeed,' said Caílte. 'He is on the noble circuit of Ireland together with his comrades and joint-fosterlings. I am he,' said Caílte, 'and we are first cousins having a grandfather in common.'

Caílte gave Bairnech three warm and fervent kisses and a truly gentle welcome. 'Fitting is the path that you have followed, my dear *Fían*-chieftain,' said Bairnech. 'Patrick arrives at the end of this week together with the nobles of Connaught to the Grave of the Druid, now called the Grave of Geidech. Stay at the house of your kinsman until then, enjoying food and drink. Though the number of *Fían* and companions that used to come with you was greater, you shall be welcome until the Adze-Head comes to meet with you. But we have great problems in this territory,' said Bairnech, son of Carb. 'What are these problems?' asked Caílte. 'I have numerous herds here,' said Bairnech, 'but a woman from the *Síd* of *Crúachu* raids us each year at the Eve of *Samain*, and takes with her the nine best cows of each herd and brings them without hindrance into the *síd*. I and my sons are not men of great martial ability,' he said. 'Our family's share of energy and warlike activity was given to you and your two sons, Colla and Fáelán.' 'Good indeed was the prowess of Colla,' said Caílte. 'How did he surpass the other son?' asked Bairnech. 'He happened one evening to be in a contest of *fidchell*-playing on the wall of Tara because the wife of Binne of the Boyne, the Steward of Tara, had fallen in love with him. Colla and the *Fíana* of Ireland held contests of running and of *fidchell*-playing and Colla asked the *Fían*, "How do you wish to make the race?" "You three battalions of the

Fían turn your faces in some direction and I shall face the opposite direction." The race was run in that way and he carried the *fidchell*-board with him away from the *Fíana* of Ireland. He ran over the summit of the Hill of Howth off into the sea and was drowned there.' 'It is sad', said Bairnech, 'that I had not found him, for then my cows would not be taken from me without vengeance.'

'Do you know, my Cas Corach,' asked Caílte, 'who of the *Túatha Dé Danann* that woman is?' 'I know her,' said Cas. 'It is Scothníam, daughter of Caissirne the Druid, from the nearby *Síd* of *Crúachu* who makes those raids on you. Cathmug, son of Fircherp, the King of *Brega* and of Meath killed her father and her grandfather and she is avenging them on you one after the other.'

They went off to the fort of Bairnech, to the Enclosure of the Banquet, to the west of Carnfree. For three days and nights they were well attended to there. 'Well, my dear friend,' said Caílte, 'it seems to me that tonight is the Eve of *Samain*.' 'If that is so,' said Bairnech, 'then tonight is the night that the woman comes to raid and plunder us.' 'Should I go tonight, Caílte,' asked Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, 'to the door of the *síd*?' 'Go, my friend. Take your weapons and act with valour.' Cas went off and had not been there long when he saw a woman pass by leaving the *síd*. She was wearing a beautiful cloak of a single colour with a pin of gold in it, and had a tunic of yellow silk next to her skin. The tunic was bound up between her thighs and she carried two spears in her hands. She had no great fear of what was before her and little for what was behind. Cas Corach confronted her and put his forefinger of valour in the loop of the spear that was in his hand. He cast the spear at the woman and it entered her breast and destroyed her heart within. Caílte recited these lines:

'Cas Corach with his spear killed the frenzied maid.
Quickly he overcame her, north outside the *síd*.'

Cas cut off her head and brought it with him to Bairnech and Caílte. 'Behold, my dear warrior,' he said, 'the head of the woman who raided and plundered you each year.' They spent the following three days and nights in that place.

Bairnech then said, 'Well, my dear Caílte, do you know the other persecution that I suffer in this land?' 'What would that be, dear friend?' asked Caílte. 'Three wolf-bitches* come from *Úaim Crúachan*

"the Cave of *Crúachu*" every year and destroy whatever rams and sheep we have. Before we can do anything they retreat back to the Cave of *Crúachu*. He would be a welcome friend who would drive them away from us.' 'Well, dear Cas,' said Caílte, 'do you know who these three wolves are that make raids on Bairnech?' 'I do indeed,' said Cas Corach, 'the three daughters of Airetech, the last of an oppressive company from the Cave of *Crúachu*. It is easier for them to raid as wolves than as people.' 'Would they trust anyone to approach them?' asked Caílte. 'There is but one group they would trust,' said Cas. 'What group is that?' asked Caílte. 'If they saw men of this world with harps and dulcimers they would trust them.' said Cas. 'They will trust Cas Corach in that case,' said Caílte. 'What place do they usually come to?' he asked. 'To the Cairn of Bricriu here,' said Bairnech. 'How would it be if I went there tomorrow,' asked Cas, 'and bring my dulcimer along with me to the top of the cairn?' He set off early in the morning and went to the top of the cairn. He kept playing his dulcimer there until the setting of the clouds of late afternoon. As he was playing he saw the three wolves approach him and lie down nearby to listen to the music, but he was unable to attack them. At the end of the day they went from him north to the cave and Cas Corach returned to Caílte, and told him his tale. 'Go back there in the morning,' said Caílte, 'and tell them that it would be better for them to listen in human form to music and minstrelsy rather than in the shapes of wolves.' Cas Corach went back the next morning to the same cairn and placed his men about it. The wolves came up to the cairn and lay in their wolf-shapes to listen to the music. Cas then said to them. 'If you really are human it would be better for you to listen to the music in human shape rather than as wolves.' They listened to him and took off the dark, long cloaks they had been wearing, for they enjoyed the beguiling music of the *síd*. As they lay there, side by side and elbow by elbow, Caílte eyed them. He put his forefinger of valour in the loop of the spear, and his spear in its poisonous course went through the nipple of the breast of the woman furthest away, having already gone through the other two women, so that all three were strung together on the spear. Caílte recited these lines:

'Caílte with his venom killed the wondrous three.
They perished, great the sadness, from a single cast.'

Cas Corach went over to them and cut off their heads. Thus the valley running north from the Cairn of Bricriu is even now called the Valley of the Wolf-Shapes.

'Good was your prowess today, Caílte,' said Cas Corach. 'That was not the work of an old man and it was a fine thing for your minstrel to be at hand.' 'I did no more than the minstrel,' said Caílte, 'you who enticed them out of their wolf-shapes into human form.'

They returned to the fort of Bairnech carrying the heads of the three women as tokens of victory and triumph, and they stayed there for another three days and nights.

CHAPTER XII

SAINT Patrick at that time went to the Grave of the Druid,* now called the Grave of Geidech, since Geidech, the bishop of the household of Patrick had been there, or else it was Geidech, the druid of Medb and Ailill, who fell there. The King of Connaught, Áed, the son of Muiredach, son of Finnachta, went at that time to the Fort of the Sheep of Medb, now called the *Mairtine* of the son of Connra.

That evening an attack of serious illness came upon Bé Binn, the daughter of Eochaid Lethderg, the King of Leinster, and the wife of the King of Connaught. She died there, and was buried in the Height of the Angels, now called the Spring of Garad,* for thousands of angels came there three times to converse with Patrick as he recited his hours. For this reason is it called the Height of the Angels.

The King of Connaught came to the Grave of the Druid where Saint Patrick was staying and they made a gathering and an assembly of the province of Connaught, which extends from the Flagstone of the Cataract of Lomanach, now called Limerick, to Assaroe.*

Caílte, meanwhile, went off with his people from the Enclosure of the Women to the place where Patrick and the nobles of Connaught were and put his head into Patrick's lap. The nobles of Connaught welcomed Caílte and Cas Corach, son of Caincinde. 'By our word,' they said, 'since you left us we have not seen a company more beloved by us than you.' 'By my word,' said Caílte, 'since the Lord Finn went away I have not seen a company more beloved by me than you.' Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, went over to Patrick, put his head into Patrick's lap, and did homage to him. 'The virtue of eloquence on you, dear boy,' said Patrick, 'every third word that a man of your art will say will be sweet to all who hear it, and they will be men of the king's bed, and candles of each assembly for ever because of your art.' The arrival of that pair provided Patrick with entertainment of both mind and spirit.

Patrick asked Caílte about all that had happened to him from the time that he left to the time that he returned and Caílte told true tales to him. 'Well now, Broccán,' said Patrick, 'let the tales of Caílte

be written down and preserved by you so that they are not lost, and so that they may provide entertainment for the hosts and for the nobles of a later day.'

'Well, holy Patrick,' said Caílte, 'what are your own tales and adventures from the time I left you until today?' 'Here they are,' said Patrick, 'Maelán, Mugán, Brothrachán, and Dubchú na Celg, "of the Ambush" were driven out from the Red Assembly, now called Aghagower.' Patrick recited these lines:

'A well I have left in the land, and two salmon without care,
Till white Doom they remain there. Believe me, Caílte mine.

'Fer Benn, Fer Boga, and Fer Gabla, three brothers who did evil and wrongdoing in the west of Ireland, and the three hundred thousand demons about Croagh Patrick,* I drove away across the Island of the Swimming into the sea, so that it is now called the Island of the Demons.' Patrick recited these lines:

'My bird, my water, and my host, and my *Crúach* fair,
They will give protection to all who suffer wrong.'

'My dear holy Patrick,' said Benén the Great, son of Áed, 'what judgment, by our word, on this, for each one who will walk about the expanse of the *Crúach* and drink the water of the spring *Dobar*?'* 'They shall be in your own power, both old and young, for I have left this place as a place for holy and righteous ones, and each one that does evil or wrong or deceit there will suffer the withering of children, of family, and of tribe, but there will be blessing to the one that will honour and protect it. Those, my dear Caílte,' said Patrick, 'are my tales and my travels for the year you have been away.' 'May you have victory and blessing, holy Patrick,' said Caílte, 'great is the benefit that you have left to the Gaels in that place.'

At that time Patrick's tent was raised for the night and an encampment was made by the King of Connaught there for the next six weeks until the five great provinces of Ireland arrived to celebrate the Feast of Tara. A secret and secluded house was built by them for Caílte between the house of the King of Connaught and the tent of Patrick. His house was placed there so that both would derive entertainment from listening to him.

