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BUILE SUIBHNE

By BLIGH TALBOT-CROSBIE

IT all began about a piece of land: Ronan Fionn, forgetting in his zeal for the King of Heaven, the due of earthly, even though unbelieving, kings, marked out the site for a church in the territory, and near the residence of Suibhne (Sweeny) Mac Colmain Chuair, king of Dal Araidhe, without concerning himself to ask first King Suibhne's leave. Suibhne, hearing the cleric's matin-bell, and learning what was going on, flew into a rage, and drawing a scarlet *brat* around his naked body, made for the door. His wife, Eorann, tried to stop him, and caught hold of the *brat's* fringe, but the silver brooch gave way and sprang across the room, and Eorann was left with the *brat* in her hands, while her husband rushed out, stark-naked. He found Ronan chanting his psalms, and catching up the psalter that was before the cleric, flung it into the adjacent lake. He then seized Ronan by the hand, and was dragging him from the disputed plot, when a *giolla* from Congal Claon, King of Ulster, appeared on the scene, begging Suibhne's immediate help in battle against Domhnall mac Aodha, Ard-Ri of Eire. Suibhne hurried off leaving Ronan disconsolate and indignant. Next morning, an otter out of the full lake, brought the psalter, undamaged, to Ronan's feet, but the cleric, having given thanks for the miracle, none the less cursed Suibhne, praying: "As he came naked to drive me away, so may God cause him to be naked until the day of his death." On the other hand, he blessed Eorann, for having tried to restrain her husband. Ronan then followed Suibhne to Magh Rath, where the armies were arrayed, and tried to make peace, but in vain: the most he could do was to offer himself as surety to either side in turn, for the observance by the other of a nightly truce. But Suibhne, loath to leave off and eager to resume fighting, violated Ronan's guarantee evening and morning.

The great day of the battle of Magh Rath dawned: Suibhne, little thinking that henceforth he was to go naked, arrayed himself splendidly; putting, on above his *leine* of gossamer silk, the scarlet and jewelled *ionar* which Congal Claon had given him a day or two before, after Suibhne had challenged and slain King Domhnall's champion, Ailill Cedach, King of the Ui Faelain: his yellow-speckled shield hung on his shoulders, his two long broad-bladed spears were in his hand, about his slender loins was girt his gold-hilted sword. Thus, young, agile, ardent, battle flashing in his blue eyes, Suibhne mac Colmain Chuair, far-famed King of Dal Araidhe,

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surrounded by his men, his yellow banner tossing above his head, marched to battle. But as he went, he came, by chance, to the place Ronan, assisted by eight "sons of the clergy," was sprinkling the army. An altar had been contrived above a well-spring of pure water, and the Host placed thereon, and now the nobles and choice men of Eire, and each and all who cared to do so, were presenting themselves for sprinkling, before the battle joined. But Suibhne, included before he was aware in the rite, and touchy, whether through memory of the "drowned" psalter, or through concern for his scarlet *ionar*, resented the aspersion he received, as a studied insult, and, impulsive ever, transfixed a "son of the clergy" with one of his spears; then, turning towards Ronan, he hurled the other, with all the vindictiveness begot of injuries borne and done, at him. The bell which the cleric wore on his breast saved his life: the spear scored the bronze and glanced into the air. Thereupon Ronan cursed Suibhne again, praying that as his spear had flown into the air, so Suibhne himself might fly into the air, mad without respite; and that as he had reddened his spear-point in the blood of Ronan's foster-son, so Suibhne himself might at last find death by the point of a spear.

