

THE SHANNON LEGENDS.

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SEVERAL legends are connected with the Shannon, but of these I shall have only space to deal with the two told in the *Dinnshenchas* to explain the names *Luimnech* and *Shannon*. Though the explanations given are not correct, still the tales are very valuable from the mythological allusions contained in them. We are all anxious to know who we are, and whence we came, and I consider that if these myths be collected, sifted, and compared with the tales of similar nature prevailing among other nations, we may hope for some light to be thrown on the origin of the Gaelic race. I think also that the myths should be applied towards the solution of the problem of the rude stone monuments of our land. We know that myths similar to ours are found in many old mythologies, and we are also aware that monuments of stone like ours have a wide distribution. We may trace them from Ireland along the northern coast of Africa to Palestine, and through the western plains of Asia on to India. We must seek information concerning the oldest races which inhabited these lands; we must examine their languages, their myths, their monuments, their pictures, as displayed on Egyptian slabs, and when this is done, I ween, we shall know something of the blonde, blue-eyed, red-bearded, dark-haired race who reached Ireland so long ago. Ages have rolled over *Erinn* since the first living tide reached her shores, but still these weird tales live on, and will carry us across the gulf of time, and will land us beside the cradle of that great white race who marked their course with these grim monuments, which, whitened with the frosts of ages, tell a tale of the ancient race.

Dealing with the *Amorites*, Professor *Sayce* recently said that "they were a fair-skinned, blue-eyed, light-haired race, as we learn from the Egyptian monuments, with regular features, thin lips, and pointed beards. At *Abu-Simbel* their skin is painted a pale yellow, their eyes

blue, and their eyebrows and beard red, while the hair of the head is black. It is clear that they belonged to the same race as the blonde, blue-eyed Libyans of Northern Africa, whose racial connexions can be traced through Western Europe and the British Isles." In the Annals of Sargon of Akkad (B. C. 3800) Syria, including Palestine, is called the land of the Martu or Amorites. I believe the Irish (Firbolg) race are an offshoot of the Libyans, who were influenced and influenced in turn the Egyptians at a remote period, and in the explanations which I shall give of the Shannon legends I shall accordingly, and unhesitatingly, draw upon Egyptian mythology. Irish writers imbued with false notions of what Ireland ought to be have pictured an Ireland which never existed. Ancient Ireland was no better, nor no worse than any other pagan country. Various aspects of nature were worshipped, the sun, moon, stars, and water, became so many living and thinking beings, and in process of time their origin was forgotten, and they became so many kings and queens and heroes, who lived, and loved, and fought, and died, in barbaric Ireland. Animal worship was also extensively practised; the wild boar, the serpent, the hound, the cat, and the cow, were significant of certain mythological ideas. The myths tell us of all this, and in examining those myths we must remember that the beings of whom they tell were not ordinary mortals, and that they were not subject to the jaws of space and time, that they could multiply, and divide at a most astonishing rate, that sometimes the same entity lived at widely separated periods, and assumed many and various forms, so different as to be scarcely recognisable. It is thus we can explain the three Machas of Armagh, who married all the kings of Ireland, won a race from the swiftest horses in the land, and immediately after gave birth to the Emuin, or Twins, became the Moir-rioghan, or Badhbh, the terrible scaldcrow, or war goddess, which is still remembered in the land.

According to the Dinnshenchas, Luimnech is so named from a contest which took place there between two swineherd champions, who were brothers named Rind and Foebur, sons of Smucall, in the employment of Bodb of Sid Femin, the fairy King of Munster, and Ocaill of Sid Cruachan, the fairy King of Connaught. The assembly which had come from south and north were so engaged in admiring the feats of the champions, that the tide carried off their shields which they had left on the strand. So looking from Tul Tuinne, a hill beside Lough Derg,

they exclaimed, "Is luimnechda in t- inbiur?"—"the inver is full of shields." So the inver was named Luimnech. I shall now offer a few remarks on the legend. Sid Femin is another name for Slievenaman, County Tipperary, and means the fairy dwelling of Femin, which is that part of Lismore diocese in County Tipperary; the plain lying between it and the town of Tipperary was Magh Breagain. In the "Children of Lir," Bodb Derg or Red Bodb, becomes King of the de Danand in opposition to Lir, which, perhaps, is the same myth as the dispute between Bodb and Ocaill in the present case, for Lir was a water deity, as was Ocaill, while Bodb is the productive principle of nature, the Egyptian Phtah. In the "Children of Lir," Bodb takes charge of the children of Oilíoll of Ara, or Cnoc Aine, in County Limerick, and is supposed to be living beside Lough Derg, so in the "Children of Tuireann," he is named King of Connaught, which is a mistake.