At that time Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, took his dulcimer and put a lengthy sleep upon them all. When they arose in the morning, a

fidchell-set was brought to them and three pieces of the set were found to be missing. The King of Connaught said, 'Their like cannot be found in Ireland nor in Scotland.' Caílte then said, 'Do not play *fidchell* until I go to seek a *fidchell*-set that I saw being hidden some time ago.' He went off to the east to the top of the Mount of Shelter, now called Slieve Baune, and saw there a mighty column of stone at the entrance to the *síd*. He put his two hands about the column, and pulled it from the earth. There was a solid lid of stone on the *fidchell*-set that lay in the cavity and a lid under it. He lifted out *In Solustairtech* 'the Bright and Strong', the *fidchell*-set of Goll, son of Morna, and took from it three men of gold and three men of silver. He then put the *fidchell*-set back between the two closely joined stone surfaces and returned to the King of Connaught. He placed the men in his hand and each was the size of the fist of the largest man in the host. 'Are there any more of these?' asked the king. 'There are indeed,' said Caílte, 'a hundred and fifty men of gold and a hundred and fifty men of silver.' 'Why', asked the king, 'did you not bring me the entire *fidchell*-set?' 'You did not ask me for a *fidchell*-set,' said Caílte, 'but for three *fidchell*-pieces. I brought more than enough to you, and I shall not move the *fidchell*-set from the place in which the warrior who owned it put it.' The pieces were then placed on the *fidchell*-board. 'Who owned this *fidchell*-set?' asked the King of Connaught. 'Goll, son of Morna,' said Caílte. 'It is sad that you did not bring it with you for me,' said the King of Connaught. 'Do not carry on, good King,' said Caílte, 'for I shall certainly not bring that *fidchell*-set to you, nor shall I bring you any more pieces from it.'

They had not been there long when they saw Aillenn Fhialchorcra 'of the Purple Veil', the daughter of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda, coming towards them together with a hundred and fifty of the women of *Túatha Dé Danann*. They sat down on the earthen mound close to Saint Patrick and the King of Connaught, and Aillenn told them why she had come. 'What answer do you give her, dear King of Connaught?' asked Patrick. 'What I will say is that, if you wish me to do it, I shall,' said the king. 'I do wish to give her to you,' said Patrick, 'for I have promised her that she would be given to you provided that she forsook her false and druidical belief and did homage to the Gospel of the King of Heaven and of Earth.' 'Do you agree to that, woman?' asked the king. 'I do,' she said and went with

all of her women and did homage to Patrick. Patrick bound and wed them and this was, according to scholars, the first marriage that the Adze-Head performed in Ireland.* 'Where is the fee for the marriage?' asked Benén the Great, son of Áed. 'It shall come indeed,' said the king, 'the choice of a townsland from each tribe from the Stone of the Cataract of Lomanach, now called Limerick, to the Stone of Assaroe.' 'And a fee from you in return, good Patrick,' said Benén, 'to the people of the province.' 'I shall give this,' said Patrick. 'Three kings of their people shall rule Ireland and they shall have the prosperity of Ireland to the end without extinction.' Broccán wrote those ordinances down for the province of Connaught, and wrote down what was given to Patrick. The couple spent that night in a well-appointed bed, Áed, the son of Muiredach, son of Finnachta, and Aillenn of the Purple Veil, the daughter of Bodb Derg, son of the Dagda.

The King of Connaught rose early the next morning. There was on the hill near them a royal column of stone and the king put his back against the stone and asked of Caílte, 'Why is this stone called the Stone of the Mistake?' Caílte answered, 'Once upon a time when the Sons of Morna came to the Post of a Tree-Stump on Slieve Aughty in Connaught to raid and plunder against Finn and the *Fían,* we went south with the three battalions of the *Fían* to the summit of the Mount of a Cairn in the territory of the *Corcamrúad* [Corcomroe]. Finn had concerns about the Sons of Morna. He did not know, at this time, whether they had gone south into Munster or had gone past them to the north into the province of Connaught. He told his two sons, Uillenn and Cainee with their *Fían* and their companions, to go to the province of Munster to gain information about the Sons of Morna. He sent Áedán and Cathal, the two sons of the King of Ulster, and two hundred warriors together with them, into the fair and lovely province of Connaught to learn about the Children of Morna. Two sons of the King of Leinster were with him, Connla and Cellach by name. They went with two hundred warriors after their foster-brothers. They met each other so that they were four hundred warriors together. They came to this place,' said Caílte, 'and they were searching each day from the Ford of Colta to the Ford of a Robbery looking for the Sons of Morna. Each evening they came as far as this. Finn was anxious about his people, for he had received no news from them. We went off with the three battalions of the

Fían and found the track of the host before us, and thought that it was the track of the Children of Morna. We surrounded them and they were quickly killed, both warriors and servants, and they numbered four hundred. When the day came with its full brightness in the morning the men of the *Fían* recognized their own people and gave three great cries of lamentation for their people that they had killed by mistake. Finn ordered that a royal column of stone* be found for those four beloved men, the two sons of the King of Ulster and the two sons of the King of Leinster. Oisín and I went off to the Fort of Medb, now called the Fort of the Sheep of Medb, and we found the royal column of stone there. We brought it as far as this hill and placed it here above the heads of those men.'

'May you have victory and blessing, my dear Caílte!' said all the host. 'Great is the knowledge and revelation of truth you have given us regarding each thing that is asked of you.' That is why it is called the Stone of the Mistake, from the mistake of Finn and the *Fían*, who killed their own people instead of the Children of Morna.

EPILOGUE

Caílte and Oisín went then to Tara, and told much knowledge and true lore in the presence of the men of Ireland, and all that they said was preserved by the ollaves of Ireland.

'May you have victory and blessing, noble ones,' said the men of Ireland. 'Though there be no knowledge or true lore in all of Ireland but that which you have now left with us, the men of Ireland should be gathered in one place to obtain it.'

At that time Cas Corach, son of Caincinde, arose and said, 'Well, my dear Caílte, it is time for me to leave now. The blessing of each fosterling on you.' 'The blessing of each foster-father who has ever had a fosterling on you,' said Caílte, 'for you are the best musician that we have ever seen.' And the King of Ireland, Díarmait, son of Cerball, said, 'I give you the sage-ship of Ireland as long as you may be in my kingdom.'

On that occasion twenty-seven of the remainder of the *Fían* that was with Caílte came onto the hill to the west of Tara, and became aware of their lack of activity and of full vigour, and the fact that they did not have the good fortune that people would talk with them. They put their mouths to the ground of the earth on that hill and perished there. They were placed under the earth there and it is called the Hill of the Nines after them.

'It is sad,' said Oisín. 'Those were all that survived with us of the remainder of the great and noble retinue of our leader and chief, Finn mac Cumaill.' The elders were sad and sorrowful that day after the death of those twenty-seven who were all that remained, aside from Oisín and Caílte, of the three battalions of the *Fían*. All the men of Ireland were silent without a man of them speaking to his fellow, so much were they moved by the extent of the grief of the elders for their *Fían* and their people. Oisín recited these lines:

'Can anyone tell us, though humble he be,
Where Finn's cup lies, alone in *Cromglenn*?'

'There has never been a day,' said Caílte, 'when I would not promptly answer you, dear Oisín, but for today.' Caílte then recited these lines:

'One here knows where Finn turned south,
To the deep green valley shrouded in mist.'

Oisín answered:

'Can anyone tell us, though humble he be,
Who put Currach's head on the hill by *Badamair*?'

'It was you that cut his head from him,' said Caílte, 'and your father that killed him, and I that built the mound.'

Oisín answered:

'If one here knew, where he turned to the south,
That Finn had killed him, and I took his head.'

Caílte answered:

'I brought the head with me, to the hill by *Badamair*,
And there it remains, resting in the hill.'

'Do you remember, dear friend,' said Oisín, 'who struck Goll, son of Morna, that morning above the Gowran Pass?' 'I struck him,' said Caílte, 'ripping the helmet of gold from his head and taking the equivalent of a very thick spearshaft of flesh from him.' 'But he was proud despite that,' said Oisín, 'though great his wound. He put his helmet on his head, took his weapons, and said to his brothers that nothing was wrong with him.' Oisín recited these lines:

'Can anyone tell us, though humble he be,
Who struck down Goll at Gowran Pass?'

Caílte answered:

'I hurled the javelin, Oisín fair,
The certain cast at Morna's son.'

The King of Ireland then asked them, 'Who killed Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac, in the battle of *Gabair*?' 'Oscar, son of Oisín, killed him,' said Caílte.' 'A noble deed,' said Oisín. 'Who else did he kill?' asked the king. 'Orlám, the King of the *Fothairt* [Forth] in the south,' said Oisín, 'a beloved warrior that was with me and with my father before me.' Oisín recited these lines:

'Orlám, the King of *Fotharta*'s son, not a gentle man.
Brother of Brónach, Cairbre Lifechair's bane.'

'And Oscar then, who killed him?' asked the King of Ireland. 'A single cast by Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac, killed him.' 'And Mac Lugach, who killed him in the battle?' asked Díarmait, son of Cerball. 'Bresal, son of Éirge, the son of the King of the Irish Vikings who had come here, and he was Leader of the Household of the King of Ireland.'

That was the last evening of the Feast of the Tara,* and they spent that evening in drinking and pleasure. The hosts arose in the morning and the men of Ireland went off to their own territories and provinces and places of origin. The King of Ireland went off early in the morning to the Stone of the Druids to the north-east of Tara with his wife, Bé Binn, the daughter of the King of Scotland, Alasc, son of Aengus.

