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Frewen, a bright-minded officer of Brega, revisited the salubrity of the Gaed.

Forsake not for Donegal, or the bay of Eas Dá Fagairn, or ancient Loch Foyl, of the sparkling wine of a thousand islands, and the rampart of Tara in the east.

Alas, if anyone found that for the cockpit of Sligo Bay, or for bright Croghean of the fair equipment thou wouldst abandon ancient Tara of Tuathal Teachtmhar.

The words of soothsayers, the utterances of sages, anoint her with thee, O wavy tresses; did they not prophesy of yore the salmon from Frewen’s fair harbor?

Prophets of thy rule, thou lord of Bennua, are the promise of fruit on the green-leaved bough, the fury of the stream bearing its produce, the wave concealed beneath the washed-up treasure.

Abundance of milk from a small number of cattle, abundance of coen stacks before summer, and — soothsayers through whom thou art most clearly recognised — the ruined buildings of the churches repaired.

Thou at the service of all, and all submitting to thee; thou above everyone, and everyone above thee; thou at the pleasure of every man, and for all that, wheels at thy mercy.

The noble Gæls welcome thee to this enterprise, O cheerful heart; as a woman with her unlawful mate, so is Ireland with thy warriors.

5. A commoner certificate or duty.

from: IMMRAM BRAIN
(The Voyage of Bran)

Morgain was the son of Fiachra, son of Bérain, king of Dál nAraidi in the north-east of Ireland; he flourished in the first quarter of the seventh century. But in the literature his persona has acquired a rich mythological dimension, and already about the eighth century a short anecdote told how the god Manannán persuaded Fiachra’s wife to lie with him in return for saving the life of her husband, who was at that time reigning the king of Scottish Dál Riada in their war with the Anglo-Saxons.

The account of these events dates from a much later period, the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, and reflects contemporary fashions in narrative. Many of the motifs are ancient, notably the magic powers that Morgain inherited from his divine father and the trickster element in the personalities of both. The author exploits these with a tongue-in-cheek urbanity that belies the popular wonder-tale style and the surface naïveté of the plot.

And three hundred warriors fell by Fiachra in the fight. And venemous sheep were let out of the king of Lochlann’s tent against them, and on that day three hundred warriors fell by the sheep, and three hundred warriors fell on the second day, and three hundred on the third day. That was grievous to Fiachra, and he said: ‘Said is the journey on which we have come, for the purpose of having our people killed by the sheep. For if they had fallen in battle or in combat by the host of Lochlann, we should not deem their fall a disgrace, for they would avenge themselves. Give me,’ saith he, ‘my arms and my dress that I may myself go to fight against the sheep.’ ‘Do not say that, O King,’ said they, ‘for it is not meet that thou shouldst go to fight against them.’ By my word,’ said Fiachra, ‘no more of the men of Ireland shall fall by them, till I myself go to fight against the sheep; and if I am destined to find death there, I shall find it, for it is impossible to avoid fate, and if not, the sheep will fall by me.’

As they were thus conversing, they saw a tall warlike man coming towards them. He wore a green cloak of one colour, and a brooch of white silver in the cloak over his breast, and a satin shirt next his white skin. A circlet of gold about his hair, and two sandal of gold under his feet. And the warrior said: ‘What reward wouldst thou give to him who would keep the sheep from thee?’ ‘By my word,’ said Fiachra, ‘whichever thou ask, provided I have it, I should give it.’ ‘Thou shalt have it to give,’ said the warrior, ‘and I will tell thee the reward.’ ‘Say the sentence,’ said Fiachra. ‘I shall say it,’ said he; ‘give me that ring of gold on thy finger as a token for me, when I go to Ireland to thy wife to sleep with her.’ ‘By my word,’ said Fiachra, ‘I would not let one man of the men of Ireland fall on account of that condition. It shall be none the worse for thee; for a glorious child shall be begotten by me there, and from thee she shall be named, even Morgain the Fair (Finn), son of Fiachra the Fair. And I shall go there in thy shape, so that thy wife shall not be defiled by it. And I am Mamannán, son of Len, and thee shall be the kingship of Lochlann and of the Saxons and Britons.’ Then the warrior took a venomous hound out of his cloak, and a chain upon it, and said: ‘By my word, not a single sheep shall carry its head from her to the fortresses of the king of

Lochlann, and she will kill three hundred of the hosts of Lochlann, and thou shalt have what will come of it.’ The warrior went to Ireland, and in the shape of Fiachra himself he slept with Fiachra’s wife, and in that night she became pregnant. On that day the sheep and three hundred of the nobles of Lochlann fell by the dog, and Fiachra seized the kingship of Lochlann and of the Saxons and Britons.

