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Gaelic Mythology. By Hector Maclean, Esq.

In Gaelic mythical tales and ballads, the most of the names of the heroes and heroines, as in the case of names of the same kind in the myths of other Aryan peoples, are such as may be traced to roots denoting the elements and powers of nature, namely: fire, light, sun, moon, stars, day, night, darkness, cloud, thunder, lightning, earth, sky and wind. The most conspicuous of those stories and poems are such as recount the exploits, fights, victories, and adventures of a race of giants called the *Feinn* or *Fianna*, inhabiting Ireland and the Scottish Islands at a remote period. The ruling tribes among the Irish and Scottish Islanders of olden times claimed descent from those supernatural heroes, as the Greeks and Romans did theirs from their own fabulous gods and demi-gods. The Campbells are called in Gaelic *Duibhnich* and *Sliochd Dhiarmaid O Duibhne*, "the descendants of *Diarmaid O Duibhne*," who is assigned to them as ancestor by the traditions of the Gaels. Diarmaid was the nephew of Fionn MacCumhaill, the lord or king of the Fianna, and was wounded in the sole of his foot by one of the venomous bristles of a boar, which he hunted and killed, as he measured his length from the tail to the snout, in accordance with his uncle Fionn's strict injunction, who wished to compass his death in revenge for Diarmaid's elopement with Graine, Fionn's betrothed wife. Diarmaid died of the wound; and, although according to the ballad that relates Diarmaid's death, it was in his uncle's power to heal him, and he had promised to do it, yet, although repeatedly entreated by Diarmaid, who enumerated the numerous services he had performed for Fionn, the latter declined. Highland traditional story tells us that it is in commemoration of the killing of the venomous boar by Diarmaid that the chief of the Campbells, the Duke of Argyll, has a boar's head for his crest. The first Gaelic book printed, a translation of "John Knox's Liturgy," by Mr. John Carswell, Bishop of the Isles, published in Edinburgh in the year 1567, is dedicated to the Earl of Argyll, whom the translator addresses

"do ghiollaeasbuig uanduibhne Iarrla Earra gaoidheal, agas tighearna Ladharna," *to Archibald O Duibhne, Earl of Argyll and Lord of Lorne.* This fact illustrates well how much traditional national myths were interwoven with the political and social institutions of the Scottish Gaels.

The belief in the animation of inorganic nature still lingers in several parts of the Highlands, as well as the belief in fairies, ghosts, metamorphoses, and sorcery. Every hill, knoll, valley, dell, wood, river, lake, brook, well, bay, or rock seems to have had its spirit; and sea, sky, winds, and clouds were imagined to be endued with a certain amount of consciousness, at a period not very remote from our own day in this part of Great Britain. In Campbell's "Popular Tales of the West Highlands," vol. ii, p. 37, we find a short story that recounts how one of four men in the Island of Barra, who were watching cattle, struck a dog that they saw, although cautioned by his companions, and immediately lost the power of his hand and arm. He consulted an old woman who had some knowledge of those matters, and she told him that there was no remedy to be had for a year and a day; but, at the end of that time to go to the knoll, where he struck the dog, and say to it "If thou dost not let with me the strength of my hand, I or my race will leave neither stick nor stone of thee that we will not drive to pieces." At the end of the stated time he did as the old woman directed him to do and so recovered the power of his hand and arm. This story is followed by another, which tells how a woman went to a knoll for shelter and began to fix in it the tether-peg of the tether of two calves of hers, when the knoll opened and a woman put out her head and all above the middle, and rebuked her for what she was doing. The owner of the calves apologised and pleaded weakness and poverty as an excuse. The inhabitant of the knoll directed her where to feed her calves and told her that if she acted as she was bidden she should not be a day without a cow as long as she lived. She took the advice of the woman of the knoll, and was never thereafter without a milk cow. These and many other such stories were related in Barra, Uist, and several other districts in the Highlands, in the year 1859 and subsequently by men and women who believed in them, who could neither read nor write, and could speak no other language than Gaelic.