'I desire,' he said to his wife, 'to go on the noble circuit of Ireland, and wish you to stay in Tara to attend to the elders, so that no reproach or rebuke may come to me from the men of Ireland.' 'They shall be attended to as you yourself order and direct,' said the queen. They then went together into the house where the elders were, Oisín and Caílte, and the king told them of his plan. Such a man was Oisín, the most noble and generous man that was in Ireland. He said, 'It shall not be done thus, dear King,' he said, 'but keep your spouse with you and commend us to your Steward.' 'If it be thus, then have the Steward brought to us,' said the king. The Steward and his wife were brought there and the king said to them, 'Behold what I order you to feed the elders. Put seven score cows in an enclosed pasture and give them their milk each evening, and a meal for a thousand of the men of Ireland shall be their drink and their sip in Tara, and washing every second day, and the strewing of fresh rushes in their beds, and have new ale ready for them to drink before they finish the old. You have seven sons,' said the King of Ireland, 'and they will all be killed by me, and you with them, if these elders suffer any lack.'

At that time Oisín said, 'Not stranger,' he said, 'was the bed of the dwarf in Tara, when all the men of Ireland were coming to see it, than our being entrusted to Mael of the Retinue, son of Dubán, the Steward of Tara, and Cúarnait, daughter of Becán Bóaire "the Cow-Noble", his wife.' 'Well, my dear Oisín, what dwarf is this?' 'Conn Cétchathach found a lordly find,' said Oisín, 'a dwarf three fists of Conn Cétchathach in height and the best *fidchell*-player and *brandub*-player that was in Ireland. And though all the diseases in the world

were afflicting a man, if the dwarf's hand were placed on him he would be helped, and if the men of Ireland were ready for battle and combat he would make peace between them. There was a stone here in Tara,' said Oisín, 'and on it was his bed. There was a wonderful thing about his bed,' said Oisín, 'for the biggest man of the men of Ireland would fit in the bed of the dwarf, and the smallest infant that could be found would also just fit in it. The bed and *Lía Fáil* "the Stone of Fál"* that was in Tara were the two wonders of Tara.'

'What wonder was on the Stone of Fál?' asked Díarmait, son of Cerball. 'Anyone accused by the men of Ireland', said Oisín, 'was placed on that stone, and if he were truthful it would turn him white and red, and if he were untruthful there would be a black spot in an obvious place on him. When the King of Ireland came onto it the stone shrieked under him and the chief waves of Ireland answered it, the Wave of Clidna,the Wave of Tuaide [the Tuns], and the Wave of Rudraige. Whenever the king of a province came on the stone it roared under him. Whenever a barren woman came on it a dew of black blood broke through it. And whenever a fertile woman came on it a many-coloured moisture came through it.' 'Who raised that stone or brought it from Ireland?' asked Díarmait, son of Cerball. 'A warrior of great spirit took over the kingdom . . .'

Caetera desunt.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

3 *Commar, Gabair, and Ollarba*: only in *Tales* are these three battles linked together as the final disasters that destroyed the *Fíana*. In a text in the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster* (*LL*) eds. R. I. Best, M. O'Brien, and A. O'Sullivan, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1954–83), *Do Fhlathiusaib hÉrenn* (On the Lords of Ireland, pt. i, fo. 24, col. a, ll. 26–30), the three battles are listed in sequence as the battles in which mythical kings of Tara fell. In *LL*, Cairbre Lifechair is killed at the battle of Gabair by Senioth, son of Cerb, rather than Oscar as in *Tales*, p. 221. In another poem in *LL*, fo. 48, col. b, l. 39, Caílte is said to have slain Fothad Airgdech, who fell in the battle of Ollarba according to the *LL* poem above. The second of these battles, Gabair (listed first in the *LL* poem), is mentioned in the *Annals of the Four Masters* (*AFM*) at AD 284, 285, but this collection draws much of its material from non-annalistic sources such as the *LL* material above, hence may not be an independent citation. Gabair is in the region of the River Liffey, Co. Dublin, Ollarba is connected with the River Larne in Co. Antrim, and Comur is in Co. Meath. *Tales* refers again to the battle of Ollarba, p. 165.

Oisín . . . Rónán: the convention that Caílte and Oisín survived until the time of Patrick is first established by *Tales* and remains a staple of Fenian tradition thereafter. According to *Tales*, Oisín's mother was a mysterious Blái, daughter of the otherworld Derg Díanscothach of Síd Ochta Cleitigh. The earliest reference to the persistent folkloric legend that his mother was a deer comes from some quatrains (dated to the eleventh century by K. Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series, 16 (Dublin, 1910), p. xxvi) in the margin of *LL*. Oisín rather than Caílte is the main protagonist and storyteller in the later recension of the *Acallam* (*Agallamh na Seanórach* (*AS 2*), ed. and trans. N. Ní Shéaghdha, 3 vols. (Dublin, 1942–5)). His name derives from *os* 'deer', so the deer association is of some antiquity; the name may also connect him with the Osraige, the important vassal people occupying the border area between Leinster and Munster, roughly corresponding to the extent of the present diocese of Ossory. His biography is not fully represented in the literary tradition but can be filled out from folktale evidence (M. Ó Briain, 'Some material on Oisín in the Land of Youth' in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, eds. D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, and K. McCone (Maynooth, 1989), 181–99; Eoin Mac Neill and G. Murphy, *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Finn* (*DF*), Irish Texts Society, 3 Parts, 7, 28, 43 (London, 1908, 1933, 1953), vol. ii, no. xliii, pp. 100–1, and vol. iii, pp. 100–3). Caílte's name occurs with Finn in the commentary on the Leinster genealogical tract *Senchus Laigin* (M. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogorum Hiberniae* (Dublin,

1968)) as one of the three hUa Baiscne, descendants of Núadu Necht. The three are Finn, Taulcha, and Caílte, or as the gloss in *LL* and in the later medieval *Book of Ballymote* (*BB*) has it, *Find 7 Oisín 7 Caílte*. Towards the end of *Tales*, p. 183, Caílte states that his people are the Uí Thairrsig from Collamair Brega, an area on the borders of Cos. Meath and Dublin. Further information on both Caílte and Oisín is supplied by various poems in *DF*, the collection of Fenian lays collected in the seventeenth century, some of which date back to the period of *Tales*. Some biographical material on Caílte is given in the medieval Irish poet Gilla in Choimded's sketch of universal history, '*A Rí richid, réidig dam*' (O King of Heaven, make clear to me), found in *LL* fo. 143, col. a–fo. 145, col. a (*Fianaigecht*, pp. xxviii–xxix; 46–57). For a discussion of Finn see Introduction, pp. xiv–xvi; for Finn as a divine figure see T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), and *DF*, iii, introduction, pp. xiii–xxxvii.

Louth: the story begins on the borders of Cos. Armagh and Louth. This suggests in an unobtrusive way the work's Patrician milieu by having the literary journey begin in the region just south of Armagh, the ecclesiastical centre of Ireland and of the cult of St Patrick. The direction of the journey from here to Louth, to Drogheda, and to the Boyne follows a traditional historical route from east Ulster to the midland plains.

Cáma: Cáma seems to be an invention of our author; she occurs nowhere else in Irish Fenian tradition and her role seems to be that of facilitator of remembrance for the old heroes who partake of her hospitality. The drinking-horn, a gift from Finn, came to him from Móriath. She is known elsewhere in Irish saga as, variously, an Armorican or west Munster princess who falls in love with Labraid, the most important figure in the prehistoric traditions of the province of Leinster. Cf. *Orgain Dind Ríg* (The Destruction of Dind Ríg), ed. W. Stokes, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* (*ZCP*), 3 (1901), 1–14.

4 *Síd of the Breast of Cleitech*: *Síd* is used in Irish saga and folklore to designate an otherworld dwelling. The *Síd* of the Breast of Cleitech in Co. Meath is a site associated with the Tara kings of the mythological period and especially with Cormac, the great just king of Irish tradition.

the monastery of Drogheda: this is Mellifont Abbey, Co. Louth, the first Cistercian foundation in Ireland; founded in 1142 by St Malachy, the great reforming archbishop of Armagh, and King Donnchad mac Cerbaill. Mention of the monastery in *Tales* establishes an inferior dating limit on the work.

the Pool of Fíacc: near Rosnaree on the Boyne, and near the aforementioned Cleitech. The River Boyne has been considerably altered by canal work and a series of locks along this stretch. In Fenian lore it is famous as the spot where Finn tasted the salmon and acquired the gifts of knowledge and poetry. It is also the place where the other great *Fían* warrior Fothad Canann (Canainne) fell (*Fianaigecht*, 11).

4 *Patrick, son of Calpurn*: St Patrick's patronymic is provided in his own autobiographical work, the *Confessio* (*St Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu's Life*, ed. and trans. A. B. E. Hood, History from the Sources (London, 1978)). Already by the late sixth century Patrick is established in his honorary position as the Apostle of Ireland with Armagh as the centre of his cult. By the time of the compilation of *Tales*, Armagh has become the metropolitan head of the Irish Church. The midlands region where Caílte finds him is the prime locale of Patrick's preaching according to his earliest biographer, Muirchú (*The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. and trans. L. Bieler (*M*), Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 10 (Dublin, 1979), 61–123.

5 *their great dogs*: disparity of size is, in Irish literary tradition and folklore, a sign of belonging to a former age or to another world. The topos will be repeated many times in *Tales*, whether in the miniature size of Cnú Deróil, pp. 20–3, or the gigantic figures of pp. 166–9.

Tráig Dá Ban: of the incidents mentioned in this poem, only Fothad's death at the battle of Clárach (ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, 1–21) can be identified from other Irish literary sources.

6 *Sechnall*: as his name implies, St Secundinus was identified by later Patrician hagiographical writing as one of Patrick's bishops in his evangelizing mission in Ireland. A surviving hymn to Patrick attributed to him was known to Patrick's earliest biographer, Muirchú. His church was Domnach Sechnaill (Dunshaughlin) in Co. Meath and, from the several southern Uí Neill kings of the area who bore his name, i.e., Maelsechnaill (devotee of Sechnall), the surname for this dynastic family became Ua Mael Sechlainn.

7 *Grugán Gann*: some names have not been translated in this poem as there is some doubt as to their meaning. One might suggest, however, 'Ambergold' for *Odrán*, 'Speechless' for *Mudán*, and 'Shouter' for *Grugán*.

