

The Battle of Carnn Chonaill

(Autor unbekannt)

Diarmait, son of Aed of Sláne, Sinech Cró fostered him. The Connaughtmen used to carry off her kine, so she brought about a bitter quarrel between Diarmait and Guare of Aidne. Then she said (to her fosterson):

O Diarmait, thou slack in help, | fear of Guare destroys (?) us;
since thou art weak in winning battles, | come to us out of the manslaying!
Let Diarmait alone: speak not to him | of battle, nothing truly small is known:
Do right (?) to him as he is, | send to him, he will come to thee.
Hitherto he was called a hero | from the greatness of his splendour;
today a weakling in Meath | is Diarmait, son of Aed of Sláne.
Thirty flitches, thirty cows | was the feast of the kindred of Fergus,
a yearling at the end of the prey was paid to Diarmait for his guesting.
Our little boys will be big men | before our help comes with Crip,
the calves of our kine will be trained oxen | before help comes from Diarmait.

Howbeit this setting at loggerheads paid her somewhat, for Diarmait mustered hosts and multitudes to invade Connaught.

Now when entering Connaught Diarmait went to Clonmacnois, and St. Ciarán's community, with their abbot Aed-lug, son of Cumman, did penance to God for him that he might come (back) safe by virtue of their guarantee. So the king (after returning in triumph) offered him Tuaim n-Eirc with its subdivisions of land — i.e. Liath Mancháin — as a 'sod on altar' to God and to St. Ciarán, and he bestowed three curses on the king of Meath (for the time being) if any of his people should consume (as a right) even a drink of water therein. Wherefore no king of Meath ventures to look at it, and none of his people ventures to partake of its food.

Hence it is that Diarmait requested his burial in Clonmacnois, wherefore he was after interred therein.

Diarmait overcame Connaughtmen till he came to Aidne. Guare gathered to him the men of Munster. These were the kings that came to succour Guare, to wit, Cuan, son of Enna, king of Munster, and Cuan, son of Conall, king of Húi Fidgenti, and Tolomnach, king of Húi Liatháin. The battle of Carn Conaill was fought between them on the day of Pentecost, and Guare was defeated, and a 'slaughter of chiefs' was inflicted there, including Cuan, son of Enna, king of Munster, and Cuan, son of Conall, king of Húi Conaill, and Tolomnach, king of Húi Liatháin.

St. Cámmine of Inis Celtra, 'tis he that had set a curse on Guare, that he should not withstand warriors. For Cámmine had been for three days fasting upon him concerning a guarantee which the

saint had made him give; for Guare had outraged him.

'If God see fit', says Cámmine, 'the man who is stubborn against me shall not stand fast against (his) foes.' Whereupon the angel declared this to Cámmine, saying:

The battle in Inis-celtra | which the weakling fights against strengths,
'tis the weakling that shall be strong, | 'tis the strong that shall be put to flight.

Guare went to entreat Cámmine, and kneels to him.

'Thy cast has been hurled', says Cámmine: 'I cannot help to stay it. But this is as swift as that', says Cámmine, 'and those that shall inflict a defeat upon thee will straightaway give thee thy desire.'

Thereof said Cámmine:

When edges shall be against edges | and shields against shield,
thou wilt be penitent, O Guare, | as to the poor cleric to whom thou hast shewn stiffness.
According to (His) will God's son | in the charge of a single hour has brought
Guare's heart under gentle ones, | the strong ones under Guare.

'Fast with me then', says Guare to Cámmine, 'unto God, that He may grant my prayer.'

Then the three of them entered the church, to wit, Cámmine and Guare and St. Cummine the Tall. A great church built by Cámmine, therein they were. Then the clerics were causing Guare to confess.

'Well, O Guare', say they, 'with what wouldst thou like to fill this church wherein we stand?'

'I should like its fill of gold and of silver; and not for worldly greed, but to bestow it for my soul's sake on the saints and the churches and the poor of the world.'

'May God give thee help, O Guare!' say they. 'The earth which thou wouldst bestow for thy soul's sake shall be given to thee, and thou shalt (after death) be a dweller in heaven.'

'We are thankful', saith Guare. 'And thou, O Cámmine', saith Guare, 'with what wouldst thou like it to be filled?'

'I should like to fill it with pain and sickness and every ailment that is worst to man, so that all of them might be inflicted on my body.'

'And thou, O Cummine', saith Guare, 'with what wouldst thou fain have it filled?'

'Fain would I have its fill of books, for students to repair to them, and (then) to sow God's word in the ears of every one, so as to bring him to heaven out of the troop of the Devil.'

Now all their musings came to pass. The earth was given to Guare. Wisdom was given to Cummine. Pains and sicknesses were inflicted on Cämmine, so that no bone of him came to another earth, but it had dissolved and decayed with the anguish of every illness and every tribulation.

