

CHAPTER IV: THE TERRACED ISLE OF BIRDS

AGAIN for three days and three nights they saw no land. But on the morning of the fourth day they heard the murmur of the waves on the beach; and as the day dawned, they saw a large high island, with terraces all round it, rising one behind another. On the terraces grew rows of tall trees, on which were perched great numbers of large, bright-coloured birds. When the crew were about to hold council as to who should visit the island and see whether the birds were tame, Maildun himself offered to go. So he went with a few companions; and they viewed the island warily, but found nothing to hurt or alarm them; after which they caught great numbers of the birds and brought them to their ship.

A shield-shaped island, with terraces crowned, And great trees circling round and round:
From the summit down to the wave-washed rocks,
There are bright-coloured birds in myriad flocks
Their plumes are radiant; but hunger is keen
So the birds are killed,
Till the curragh is filled,
And the sailors embark on the ocean green!

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