8 *Artúir . . . Benne Brit*: the name Artúir is intriguing in that knowledge of an historical or literary Arthur of Britain is not evident in medieval Irish tradition until the later fourteenth century. Benne Brit features as the British ally of an Irish saga figure, Mac Con, in the early ninth-century tale, *Scéla Moshauluim* (The Tale of Moshaulum, ed. and trans. Máirín O Daly in *Cath Maige Mucrama* (The Battle of Mag Mucrama), Irish Texts Society, 50 (Dublin, 1975), 74–87). Reference is frequently made in *Tales* to the characters that appear in this set of king tales. A further link with *Fían* tradition is furnished by the medieval Irish compendium of information, *Cóir Anmann* (Fitness of Names, ed. W. Stokes in W. Stokes and E. Windisch (eds.), *Irische Texte*, 3rd ser., vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1897)). Here the mother of the famous *Fían* leader Fothad Canainne is Fuinche, daughter of Benne Brit, king of the Britons. The story of Artúir seems to provide information on the importation of a new type of horse into Ireland. It is evident from the late eleventh–twelfth-century work on the dues of Irish kings, *Lebor na Cert* (The Book of Rights, ed. and trans. M.

Dillon, Irish Texts Society, 46 (London, 1962), *passim*), that horses figure along with armour, drinking-horns, and clothing as the standard elements in the *túarastal* or stipend given by provincial kings to the petty kings under them in return for military co-operation. This may be an index of the changing role of the provincial kings and the adoption of a form of feudal knight's fees from the late tenth century onwards.

Howth: the Hill of Howth north of Dublin city is famed as the burial place of Oisín's son Oscar, who was slain at the battle of Gabain. It occurs frequently in Fenian tales and ballads as a locale for Fenian adventures and hunts.

Finn's hounds: the general *Fían* tradition is of the pair Bran and Sceolaing. Fenian balladry makes them the offspring of Uirne, daughter of the mythical Tadg son of Núadu, and hence cousins of Finn himself! Cf. *DF*, ii, no. xliv.

9 *Tooth of Wisdom*: Finn's tooth of wisdom figures in the most popular version of the tradition of Finn's supernatural knowledge. The fullest account of how he accidentally acquired this special gift by burning himself on the magic salmon of knowledge as it was being cooked by his druid mentor, Finnéces, is given in the twelfth-century story of the boyhood deeds of Finn, *Macgnímartha Finn* (ed. K. Meyer, *Revue Celtique* (*RC*), 5 (1882), 195–204; trans. J. Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw* (Berkeley, 1985) Appendix I, 209–21; cf. *Fianaigecht*, p. xxviii). Earlier tales describe how he caught his thumb in the door to an otherworld dwelling and, by putting his thumb in his mouth to ease the pain, discovered that he had supernatural knowledge and the gift of poetry. Cf. R. D. Scott, *The Thumb of Knowledge in Legends of Finn, Sigurd and Taliesin: Studies in Celtic and French Literature* (New York, 1930).

names: this list contains the names of some important figures of Fenian tradition. The family of Goll mac Morna, according to standard medieval Fenian lore, are the implacable enemies of Finn and his rivals for the leadership of the *Fían*; Díarmait ua Duibne, a long-time follower of Finn, in one of the most famous and tragic of all Irish wooing tales, elopes with Gráinne, daughter of King Cormac mac Airt and bride of his lord, the ageing Finn (*Tóraidheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne), ed. and trans. N. Ní Shéaghdha, Irish Texts Society, 48 (Dublin, 1967)). Here he is given a tribal affiliation, *Érainn*, frequently used for the peoples of west Munster to which the Uí Duibne belong and not to be confused with the more common use of the word as a general term for the Irish as a whole. Mac Lugach's profile is not as high in *Fían* tradition as the two already listed above but he plays an important exemplary role in *Tales* as the epitome of the raw young warrior.

10 *Dagda*: one of the most famous of the Túatha Dé Danann, the race of gods in Irish tradition; he is lover of Bóand (the goddess who gives her name to the River Boyne), father of Aengus (the divine son of Irish

tradition, also called the Mac Óc) and, according to *Dinnshenchas* tradition, wife of the death goddess, the Morrígu. Of his many children, his sons in *Tales* are Bodb Derg, Midir, and Aengus Óc.

10 *Ceylon . . . Hesperides*: in the ancient world the Gardens of the Hesperides represented the westernmost point of human settlement. Thus the formula, 'from Ceylon to the gardens of the Hesperides', represents the entire span of the known world.

Clontarf: the plain south of Howth, a site made famous in 1014 as the place where the battle of Clontarf was fought between the Dublin Vikings, their Irish allies, and the armies of Brian Boru, king of Ireland.

11 *Teltown*: the Assembly of Tailtiu (Teltown), was the most famous of all the Irish assembly sites. Presidency of the assembly was the prerogative of the king of Tara and the holding of the fair was one of the signs of a successful reign. These gatherings seem to have been a combination of political decision-making assembly, market, and poetic and musical entertainment; in the case of Tailtiu they retained much of their festive assembly traditions down to the present day (cf. Máire MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa* (Oxford, 1962), 311–38; D. Binchy, 'The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara', *Ériu*, 18 (1958), 113–38). The last fair was convened according to the Annals in 1168 by Ruadhrí Ó Conchobhair, last high king of Ireland, in the year before the first Anglo-Normans arrived in Ireland.

12 *names*: Caílte's retinue—of nine rather than seven—is made up of individuals representing a miscellaneous grouping of kingdoms belonging to a post-Patrician political disposition. The grouping has no particular significance to the date of *Tales* as such and still less historical validity as a retinue of Fenian warriors of the third century. The *Cenél Conaill*, named from Conall, son of Níall, represent that branch of the great Uí Néill dynasty that in the fifth century took over the territory of modern Co. Donegal. *Dál nAraide* in the north-east of the modern province of Ulster greatly expanded their kingdom in this period by settling the west coast of Scotland. The history of the midland kingdoms of *Brega* Meath and Usnagh is complex. In the early Middle Ages the Clann Colmáin branch of the southern Uí Néill dynasty styled themselves kings of Uisnech and Meath (Co. Westmeath and north-west Co. Offaly). Brega (Co. Meath itself and north Co. Dublin) was the territory of another Uí Néill branch, Síl nAeda Sláne, with its centre at the megalithic sites of Knowth and the crannog, or lake-dwelling, of Lagore. In the west of Brega was the kingdom of Loegaire. With the establishment of Ua Mael Sechlainn overlordship in the midlands at the end of the tenth century the name Mide (Meath) was extended to the whole territory. The Déisi's expulsion from Tara and their dispersal through the south of Ireland and Wales is related in a very popular account (ed. and trans. Vernam Hull, *ZCP* 27 (1958–9), 14–63). Scandlán as a name for an

Ossory prince is a reflection of the well-known Scandlán mac Colmáin, the royal hostage of Columban hagiographical tradition (d. 644), but the other names have no discernible resonance.

Adze-Head: this odd name for Patrick, Irish *Tálcenn*, possibly derived from an Old-Welsh term for a diadem, is first used by the biographer Muirchú (*M*, 76–7). The goldwork envisioned for St Patrick's bells is quite unhistorical. The earliest Irish ecclesiastical bells were simple iron ones. Later in the medieval period bronze bells came into use but all surviving ones are very simple in design.

13 *Arran*: the location is given as *idir Albain 7 Cruitentuaith* (between Alba and Pictland). By this time the author would have understood northern Britain to be divided between people of Gaelic descent in western Scotland and Picts in the east and far north, but as a geographical description it makes more sense to take Alba in the older sense as the British part of the island. In any case it is an imprecise formula. On this passage see T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 539.

Trogan, or Lugnasad: Lugnasad seems to have the meaning here of a season rather than a specific harvest festival. MacNeill, *Festival of Lughnasa*, lists no tradition of a Lugnasad festival on Arran.

Tara: part of the megalithic tomb complex of the Boyne valley and known from earliest tradition as a royal centre. Though abandoned as a royal centre in the seventh century, the title of king of Tara carried a special prestige and the literary propagandists for the Uí Néill dynasties from the ninth century onwards considered it the appropriate honorific title for the high king of Ireland.

14 *Land of Promise*: the term is commonly applied to the Irish otherworld. It seems to be borrowed from the biblical idea of the *Terra Repromissionis* (Heb. 10: 9).

Newgrange: *Brúig na Bóinde* is the Irish term for the great megalithic complex at Newgrange, Co. Meath. It was considered in Irish saga tradition as a *síd*, an otherworld dwelling, presided over by the son of the god Dagda, Aengus Óc. Here it is the dwelling of Bodb Derg, another of the Dagda's sons according to a late tradition found first in *Tales*.

Túatha Dé Danann: the inhabitants of the Irish otherworld are known under the collective name of Túatha Dé Danann, the people of the goddess Danu. It has been suggested that the original form of this name is simply Túatha Dé(a), People of the god/goddess. In the artificial prehistory schema of the medieval Irish historians who produced *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (The Book of the Taking of Ireland (*LG*), ed. and trans. R. A. S. Macalister, Irish Texts Society, 34, 35, 39 (London, 1938–40), Pts. i–iii), the Túatha Dé Danann are an invading group who settled Ireland before the sons of Míl, the Gaelic settlers. The present story allows the author to give brief vignettes of a number of well-known Túatha Dé Danann figures, such as Midir and Aengus Óc, at this point.

14 *Sons of Míl*: the Goedelic settlers of Ireland who, according to the Irish literati's account of the prehistory of Ireland, succeeded the Túatha Dé Danann and wrested control from them.

16 *following verse*: a quatrain of this poem on the sons of Lugaid turns up in the Old-Irish poem, 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare' (ed. and trans. G. Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics* (Oxford, 1956), 74–83). But this contamination of the earlier poem is not in itself proof that our poem is also early. The entire poem occurs as the *Dinnshenchas* item for Ard Ruide (ed. and trans. E. Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas* (*MD*), iv, Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series, 11 (Dublin, 1924), 368–71).

