

The First Voyage of Brendan.

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Life of Brendan of Clonfert

Translated by

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i. (1) *Beaius uir* &c, Happy, righteous, blessed, and perfect is the man on whom is the fear and dread of the mighty Lord, and who desires greatly to fulfil the command and teaching of God, as it is laid down in the canon of the Old and New Testaments. Now there are many of the patriarchs and of the prophets and apostles of the Lord of the elements of whom this oracle is spoken in the Old and New Testaments, that they were happy, just, and perfect in their desire and longing to fulfil the divine command and teaching, and who had the secret of the fear of the Lord perfectly in their hearts and minds, without thought for anything else but that alone.

(2) One then of this company of happy and blessed ones in the New Testament is he whose festival and commemoration falls at this season, on the 16th day of June (read *May*), to wit, Brendan son of Findlug. This Brendan was the head of the belief and devotion of a great part of the world like faithful Abraham, a pre-eminently prophetic psalmist like David the son of Jesse, a distinguished sage like Solomon the son of David, a lawgiver to hundreds like Moses the son of Amram, a prolific translator like Jerome, a wondrous thinker like Augustine ; a great and eminently universal student like Origen, a virgin like John, the Lord's bosom-fosterling, an evangelist like Matthew, a teacher like Paul, a chief apostle, gentle and forgiving, like Peter, an eremite like John the Baptist, a commentator like Gregory of Rome, a prudent and wondrous emissary by sea and land like Noah in the ark ; [for as Noah raised the ark] high above the noisy waves of the flood, so will Brendan son of Findlug raise his monks and his family high above the fire of doom, so that no fog, or spark, or smoke shall reach them through the power and fair devotion of Brendan son of Finding.

(3) In the time of Oengus son of Natfraech, king of Munster, was St. Brendan born. He was of Ciarraighe Luachra ; that is, to speak precisely, his noble, well-born, devout and faithful father, Findlug, belonged to Alltraighe Caille. And this couple (i. e. F. and his wife) lived in discipline and lawful wedlock under the rule of Bishop Erc. Now the mother of Brendan saw a vision before he was born. (It seemed to her) that her bosom was full of pure gold, and that her paps shone like snow. When she told this vision to Bishop Erc, he said that a wondrous birth would be born of her, who would be full of the grace of the Holy Ghost, meaning Brendan.

ii (4) There was a very wealthy man who dwelt some distance from the house of Findlug, Airdi the son of Fidach. The chief prophet of Ireland, Becc mac De, came to the house of this Airdi. Presently Airdi asked him : ' What is nearest to us now ? ' Becc mac De said to him : ' Thine own worthy king will be born to-night between thee and the ocean ; and there will be many kings and princes who will adore him, and whom he will bear with him to heaven. '

(5) In this night of Brendan's birth thirty cows bore thirty calves to Airdi son of Fidach, and he was looking for the house in which the little child was born, and he found [the house of Findlug, and the infant in it, and he prostrated himself devoutly] before him, and he offered the thirty milch kine and the thirty calves to him. And this was the first alms received by Brendan. Then the landowner took the child in his arms and said : ' He shall be my foster-ling, ' said he, ' for ever. '

(6) The night, moreover, of Brendan's birth, Bishop Erc saw Alltraighe Caille all in one great blaze, as was never seen before, and an attendance of angels in shining white garments all round that land. Then Bishop Erc rose early on the morrow, and came to the house of Findlug, and took the child in his bosom, and said : ' O man of God, and destined servant of God, accept me as thine own monk ; and though many are joyful at thy birth, my heart and my soul are yet more joyful,' said Bishop Erc.

(7) And Mòbì was his original name (given to him) at first by his parents. And then a fair drop fell upon him from the heaven and filled the land. [1] So that thenceforth his name was Braenfind (fair drop) or Brendan. Fair moreover was he called, because he was all fair of body and soul.

(8) Afterwards three wethers leapt forth from the fountain in which he was baptized, and they formed Brendan's baptism fees.

iii (9) Then his family took him with them, and he was with them for a year being nurtured. At the end of the year Bishop Erc took him to his foster-mother, Ita, and he was with her [five] years. [2] And the nun loved him exceedingly, because she saw the attendance of angels above him, and the grace of the Holy Spirit evidently abiding on him. And Brendan was always smiling at the nun whenever he saw her.

iv. (10) So one day Ita asked him : ' What is it that pleases thee, O holy child ?' said she. He answered : ' Thou,' said he, ' I see thee talking to me continually and numberless other virgins like thee, nurturing me in turn.' But these were really angels in the forms of virgins.

v. (11) After this, at the end of his five years, Brendan studied with Bishop Erc ; and to Ita the time seemed long without him. Then he learnt his psalms ; and at that time Bishop Erc had neither milk nor milch cow, for he would accept no alms from any one, except from a few men of rule (monks). It happened one day that Brendan asked for a drink of milk from his foster-father. ' God can do that,' said Bishop Erc. Thereupon a doe would come every day from Slieve Lougher with its fawn, and would be milked for him, and would return to the same hill of her own accord.