Many phrases still live in Gaelic in which the seasons, the weather, and the various powers of nature are spoken of as living persons. The cold weather of winter is spoken of as a hag or old woman, who prevents the grass from springing up by beating it down with a large mallet. This mallet she throws away on the 1st of February, St. Bridget's day. After the 15th

of February come the "three days of the beaked female;" these are followed by the "three days of the whistling female;" the three days of the lame, white work-horse succeed these; lastly, the "three days of the sweeping female. Up with the spring!" The "carrying south of the year" is mentioned in a Gaelic poem: the last fortnight of summer and the first of autumn are named "The Keys;" the former locks summer and the latter unlocks autumn. Gaelic myths, evidently then, like other Aryan myths, were evolved from animism and metaphorical expressions to a considerable extent, as the preceding instances, quoted from a multitude, would seem to show clearly: personifications of physical powers, and a belief in their being animated.

Mr. G. W. Cox in his "Aryan Mythology," has compared several of the stories in Mr. J. F. Campbell's "West Highland Tales," with Hindoo, Greek, Latin, and Teutonic myths; and has identified two of their heroes, Diarmaid and Conall Gulban with the sun; two of their heroines, the daughter of the king of the kingdom under the "Waves" and "Breast of Light" with the dawn; and a third of their heroes, the one-eyed Smith, Lon MacLiobhann, with the thunder-cloud. In this collection of Highland stories are to be found tales and ballads that recount the adventures of some of the other heroes of the Feinn, such as Fionn, Osgar, Goll, Oisean, and Caoilte. A collection of poems relating the battles, quarrels, and hunts of these giants was made by Dean McGregor, of Lismore in Scotland, in the year 1512. This collection was translated into English by the Rev. Dr. Thomas McLauchlan, of Edinburgh, and was published with the translation in Edinburgh in 1862. Several other collections of such poems were made at successive periods subsequent to the time of the Dean, the most of which, along with a collection of his own, made orally in the Highlands were published in London in 1872 by Mr. J. F. Campbell, editor and translator of the West Highland tales already referred to. This work is entitled "Leabhar na Feinne" or "Heroic Gaelic Ballads." Mr. Campbell meant to follow this volume by one of translations, which has not yet, however, appeared. Stories and ballads of which the Feinn are the subject, are found in Irish writings as early as the eleventh century. Irish chroniclers have converted this mythical people into a militia raised to defend Ireland against foreign invasion. The births, deaths, and exploits of those fabulous heroes are narrated with as much precision in regard to day and date as the reign of Brian Boroimhe, and the battle of Clontarf. Tradition and writing hand down to us two sets of parallel stories of a kindred nature respecting them. The traditional tales and ballads which have not been modified by the

historians of the Middle Ages are, as might be expected, more mythical and less historical in character. The ballads are but prose narratives abridged and versified.

The geography of the stories of the Feinn is remarkably limited in the more primitive of them. The regions mentioned in such are usually four: *Eirinn, Tir-Shoir, Sorchir* or *Sorcha*, and *Lochlan*. These names are transparent and explain themselves. Eirinn, the oldest form of which is *Eriu*, denotes the land of the west, Ireland, and is named in one of the ballads in the Dean of Lismore's book, "fodleith earra in doythin," "the western land of the world." *Fodla*, which means "land or country," from *fód* "soil," is a name for Ireland. *Sorcha* signifies "light," and is traceable to the same root as that from which the Latin *Sol* and the Sanskrit *Sûrya*, the sun, come. Sorchir found in the Dean of Lismore's book when translated into the orthography of Irish and modern Scotch Gaelic, is *Sorcha-thir*, "land of light." When *Sorcha* had become obsolete as a name for "light," *thir* "land," pronounced nearly *heer*, was dropped from *Sorcha-thir*, and hence we find *Sorcha* substituted for it in the greater number of the ballads and tales. This name would appear to have denoted, in ancient times among the Gaels, all the countries to the south-east, south, and south-west of their own country, and to have become restricted in meaning in proportion to the increase of geographical knowledge among this people, until ultimately it became a name for Portugal, and it has now ceased to be a name for any country. It was originally, in fact, the land which corresponded to the daily apparent course of the sun, southward, from east to west. *Tir-shoir* signifies "east land," and was used in contrast with *Eirinn*, "west land;" another form of the name is Airthir. *Oir* and *soir* both mean "east." The name of Argyll, in Gaelic *Earra-Ghaidhcal*, denotes "east land of the Gaels." This name is a corruption of *Oirthir Ghaidhcal*, and the part of the highlands so called included at one time the present counties of Argyll, Inverness, and Ross. It was so named in contrast to the Hebrides, which in ancient times were considered by the inhabitants part of Eirinn or west land; and hence Ptolemy describes them as part of Ireland. The *Eirinn* of the myths of the Feinn would appear evidently to have comprehended the West Highlands; and in a letter to Henry VIII of England from a Highlander, the latter tells the English King that the Highlands were called *Eirinn bheag*, "Little Ireland."