17 *Cessán*: there is some geographical confusion relating to the place-name, rendered Wood of a River-Branch (Fid Gaible) here. The young man says he hails from Fid Gaible which is equated with Ros meic Tréoin in Co. Wexford in the south-east. The name of the wood refers to an area near present Castledermot, on the Co. Carlow–Kildare border, rather than the better-known Fid Gaible located a little north of present Rathangan, Co. Offaly. If Fulartach claims as his inheritance his brother's kingdom of Brega and Meath and Déisi of Tara, then the Leinster–midlands border location makes sense. Patrick and Caílte set out on their journey from this wood a little later. There is a cleric Cessán at New Ross in the charming story, *Altram Tige dá Medar* (The Fosterage of Two-bucket House), ed. and trans. Lilian Duncan, *Ériu*, 11 (1932), 184–225. Here a hermit of this name instructs the otherworldy girl Ethne in Christianity and she is baptized by Patrick. After her death the hermit retires to Clúain Cessáin.

Benén: in Tírechán's Life of Patrick ((*T*) ed. L. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 10 (Dublin, 1979)), Benignus is the little boy who 'took Patrick's feet between his hands and chest and would not sleep with his father and mother, (5, 2–4). There Patrick designates him his successor in Armagh; in other sources he is described as Patrick's psalm-singer.

18 *until tomorrow*: in the late ninth-century Patrician biography *Vita Tripartita* ((*VT*) ed. K. Mulchrone (Dublin, 1939)), Patrick resorts to cursing quite frequently, as do Irish saints in general. For a discussion of Patrick's curse here see T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Curse and Satire', *Éigse*, 19 (1986), 10–15.

the Champion: a tradition of Finn's brothers is also echoed in a somewhat jumbled poem in *DF*, no. xliii, vol. ii, pp. 104–5, and vol. iii, pp. 100–3, which is itself related to a Middle-Irish poem on Finn's female relatives from the *Acallam Bec* (The Little Colloquy: The Book of Lismore, fo. 194, col. a). Murphy dates the *DF* poem to which our quatrain relates to 'the first half of the classical period' (*DF*, 101), hence to the same period as *Tales*.

Lugach: there is a hesitation between paternal and sibling incest in the account of Mac Lugach's conception. This allows a convenient impreci-

sion as to the ancestry traditions of the young man. In Gilla Modutu's twelfth-century poem on famous women, Mac Lugach, under the name Gaine, is the son of Áine, daughter of Finn, and Eochu. *DF*, poem no. xlii (vol. ii, pp. 66–99, and vol. iii, pp. 97–100), from the latter half of the twelfth century, fills in the account of Mac Lugach's birth and fosterage with details that do not correspond to the account in *Tales*. This source gives the parents of Mac Lugach as Dáire, Finn's son, and an otherworld woman, Lugach. Lugach is itself a very unlikely woman's name.

19 *poem*: there is a long tradition of 'Advice to Princes' and of wisdom literature generally in medieval Ireland. But nothing compares with this tale of Mac Lugach and with this poem's specific focus on the appropriate behaviour of those in military service in a king's household. As if to stress its importance, the author makes it the first tale which Patrick instructs his young cleric Broccán to write down.

20 *Broccán*: he is mentioned in *T* (156–7) as one of Patrick's early collaborators, of the family of Lommán the Briton.

the Little: the tale of Cnú Deróil and Bláthnait probably existed in verse narrative form before the period of *Tales*. They are mentioned together in *DF* (no. xlii, vol. ii, pp. 82–3).

22 *House of Donn*: a rocky islet, the Bull, off the coast of Co. Kerry. To go to the house of Donn in Irish tradition means to die.

23 *Eógan Lethderg . . . Aengus*: the name of the Munster king, Eógan Lethderg, son of Aengus, is unhistorical but the names themselves, Eógan and Aengus, are significant in the prehistorical royal dynastic history of Munster. Eógan Taidlech, alias Mug Núadat, is the figure from whom all Munster ruling dynasties, in particular the Eóganacht, claim descent. According to *VT*, Oengus son of Nad Froích was the Munster king baptized by St Patrick at Cashel and was the founder of several important dynastic lines, including the Eóganacht of Cashel.

Patrick set off: the place-name list here is generally trustworthy; indeed, all the journey passages in *Tales* follow traditional routes from one major geographical zone to another. This sequence follows in part the old royal road of Slighe Dhála joining Tara and Cashel; it is also a strongly monastic itinerary, paying tribute to the great Leinster monasteries of St Brigit at Kildare, the Columban Durrow, the important Ossory monastery of Aghaboe, the Munster border foundation of Roscrea, and ending with the Patrician church of Ardpatrick in Co. Limerick (which also forms part of Patrick's itinerary in *VT*). Considering the acute rivalry for the kingship of Munster between the dynasties of Eóganacht and Dál Cais (the Uí Briain from Co. Clare, Limerick city, and north Munster) from the tenth century to the end of the twelfth, it is not without significance that the king of Munster who awaits them is—from his seat at Rosach na Rígraide in north Co. Cork—almost certainly an Eóganacht dynast.

24 *Ventry*: the battle of Ventry is also the subject of a popular late medieval Irish Fenian tale, *Cath Finntrágha* (The Battle of Ventry (*CF*); ed.

C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1962)), of which there is a copy with *Tales* in MS Rawlinson B 487; our text clearly understands this location as Ventry, west of Dingle, Co. Kerry. The story of the lovers Cáel and Créde is one of the best-known tales in the collection and it has been edited separately by M. Dillon (*Stories from the Acallam* (Dublin, 1970), 11–18) and G. Murphy (*Early Irish Lyrics* (Oxford, 1956), 140–51). J. Carney (*Celtic Studies in Memory of Angus Matheson*, eds. J. Carney and D. Greene (London, 1968), 22–32) contends that the poems are earlier professional eulogies to patrons and are not originally part of a romantic tale. If so the author of *Tales* has made a very skilful blend of older materials to fit a new narrative context. The most interesting topos of Créde's lament (p. 28), that creation mourns the death of the hero, is frequently found in bardic elegies. It is combined here with a kind of totemic belief that a person's life-span is magically paired with an animal. This motif figures strongly in the account of the death of the Fenian hero Díarmait in the later romantic tale of the ill-starred lovers Díarmait and Gráinne; cf. Ni Shéaghdha, *Tóraidheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*.

26 *Turbe*: known from *Dinnshenchas* tradition as a famous goldsmith.

29 *Dublin*: Irish *leth-cúarán*, 'a single sandal', may refer to an Irish royal inaugural rite of the king presented with or wearing a single shoe, but it may also refer to Olaf Cúarán (Óláfr Kváran), the most important of the Norse Kings of Dublin. He ruled Dublin and the surrounding areas from the 940s to 980.

30 *We must now depart*: there is an awkward narrative transition here with Caílte's announcement that he must leave the Patrician party. It is understood that the group divides in three: the men of Munster return to the Fenian hunting camp, Caílte explores the stronghold of Fermoy, and Patrick and his clerics remain where they are. Caílte will not really leave Patrick until the end of Chapter II.

33 *King of Connaught . . . Finnachta*: the name of the Connaught king reflects the descent from Muiredach (d. 702) of the ruling Connaught dynasty (the Síl Muireadaigh) at the time of *Tales*.

Níam: much of Chapter II is taken up with fairly mainstream Irish saga and Fenian lore. Here a tale typical of the work as a whole begins, one of the many tragic bethrothals in *Tales*.

Cormac: the most important king in the artificial historical schema of the medieval Irish literati and reigning monarch in the time of Finn. King of Tara and legendary builder of its royal hall, his birth and youth have features in common with the Roman myth of Romulus and Remus; though twice exiled he was victorious over the other provincial kings and his reign is a golden age of peace and prosperity. He is known as the archetypal wise monarch and several medieval Irish wisdom texts are attributed to him. He died in Cleitech. See T. Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac Mac Airt* (Dublin, 1977).

35 *You gave Heaven . . . said Patrick*: the stories of the two dead warriors

saved from hell posthumously by Patrick—the first, Airnélach, who died of shame because he had not the means to reward an importunate poet, the other, the *Fían* warrior Sálbuide, interred with a great quantity of grave goods—resemble similar stories of pagan tombs and worthy dead in the earlier hagiography of Patrick; cf. *T*, 40, 41. Irish poets are known for the power—often fatal—of their satire, particularly of niggardly patrons. That someone should receive heaven for leaving behind treasure from which future generations can profit is rather stretching Patrick's powers of intercession.

36 *Mug Núadat, die*: the tale of the fatal quarrels of Mac Con, Ailill Ólamm, Fiacha Muillethan, Benne Brit, etc. is told most fully in O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*. The saga recounts the dynastic struggles in Munster around the time of Art, son of Conn, maternal uncle of Lugaid Mac Con and father of Cormac.

37 *residence*: the Irish term used here, *baile*, is a settlement term of some difficulty. From the manner in which it is associated in the text with the term *dún*, it probably designates a standard Irish medieval landholder's residence comprising ringfort, animal husbandry accommodation, and stockfolds.

38 *Áed*: the narrative shifts very abruptly here to one of the central characters of *Tales*, Áed, son of the king of Connaught. His childhood adventure is introduced here, and later, p. 217, attention is given to the question of his marriage with Aillenn, an otherworld woman.

39 *Roscommon*: of Ros Commáin, a Connaught ecclesiastical centre, possibly a daughter house of Clonmacnoise.

Lochlann: the standard medieval Irish term for Scandinavia.

Almu: the lore of Finn's residence, Almhu, is rather confusingly given here. It shares some stanzas in common with the poems on Almhu in *MD* (9, 72–9, 106–7). The traditions on Almhu and the other Leinster places of note whose names derive from the five daughters of Iuchna are much more clearly set out in this latter work, as indeed they are in the later medieval version of *Tales* (*AS 2*). One notes the reference to Carman in the verse; the exact location of the site of the general assembly of the Leinster province remains unclear; in the important *Dinnshenchas* poem on Carman (*MD*, iii, 2–25, 469–80), the name *Carman* has nothing to do with the daughters of Iuchna.