Then the grim and glittering armies joined, and as they joined, they raised three sullen shouts which echoed in the vault of the firmament; and Suibhne, when he heard that dread shout, looked up, and he saw the multitude of gigantic, sinister-wheeling battle-spectres, whose office it is to unnerve and expose cravens and raw youths, but to brace and inflame true warriors; and he heard the shrieking and howling of the spectres above the clamour of voices and the clash of sword and shield; and the whirling and the shrieking of the spectres tormented him. Darkness, terror, agony, giddiness and frenzy, loathing of carnage and longing for quiet overwhelmed him; his sight was troubled, his hearing exalted, his knees shook as though relentlessly beaten by the force of a torrent; his weapons dropped from his hands, his very soul fluttered in his body; he was like a salmon in the weir, or a bird new-prisoned in a crib. He made a leap upon the boss of the nearest warrior's shield, and a second leap on to the crest of his helmet, but the warrior felt his weight no more than if Suibhne had been a feather. Then, resolving to turn his back on his fellow-men for ever, and to roam with deer and course with the showers, to fly with the birds, and to feast in wilderness, he made a third nimble leap on to the top of a neighbouring *bile* tree, in the branches of which were perched numbers of useless and decrepid folk, watching the battle. These all screamed at Suibhne, to drive him back into the fray, and he, endeavouring to

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escape in the opposite direction, found himself, in his confusion, walking on the shoulders and the helmets of the warriors. Then all saw him and cried: "Let not that man in the gold-embroidered *ionar* escape! take him! slay him!" But, though they tore the clothes off him, he evaded their hands; and now a fierce shower of hail—omen of slaughter to the men of Eire—swept over the battle-field, and when the hail-shower passed, Suibhne passed away with it, like any armed bird of the air. In the battle, Domhnall was victorious: "there was a drop on a bright sword; so fell Congal Claon."

As for Suibhne, when he got clear of the battle, it was very seldom that his feet would touch the ground for the swiftness of his course, and when they did they shook not the dew from the tassels of the grass, so light, so airy was his step: nor did he stay in his impetuous flight until there was not a plain, or wold, or bald mountain, or turf-bog, or thicket, or swamp, or hill, or vale, or close-sheltering wood of Eire which he had not that day visited. At last he came to rest in Ros Bearaigh, in Glenn Earcain, and went into a yew-tree in the glen. While he was in the yew-tree, fugitives from the battle passed near, one of whom was a kinsman of Suibhne, Aongus Reamhar by name, and as they passed, they were saying: "Strange that none of us saw Suibhne, alive or dead, after the battle joined, but doubtless it was because of Ronan's curse upon him." Then Suibhne answered from the yew: "*A oga*, come hither; in this tree is the man whom you seek: God hath allowed me here life very bare, very strait; without music, without restful sleep, without women, without lovers. Here am I at Ros Bearaigh, betrayed by Ronan: God hath put me away from my likeness; put ye away my acquaintance, *a oga!*" His comrades urged him to trust them, but he had already conceived that wild beast's fear and distrust of man which was to haunt him till his death, and he flitted away to the *bile* tree of Cill Riagain. Here Domhnall and his victorious army passed, and seeing some mad creature, man or whom they knew not, in the branches, they surrounded the tree: his heart smote Domhnall when he recognised the King of Dal Araidhe; he promised Suibhne plenty and riches if he would only trust him, but Suibhne, in terror, soared up into the clouds.

A year later he lived like a solitary bird, feeding on berries and water-cresses, perching on crag or ivy-tod. When the year was ended, he came to "Glenn mbithaluinn mBolcain," whither all the madmen of Eire repair when their first year of madness has expired. Now after this sort is Glenn Bolcain: four doors it hath to the four winds; likewise a wood, most beautiful, most peaceful, and bright-verged wells and ice-cold springs and sandy runnels of clear water,

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and green-topped cresses, and long, limp *fothlocht* trailing on the surface. Many also are its sorrels, its trefoils, its *lus-binn* and its *biorraguin*, its berries and its wild garlic, its *melle* and its *miodbhun*, its black sloes and its brown acorns. Moreover, each of the madmen used to strike his fellows for the pick of the cresses of the glen and for the choice of its couches.