vi (12) Brig, daughter of Finding, his sister, was with him there, and great was his love for her, for he saw the attendance of angels above her. And he looked in the face of his foster-father, and saw it like the sheen of the summer sun.

vii (13) One day Bishop Erc went to preach the word of God, and Brendan went with him in the chariot ; he was then turned ten years old. Brendan was left alone in the chariot, while the cleric went to the preaching. He was seated in the chariot reciting his psalms by himself. There came then a young girl of royal race to the chariot ; she looked upon him and saw that his face was very beautiful. She forthwith tried to jump up to him in the chariot, and play with him. Thereupon he said : ' Be off home,' said he, ' and what brought thee here ?' And he took the reins of the chariot in his hand, and began beating her ; so that she went weeping to where her father and mother, the king and queen, were.

(14) Meanwhile Bishop Erc returned, and began reproaching his fosterling greatly, and rebuked him sharply for striking the innocent maiden. ' I will do penance therefor,' said Brendan, ' name the penance to me.' ' Go into this cave till morning,' said Bishop Erc, ' and remain there alone till I come to thee to-morrow.' Brendan then seated himself in the cave, and recited his psalms and hymns of praise to the Lord there. And Bishop Erc remained near the cave listening to Brendan, unknown to him.

(15) And the sound of Brendan's voice, as he recited his psalms, was heard for a mile in every direction. Moreover the cleric, Bishop Erc, saw hosts of angels going upwards to the heaven, and downwards to the earth over the cave till the morning. And from that day forth no one could ever look upon the face of Brendan for the greatness of the divine grace which he had, save only Finan Cam (the squinting), for he was full of the grace of the Holy Spirit ; and it was this which enabled him beyond all others to look upon him.

viii. (16) One day Brendan and Bishop Erc were going along the road, when a man happened to join them. There happened, moreover, to meet them seven warriors who were enemies of his. He was greatly terrified at seeing them, and said : ' Those men will kill me now,' said he. ' Go under the shadow of yonder standing stone,' said Brendan, ' and stretch thyself in its shadow.' He did so ; and Brendan lifted up his hand to God, in prayer for the man's deliverance.

(17) Then his enemies came to the stone, and smote it on the side, and after cutting off its head, they left it, and carried off the head, thinking that it was the head of their enemy ; and the (decapitated) stone still remains in the same place. Thus Brendan made a man of the stone, and a stone of the man. ' Do penance,' said Bishop Erc to them, ' for it is the head of a stone that you hold, and your enemy has escaped from your hands safe and sound.' They did rigorous penance thenceforth under the rule of Bishop Erc.

(18) Now after learning the canon of the Old and New Testaments, Brendan wished to write out and learn the rule of the saints of Erin. Bishop Erc gave him leave to go and learn this rule, for he knew that it was of God that this counsel had come to him. And he said to him : ' Come back to me, and bring the rules with thee, that thou mayest receive orders at my hands.'

(19) When he went to consult his foster-mother, Ita, she said the same thing to him, viz. that he should learn the rule of the saints of Ireland. And she said to him : ' Do not learn of women or of virgins, lest thou be reproached in regard to them. Go,' said she, ' and there shall meet thee on the road a well-known well-born warrior.' And it happened that this warrior was Mac Lenin.

ix. (20) So when Brendan set out, Mac Lenin fell in with him. ' Repent,' said Brendan to him, ' for God is calling thee, and thou shalt be His own son from henceforth.' Colman mac Lenin then turned to the Lord, and a church was built by him forthwith.

(21) After this Brendan came to the district of Connaught, attracted by the fame of a certain devout man there, to wit, Iarlaithe son of Lug, son of Tren, son of Fécc, son of Mochta ; and learned all the rules from him. Then said Brendan to Iarlaithe : ' Not here at all shall be thy resurrection,' said he. Then said Iarlaithe : ' O holy son, why dost thou conceal from us the grace of the Holy Spirit which is evidently in thee, while the incalculable power of God and of the Lord is concealed in thy pure mind ? Thou didst come to learn of me, and I will be thy pupil henceforth,' said Iarlaithe. ' Take me into thy service for ever. Howbeit tell me where my resurrection shall be.'

(22) Brendan said to him : ' Have a new chariot made,' said he, ' for thou art old ; and go thy way in it, and wherever the two hind shafts of the chariot shall break, there will be thy resurrection, and that of many others with thee.' After this the elder entered the chariot, and he had not gone far when the hind shafts of the chariot broke, one a little while after the other ; and this is the name of that place, Tuam da Ghualann.

x. (23) Leaving Iarlaithe there, Brendan proceeded to Magh Ai. An angel met him on the road, and said to him : ' Write down,' said he, ' from my mouth the words of devotion.' Brendan wrote from the mouth of the angel all the rules of holy Church, and all these rules are still extant.