Lochlan denotes now Norway and Denmark; but in olden times it was a name for the whole of Scandinavia and Germany. As Sorcha or Sorcha-thir was an old Gaelic name for the land of the south, so Lochlan was the corresponding name for the

land of the north. It comes from *loch* "black," and *lan or lann*, "enclosure, land, house," and so signifies "dark land," the land that the sun was supposed by the old Gaels never to visit,—the land of frost, snow, cold, and darkness.

In Campbell's "Heroic Gaelic Ballads," there are eight variants of the ballad "Dyr borb" (Fierce Dyr) in the Dean of Lismore's book. In four of these we find Iarsmaile (Jerusalem), Hespainte (Spain), Eispainte (Spain), and Greiga (Greece), replacing the Sorchir of the Dean's Book and the Sorcha of the other variants. As regards Lochlan, variants of ballads and tales point to its gradual subdivision into several countries. A ballad that recounts a battle fought between the Feinn and the whole world in arms, in which the former were victorious, mentions Daor Done (Brown Daor) as King of Lochlan in one verse, and as king of the world in another. Of all the countries of the world, only Lochlan, France, Greece, and parts of Ireland are named. Fairstrand, the place where the battle is said to have been fought, might have been one of numerous places on the shores of Ireland and Scotland, but was more probably a place in Cloudland. Ossin, the mythical bard, the son of Fyn MacCoul, sings the ballad to St. Patrick, but assigns no date to an event of such importance to his father and people. The Irish have localised the place at Ventry Harbour; and Ventry means Fairstrand, while the inhabitants of the island of Islay, in Scotland, tell us that it is a strand so called on the north-west of their own island. In his "Heroic Gaelic Ballads," vol. i., p. 137, Mr. Campbell, referring to Mr. John Hawkins Simpson's translation of an Irish variant of this ballad and of a tale treating of the same subject, remarks of the tale: "Then follows a good English version of an exceedingly wild, extravagant prose story, which has the marks of old manuscript tales. All the kings known to the composer of the story, including the kings of India and France and the Emperor of the World, invade Ireland. Fionn beats them in Homeric single combats." *Riigh Teurmann*, "King of Germany," is found among the allies of the King of Lochlan, in another ballad. In an Irish story, which relates how a Norwegian king came to the island of Rathlin with a large fleet to carry off a beautiful lady for wife by force, but was defeated and slain, Norway is called Huardha. These instances show how a name that, in ancient times, denoted the whole known and unknown northern world, has now become the Gaelic equivalent for Denmark; and *Tir-Shoir*, Eastland, recedes from Ireland to India in the ballad of the Battle of Gabhra, in which "Oskir," Ossin's son, was killed.

The battles between the Feinn and the Lochlaners cannot be

identified with any battles fought between the Scandinavians and the Irish and Scotch Gaels. Very few of the names of the Lochlan heroes, mentioned in traditional story as having warred with the Feinn, are Scandinavian; they are mostly all Gaelic, such as *Gorm-Shuil*, "Blue-eye," *Ceothach*, "Misty," *Lamhnambeud*, "Hand of the Hurts," and *Lamhfhad*, "Long hand." The names of the Scandinavians of History, who invaded the Highlands and Ireland in the eighth century, became Highland and Irish personal names and surnames, all of which bespeak their Norse lineage: such as Torcall (Torquil), Tormaid (Thormond), Iomhar (Ivor), Raghnall (Raginhild). Tormaid, Iomhar, and Somhairle are Anglicised Norman, Edward and Samuel, and Raonailt (Raginhilda), a woman's name, is Anglicised Rachel. The *Lochlannaich* of history, the Scandinavians, are known by two other names: *Gennti*, "Gentiles," and *Gaill*, "strangers." The Norwegians are called *Fionn-Ghaill*, "White strangers" and the Danes, *Dubh-Ghaill*, "Black strangers"—figurative expressions which signify the nearer or more known, and the more remote or less known foreigners. These historical Lochlaners or Norsemen not only introduced personal names and surnames among Highland and Irish tribes, but also local names into Irish and Highland territory, which, at this day, notwithstanding the change they have undergone, leave no doubt as regards their Norse origin; while hardly any of the topographical names that occur in the Feinn stories are Norse, excepting, perhaps, Beirbhe and Spaoili, which are very probably Gaelicised forms of Bergen and Upsala. No old Gaelic song or ballad commemorates the exploits of Robert Bruce, although a large Highland force was present at the battle of Bannockburn. In one old Gaelic song alone does the name of William Wallace, the Scottish hero, occur. In this song the author compares the Earl of Argyll with *Uilleam Walas;* and the form in which the name is found, shows that it was not naturalised among the Gaels. Yet Sir Neil Campbell of Loch Awe, and several other Highland chiefs, with their clansmen, supported Wallace in the war of Scottish independence. It seems therefore that myths are transmitted through very long periods of time by tradition, and that historical facts vanish from oral narratives in a few generations. The tales and ballads found in the Highlands, which recount the feats of the Feinn, are as unhistorical, with respect to facts, as it is possible for any fiction to be. As already stated, the heroes and heroines are evidently personifications of the powers and phenomena of nature, and like the mythical tales of other nations, delineate the alternations of day and night, the succession of seasons, storm and calm, cloud and sunshine, heat and cold, growth and decay.