Fir Bolg: one of the mythical groups of settlers who preceded the *Túatha Dé Danann* into Ireland according to *LG*.

40 *battle*: the battle of Ráth Glais has some characteristics of the Fenian battle of Ventry alluded to earlier in the work. The battle of Ventry receives a separate saga treatment, but common to both texts are the use of such terms as 'the men of Ireland' and *Éireannaigh* 'the Irish'. Such collective terms remain very rare until the later fourteenth century.

41 *Fergus*: this is likely Fergus mac Róich, the deposed Ulster king of Ulster saga tradition. In later medieval literary tradition he has a number of new adventures in Connaught.

Garad: the name of the well which Patrick blesses in *VT*, 106, 66–7. See note for p. 215.

fidchell: a medieval Irish board game bearing some relationship to modern chess. It is especially noted in Irish sources as the game of kings.

42 *Drumcree*: of the Uí Thairsig is in the barony of Delvin, Co. Westmeath. See note for p. 3 above on the family of Finn. At *Tales*, p. 183, Caílte also gives this as his family's holding.

43 *lit a great fire . . . doors*: another version of this story has Garad burning the house with the women inside ('The Burning of Finn's House', ed. and trans. E. J. Gwynn, *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 13–37). The point the author wishes to make here is that forbearance rather than reciprocal violence is advocated as a response to insult.

47 *Ballysadare*: the locations on this major journey crossing from one province, Connaught, to another, Ulster, are for the most part real places, as Nollaig Ó Muraíle has demonstrated ('Acallamh na Seanórach', P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Fhiannaíocht*, Léachtai Cholm Cille xxv (1995), 120–4.

49 *Derg . . . Hasty Words*: unusually for *Tales* this figure is half human, half divine as his mother is of the Túatha Dé Danann while his father's people belong to the area around the hill of Usnagh in the midlands. This adventure of Caílte without Patrick is also the first long narrative interlude relating to the otherworld of the *síd* people.

Cuinnscleo: contemporary Irish annals for the period usually describe the head of the Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd as 'king of the Britons'; no likely prince of Gwynedd fits the Irish name, however. Some of the allusions in the conversation of Caílte and Derg here and in the occasional quatrains of verse do not convey a clear narrative sequence. The references to a race which Caílte won are given more clearly in the full ballad treatment of these same incidents supplied in the later version of the work (*AS 2*).

51 *great war*: the story of how Finn saved Tara from the baleful forces of the otherworld parallels the famous Irish tale of how the greatest of the Celtic gods, Lug, saved Tara from the attacks of the otherworldly tribe of the Fomoire in the saga *Cath Maige Tuired* (The Second Battle of Moytura, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Gray, Irish Texts Society, 52 (London, 1982)). Students of English literature will note that the role of Aillén's mother who comes to avenge her son is similar to that of Grendel's mother in the Old-English epic *Beowulf*.

52 *Samain*: the new year in Ireland began at Samain, the end of October/beginning of November, as does the winter season now. The term contains the Irish word for summer; in saga and folklore tradition, Samhain (Hallowe'en) is a sinister time of danger and spectral beings.

53 *even women in labour . . . music of the síd*: a common topos on the power of fairy music and also of music in general in Irish literary tradition.

54 *Thrice was his blood shed*: literally, 'his third wave has come upon him'. There is an Irish topos of three, seven, or nine waves that designate destiny or fate. Earlier the image of the wave was used to fine poetic effect, and in the same context of fate and lamentation, in Créde's lament for her lover.

55 *he died . . . in the west*: there are a number of conflicting accounts of Finn's death. This reference places it in south-west Munster but the more common tradition places his death on the River Boyne in the midlands.

56 *belief*: this is the second account of a Fenian display of faith in the Christian god. It may be significant that it is connected here to the great midland monastery of Clonmacnoise. Founded by St Ciarán, known as 'the son of the mason', in the year 548, its origins are associated with Díarmait mac Cerbaill, the presiding high king of *Tales*, and it was heavily patronized in the twelfth century by the kings of Connaught. It stands at a major travel crossing on the banks of the Shannon. Some elements of the warnings to the despoilers of the church recall the events of 1129–30 when Clonmacnoise was robbed and the wrongdoer hanged.

Ciarán: Ciarán's Patrician connections are tenuous. In *T*, 28, a disciple of Patrick baptized Ciarán 'out of Patrick's book', and the number of years between the death of Patrick and this baptism is calculated at 140.

58 *Fomorian*: the Fomoire are yet another supernatural race who settled Ireland in the prehistoric period. Saga tradition also associates them with the sea and with Viking raids on Ireland.

cantred: the Irish term, *tricha cét*, means literally thirty hundreds.

60 *Lug of the Long Arm*: Lug's cult seems to be pan-Celtic. In Irish tradition he assumes the leadership of the Túatha Dé Danann and leads them to victory against the Fomoire (cf. *Cath Maige Tuired*). This anecdote remains mysterious; neither this nor the reference, pp. 63–4, 73, to the chain and skull of Lug occur elsewhere in Irish tradition. In *T*, the saint speaks to and baptizes a resurrected pagan giant, Macc Maicc Glais.

Columcille: the great missionary saint of the Irish and Scottish Church (d. 597) is referred to here. By the date of *Tales*, the glories of the Scottish island monastery of Iona are long over—headship of the Columban churches passed to Kells, Co. Meath, in the early ninth century. The network of Columban monasteries became very powerful again in Ireland in the twelfth century, this time with the church of Derry at its head. The tradition of the birthplace of the saint at Gartán, Co. Donegal, in the Derry hinterland, referred to here, does not surface until the twelfth century in the period of considerable co-operation between the Columban monasteries and Armagh.

62 *from . . . Lúachair*: the manuscript is illegible at this point.

63 *Half of Conn*: the name given to the northern half of Ireland, derived from Conn, grandfather of Cormac.

65 *four women*: two of these women are otherwise known in saga tradition: Sadb, daughter of Conn, is the wife of Ailill Ólamm from whom the Munster royal dynasties descended, while Aillbe is the daughter of King Cormac wooed by Finn in the tale *Tochmarc Ailbhe* (The Wooing of Ailbhe, ed. and trans. R. Thurneysen, *ZCP* 13 (1920–1), 250–82, 297–8; corrigenda ibid. 14 (1923), 421; ibid. 19 (1932), 125–7).

Imbolc: a term of uncertain etymology for the feast of 1 February, the first day of spring in Ireland.

68 *verse*: the little elegy for Finn's favourite hound is one of a number of attractive poems about pet animals in Irish tradition. In the saga *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley (*TBC*), ed. and trans. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1976), 19), the smith Culann laments in rhythmic prose his hound's death at the hands of the boy hero Cú Chulainn who thus receives his heroic name, 'hound of Culann', from the incident.

In Muc Slándae . . . Sow of Healing: the Irish otherworld feast commonly involved the consumption of a pig, the Mucc Slánga or *Slándae*, here translated as 'healing' although Slánga may also be a proper noun. Finn and Goll quarrel over such a pig in the tale *Fotha Catha Cnucha* (The Causes of the Battle of Knock, ed. W. M. Hennessy, *RC* 2 (1873), 86–93).

69 *Díarmait, son of Cerball*: the chapter that follows this summons brings together all the principal characters of the work in a formal setting at the court of Díarmait, the high king of Ireland (cf. Introduction, p. xx). This scenario owes much to the joint secular–ecclesiastical assemblies and synods convened by Irish kings in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The stories and lore told by the old *Fían* survivors are formally ratified and codified by order of the king and a title to the work, *Acallam na Senórach: The Conversation of the Ancients* (*Tales*), given.

71 *Meanwhile . . . yoked for him*: there seems no reason for rerouting Caílte at this point other than to introduce to the audience the core combat scenes in the most famous of Irish sagas, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, scenes in which the youthful hero Cú Chulainn excels himself in weapon dexterity. These saga scenes took place along a well-known access route to Ulster, the same region from which Caílte set out at the beginning of *Tales*.

72 *charm of invisibility*: charms of invisibility are a frequent motif in early Irish narratives; St Patrick was traditionally accorded one as was, in the Irish annals tradition, King Díarmait mac Cerbaill at the battle of Cúl Dreimne (Drumcliffe) in 561. The spell is elsewhere associated with the *Fían* hero Díarmait.

those two Fenians: the Irish word *días* (two) could also refer to the two-thirds share of the ancient treasure which has just been handed over to the king. Caílte is not yet present to make up the *Fían* pair and the

connection with the Fenians is only made in the Franciscan manuscript version.

Mochua: St Mochua, founder of the monastery of Tech Mochua (Timahoe) in the territory of the Laigis, a vassal tribe on the midland border of Leinster, is here given a Connaught pedigree instead of his usual and normal Leinster genealogy.

73 *linen chain*: Irish *línide* is unclear. Linked iron neck-shackles have been found at Lagore, a residence of the southern Uí Néill kings.

74 *Messgegra*: Messgegra appears in an Ulster hero tale, *Talland Étair* (The Siege of Howth, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 8 (1887), 47–64). After death, part of his brain is made into a ball which then becomes a weapon for the Ulster heroes. In the death-tale of the Ulster king, Conchobar mac Nessa (*The Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series, 14 (Dublin, 1906), 2–21), Cét hurls the brain ball at Conchobar; it lodges in his head, remaining there for seven years until the king's anger at the crucifixion of Christ causes him such agitation that the ball drops from his head and the king dies. According to *Talland Étair* another part of the brain fell in Co. Kildare; it is admirably resourceful of the author of *Tales* to use up for his purposes some odd bits of Messgegra brain lore.

A disciple . . . until Judgment Day comes: the prophecy of Finn, and indirectly of Patrick here, concerning St Kevin of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow is also repeated in two Lives of Kevin written in Irish between the tenth and eleventh centuries (*Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of the Irish Saints*, ed. and trans. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1922), i, 124–7, 131–6; ii, 121–3, 127–32). These Lives also mention the mysterious beast who disturbs the lake periodically.