Remaining now in this favourite glen, impelled now to distant flights, Suibhne passed seven years; in summer along the cranes of Cuailnge, in winter among the wolves of Benn Boirche; afraid to go beneath a roof, afraid to close his eyes; afraid in the woody glen, afraid on the bare mountain-top; torn by briars, pierced by bitter winds, numbed by frost and snow; suffering for want of food, the want of sleep; suffering far more in the consciousness of his own misery and the remembrance of what he had been; lamenting his beauty and wisdom, bemoaning his state and power, longing for his kingly joys; the foray, the banquet, the tryst; for his steeds with golden bridles, for his warriors ten hundred and ten, for the company of generous men and lovely women, for music; yearning for human sympathy, yet dreading the neighbourhood of man: sometimes desiring death, wishing he had lain on his back on Magh Rath beside his ally, Congal Claon; sometimes invoking God and Christ to pity: cursing not, challenging not, questioning not; confessing that all his sufferings were from God, that all his sufferings were deserved, but unremorseful, unrepentant, unreconciled: finding his only relief and comfort and delight in free, unsullied nature; in all its richness, in all its variety, in all its changes; in sky and earth, in rocks and streams, in trees and flowers; in beasts and birds and fishes; deeming the rigour and cruelty of nature repaired and made light and thrust into oblivion, by all its abundance of beauty and excellence and joy.

But Suibhne was not quite abandoned: his foster-brother, Loingseachan, sought him out thrice, and thrice Suibhne broke away: now, a fourth time, Loingseachan sought him in his favourite retreat, Glenn Bolcain. Suibhne evaded his search, but Loingseachan found the branches broken where the madman had perched, and the path worn by his feet to the beds of cresses in the stream. Weary with his search, Loingseachan went into an empty cow-shed in the glen, and climbing to the loft, threw himself on the straw, and fell asleep. But Suibhne followed his pursuer's tracks, and listening at the door of the shed, heard Loingseachan snoring; then he envied Loingseachan's state, and contrasted it with his own, and bemoaned himself that he who had been called "Suibhne sruith," should now be called "Suibhne geilt," and said: "*Monuar!* I not to know, these seven

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years, a moment's sleep like that of the man in the loft!" Then he sped away to the mill kept by Loingseachan's old mother-in-law, Lonnog. He was not so much afraid of her, and she set scraps of food, for which he would venture into the house every evening. When Loingseachan heard of this, he put the woman's dress on him, drew her hood over his head, and waited for Suibhne; but when Suibhne saw the bright eyes of the young man, he knew Loingseachan, and sprang out through the *forles* in the roof, crying: "Shameful is it of you, Loingseachan, to chase me from all my dearest haunts, seeing that Ronan will not suffer me to trust you!"

Suibhne's wife, Eorann, had followed, not the fortunes of her husband, but those of his kingdom, and was living with the son of Congal, Suibhne's late ally, Guaire by name, who was contesting the sovereignty of Dal Araidhe with his cousin Eochaidh. Guaire, on a hunting expedition, now camped close to Glenn Bolcain, whither Suibhne had returned: with Guaire, with a large retinue, was Eorann, Suibhne's wife. Suibhne glided to the booth in which Eorann was, and perched on the lintel above the door, and addressed her: "Easeful art thou *a Eorann an*, in the side of thy *leannan's* bed: not so am I; long is it that I know not rest. Thou saidst, *a Eorann oll*, a pleasant, pretty saying, that thou would'st not be alive parted a single day from Suibhne. To-day, plainly enough, 'tis little thou thinkest of thy *sencharad*; warm for thee on the down of a soft bed: cold for me outside until morning." Eorann professed great sorrow to see her husband's skin so scratched with briars, and protested her devotion: "Though a king's son should lead me to a hall of flowing cups and concords, rather would I lodge with thee, *a fir*, in the narrow hollow of a tree, had I but my own way." Suibhne answered that he was not blaming her, and on the approach of Guaire's men, was gone.