Note. Page 7

Inis Fail 'Island of Light'
Windisch traces solus 'light'
and follus 'clear' to the Ar-
yan root svar 'to shine'.
The following definitions
of follus are given in Lhuyd's
Irish English Dictionary.
"Follas: Evident, publick;
go follas, openly, in the
day time."
"Follus. Id. q. Follas: Mar
si follus, as is manifest.
As ro fhollus ē, it is very
apparent."
The sixth part of the eric-
fine which the Children of
Turenn were to procure

Dāiri donn, according to Irish accounts, and a Highland ballad

for Cian's son for having murdered his father was a hound-whelp named Failinis belonging to the king of Hirwath (Norway).

"The hound-whelp belong to the king of Proda, and his name is Failinis. He shines as brightly as the sun in a summer sky; and every wild beast of the forest that sees him falls down to the earth powerless before him."

Joyce's 'Old Celtic Romances' translated from the Gaelic."

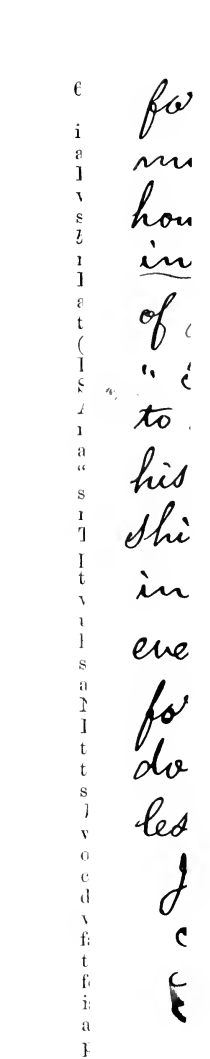
cession of seasons, storm and calm, cloud and sunshine, heat and cold, growth and decay.

This description of the hound whelp is evidence in favour of the derivation of his name Failinis, like Solus and follus from Svar 'to shine'. So Solus, follus, Failinis and Fail in Inis Fail may be considered as cognate words all traceable to the root Svar.

The name of Inis Fail is such as was natural for the natives of a country to give it in primitive times as being especially the land within their own ken.

H. Mc.

Dáirdonn, according to Irish accounts, and a Highland ballad



cession of seasons, storm and calm, cloud and sunshine, heat and cold, growth and decay.

The two principal tribes of the Feinn were the children of Morna and the children of Baoisgne; Fionn MacCumhaill was the chief of the latter, and Goll MacMorna of the former. They have quarrels and feuds amongst them; but they invariably combine to fight against the men of Lochlan or Darkland. Fioun MacCumhaill, besides being chief of the children of Baoisgne, was lord of all the Feinn, and Goll MacMorna was subordinate to him. Their country was Eirinn, Westland, which was also called *Tir-Fail*, a name seemingly meaning "Land of Light." M. Windisch traces the Gaelic *Solus* "light," and *follus* "clear, manifest," to the root *svar*, "to shine," and from the same root, doubtless, comes Fal (nominative of fail). *Innis Fail*, "Isle of Light," corresponds to modern Ireland in Feinn story and Eirinn to Ireland and the Hebrides. Fionn is frequently called in these traditions *Flaith Fail*, "Lord of Light," and all the heroes are sometimes spoken of as *Uaislean Fail*, "Nobles of Light," and at other times *Flaithean Fail*, "Lords of Light." In the ballad of Caoilte and the Giant, the expression *Mhic Righ Phail*, son of King of Fal, occurs, and in one variant of it the same expression is replaced by *Mhic Righ Soluis*, "Son of King of Light;" in another verse of this variant is to be found *Mhic Righ Fail*, "Son of King of Fal." So it would appear that Fal and Solus were in olden times synonymous. (Campbell's "Heroic Gaelic Ballads," vol. i, pp. 54, 56, 57.)