76 *Feradach Finnfhechtnach 'the Righteous'*: the story of Feradach (Finn) Fechtnach as given here is a rather confused reflection of the traditional Irish pseudo-historical accounts of the revolt of the vassal tribes of Ireland against Fiacha son of Feradach, and their defeat by Túathal Techtmar son of Fiacha. There are a number of different versions of this tale in circulation in medieval Ireland but the account here, which is used to incorporate a kind of founding charter for the *Fían* institution and ruling dynasties, bears little relationship to any other form of the tradition.

77 *Morrígu*: see note on *Dagda*, p. 227. Most traditions of the revolt of the vassal tribes agree that Fiacha's wife is Eithne, daughter of the king of Britain. The reference to the Morrígu is unclear; the line could mean, 'the Morrígu slew his mother'.

79 *Half of Mug*: southern half of Ireland or Munster, ruled over by the dynasties descended from the mythical Mug Núadat.

Ceinnselach: the *Uí Cheinnselaig*, a south Leinster dynasty, take their name from a fifth-century ancestor, Énna Cennsalach. They ruled Leinster from the late eleventh century until the arrival of the

Anglo-Normans in 1169. In the Patrician period, however, they supplied very few kings of Leinster.

80 *poem*: the poem on the church of Ferns also occurs almost verbatim—though *Tales* has a slightly better text—in the Irish Life of St Maédhóc (*Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, i, 192–3; ii, 186–7). The account following of the marvellous waters of Ros Brocc draws on traditions of the mill-race of St Moling at the monastery of St Moling (St Mullins) which also occur in the late medieval *Life* of that saint (ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 27 (1906), 257–312; ibid. 28 (1907), 70–2). The account of Finn's prophecy provides a synopsis of the traditions which associate the saint with the famous mad king Suibhne (*Buile Suibhne Geilt: The Frenzy of Suibhne*, ed. and trans. J. G. O'Keeffe, Irish Texts Society, 12 (London, 1913)) and the late eleventh- to early twelfth-century tale of Leinster–Munster rivalry, '*The Borama*', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 13 (1892), 32–124, 299.

85 *Leinster*: the description of Conn as king of Leinster is odd considering that he is particularly well-established in historical tradition as founder of the ruling dynasties of the northern half of Ireland (see note to p. 63).

Finn's bed: bed-sharing as a mark of favour between a lord and his attendants is common in medieval Irish literature, especially in bardic eulogies to patrons.

87 *geis*: the idea of a personal tabu, understood both as privilege and prohibition, is fundamental to an Irish concept of heroic identity and destiny. Most of the great warriors and kings of saga tradition are given special lists of tabus of this kind.

88 *Colmán Éla*: this saint, whose monastery is Lann Ela (Lynally on the Westmeath–Offaly border), is normally considered as a midlands Leinster saint with northern associations to the Dál nAraide, a link reasserted in the early thirteenth century (see C. Doherty, 'The Cult of St Patrick and the Politics of Armagh in the Seventh Century' in J.-M. Picard (ed.), *Ireland and Northern France AD 600–850* (Dublin, 1991), 53–94). His appearance here is yet another example of the narrator's habit of interweaving stories from different areas.

Tralee: strictly speaking, Caílte has not been here in north Co. Kerry in any narrative adventure thus far. However, in the aetiological tale that follows, the stag is pursued by the *Fían* from Kerry to north-east Ulster where Caílte now is and where he has met Colmán and Eoganán.

89 *true learning*: it seems that lore of place-names (*Dinnshenchas*) and of genealogy is intended here by the king. Caílte, however, does not show much enthusiasm for the latter type of knowledge in the work as a whole.

90 *recited this poem*: this poem reproduces almost exactly a devotional poem on the eight Deadly Sins attributed to Maél Ísu Ó Brolchán, a celebrated poet from the monastery of Armagh who died in 1086 (Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, *Maolíosa Ó Brolcháin* (Maynooth, 1986)). The idea of link-

ing the Deadly Sins with the Hours is not a common topos of medieval devotional literature outside Ireland.

97 *young woman*: the story of Lí Bán is part of the place-name lore connected with Loch Neagh. In the tale describing the eruption of the lake, she is the daughter of Eochaid mac Maireda and is the only survivor of the great outflow that brought the lake into being. Having lived as a mermaid for many years she is discovered by the monks of St Comgall of Bangor and baptized. (*Aided Echach meic Maireda* (The Death of Eochaid Son of Mairid), ed. and trans. S. H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* (London, 1892)).

99 *Caílte completed the verse*: such quatrain-completing contests are not uncommon in medieval Irish literature, the most famous example being the tragic dénouement of the saga *Fingal Rónáin* (The Kin-slaying of Rónán, ed. D. Greene (Dublin, 1955)). Usually as here they involve a punningly coded personal name which is explicated by the response that completes the verse.

other side: Cairbre Lifechair is the son of and successor to Cormac, hence a seat by his father's side is appropriate.

101 *young man approaching*: Cas Corach becomes one of the most important figures in the narrative. His successes in poetry, warrior action, and love in *Tales* are possibly meant to represent the social aspirations of the new secular literary and learned families of medieval Ireland.

Sage: translated here by the general term 'sage', the Irish title *ollam* has a quite specific meaning in the early Irish legal tracts on poets and in later Gaelic medieval usage. It was the term reserved for the highest grade of poet, and by extension the highest grade in any other learned profession. A candidate had to be, like Cas Corach, the son and grandson of a poet. Normally, one *ollam* was appointed to each petty kingdom (*túath*) and he held office by licence from king and *túath*.

105 *Race-Course of the Chariots*: this place-name, with Gáirech and Ilgáirech, occurs in *TBC* as the site of one of the greatest of the battles in that saga.

106 *Soichell*: Sacellus occurs in the lists of Patrick's clergy in *T*. He is described there as bishop of Baslick, Co. Roscommon.

The tenant is fat: the pun on the Irish word *méith* 'fat' gives the family name Uí Méith. In the medieval Irish genealogical collections the family, Uí Méith Macha, is connected to Armagh, the chief Patrician establishment by the late sixth century and subsequently the metropolitan head of the whole Irish Church.

111 *Manannán*: a divinity associated with the sea in the early Irish voyage tale, *Immram Brain* (The Voyage of Bran, ed. A. G. van Hamel, *Immrama* (Dublin, 1941)). Often represented as King of the Otherworld, he is also known for his amorous adventures.

112 *Miliuc maccu Bóin*: the narrative refers here to the Patrician hagiographical tradition of the young Patrick's years of bondage to Miliuc.

Described by the saint himself in the *Confessio*, Miliuc's name first surfaces in Muirchú's *Life*, (i, 11) where Miliuc, in an extraordinary display of pique, immolates himself on a pyre rather than face his old swineherd Patrick, now returned as a missionary.

112 *Raigne*: there is a well-known Mag Raigne in present-day Co. Kilkenny; Sliab Caince is otherwise unknown. Caílte's little poem in praise of Ard Caémáin inserted in the Franciscan manuscript's version at this point (omitted here) also seems to pertain to a church in south Leinster, modern Ardcavan, which is also out of place for Caílte's location at this stage.

113 *Corc*: the sudden switch of focus to the lore of the three fateful waves of Ireland, yielding the long story of Cíabán in Mannanán's sea-kingdom, is told at the request of a western warrior in Patrick's retinue, Corc, and anticipates the abrupt switch of location back to Connaught at p. 179.

116 *Medb . . . said Patrick*: Medb's singular mode of chariot transportation in massed formation is borrowed from *TBC*. Patrick's disparaging response represents a rare comment of a medieval Irish author on the most revered of Irish saga texts, though the hostility may be directed, not at the text itself but rather at Medb.

117 *Rathcroghan*: this still impressive site in Co. Roscommon is the royal centre of the Connaught province in the saga literature. It is a megalithic necropolis and ritual centre sprawling over several acres. See B. Wailes, 'The Irish "Royal Sites" in History and Archaeology', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 3 (1982), 1–29.

118 *are the men*: the Franciscan manuscript adds several more quatrains to this poem continuing the theme of the hidden treasures of famous heroes.

119 *watch the hunt*: the Franciscan manuscript adds a poem of sixteen quatrains here in which Caílte laments the *Fían* to Mael Tréna.

120 *the man died*: the point of Patrick's curse is not clear but it seems that the author sees no problem in invoking Caílte's name and fearsome reputation in the service of the saint's curse, these being sufficient cause to bring about the robber's death.

They had not been there long . . . approaching them: there is yet another awkward narrative switch of scene here from Connaught to Leinster. The only tenuous connection is that the abducted royal child's mother is Bé Binn, daughter of a king of Connaught. The snatching of children by the otherworld is a very common feature of Irish narrative tradition and folk beliefs down to the modern period. As with the story of the king of Connaught's son, also called Áed, this Leinster tale involves a type of literary interweaving of multiple narrative strands.

122 *He had two fine daughters . . . came to ask for one of them*: the tragic tale of the king of Leinster's abuse of the sister brides is also told in *Bórama Laigin* where it serves as motivation for interprovincial strife.

126 *Coscrach na Cét*: a Franciscan manuscript poem of seven quatrains in which Coscrach addresses Caílte is omitted.

127 *lake-monster of the Lake of Lurgu*: the beast of Loch Lurgan is referred to occasionally in bardic verse and in Leinster hagiography but only here is Finn credited with its destruction.

134 *Mullaghmast*: Maistiu is the royal centre of the Uí Muiredaig, a sub-dynasty of the Uí Dúnlainge, the kings of Leinster in the early medieval period. In the twelfth century the family of Uá Tuathail had taken over the kingship of this area. The most famous representative of this family is St Lorcán Ó Tuathail, abbot of Glendalough and archbishop of Dublin when the Anglo-Normans arrived in Ireland in 1169. The fact that Patrick is represented as preaching at this site may reflect a desire of the twelfth-century Patrician Church to assert its control over the churches in the See of Dublin.