Before long it was reported that Suibhne was in the *bile* tree of Ros Earcain, in his own country, and the chief men of Dal Araidhe consulted together as to whom they should send to capture him: all agreed to send Loingseachan. Arrived under the yew-tree, Loingseachan deplored the fall and misery of the madman in the branches above, until Suibhne bade him hold his peace, "for," said he, "these things were fated to come upon us: and now, tell me, have you any tidings of my own land?" "I have indeed," said Loingseachan, "for your mother is dead." "Is my gentle mother dead?" said Suibhne, "now has she too ceased to pity me." Death after death, Loingseachan reported, of brother, of wife, of sister, of daughter; and Suibhne raised no *ulagon*, but patient, sorrowful, appraised the greatness of each loss. But when Loingseachan, probing the

diseased mind yet more subtly, continued: "There is another piece of news much noised—loath am I to tell it—the men of Dal Araidhe, all those ready of speech, are keening thy only son"; then Suibhne, crying: "This is the overflowing drop that brings a man to the earth, his little son who used to say 'Papa,' to be without life"; fell from the branches at Loingseachan's feet. Loingseachan seized and bound him, and then told Suibhne that he had been beguiled; that all his family were well. Six weeks, Loingseachan kept him close, and the chief men of the province visited him: afterwards, he was restored in mind and body, and his kingship was manifest.

Samhain-tide was now near: one day Loingseachan went harvesting with his people, leaving Suibhne locked in his sleeping-room, alone with the *cailleach*, Loingseachan's mother-in-law, whom he charged not to speak so much as a single word to Suibhne in his absence. Nevertheless, she began to beg him to tell her some of his adventures while he was in his madness. "Curse on your mouth, *a chailleach*," said Suibhne, "evil is your speech: God will not let me go again into madness." "I know well," she resumed, "that it was the outrage done by you on Ronan that drove you into madness." "*A bhen*," he replied, "abominable of you is it to be deceiving and provoking me." "It is not deceit at all," she rejoined, "but truth." Then he began to talk of his sufferings, and of the dreadful leaps he had made in his madness, and she besought him, in God's name, to leap one little leap for her now, and when he sprang across the room she sprang after him, and when he leaped through the *forles* of the roof, she leaped after him: in fine, she followed him that day through five cantreds of Dal Araidhe; and when at last he alit on an ivy-tod in Fiodh Gaibhle, she perched on a neighbouring tree. The old affliction had fastened on him more cruelly than ever, the old insane dread of man, continually pursuing him; the old insane longing to merge himself in wild nature, continually seducing him; both forbidding him to rest. He heard a hunting cry, and he thought it was the host of the Ui Faelain, seeking to avenge their king, Ailill Cedach, upon his slayer. He heard the *buiríudh* of a stag, and addressed it, the little bellow, the little roarer, in a long, fantastic *laoi*, in which he apostrophised trees and plants and birds, calling them by endearing diminutives, with intimate familiarity, with vivid imagination: his passionate love for their beauty ever checked and thwarted by the obtrusion of his own miseries, by the terrors of his own exasperated conscience: the little hump-backed briar will have its full of his blood; in the pattering of the dry aspen leaves he hears the racing of a troop: only of fresh verdant Glenn Bolcain, to which his mind turns longingly, does the