In a Scottish Lowland poem, the "Interlude of the Droichs," we have an account of Goll MacMorna's birth, which appears to have been analogous to that of Dionysus and of Athênê:—

> "My fader meikle Gow-mac-morne,
> Out of his moder's wame was schorne,
> For littleness was so forlorne
> Sican kemp to beir."

Highland story, so far as we know at present, says nothing of Goll's birth; but this account of it must have been, in former times, current among the Gaels of the north-west of Scotland. Goll's other Highland name is *Iolann*, which denotes "Light giver," and is derived from *ial*, "light." In Irish writings his other name, besides Goll, is *Aéd*, a name which signifies "fire." The name *Goll*, which means "blind," he received, according to Highland story, after having lost an eye in a fray in Lochlan; but, according to Irish chronicles, was deprived of it by one *Luchet*, whom he killed thereafter at the battle of Cnucha, fought between Conn of the hundred fights and Cumhall, the father of Fionn. His father, Morna, had also another name, *Dāiri donn*, according to Irish accounts, and a Highland ballad

speaks of his grandfather Neamhan, the father of Morna. The name Dairi, the modern form of which is Daoire, the Dyr and Dyryth of the Dean of Lismore's Book, is, like the classical names Zeus, Dianus, Juno, and the Teutonic names Tyr, Tiu, Tuisco, traceable to the root *dyu*, "to shine," from which come several other names met with in the Feinn ballads and tales, *e.g.*, Diarmaid, Dearg, Diurag, Deirdre; also the Gaelic words *dears*, "to shine," *dealan*, "lightning," *dealradh*, "effulgence," *deachair*, "bright," *dearg*, "scarlet," and *Teirt*, "morning or dawn." A brother of Goll is named Daoire, another, *Fiann*, "Red," and a third, *Garaidh*, "Heater," from *gar*, "to warm or heat." Of the same origin with Garaidh is Graine, the name of a lady who was bethrothed to Fionn and eloped with his nephew Diarmaid. Grian, a feminine name like Graine, is from the same root, and is the only living name in Gaelic for the sun.

Goll and his tribe, the children of Morna, would seem to be personifications of sea-side phenomena, the sun setting in the sea and rising out of it; the glowing western sky of evening twilight and eastern sky of dawn, reflected from the waves, become luminous with borrowed light, and tinctured with variegated, brilliant hues. Near the sea Goll performed the most of his feats; at Eas Ruadh, close to it, he fought and killed Dyr Borb—fierce Dyr; wading in it he fought and killed Kerrel or Caoireall, a son of Fionn; and on a rock in the sea he was killed himself by Mugan MacSmail. In Ireland the children of Morna are localised in Connaught, and some Highland stories locate them in the Highlands. In the name Morna we have the Keltic base *Mor*, denoting "sea," from which is derived the Gaelic *muir* and the Welsh and Breton *môr*, "sea." Morna is, therefore, the "sea being" or "person." *Dairi derc*, his other name, signifies "Bright-red Shiner," and would appear to have been an old metaphorical name for the rising sun darting its rays through the red-tinted clouds of dawn. *Neamhan*, the name of Morna's father, also signifies "Shiner" or "dweller in brightness."