So they all went to heaven according to their musings.

Guare flees out of the battle on one side with his servant only. The servant caught a salmon with a line, broiled it, and gave it to Guare. Whereupon Guare said:

I thank God for what has been gained | to-night for my feast, a single morsel.
I have had (many) another night | (when) Mary's Son gave me seven cows.

Then Guare went to make submission to Diarmait at the sword's point.

'Well', says Diarmait, 'why does Guare practise that generosity (for which he is famed)? Is it for God's sake or for men's? If it be for God's sake he will now bestow somewhat. If it be for men's, he will give nothing, because he is in anger and great bitterness.'

He went to them. 'Something to me, O Guare!' says the jester. He passes by him. 'Something to me, O Guare!' says the leper. 'Thou shalt have', says Guare. He flings him his spears. 'Something to me', says the leper's fellow. Guare flings him his shield. 'Something to me!' says his other fellow. Guare flings him his mantle and his brooch and his girdle.

'This will not protect thee', says Diarmait: 'come under the sword.'

'Something to me, O Guare!' says the Culdee. 'Wait a little, O Diarmait', says Guare, 'till I strip off my shirt for the Culdee.'

'Well', says Diarmait, 'thou hast submitted to another king, even to God's Son. Here, however, is my submission to thee.'

So Diarmait kneels thrice to Guare. 'Let it not be unpeace now', says Diarmait, 'that thou shouldst go to meet me to the Assembly of Talltiu, so that the men of Erin may take thee for their adviser and their chief of counsel.'

'It shall be done', says Guare.

Then Sinech sang this praise to Diarmait:

Every faint-hearted son of a lord, | a counsel I have for thee about him,
he shall walk righthandwise round the mark: | he shall have my champion's leavings.
Not on necks of oxen or cows | is my champion's sword blunted,
'tis on kings that the sword | in Diarmait's hand today makes a whistling noise.
Guare son of Colmán, the king, | befouled the trees of Aidne:
he cast forth ordures as big as a cow's head, | for dread of my champion.
Since a shower of blood has bespattered | Diarmait's blue-coloured shirt,
the dress of a man who turns back battles | is not meet without many colours.

Since a shower of blood has bespattered | the breast of Diarmait's steed,
the water with which Crip is washed | is not clear for the Sacrifice.
When in turns the warlike shafts | are hurled on every side
a bloody mantle were not strange | on the shaft from Diarmait's hand.
When the small javelins are loosed | at the beginning of their conflict,
the pair which first meets (them) | is Diarmait's steed and himself.

Saith Guare:

I promise this, I promise,
if Sinech reach a fold
I will not leave her alive,
I will slay her with my kick.

Saith she:

I promise. | Sinech reaches not a fold:
there are no warriors. ... | why dost thou not know it ...?
Diarmait the hero, good the king, | outgrows every one through boldness,
the king usually outgrows every one, | so that he causes sadness to all.

Then Guare went to the Assembly of Taltiu to meet Diarmait, having with him a sack of silver to bestow on the men of Erin.

'Well', says Diarmait, 'the man that has come to you, ye seize his cattle at his house. 'Tis an outrage to me if (anyone), wretched or strong, in the assembly ask aught of him.'

So Guare went and stayed on Diarmait's (right) hand on the ... highseats in the assembly. On that day, then, no one asks aught of him. This seemed to him a marvel.

At midday on the morrow, 'well', says Guare, 'let a bishop be summoned to me that I may make my confessions to him and be anointed.'

'Why is this?' says Diarmait.

'Deemest thou not, O Diarmait, that it is an omen of death to me that in a stead where stand the men of Erin, both wretched and strong, not one of them asketh aught of me?'

'Nothing shall be taken from thee', says Diarmait. 'Here is a sack of silver for thee.'

'But I (myself) have silver', says Guare.

So then Guare rose up, and flings it out of his two hands. And men say that from that hour one of his arms was longer than the other from reaching out to the 'servants of God' (Culdees).

Then they, Diarmait, to wit, and Guare, make a perfect peace. And the men of Erin took Guare for

their adviser and their chief of counsel, from that time forward so long as he was alive.

Good, then, was that Guare. Tis to him that through grace of generosity was given the cow with beauty of fat, and the blackberries in the ...

'Tis he that wrought the wondrous miracle at Clonmacnois when they were bearing him thither to his burial.

The jester came to him and asked a boon of him repeatedly. So he (the dead king) put his hand out over the ground, and took his handful of the sand, and. flung it into the jester's bosom, and made a glowing mass of gold thereout. So that is Guare's last deed of bounty.

This tale above is (also called) the Battle of Diarmait and Guare of Aidne.

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