image seem scarcely troubled : the unsubsiding excitement of brain which has whirled him from place to place, again possesses him ; all his thoughts are in terms of motion : he has gone like a well-hurled spear, he has ridden upon the little leggy fawn from mountain-peak to mountain-peak, he has been hunted by the wolf-pack, he has fled before the sky-lark and grasped, since his feathers have grown, the wood-dove high-perching on the fir-tree : he provokes the hag to a frantic ride, counselling her the while that a fiend is destroying her, that she is destroying herself : he wants to make a six-yoke plough-team of his eight favourite stags, " albeit not oft has the ploughman's hand been round their antlers." In his exalted, intoxicated state, he revels in monstrous puns and quibbles. He apostrophises his luckless foster-brother, and confounds his name with opprobrious epithets : "*A thruaghain, a thuisseachain, a Loingseachan*" : the identity of the word "*beann*" for the peak of a mountain, and for the point or tine of a horn, enchants him : he turns to a grey-coated "mother of the herd," not one of whose posterity but has two score *benn*, and tells her that his name is not Suibhne, but *Fer Benn*, Man of the Peaks, and that he wants to sit on the pleasant seat of her *benn*. Afterwards, he paid the *cailleach*, in her own coin, at *Dun Sobairche* ; she had tempted him to leap to madness : he tempted her to leap to death. After the death of the *cailleach*, Suibhne was afraid to be found in his own province, lest Loingseachan should avenge her on him. So he went to Ros Chomain in Connaught, and lived on the cresses of the spring. A woman of the *airchinnech's* household came and plucked the cresses : Suibhne took this bitterly to heart, that she who had abundance should deprive him of his poor all, and when she speaks of "the portion of the Lord," and "earning a blessing," offers to give her what shreds of garments remain upon his loins, if she will only leave the little bunch of cresses. She refuses, whereupon Suibhne curses her, praying that the blue-naked Galls may carry her off, and that the Lord will bring her to account. Thence he went to Inis Mureadhaigh and Carraig Alastair, and remained for six weeks on the naked, gull-haunted crag : then, bidding it farewell, in a heart-heavy, exclamatory *laoi*, he went over *an muir craosfhairsing, cithainbhraenaigh*, till he reached the coasts of the Britons. He left the dun of the king on his right hand, and came to a great wood, and as he went through the wood he heard a loud wailing and groaning, and he knew the voice was that of another madman. Suibhne drew near and said : "Who are you, *a dhuine?*" "A madman," said he. "If you are a madman," said Suibhne, "come hither and let us be comrades, for I myself am a madman." At first Fear Caille (Man of the Woods), as he called

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himself, was afraid to trust Suibhne, but presently they told one another their stories, and agreed to watch over one another, keeping the space of two trees between them, and on either of them hearing the cry of a startled bird, or the breaking of a dead branch, to warn the other, so that they might at once together flee. Thus, for a whole year, they lived together: at the end of the year, Alladhan said they must part, for it was time for him to go to Eas Dubhthaige, where he was fated to be drowned in the fall. Suibhne then described his own death, and the two went their several ways. Suibhne re-crossed the sea, and came at close of day to Magh Line, in Ulster, and he remembered his former glory in that place, and praised its beauty. Next he returned to Glenn Bolcain, where he came upon a madwoman, from whom he fled, till knowing that she, too, was mad, he turned, when she fled from him. "*Uchan, a Dhe*," said Suibhne, "pitiful is this life! I fleeing before the madwoman, and she fleeing before me, in the midst of Glenn Bolcain!" He then went, for the last time, to see his wife, Eorann, and looked in through the door of the house. "Full of ease art thou, Eorann," said he, "but I of disease." She told him to come in, but on his refusing, for fear of "the host," she bade him begone, for she was ashamed for him to be seen in that state. Whereupon he said: "Woe to him who trusts a woman, either by night or day, since Suibhne Geilt has found no compassion from his first love," and he reminded her of the riches and honour he had brought her in former days, and how she had welcomed him then. Struggling thence to the summit of Benn Boirche, he passed a night of terrible suffering, because of the bitter wind and rain. Next day he retreated to Crith Gaille in Connaught, and perched for the night in the fork of a *bile* tree. That night the snow came on, and a keen frost with it, so that the snow, as it fell, lay frozen: Suibhne endured the last extremity of suffering. He determined to trust himself to his own people, though it were to find death at their hands: "Better they to kill me than I to suffer ever more and more affliction." A splink of reason came to him, and he set out towards his own country. At that time, it was revealed to Ronan that Suibhne had come to himself, and was returning to his own people; thereupon he prayed and said: "I beseech the noble and almighty King not to suffer that persecutor to draw nigh the church, but that God's vengeance for the dishonour of his people may not lessen or lighten upon the man, till his soul departs from his body, so that no other such persecutor may ever afterwards dishonour the Lord or his people."

