

A STORY FROM WHICH IT IS INFERRED THAT MONGAN WAS FINN MAC CUMAILL

Mongan was in Rathmore of Moylinny in his kingship. To him went Forgall the poet. Through him many a married couple complained to Mongan. Every night the poet would recite a story to Mongan. So great was his lore that they were thus from Hallowe'en to May-day. He received gifts and food from Mongan.

One day Mongan asked his poet what was the death of Fothad Airgdech. Forgall said he was slain at Duffry in Leinster. Mongan said it was false. The poet said he would satirize him with his lampoons, and he would satirize his father and his mother and his grandfather, and he would sing spells upon their waters, so that fish should not be caught in their river-mouths. He would sing upon their woods, so that they should not give fruit, upon their plains, so that they should be barren for ever of any produce. Mongan promised him his will of precious things as far as the value of seven bondmaids, or twice seven bondmaids, or three times seven. At last he offered him one-third, or one-half of his land, or his whole land; at last anything save only his own liberty with that of his wife Breothigernn, unless he were redeemed before the end of three days. The poet refused all except as regards the woman. For the sake of his honor Mongan consented. Thereat the woman was sorrowful. The tear was not taken from her cheek. Mongan told her not to be sorrowful, help would certainly come to them.

So it came to the third day. The poet began to enforce his bond. Mongan told him to wait till evening. He and his wife were in their bower. The woman wept as her surrender drew near and she saw no help. Mongan said: "Be not sorrowful, woman. He who is even now coming to our help, I hear his feet in the Labrinne."

They waited a while. Again the woman wept. "Weep not, woman! He who is now coming to our help, I hear his feet in the Main."

Thus they were waiting between every two watches of the day. She would weep, and he would still say: "Weep not, woman. He who is now coming to our help, I hear his feet in the Laune, in Loch Leane, in the Morning-star River between the Ui Fidgente and the Arada, in the Suir on Mag Femin in Munster, in the Echuir, in the Barrow, in the Liffey, in the Boyne, in the Dee, in the Tuarthesc, in Carlingford Loch, in the Nid, in the Newry river, in the Lame Water in front of Rathmore."

When night came to them, Mongan was on his couch in his palace, and his wife at his right hand,

and she sorrowful. The poet was summoning them by their sureties and their bonds. While they were there, a man was announced approaching the enclosure from the south. His cloak was in a fold around him, and in his hand a headless spear-shaft that was not small. By that shaft he leapt across the three ramparts, so that he landed in the middle of the enclosure, thence into the middle of the palace, thence between Mongan and the wall at his pillow. The poet was in the back of the house behind the king. The question was argued in the house before the warrior that had come.

“What is the matter here?” said he.

“I and the poet yonder,” said Mongan, “have made a wager about the death of Fothad Airgdech. He said it was at Duffry in Leinster; I said that was false.” The warrior said the poet Was wrong.

“It shall be proved. We were with thee, with Finn,” said the warrior.

“Hush!” said Mongan, “that is not fair.”

“We were with Finn, then,” said he. “We came from Scotland. We met with Fothad Airgdech yonder on the Lame river. There we fought a battle. I made a cast at him, so that the spear passed through him and went into the earth beyond him and left its iron head in the earth. Here is the shaft that was in that spear. The bare stone from which I made that cast will be found, and the iron head will be found in the earth, and the tomb of Fothad Airgdech will be found a little to the east of it. A stone chest is about him there in the earth. There, upon the chest, are his two bracelets of silver, and his two arm-rings, and his neck-torque of silver. And by his tomb there is a stone pillar. And on the end of the pillar that is in the earth there is an inscription in ogam. This is what it says: ‘This is Eochaid Airgdech. Cailte’ slew me in an encounter against Finn.’”

They went with the warrior. Everything was found thus. It was Cailte, Finn’s foster-son, that had come to them. Mongan, however, was Finn, though he would not let it be told

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