Now, as to the Cailleach Dubh, Fiachra gave her due vize, seven castles with their territory and land, and a hundred of every cattle. And then he went into Ireland and found his wife big-bellied and pregnant, and when her time came, she bore a son. Now Fiachra the Fair had an attendant, whose name was An Dambh, and in that same night his wife brought forth a son, and they were christened together, and the son of Fiachra was named Morgain, and the son of the attendant was named Mac an Daimh. And there was another warrior reigning together with Fiachra the Fair, to wit Fiachra the Black, son of Domnán, who lay heavily on his rule. And to him in the same night a daughter was born, to whom the name Dubh Lacha (The Dark One of the Lake) White-hand was given, and Morgain and Dubh Lacha were affianced to each other. When Morgain was three nights old, Manannán came for him and took him with him to bring him up in the Land of Promise, and vowed that he would not let him back into Ireland before he was twelve years of age.

Now as to Fiachra the Black, son of Domnán, he watched his opportunity, and when he found that Fiachra the Fair, son of Béain, had with him but a small host and force, he went up to his stronghold, and burnt and destroyed it, and killed Fiachra himself, and seized the kingship of Ulster by force.

And all the men of Ulster desired Morgain to be brought to them when he was six years old, but Manannán did not bring him to Ulster till he had come to the age of one year. And then he came to Ulster, and the men of Ulster made peace between themselves and Fiachra the Black, to wit, one-half of Ulster to Dubh Lacha to be his wife and consort in retaliation for his father. And it was done so.

One day while Morgain and his wife were playing fiachadh, they saw a dark-buffed little cleric at the door-post, who said: ‘This inactivity in which
thou art, O Mongin, is not an inactivity bearing a ring of Ulster, not to go to average thy father on Fianach the Black, son of Demán, though Dubh Lacha may think it wrong to tell thee so. For he has now but a small host and force with him; and come with me thither, and let us burn the fortress, and let us kill Fianach. 'There is no knowing what luck there may be on that saying, O cleric,' said Mongin, and we shall go with thee.' And thus it was done, for Fianach the Black was killed by them. Mongin seized the kingship of Ulster, and the little cleric who had done the treason was Mananan the great and mighty.

And the nobles of Ulster were gathered to Mongin, and he said to them: 'I desire to go to seek boons from the provincial kings of Ireland, that I may get gold and silver and wealth to give away.'

'That is a good plan,' said they. And he went forth into the provinces of Ireland, until he came to Leinster. And the king of Leinster at that time was Brandub mac Echach. And he gave a hearty welcome to the king of Ulster, and they slept that night in the place, and when Mongin awoke on the morrow, he saw the fifty white-red eared kine, and a white calf by the side of each cow, and as soon as he saw it, he gave away the kine with love with them. And the king of Leinster observed him and said to him: 'Thou art in love with the kine, O king,' said he. 'By my word,' said Mongin, 'no one of the breeds of Ulster, I never saw anything that I would rather have than them.'

'By my word,' said the king of Leinster, 'they are a match for thirty Dubh Lacha, for she is the one woman that is most beautiful in Ireland, and those kine are the most beautiful cattle in Ireland, and on no condition in the world would I give them except on our making friendship without refusal.'

They did so, and each bound the other. And Mongin went home and took his thirty white-red kine with him. And Dubh Lacha asked: 'What are these cattle that are the most beautiful that I ever saw?' And Mongin told her how he had obtained the kine. And they were not long there when they saw hosts approaching the place, and 'tis he that was there, even the king of Leinster. 'What hast thou done to Dubh Lacha, O Mongin? For by my word, if what thou seest be in the province of Ulster, thou shalt have it.' 'It is then,' said the king of Leinster. 'Tis theDubh Lacha.'