God heard Ronan's prayer, for when Suibhne came to the midst of Slieve Fuad, he stayed his steps, and at midnight there appeared

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to him ghostly horrors; necks red and raw, heads without bodies, and five shaggy, rough, grey heads, without a trunk or body between them, leaping hither and thither upon the road. When he came among them, he heard them talking to each other: "He's a madman," said the first head. "A madman of Ulster," said the second. "Follow him well," said the third. "Long be the following," said the fourth. "Till he comes to the sea," said the fifth. Then they all sprang at him: he bounded from them, and a hellish pursuit took place. From ben to ben, from glen to glen he bounded, the heads after him, screaming, shrieking, yelling, howling, gnashing and foaming, goat-heads and dog-heads with them; springing up, in the rush of their pursuit, to his calves, to his houghs, to his thighs, to his shoulder blades, and even to the hollow of his neck, gaping and clutching at him, so that what with the shocks and blows of the heads against him, and against one another, and of both him and them against trunks of trees and heads of rocks and the hard surface of the ground, it seemed to Suibhne that he was exposed to the rage of a resounding torrent rushing from the breast of some high-towering mountain; nor did the pursuit cease, until he escaped amid the light, airy clouds of the sky. For three fortnights after this Suibhne dared not pause to drink a mouthful of water. At last he came to rest on the summit of Sliabh Eidhneach, where he spent the night in a tree bemoaning himself that none had been found to slay him at Magh Rath, and harking back to the treachery of the *cailleach*. "But," said he, "it is just that I should get evil: many a night have I leaped a loch: many eyes of fond women have I made to weep."

The outcast kept coming upon anchorites, the distraught fugitive upon deliberate fugitives, the man fleeing God's curse upon those who sought God's blessing, the afflicted man upon ascetics, the famished upon those who fasted. At Druim Iaroinn, Suibhne ate the green-topped cresses and drank water from the church-spring: he had retired to a yew tree, when the cleric came out, indignant and resentful, and upbraided Suibhne, "sitting at ease," after eating another's cresses. But Suibhne answered: "At ease am I not, for I cannot close an eye for fear, and were I to see the hosts of the world coming, I would not flee them with greater terror, O man of the bell, than I do the flitting of a wren. Would that we were in one another's places, then would'st thou understand *nach cerd geilte beith sadail*, 'tis not the 'metier' of a madman to be at ease."

One day, as Suibhne was roaming through Tir Fhiachrach Mhuaidhe, he came by chance to All Fharannan, and when he saw this sweet, happy glen, and the glassy water of the stream hurrying

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over the brink of the cliff, and a very numerous synod of saints and righteous men, and many dense-foliaged trees, beeches shedding plentiful mast, and apple-trees bending to the ground with the load of their fruit; and wild deer and fleet hares, and furtive badgers, and heavy great swine, and fat seals come from the main to bask upon the rocks; he was seized with a vehement desire for the spot to dwell there.

After this glimpse of heaven, Suibhne came early one morning to Teach Moling, and found Moling reading to his "*lucht an aicepta*" from the Psalter of Caoimhghin, open before him. Suibhne, hungry for the cresses of the spring, drew near, and while he was eating, Moling spoke to him: "That's early eating, *a ghealtagain!*" To which Suibhne answered: "Though it seems early to you, terce has come in Rome." "How do you know, *a ghealtagain*, when terce comes in Rome?" "Knowledge comes to me from my Lord, each morning and evening." A spirited dialogue followed between the sage and the madman, in which the former praised the leaves of his yew-tree. Suibhne showed, too, his prophetic power, and foretold his own death at that place, early in the morning, by the hand of Moling's swineherd. Moling pitied the mad King, and, desirous of hearing and writing down his story, charged him, however much of Eire he might range during the day, to return every evening to Teach Moling. He did so, going one day to delightfulest Eas Ruaidh, another as far as the smooth, fair Sliabh Mish, and another to the summit of ever-cold Benn Boirche, but always returning for vespers to Teach Moling. Moreover, Moling ordered his cook, Muirgil by name, the wife of Mongan, Moling's swineherd, always to give Suibhne, when he returned, a drop from the cow by way of a little supper. Muirgil feared to disobey her master, but she would not give the madman one of her bowls to drink from; so when she had finished the milking in the *buailidh*, she would thrust her heel, to the ankle, in the nearest pad of soft cow-dung, and fill the hole with new-milk, which Suibhne, stealing in cautiously, would lap up. But one day there was a quarrel in the *buailidh* between Muirgil and another woman, and in the end the other woman cried: "The worse for you, Mhuirgil, that you did not choose another husband, and yet that you would not rather have your own husband himself coming to you than that madman who is coming to you this year back." Mongan's sister chanced to hear this, but she held her peace until early next morning, when she saw Muirgil leaving milk in the cow-dung near the hedge, behind which Suibhne was. Then she ran to her brother, and cried: "You chicken-hearted *mheathaigh*, your wife's in the hedge yonder with another man!" Horn-mad,