The children of Baoisgne whose chief was Fionn MacCumhaill, mostly personify physical powers and appearances in districts where the sea is out of sight; inland sunrise and sunset; inland dawn and gloaming. The exploits of Fionn, Diarmaid, Caoilte, and Osgar are not much associated with the sea; nor the deaths of Diarmaid, Osgar, and Fionn. Baoisgne, the name of the progenitor of the Baoisgne tribe, might be derived from *baoisg* or *boisg*, "to shine;" but in the pedigree of Fionn compiled by the Vicar of Bienn Eadair ("Heroic Gaelic Ballads," vol. i., p. 34), the form of the name is Baiscne; and *baiscne* is an obsolete Gaelic or Irish name for "tree." *Basc* is

an obsolete Gaelic word, meaning "scarlet." The name may, therefore, signify "Shiner, Red-being, or Tree." *Inis na fiodhbhuidhe*, "Isle of Wood," is an ancient name for Ireland; and it implies that this island was in olden times covered with forests. In those ancient times, consequently, the sun, moon, and stars would be seen rising and setting in the woods, in the interior of the country; while the red, purple, and yellow clouds of early morning and late evening would appear in the distance as branches of varied and fantastic shapes, covered with gorgeous foliage. Traditional story informs us that Fionn's nurse, having run away with him when a child to save him from those who aimed at his destruction, had the trunk of a tree hollowed out to serve as a hiding-place for herself and the child; and to this excavated retreat the bark of the tree was adjusted for a door. Here he was fed on fat, instead of milk from the breast, until he was able to walk and go about. Bathing in a lake one day, he encountered a number of young princes whom he plunged under the water and drowned. In consequence of killing these princes, he found it necessary to take to flight and find out some other retreat farther off from his enemies. He set off accordingly, carrying his nurse on his back through the forest. When he got through it nothing remained of the old woman, his nurse, but the two legs. He threw them into a lake close by him, where they became two large monsters. Here, as he looked around him, he observed a man fishing on a river. He walked up to him and asked him if he was getting any fish. He said, No; that he had been fishing for years for the king, and that he had not yet caught a trout for him. Fionn asked him to fish in his name. This the man did, and he killed a trout for the king, one for the queen, one for the king's son, one for the king's daughter, and one for Fionn. The directions that he received from the fisherman *Arcan Dubh*, "Black Bung," with respect to cooking the trout are best told in Mr. J. F. Campbell's translation of this story. (Campbell's "West Highland Tales," vol. iii., pp. 335, 336.)

"Thou must, said Arcan, broil the trout on the farther side of the river, and the fire on this side of it, before thou gettest a bit of it to eat; and thou shalt not have leave to set a stick that is in the wood to broil it. He did not know here what he should do. The thing that he fell in with was a mound of sawdust, and he set it on fire beyond the river. A wave of the flame came over, and it burned a spot on the trout, the thing that was on the crook. Then he put his finger on the black spot that came on the trout, and it burnt him, and then he put it into his mouth. Then he got knowledge that it was this Black Arcan who had slain his father, and unless he should slay Black Arcan

in his sleep, that Black Arcan should slay him when he should awake. The thing that happened was that he killed the carle, and then he got a glaive and a hound, and the name of the hound was Bran MacBuidheig."

Fionn means "white, fair, clear." As a substantive it is now restricted in meaning to "cataract on the eye;" but it anciently signified "a fair person," a fair-haired person, or anything white or clear. As a verb, it formerly meant "to see, to look, to perceive;" and metaphorically it denoted "sure, sincere, pleasant." From these several meanings it is sufficiently evident how it might be a name for the pure clear sky, and for the bright day of unobscured sunshine, and also for an imaginary hero, noted for his wisdom, knowledge, and justice, who was king of a race of mythical, redoubted warriors. Fionn MacCumhail, the "Lord of the Feinn," the "Lord of Light," is surnamed *finnla*, "fair day," in a variant of the "Lay of the Distressed Maiden" ("Heroic Gaelic Ballads," vol, i., p. 128), and in a variant of the "Poem of Diurag," at page 219, the epithet, *fiorghlic* "truly wise," is applied to him. He is mentioned in the "Interlude of the Droich's," the Scottish poem already quoted, as having power over the sky; and from this poem, as well as from several others, it would seem that the Highland and Irish Feinn myths were current at the time those poems were composed in the Lowlands of Scotland. Here is the stanza that makes honourable mention of our Goidelic hero:—

> "My fore Grand-sire heicht Fynn-Mac-Koull,
> Quha dang the Deil and gart him zoul,
> The skies rained fludes quhen he wad skoul,
> He trublit all the air."