The old name of Croagh Patrick was Cruachan Oigle, "hill of Ocaill," and the district in which it lay, now the baronies of Murrisk and Burrishoole, was named Iath Oigle, "land of Ocaill," and Umal, and called by early English writers The Owles. Oigle I take to be the genitive case of Ogaill, or Ocaill, and as Umal is "Great U or Cu," I regard Ocaill, Cu, Humore, Cumal, as variants of the name of the King of Connaught, and Ocaill I take to be Oc of the Boyne, which is a derivative from a, "water." Ptolemy names Connaught, Nagnata, the old Irish name is Ol Nagmacht, and Connaught is Connacht, while Connemara is properly Conmaicne.

These names preserve the name of the same deity. Ol Nagmacht means the "Sons of the great Nag, or Serpent," while Connacht and Conmaicne signify the "Sons of Cu." The Ol Nag, or great Serpent, was banished according to the legend by St. Patrick from Connaught and confined in Lake Muskry in Galtees, where according to the Tipperary folk he still is; indeed, some years ago when arranging about their water supply, they quite dreaded laying down the water pipes from Lake Muskry to the town, as the serpent might come down the pipes and burn up the town. We can thus identify Oc of the Boyne, father of Oengus, with Cumal, "great Cu," the father of Finn; with Humore, "great U," father of Oengus of Dun Oenguis, in Arranmore; with Ocaill, King of the Connaught fairies, and of Dun Ocaill in Arranmore; with Ol Nag, or great Serpent, of Cruachan-Oigle and Lake

Muskry ; and we can now credit Keating when he says, that the banner of the Milesians was a Serpent twisted round a staff, and the Welsh Triads, when they say Humore led them into Wales. We can also now understand what is meant by the Firbolgs, or Folk, having possession of the temples on the Boyne. It was, then, the Firbolgs who erected the temples on the Boyne, and they were a long time in the country before the Gaedhil. These drove the Firbolgs westwards, and thus Dun Oenghuis and other forts on the west were fortifications, erected by them against the Gaedhil, or Oxmen, who did not come from Africa but from the neighbourhood of the Black Sea by way of Scandinavia. Cæsar's description of the Gauls will apply to them. Many a desperate battle was fought between the two races in prehistoric times, but not between Tuatha de Danans and Fomorian, but between Firbolgs and Gaedhil and allied races, for there were successive waves of population to Ireland in prehistoric times. The myths shew clearly that the Tuatha de Danans and Fomorian were gods, but what the races did themselves, they credited to their deities, and so from changes in the mythology, we can argue changes in the people. The swineherds, in the estimation of the composer of the Luimnech myth were druids. The magic porker figures in many an Irish tale. It was sacred to the fire gods, the Fomorian group.

Luimnech is built up from the root *la*, or *lu*, "water," which occurs as *Laoi*, in *Cork Lee*. A secondary root was formed by the addition of the consonant, then a vowel rest after the consonant, which gave *Luma*. An example of this is *Lifi*, or *Liffey*, an example of the first step is *Lug*, the river on which *Lyons* was built, *Lugdunum*, or "River fort," being the old name. This vowel rest was nasalised, so we get *Luman*, an example is *Loch Loman*, or *Lake Leman*. The termination *ech* was then added, this occurs also in *Sligech*, the old name of the *Sligo River*, and corresponds to *er*, in *Liger*, the old name of the *Loire*. We thus get *Lumanech*, which, by elision of the vowel rest, *a*, and attenuation of the broad vowel, *u*, to conform to an old law in the language, we get *Luimnech*. Hundreds of river names in our own and other lands may be similarly explained. The passage of *Luimnech*, to *Limerick*, is easy by the change of *n*, to *r*, which are like letters. We may reduce the root *lu*, or *la*, still farther by considering that it comes from *a*, "water," by placing a consonantal

