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THE VISION OF AODH.

A.D. 432.

The boy, Aodh, lay stretched on the heather, his elbows dug into the matted roots, his face framed between his hands. He wore the fine colours of a noble, and there was a gold torc upon his neck. A gold-hilted sword was fastened to his side, and a red cloak covered his shoulders. He could see far over Breffny, the bare wind-swept forests, the blue hills and the steely waters of a lough. The sun sinking in the west between vast clouds had thrown a cold, white fleeting gleam along the heather-clad slope; and the blue eyes of Aodh met the light with a wide fixed gaze. He had heard a story told in his father's Dun by Tura, the poet—Tura, who could make music on his harp like that struck from the golden lyre of Angus Og—of Connla the Prince, son of the High King of Erin, to whom a divinity had appeared. And not once but twice and thrice did she come, till the Prince rose and followed her to Tir-na-n'og. Aodh knew that the loughs and mountains held mighty beings; gods who veigned to approach and speak with mortals. And not far from where he lay, hemmed in by the forests and hills, was the awful Plain of Adoration, Magh Slecht, where Cruacht the Silent, the golden, stood with the brazen twelve, awaiting the prayers and offerings of the nobles of the Gael. There a King and his people had fallen in ages past, struck down by one greater and stronger than Aodh Cruach.

Now there came over the hill the figure of a woman, walking in the light, wearing rich garments and having a shining helmet on her head. In one hand she carried a shield, two spears in the other, and a sword hung by her thigh. She approached Aodh and bade him rise. And when he had looked up into the divine blue of her eyes, he obeyed and stood on his feet.

"I am Dana, mother of the gods," she said, "and your desire to see the immortals shall be granted, for soon we shall be dethroned and hidden from the sight of men."

She passed on and he followed. And as she went down the hill the faded heather turned bloodred under her feet. And Aodh thought of the battle and of the giving of death and wounds, and felt a warrior's strength within him. They drew near Magh Slecht, and on the sacred plain were gifts and offerings and the ashes of the sacrificial fires. There Cruach stood high, dazzling, shapeless, still, without speech, with the brazen twelve in their ranks around him.

Aodh sank on his knees, but the mother of the gods bade him rise. "Cruach and his host are but stones," she said "in whom the demons of the plain dwell. Bocanachs and Bananachs come nigh them, who fill with terror the hearts of the sons of Miledh. Yet shall Cruach be named the Stooper, for one comes who will strike him and his twelve low." And the demons of Cruach heard her, and leaving the idol, came as an airball lightly to Aodh, and resting on his shoulder, sent its voice on the wind. "Cruach is a god for ever," it said, "and in the prince's dun to-night let it be known that Cruach has spoken and demands a life to-morrow." The words distressed Aodh, so that he put up both hands to his ears that he might not hear the wind, and the demon left him and went back to Cruach.