The Deil in this passage is obviously the one-eyed Lochlan Smith, whom the Feinn compelled to forge arms for them. This smith was seven-handed, and was assisted by *Daorghlas*, one of the Feinn, in making the swords. The name *Daorghlas* signifies "Shining Grey;" but he received the name *Caoilte*, "Slender," from the smith, and by this name he was thenceforth called. When the swords were finished, the smith told them that they should not be perfect unless they were tempered in human blood. They cast lots with respect to the person in whose blood the weapons were to be tempered, and the lot pointed out "Fionn, King of the Children of Baoisgne," for a victim. Fionn walked out of the smithy, observed a bye-way, and went along it, until he came to a house, which he entered, where he found the smith's mother, whom he told that her son wished to see her. "It is seven years," she said, "since I have

seen my son;" and she went with Fionn to the smithy. When she entered the smith plunged the swords through her body, not perceiving at first that it was his mother. Fionn received his sword from the smith, after it was tempered in the old woman's blood, and then thrust it in the smith and killed him, so that he had the sword fully tempered to his wish. ("Heroic Gaelic Ballads," vol. i., pp. 66, 67.) Mr. Cox, in his "Aryan Mythology," quoting from the ballad of the One-eyed Smith in the "West Highland Tales," calls the smith "the genuine Kyklops." Of the smith's appearance and accoutrement Mr. Cox remarks:—"All this explains itself. The hammering tools and steel lathe are the thunder and lightning; and the thunder-cloud strides across whole valleys at each step, and clings to the high grounds and the mountain sides." ("Aryan Mythology," vol. i., pp. 356, 357.) The following is the passage in the ballad of the One-eyed Smith, in the "West Highland Tales," to which Mr. Cox alludes in the above:—

"There was seen nearing us
A big man upon one foot,
With his black, dusky black-skin mantle,
With his hammering and his steel lathe.

"One shaggy eye in his forehead;
He set off like the wind of the spring-time
Out to the dark mountains of the high grounds.
He would take but a single leap
O'er each single cold glen of the desert."

Caoilte, whose first name was *Daorghlas*, "Shining Grey," was Fionn's foster-son and his nephew by the mother's side. He is the impersonation of lightning; of the sun's rays when the sky is overcast with dark clouds and the sun concealed from sight; of starlight and moonlight in cloudy nights; in short, of the rays of all luminaries of the sky considered apart from the luminaries themselves. He was the swiftest of the Feinn heroes, and, when at full speed, appeared to have three heads. How transparent his mythical character is, appears from a poem in the Dean of Lismore's book (English translation, pp. 62–71), which recounts how he obtained the release of his foster-father and uncle Fionn, who was a prisoner of King Cormac. The feats that he performed previous to his obtaining the release of Fionn from Cormac fully identify him with the lightning:—

"The calves I slew with the cows,
Which I found in all fair Erin.

"The fields all ripe throughout the land,
I set them a blazing brightly;
Then indeed I had my triumph,
For I made a total havoc.

"Then it was they loosed against me
The horse of Albin and of Erin.
My fleetness gave me victory,
Until I reached Ros illirglass.
Then I westward took my way
To Taura, although great the distance;
Not one horse of all the troop
Had Taura reached so soon as I did."

When he arrived at Cormac's palace he obtained the door-keeper's clothes and held the candle for Cormac. In this disguise, nevertheless, Cormac recognised him. Wishing to procure his foster-father's freedom, he asked Cormac on what conditions he would set him free. Cormac told him that it should be done only on one condition, which was to procure for him a pair of every species of wild animal. This, Caoilte, difficult as it might seem to ordinary people, managed to do! One would think that he would require to be a fast flier, as well as a fast runner, to catch the birds! They were now put into a stronghold, the doors of which were thereafter shut:—

"There was a little ray of light
Reached them in through fifty openings."

Here Caoilte had to watch them until morning, which he did, and allowed none of them to escape. Caoilte, who relates his own story, tells what ultimately happened:—

"To see them standing side by side,
Was all the profit got by Cormag.
For when Finn did get his freedom,
All of them did scatter widely."

Here we have actually a thunder-storm of a destructive character; a night, at first dark and clearing up before morning; finally the disappearance of the stars with the coming day, the liberation of Fionn, and the dispersion of the birds—the stars, when the doors of the stronghold—night—were opened.