139 *Slievenamon*: the mountain overlooking the southern plains of Tipperary figures very frequently in Fenian tradition. It is odd that the author would here place the king of Leinster in this, the heartland of Munster.

151 *Cashel*: Tírechán's *Life* gives the tradition of Patrick having baptized Óengus son of Nad Froích on the rock of Cashel, the limestone outcrop in the Plain of Tipperary which was the royal centre of the most important segment of the ruling Eóganacht dynasty of the province of Munster. *VT* (118–29) elaborates the account greatly and adds a blessing of Patrick on Munster. In 1101 at the Synod of Cashel, Muirchertach Ó Briain, king of Munster, solemnly gave the site of Cashel to the church in perpetuity. In 1111, Cashel became the second metropolitan church of Ireland. In 1134 the exquisite Romanesque church was consecrated on the hill. The site is significant as being yet another locus in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries of church reform in Ireland.

three perpetual fires ... Columcille: the triad of Patrick, Brigit, and Columcille as the joint patrons of the country is well established in medieval Ireland; in 1185 the bones of the three saints were placed in a new shrine in the cathedral of Downpatrick, Co. Down, by the Anglo-Norman adventurer John de Courcy. Gerald of Wales refers to the perpetual fire of Brigit in his account of the marvels of Ireland, but there is no other account of a triad of sacred fires as here.

153 *Irúaith*: a number of scholarly suggestions have been made on the identity of Irúaith, from the Jutish Heorot in *Beowulf*, to Norway, to south Connaught.

160 *Grey One of Macha*: once again the text makes conscious allusion to the Ulster saga cycle. The Grey of Macha was the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn's horse, coeval with him and a chief mourner at his death.

161 *frenzy and the violence*: another reference to Ulster saga tradition. The quality of heroic frenzy is most marked in the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn, the main figure in *TBC*. Indeed the story of Fer Óc (pp. 16–24) seems to be modelled on the famous account of Cú Chulainn's boyhood deeds in *TBC*.

162 *Ulstermen*: the Franciscan manuscript adds here the detail that the *Fían*'s construction of the fortifications is a defensive strategy but it is not clear why the warlike Ulster colonists should feel the need of protection.

166 *salt-marsh*: the enormous size of the woman indicates that she, like the *Fían* themselves, belongs to another order of being from present-day humans. The similes relating her size to features of the natural world reflect a common rhetorical topos in medieval Irish and Welsh narratives. The idea of the otherworld as a Land of Maidens comes from early Irish voyage tales such as *Immram Brain* (The Voyage of Bran). Her malevolent suitor is similarly marked as otherworldly, especially in the manner of his fate; as befits a non-human figure he does not die of his wounds but is taken away by ship and mourned by a mysterious retinue in much the same way as King Arthur of British tradition.

Lugaid Lága: a figure from Irish mythical history of the pre-Christian kings of Ireland. He is son of Mug Núadat, brother of Ailill Ólamm, mythical founder of the ruling dynasties of medieval Munster. In the saga *Cath Maige Mucrama* he is the killer of Art, father of the famous just king Cormac.

169 *Cú Roí*: in Irish saga he is the most famous of Munster warriors, ultimately betrayed by his wife and killed by Cú Chulainn. In Irish pseudo-historical tradition he is king of the two Munsters when there is no high-kingship, that is, in the time period of the Ulster sagas.

172 *three . . . young men . . . three spears*: the tale of the evil raiders contains echoes—sinister redness, the name Aincél, which suggest that the author had in mind the tragic early Irish king-tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (The Destruction of Two-Red's Hostel, ed. E. Knott (Dublin, 1936)), in which these details also occur.

175 *charm or an omen*: Dub's spell, requested by Cormac, the good pagan king of Irish tradition, and issuing as it does from someone who has pagan magical powers, is a curious mixture of invective, Christian credal belief, and apocryphal details. The handling of demons here is paired with Caílte's expulsion—under Patrick's aegis—of the demons of west Munster in the 'Patrician' time of the story immediately following.

176 *flocks of birds*: these accounts may bear some relation to the story of Patrick on Croagh Patrick as told by Tírechán but more specifically in the *Vita Quarta* (*Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick*, ed. L. Bieler (Dublin, 1971), 101) and *VT*, 71–2, of the flock of demonic birds who were scattered by Patrick. Later in *Tales*, p. 216, Patrick himself alludes to this incident.

computistics: this show of computistic skill is not readily comprehensible. Some details of the computistical texts available to an Irish author of the period are supplied by A. Martin Freeman, *The Annals of Connacht* (Dublin, 1944 (1983)), introduction, pp. xiv–xx.

180 *Goibniu*: see note for *Elcmar*, below.

183 *Where did Finn mac Cumaill come from*: a twelfth-century account of Finn's death also states clearly that Finn was of the Uí Thairsig, of the midland tribe of the Uí Fhailge (*Fianaighecht*, p. xxvii). The very different genealogy there given, however, links him to Leinster as great-grandson to Núadu Necht. The information that Finn's mother was the daughter of Núadu of the Túatha Dé Danann also occurs in a fourteenth-century Fenian ballad on Cnú Deróil, Finn's harper (*DF*, no. xlv, vol. ii, pp. 120–1).

186 *Dub . . . Muirgius . . . Tomaltach*: the family referred to here is the *Uí Raduib*, also known as the *Mic Oireachtaig*. At the beginning of the thirteenth century they were principal vassals of the king of Connaught and hereditary officers of the Patrician foundation of Aghagower, Co. Mayo. In addition, they controlled the annual pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick, already by this period one of the four great places of pilgrimage in Ireland. A head of the family, Donn Óg (d. 1228), was indeed married to the daughter of a reigning king in Connaught. These sites are referred to again, p. 216, in a manner that recalls their mention in *VT*, 70–5.

191 *Elcmar*: in Túatha Dé Danann lore he is the husband of Bóand, the goddess who gives her name to the River Boyne. The Feast of Goibniu, conferring immortality, is referred to in the late medieval tale *Altram Tige Dá Medar* (The Fosterage of Two-bucket House), which also brings together characters from the Túatha Dé Danann and Patrick. Towards the end of Caílte's healing sojourn in the *síd* of Assaroe, p. 203, he is offered not the fairy drink of immortality but a less pagan gift, the potion of remembrance, which enables him to create for his Patrician audience a detailed picture of the past.

198 *brandub*: another board game, akin to the Lappish game of *taplut*. The distinction between it and *fidchell* is not clear. See Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990), 208–9.

201 *Flidais*: the mythical figure Flidais appears as consort of Fergus mac Róich in a number of late Ulster saga tales.

208 *blessing*: the Franciscan manuscript adds a poem of four lines in praise of Échna at this point.

209 *atonement . . . if Patrick bade him do it*: there is a time discrepancy here as the story of Lám Lúath takes place in the time of Finn and King Cormac, not in Patrician time.

210 *Galway river*: the western annals report that the River Galway did indeed dry up in 1189. The two Connaught kings at war may well be a reference to the conflict between Conchabhar Maénmaige and Cathal Cróbhdearg at this time in which the former was killed.

apparition: there is considerable speculation in Irish sagas that deal with the otherworld about the manner in which the appearance of otherworld

characters is to be interpreted. Medieval Irish literati frequently draw attention to their malign and diabolical aspects at the same time as they show them as quite compatible with Christian belief.

212 *wolf-bitches*: the Orphic manner in which Cas Corach and Caílte overcome the werewolves has no precedent in European medieval literature. 'The Oppressive Company' from the cave are mentioned elsewhere in medieval Irish sources also with lupine associations. Like Emain Macha, the royal centre in Ulster, Crúachu has associated with it an otherworld component, 'the cave of Crúachu'. The site is called 'the Irish entrance to Hell' in *Cath Maige Tuired*.

215 *the Grave of the Druid*: a bishop Cethiacus from Tirawley, Co. Mayo, according to Tírechán (*T*, 27, 3) is associated with a number of monastic foundations in the Co. Mayo–Co. Roscommon region.

the Spring of Garad: a Patrician ecclesiastical foundation. The narrative is close to the corresponding matter of *VT* at this point.

assembly . . . Assaroe: the claim that the province of Connaught extends from Limerick to Assaroe would have been both audacious and provocative to the kingdoms of the Uí Briain, in Cos. Limerick and Clare, as to Uí Maine, in south Co. Galway, which is emerging as a strong political unit at the time of *Tales*.

216 *Croagh Patrick*: see note for p. 168. By the twelfth century the pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick is well established and has remained an immensely popular site for pilgrims to this day. Máire MacNeill (*Festival of Lughnasa*, *passim*) considered the pilgrimage a transformation of a pagan harvest festival celebrating the victory of the god Lug.

Dobar: no visit to a well currently forms part of the mountain pilgrimage rite, but the St Patrick's Well on Downpatrick Head, possibly the Island of the Demons referred to a few lines earlier, still regularly visited by pilgrims, may be intended.

218 *Patrick bound and wed them . . . Ireland*: with this marriage the major theme in *Tales* of a twelfth-century ecclesiastical reform of society comes to a conclusion.

219 *column of stone*: medieval Irish literati connect the famous Connaught queen Medb of Irish saga with a Medb of Tara. Connections such as the two Medbs and here the royal stone helped to bolster claims of the Connaught royal house to the high-kingship of Ireland.

222 *Feast of Tara*: this royal festival first enters Irish literary tradition as the annual 'feast of pagan worship' described by Muirchú at which Patrick competed in wonder-working with the druids of the king of Tara. It is modelled on the Old Testament Nebuchadnezzar's feast and according to D. Binchy ('Fair of Tailtiu and Feast of Tara') had no existence in historic reality.

223 *Lía Fáil 'the Stone of Fál'*: traditionally the pillar stone on the mound of Tara, used in the inauguration rites of the kings of Tara. The stone is no

longer in its original place; tradition has it that it travelled to Scotland and thence to King Edward's Chair in Westminster Abbey. The stone there is now restored to Holyrood Castle, Edinburgh.

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