breathing before the vowel, a, and we may thus shew that such words as Britain and Limerick are built up from the same root, a. For we can reduce Britain to Berid, to Ber, to Ba, to a. In old times islands were considered to be floating on the water, and so the offspring of water. The Fomorian king one time ordered his soldiers to haul Ireland to the north of Norway where it would be no longer a trouble to him. Balar said: "Make fast that island named Erinn to your good ships and let the deep water take its place and fix it north of Norway."--See "Children of Tuireann."

I now give the legend of Sinann. Sinann was the daughter of Lodan, the brightly shining, who went from Tir Tairngiri, or Land of Promise, the pagan elysium in the west, to the well of Connla, under the sea. Over this well grew nine hazels whose fruit, and flowers and leaves grew at the same time, and fell at same time into the well, raising royal, purple bubbles, caused by the juice of the nuts. Salmon were on the watch for the nuts of these sacred hazels, or Coill Crinmon, and greedily devoured them, and so became "salmon of knowledge," and passed from the well into the seven rivers which issued from it, but returned to it again. Anyone catching and eating one of these "salmon of knowledge" became as knowledgable as the salmon themselves. It was from eating one of these salmon that Finn Mac Cumhail got all his knowledge. Sinann, who was a most accomplished young lady, wished to have this knowledge too, so she approached the well of Connla, but the well ebbed, and she followed it to the banks of the river Tarr Chain, when the river turned upon her, and the accomplished Sinann having lost her life in the pursuit of knowledge, gave name to the river Shannon, the old form being Sinann. Sinann comes from the root sa, "water," which occurs in many river names, and which may also be reduced to a, "water." This root, sa, occurs in Samair, the old name of the Morning Star, and in Sabarn (the English Severn), an old name for Cork Lee. Sinann may be explained in same way as I have explained Luimnech. Dr. Joyce explains Luimnech as "bare little spot," but in all the old documents the name is applied to the river. Galway Bay was one time acled Luimnech. In the "Pursuit of Diarmuid," the old name of the city site is Ros da Shoileach, or the "Promontory of the Two Sallows," but this is very doubtful. In the "Wars of G. G.," King's Island is named Inis Sibhtonn, which is considered to represent Inis Ubhdain, or

Odin's Island. Odin was the chief god of the Scandinavians, and from him was named Wednesday, that is Wodin's, or Odin's day. The Irish U, Ugh more, or Cu mal, corresponds to Odin, and Cu was the Gallic deity whom Cæsar named Mercury or Hephæstus. In an old Irish tale Caeilte running into the Cave of Cruachan found a number of smiths at work there. Lodan (1) was a Fomorian; from his son Feabhal, was named Loch Foyle or Feabhail, and from himself was named the Lothian district in Scotland, according to Nennius and Buchanan. There was also a place north of Limerick Junction named Lathach Bo Lodain Meic Lir—"Slough of the cows of Lodan, Son of Lir." The well of Connla corresponds to the Egyptian "Pond of Sa," in the northern sky, where the gods produced the sa, or juice, which was the source of health, vigour, and life. This Sa will explain the use of the Bullans, or Basins of Brugh na Boinne.



(1.) The axis of the fire god Lodan is in Lodan parish, near Caherconlish, extending as a line of stones between Knockroe and Knockfinnil, beside Loughgur. The Great Bear was sacred to Lodan, and this is the reason why one of the Kings of Ireland was named MacCecht, son of the Plough or Great Bear. This constellation was also called, at a very remote period in Ireland, Uilleann, or Haunch (its Egyptian name is Maskhait; which means Haunch of Ox), and so we can explain why Uilleann killed Manannan near Lough Corrib, when the lake burst from the grave of Orbsen, or Manannan. It is the same as the passing of Brugh-na-Boinne from Oc to Dagda.