Silence fell upon Mongin. And he said: 'I have never heard of any one giving away his wife.' 'Though thou hast not heard of it,' said Dubh Lacha, 'give her, for honour is more lasting than life.' Anger seized Mongin, and he allowed the king of Leinster to take her with him. Dubh Lacha called the king of Leinster aside and said to him: 'Doth thou know, O king of Leinster, that the men and one half of Ulster would fall for my sake, except I had already given love to thee? And by my word I shall not go with thee until thou grant me the sentence of my own lips.' 'What is the sentence?' said the king of Leinster. 'Thy word to fulfil it!' said she. The king of Leinster gave his word. 'Then, said Dubh Lacha, 'I desire that until the end of one year we be not brought for one night into the same house, and if in the course of a day thou comest into the same house with me, that thou shouldst not sit in the same chair with me, but sit in a chair over against me, for I fear the exceeding great love which I have bestowed upon thee, that thou mayst hate me, and that I may not again be acceptable to my own husband; for if we are acourting each other during this coming year, our love will not recede.'

And the king of Leinster granted her that condition, and he took her to his house; and there she was for a while. And for that while Mongin was in a wasting sickness continually. And in the night in which Mongin had taken Dubh Lacha, Mac an Daimh had taken her foster-sister, who was her constant attendant, and had brought her with Dubh Lacha. So one day Mac an Daimh came into the house where Mongin was, and said: 'Things are in a bad way with thee, O Mongin,' said he, 'and evil was thy journey into the land of Promise to the house of Mananan, since thou hast learned nothing there, except consuming food and practise foolish things, and it is hard on me that my wife has been taken into Leinster, since I have not made friendship without refusal' with the king of Leinster's attendant, as thou didst with the king of Leinster, thus being unable to follow thy wife. 'No one deems that worse than I myself,' said Mongin.

And Mongin said to Mac an Daimh: 'Go,' said he, 'to the cave of the door, in which we left the fuel for Dubh Lacha, and the fuel from Tibradhe's shape, and I will go to Scotland in it, that I may go with thee on thy back, for the king of Leinster will ask of his wizards news of the remaining nine escaped. I will stay with one foot in Ireland, and with the other in Scotland, and he will say that as long as I am like that he need not fear me.'

And in that way they set out. And that was the hour and time in which the feast of Moy-Liffe was held in Leinster, and they came to the Plain of Cell Chamain in Leinster, and there beheld the hosts and multitudes and the king of Leinster going past them to the feast, and they recognised him. 'That is said, O Mac an Daimh,' said Mongin, 'evil is the journey on which we have come.' And they saw the holy cleric going past them, even Tibradhe, the priest of Cell Chamain, with his four gospels in his own hand, and the satchel for the holy uncles upon the back of a cleric by his side, and they reading their offices. And wonder seized Mac an Daimh as to what the cleric said, and he kept asking Mongin: 'What did he say?' Mongin said it was reading, and he asked Mac an Daimh whether he understood a little of it. 'I do not understand,' said Mac an Daimh, 'except that the man at his back says "Amen, amen."'

Thereupon Mongin shaped a large river through the midst of the plain in front of Tibradhe, and a large bridge across it. And Tibradhe marvelled at that and began to bless himself. 'Tis here,' he said, 'my father was born and my grandfather, and never did I see a river here. But as the river has got there, it is well there is a bridge across it.' They proceeded to the bridge, and when they had reached its middle, it fell under them, and Mongin snatched of the bridge out of the river, and sent them down the river. And he asked Mac an Daimh whether he should drown them. 'Certainly, let them drown,' said Mac an Daimh. 'We will not do so,' said Mongin. 'We will let them down the river the length of a mile, till we have done our task in the fortress.'

Mongin took on himself the shape of Tibradhe, and gave Mac an Daimh the shape of the cleric, with a large tonsure on his head, and the satchel on his back. And they go onward before the king of Leinster, who welcomed Tibradhe and gave him a kiss, and 'Tis long that I have not seen thee, O Tibradhe,' he said, and read the gospel to us and proceed before us to the fortress. And let Golibhin Cochlaich, the attendant of my chariot, go with thee. And the queen, the wife of the king of Ulster, is there and would like to confess to thee.' And while Mongin was reading the gospel, Mac an Daimh said to me, "Amen." The hosts said they had never seen a priest who had but one word except that cleric; for he said nothing but 'amen.'