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the herd seized a spear from the rack and rushed out. He saw the naked man lying on the ground, where he was lapping the milk, and hurled the spear at him: the point struck him in the left pap, and pierced his body, breaking his back in two. Enna mac Breacan was then striking the bell for prime at the door of the reilg, and he saw what was done, and cursed Mongan for having slain a king and madman. Enna then called Moling, to whom Suibhne made his confession, and from him he received, with thanksgiving to God, the body of Christ, and anointing with holy oil. Then Mongan came up, and reproached him for slaying an innocent man: "I have not leave to run through the woods," he said, "for the wound you have given me." "If I had known it was you," said the herd, "I would not have hurt you, however much you had wronged me." "*Dar Criost, a dhuine,*" replied Suibhne, "I have neither wronged you nor anyone else on the ridge of the world since God sent me into madness: little was the harm to you if I was in the hedge to get a drop of milk from yonder woman! I would not trust myself to your wife, or to any other woman, for the earth and its fruits." "The curse of Christ on you, *a bhuachaill,*" said Moling, "evil the deed you have done: short life here and hell hereafter shall be yours for this deed you have done." "No good is to me therefrom," said Suibhne, "for your snares have encompassed me, and I shall be dead from the wound given me." "You shall get an *eric* for it," said Moling, "you shall be in Heaven as long as I." "Well will it be with you," said the swine-herd, "and you in Heaven: not such my lot here without Heaven, without my share of life." Then Suibhne made his last *laoi*, and said: "Sweeter has been to me than the quiet converse of people, the cooing of the wood-pigeon who clappeth over the linn: sweeter has been to me than the note of the little bell beside me, the warbling of the blackbird to the hill-top, and the *dordan* of the stag in the storm. Sweeter has been to me than the voice of a fair woman in my ear, the cry of the heath-cock on the mountain heard in the matin-hour. Sweeter has been to me the howling and snarling of the wolves, than the voice of a cleric within, a-baaing and a-bleating. Though good to you, in your drink halls, your ale-feasts with honour, better to me was a stealthy draught of water in the hollow of my hand from a spring. Though sweet to you, yonder in your church, the mild converse of your sons of learning, sweeter to me the glorious chanting from the throats of the hounds of Glenn Bolcain. Though good to you the flesh and the fat you eat in your banqueting-halls, better to me is a bunch of fresh cresses eaten in a place without sorrow. The swine-herd's pointed spear has wounded me; it has passed clean through my body: pity

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'tis, O Christ, whose hand hath inflicted such judgment, that I was nôt slain at Magh Rath! Though good each guileless bed I have made throughout Eire, better than all to me is the bed above the loch on the open brow of Benn Boirche. Though good each guileless bed I have made myself throughout Eire, better than all to me is the bed above the wood I have made myself in Glenn Bolcain. I give thee thanks, O Christ, for having partaken of thy body: sincere repentance in this world for every evil I have done."

A death-cloud came upon Suibhne, and Moling and his clerics arose and made ready his tomb in the churchyard of the righteous. When it was ready, Moling lamented Suibhne, remembering their pleasant talk together and the places that Suibhne had endeared, especially the well from which he had drunk, which Moling now named "Tubar an gheilt." Then Suibhne rose out of the death-cloud, and Moling led him by the hand to the door of the church, and when Suibhne had placed his shoulder against the door porch he gave one great sigh, so that his spirit flew to Heaven, and Moling buried him with honour.