The trout which Fionn roasts by the flames of a fire kindled on the opposite side of the river on which it was fished is seemingly the sun. In another story, that of the Rowan tree dwelling, an enigma is proposed to Fionn for solution, viz., Swifter than a horse and it was the young offspring that was seen? Fionn's solution is: *The salmon-trout of the red spots, for he will travel the world in a year, which a horse cannot do.* *Earc* is an obsolete Gaelic name both for "salmon" and for "heaven"; so Fionn's metaphorical expression, converted into the scientific language of our day, means that the earth revolves round the sun, or apparently the sun round the earth, in a year. The sky is here figuratively called the parent of the sun, which travels the world in a year. Arcan Dubh, who in one story is said to

be the slayer of Cumhall, Fionn's father, is the end of night, the darkness that prevents the light of dawn from issuing forth and would kill young day, the son of *Cumhall*, "early night," whom Black Arcan killed. The name Arcan is of the same origin as the Latin arceo. As already mentioned, the name means "bung or stopper," so Black Arcan is the enemy both of early night and of early day. He plans the death of Fionn, "day," at the rising of the sun, but his own death is the result. The name Cumhall is not to be confounded with the obsolete Gaelic word *Cumhal*, "a handmaid." A single story, of which there are no variants, makes Cumhall the name of Fionn's mother. In all other stories, both Irish and Highland, Cumhall is a man and the father of Fionn. In Welsh we have *Cwmwl*, "cloud," and in Breton, *Commol*, "cloud, darkness"; so evidently the primary meaning of Cumhall was, in all likelihood, the same as that of those two words in the two other cognate Keltic languages. All the traditions, as well as Irish chronicles, inform us that "Murni Muncaim," or Murenn Mong-Chaeu, daughter of Tadg, the druid, was the mother of Fionn. This name signifies the woman of the fair neck,—dawn. *Tadg*, or *Tadhg*, denotes "poet or orator," and the father of the dawn is the early breeze that harmonises with the morning songs of the birds.

The most popular account of Cumhall's death, also that which is given in Irish chronicles, is that he was killed by the sons of Morna. Highland story relates that Goll pierced him first with his spear, that the men of his tribe followed Goll's example, and that Cumhall died of the wounds received from them, uttering loud groans. The name of the warrior who destroyed Goll's eye, "*Luchet*," is apparently cognate with the Welsh *lluched*, "flashes of lightning," and the Breton *luhet*, "a flash of lightning." *Iolann*, "the light giver," *Aedh*, "fire," killed *Luchet*, who destroyed his eye, and Cumhall; and was called *Goll* "one-eyed," after having been blinded of an eye, as the sun is blinded by the lightning and the thunder-cloud, but as the thunder-storm comes to an end, the strong solar rays pierce the scattered dark clouds, the sky clears, and the single eye of day, the brilliant sun, shines with unusual splendour.

Goll was the strongest of the Feinn. It was he who fought and overcame the strongest of their enemies. He once released Fionn, whom the enchantment of three evil magicians, Nemh, Agha, and Acuis, fastened to his seat by ice in a Rowan-tree booth. *Nemh* means "poison," *Agha* is derived from *aig*, "ice," and *Acuis* from *ec*, "dark." Goll, the strong sun, the Goidelic counterpart of the Greek Hercules, and the Scandinavian Odin, overcomes the snows, frosts, and long dark nights of winter, and brings on spring and summer. The last feat of Goll was

the slaying, in single combat, of a son of Fionn, *Caoiraell*, "Sparkler," starlight mostly extinguished by the long days and twilight of midsummer. In consequence of this act he was driven by Fionn and the tribe of Baoisgne into a rocky islet in the sea. Aine, his wife, converses with him from the opposite shore and tries in vain to persuade him to come to land. *Aine* literally denotes "blaze," and metaphorically "delight." The verdant blooming earth of summer grieves for the death of the north-going sun at the summer solstice. Goll informs his wife of his approaching end and that her future husband is to be *Aedh*, "fire," from Spain, to whom she will bear nine sons and one daughter. The north-going sun is to be succeeded by the south-going sun, the fructifying sun of autumn, whose children are the ripe fruits and corn brought forth and nursed by mother earth.

Goll is slain on the islet by a person whose name was Mugan MacSmail. The name Mugan is derived from *mug* or *much*, "smoke," and *Smal* denotes the black dust that results from the combustion of fuel, or the snuff of a candle. The death of Goll is the obscuration of the light of the setting sun by the dark clouds that gather over him on the western horizon.

NOTE.—The name *Goll* is not, probably, identical with the homonym *goll*, blind one-eyed; it is more likely to be cognate with the Welsh *golen* and the Beton *Goulon*, "light."

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