And Mongin went onward to the front of the fortress in which Dubh Lacha was. And she recognised him. And Mac an Daimh said: 'Leave the house all of ye, so that the queen may make her confession.' And her nurse or foster sister ventured to go close to the queen, and Mac an Daimh closed his arms around her and put her out, and said that no one should be with the queen except the woman that had come with her. And he closed the bowers after them and put the glass door to it, and opened the window of glass. And he lifted his own wife into bed with him, but no sooner than Mongin had taken Dubh Lacha with him. And Mongin sat down by her shoulder and gave her three kisses, and carried her into bed with him, and had his will and pleasure of her. And when that had been done, the hag who guarded the jewels, who was in the corner, began to speak, for they had not noticed her until then. And Mongin sent a swift magical breath at her, so that what she had seen was no longer clear to her. 'That is said,' said the hag, 'do not rob me of Heaven, O holy cleric! For the thought that I have uttered is wrong, and accept my repentance, for a lying vision has appeared to me, and I dearly love my foster-child.' 'Came father to me, hag!' said Mongin, 'and confess to me.' The hag arode, and Mongin shaped a sharp spike in the chair, and the hag fell upon the spike, and found death. 'A blessing on thee, O Mongin,' said the queen, 'it is a good thing for us to have killed the woman, for she would have told what we have done.'

Then they heard a knocking at the door, and 'tis he that was there, even Tibradhe, and three times nine men with him. The doorkeepers said: 'We never saw a year in which Tibradhe were more plentiful than this year. Ye have a Tibradhe within and a Tibradhe without.' 'Tis true,' said Mongin. 'Mongin has come in my shape. Come out,' said he, 'and I will reward you, and let yeonder clerics be killed, for they are noblemen of Mongin's that have been put into the shape of clerics.' And the men of the household came out and killed the clerics, and twice nine of them fell. And the king of Leinster came to them and asked them what course they were on. 'Mongin,' they said, 'has come in my shape. We have seen no other.' And the king of Leinster charged them, and Tibradhe reached the church of Cell Chamain, and none of the clerics I came.'

And the king of Leinster came to his house, and then Mongin departed. And the king asked: 'Where is Tibradhe?' said he. 'It was not Tibradhe
that was here,' said the woman, "but Mongin, since you will hear it from such a woman, you must know Mongin, wherein you Mongin-girl!' said he. 'I was,' said she, 'for he has the greatest claim on me.' 'Send for Tibrase,' said the king, 'for through all hell we have heard he has killed his pite.' And Tibrase was brought to them, and Mongin went home and did not come again until the end of a half day, and during that time he was in a wasting sickness.

And Mac an Daimh came to him and said to him: 'I fear to come to you, said Mongin, 'to get news to Ráth Descrit of Breiga, where Dubh Lacha of the White Hand is, for I am not myself able to go.' Thereafter Dubh Lacha said: 'Let Mongin come to me,' said she, 'for the king of Leinster is on a journey around Leinster, and Ceibhidh Cochlaigh, the attendant of the king's chariot, is with me and keeps telling me to escape, and that he himself would come with me. And Mongin behaves in a weak manner,' said she. And Mac an Daimh went to incite Mongin.

Thereupon Mongin set out to Ráth Descrit of Breiga, and he went down at the shoulders of a hill, and a gilded chessboard was brought to them, and they played. And Dubh Lacha bared her breasts to Mongin, and, as he looked upon them, he began to think the great purples which were soft and white, and the middle small and shining-white. And desire of the girl upon him. And Dubh Lacha observed it, but then the king of Leinster with his hosts was drawing near the fortress, and the fortress was opened before him. And the king of Leinster asked of the girl whether Mongin had been in the house. She said he had been. 'I wish to obtain a request of thee, girl,' said the king of Leinster. 'It shall be granted. Except thy being with me till the year is ended, there is nothing that thou mayst ask which I will not grant thee.' 'If that be so,' said the king, 'tell me when thou longest for Mongin son of Fiachrna, for when Mongin has gone, thou wilt long for him.'

At the end of a quarter Mongin returned, and he was lying down, he thought the hosts of the place were there at the time. Then the hosts of the place came out, and Mongin turned back from the fortress and went home. And that quarter he was in a wasting sickness. And the nobles of Ulster assembled into one place and offered Mongin to go with him to make battle for the sake of his wife. By

2. A light saddle horse, especially ridden by women.