Then Dana, the ancient, the mighty, the mother of gods, war-goddess of

Eire, crossed swiftly the plain of sacrifice and entered the forest. There in a glade rose a great rock, its face gleaming with crystals. It opened at her approach, dividing like the wings of a door, and she passed through, touching as she went with her spears each side of the rock. Aodh drew near, and entering the doorway, followed in the footsteps of the goddess. And as she went before him he saw written in Ogham on her red, luminous robes, the words *Daughter of Iron—Death*. On each side of the path the walls, built of silver, flashed with the rays of jewels; and in gazing from light to light, he knew no more of time. All at once he was in a land strange and beautiful, on whose shore lapped the waters of a blue, white crested sea. And against the golden horizon were numerous islands of delight, whence came the sound of music and songs. And he saw dwellings on the land on which he stood that shone with the soft light of moonbeams; and radiant colours, too, flashed around. The figures of men and women, tall and glorious, passed hither and thither, the innumerable divinities of Eire amongst whom moved others, those whom Aodh knew had been mortals, lured by enchanting songs to Tir-na-n'og. And Dana paused by the gleaming sea, her feet resting on the pearly foam, and struck her spears into the ground. But no war-shout broke from her lips, and her eyes alone called the gods. They approached and Aodh read their names on their breasts traced in lines of light in the Ogham gleaming with every tint of rainbow. Dagda, the great father of the gods, drew near his queen, carrying his harp from which as he played figures sprang, the months and seasons bringing gifts to men, and on whose back was slung the caldron containing the foods of the earth. Lu-lamfada came, the long-handed, Ildana, master of various arts, sun-god he, golden, giver of life and fertility, bearing the sling with which he had slain Balor, the one-eyed, whose glance turned men into stone. In his right hand he carried the mighty spear from whose head streams of fire rushed. By his side ran his hound white as the snow is white in sunshine, awaiting the dark hour of its change. Across the shining water rode Manannan mac Lir, driving his horses over the crests of the sea, coming from the outmost bounds of the world. Master of the ocean was he, knowing where the weather lay in the sky. Then Aodh caught the sound of music and singing, singing that set the heart on fire. A cold blast swept by his face, and for one rapturous moment he saw the young god of love and beauty, Angus Og, the golden haired. Three birds floated above his head whose divine songs the boy heard. "Though the gods be buried in rath and lough" they sang, "yet shall we dwell in the light of the sun, for love does not die." And Diancecht, the healer of men's bodies, came; and Ogma, the wise and strong, who led men by chains fastened to his tongue. And Brian and Juchar and Jucharba passed, the Children of Tuireann, they who had done in atonement the hard feats of the world, and to whom the sun-god had shown no pity. And the war-goddesses gathered. Badhb and Maiba, fearful older than time, who fed on the battle-field, "mast-feeding," on the heads of the slain. And Eri and Fola and Banba came, eternally young, fair, with eyes shadowed by the pain of the centuries, that were to draw for ever the hearts of the men of Inisfail. And he saw there the mother of the poets, Brigit, "very noble," and her sisters of healing and smith-work. And Cliona, queen of the southern gods and beautiful Niambh. And Bove, son of the Dagda, whose power was over the four Munsters; and Orchill, whose throne was

Connacht. Long trains of immortals approached, till they rose in shining ranks tier above tier against the bright filaments of the sky, and the gaze of that great host rested on the boy, the gods of Erin who were about to be dethroned. Then the divine light of their eyes overcame Aodh, and he fell there in Tir-na-n'og blinded by the vision.

And when he looked up again he saw the stars shining in the sky, and felt the faded heather under his body. Then he rose on the hillside and went down to his father's Dun, whither men had come, strangers from afar. And Aodh saw that the prince listened to their words and heard him answer the chief of the strangers. "O Patrick, since you fear neither the elements nor our gods nor awful Cruach, teach us of this new God whom you declare is stronger than the golden one and the twelve. And to-morrow if Cruach does not strike you low, I and all those within my Dun shall believe."

Then that night on the Plain of Adoration Aodh heard the howling of the demons, and in the high places of the gods, the mournful chanting of the queens.

L. McMANUS.

*The sun god's hound changed periodically into a dark yew tree.

A FAMOUS GAELIC SONG.

An raib tu ag an t-Carrick?

For students who are a little advanced we think the commission of Gaelic poetry to memory an excellent way of learning the language, for instruction and pleasure are here combined. We propose devoting some attention to the following famous and beautiful old Gaelic poem:—

An raib tú ag an t-Carrick, nó an b-faca tú féin mo sháol?

Nó an b-faca tú ir síle, ir fínnie ir ríseim na mná,

Nó an b-faca tú an t-ubál ba cúmpa ar ba míre bláid,

Nó an b-faca tú mo Valentín, nó an b-fuit ri' ó' a claoirí mar cáim?

1st Line. Translation—Hast thou been to the Rock (Carrick) and hast thou seen my love, thyself?

Phonetically—An rev thoo ag an Gorric, nó an vaca thoo fain mo grau.

Tú. The *τ* being followed by the broad vowel becomes "th" in sound, and the *u* being accented is pronounced as if "oo." *τ* followed by a slender vowel, *i* or *e*, would remain *τ*. For example—*Úir*, a country, is pronounced "teer" not "th-er." This rule is invariable, and adds greatly to the beauty and elegance of the language.

B-faca. *f* is here eclipsed for the sake of euphony by the next softest kindred consonant *b*, which converts it into "v" or "w," or perhaps abolishes its sound altogether.

An aca thoo will do very well here as the phonetic rendering.

Féin. The *e* being accented or long, has the sound of the long "e" in the French *mère*, or of "ai" in English, as in fair.

(To be Continued).

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