(24) As then they were traversing Magh Ai, they saw a bier, and a dead man on it, and his friends keening him. ‘ Trust in the Lord,’ said Brendan, ‘ and the man whom you carry shall revive.’ After he had prayed, the man arose, and his company took him with them with exceeding joy. Then they all begin to look intently at Brendan, and carry him with them to where the king of this plain was ; and the king offered him land in any place he pleased ; and Brendan did not accept this of him, for he did not wish to remain in that place.

xi. (25) So then after writing the rule of the saints, and their customs, and devotion, Brendan returned to Bishop Erc, and received orders from him

(26) It was then he heard in the gospel (the words) : ‘ *Qui relinquit*’ etc.

xii. (27) It was after this therefore that there grew up in his heart a great love to the Lord, and he desired to leave his land and his country, his parents and his patrimony. He requested earnestly of the Lord that he would grant him some secret country, far removed from men.

(28) It happened then that Brendan was in the place called Leim na Subaltaige, when there came to him a certain holy man named Barinthus, son’s son to King Niall. And as Brendan was making many inquiries of him, he prostrated himself on the ground mourning and weeping. Brendan raised him from the ground, and kissing him said to him : ‘ It were fitter for thee to rejoice than to mourn ; and by God’s Passion I adjure thee to tell us some of the words of God, and satisfy our souls.’

(29) And after such converse between them the man began to tell him of a certain island, and said as follows : ‘ I had a son named Mernoc, and he fled from me, because he did not wish to remain in the same place with me. And he found an island near a certain mountain called Sliabh na Cloiche. And some time afterwards, when it had been shown to me that he had many monks with him, and that many miracles were manifested through him, I went on a visit to him ; and when I came within three days’ journey of him, he came to meet me with the brethren for God had revealed to him my coming.

(30) ‘ And when we reached the island, the brethren came to us out of their cells, like a swarm of bees ; and though their dwellings were divided from one another, there was no division in their converse, or counsel, or affection. And their only victuals were apples and nuts, and roots of such kinds of herbs as they found. And the brethren used to go to their separate cells from compline till cockcrow.

(31) ‘ And I and my son traversed the island, and after we had gone over it, he took me with him to the shore where was a boat ; and he said to me : “ Dear father, get into the boat,” said he, “ that we may go and see the island which is called *The Land of the Saints*, which God is to promise to men who shall come after us.” And when we had entered the boat, a mist fell upon us, so that we could hardly see the prow of our boat.

(32) ‘ And when we had spent the space of an hour of the day in this way, a great light came upon us, and we saw the island in resplendent beauty, full of fragrant apples and blossom ; and there was no single herb or tree among them which was not laden with fruit And then we brought the boat to land in the island. And we were traversing it for the space of fifteen days, and could not find any end to it And the stones of the island were all jewels. And at the end of the fifteenth day we found a stream which traversed the island, and we did not know what to do as to crossing the stream. And we awaited the counsel of God.

(33) ‘ And as we were setting forth, we saw coming to us a man of radiant beauty, who greeted us by our own proper names, and said : “ Beloved brothers, God has revealed this land

to you, and this is the half of the island, and it is not permitted to you to go beyond it ; so return to the place whence ye came.” And when he had said this, we asked him whence he came, and what his own name was.

(34) ‘ The man said : “ What makes you ask me this ? for it were fitter for you to inquire about this island and its history than about mine ; for ye see it now without lack of fruit or flower, and thus it is since the beginning of the world. And ye need no food or drink ; for ye have been a year in this land, and have not tasted food or drink all that time, and further ye have not needed rest or sleep, nor has night or other darkness befallen you during that time. So then day unending and unceasing will last here without darkness for ever, for our Lord Jesus Christ is the light and splendour of it. And if men did not transgress the commandments of their Lord, they would remain in this delight everlastingly.”

(35) ‘ And when we heard this, we experienced great sorrow, and intense regret ; and when we had finished our mourning we began to return to our boat. And the holy man accompanied us to the brink of the shore ; and when we had entered our boat, he was taken from our sight, so that we knew not whither he had betaken himself from us.

(36) ‘ And after we had set out thus, we passed through the same mist which we spoke of above. And we made no stop or stay till we came to the brink of the island from which we set out previously. And when the brethren saw us, they were filled with immeasurable joy and gladness at our coming to them, and began to question us as to what had befallen us during the time of our absence ; and they said : “ O holy fathers, why have ye left your sheep to wander in this island without a shepherd ? And our abbot has often gone on a visit for a month or a fortnight, or a week or something less.”

(37) ‘ And he tried to comfort the brethren. And I said to them afterwards,’ said Barinthus, ‘ “ Think not anything but what is unquestionably good, for your converse is good, and your dwelling is hard by Paradise, and near to you is the island which is called *the Promised Land of the Saints*. There is never any night, and the day never ends. And Mernoc, your abbot, has often been there, and the angels of God protect that island. And have ye not perceived by the scent of our garments that we have been in Paradise ?” The brethren said : “ Ah, dear father,” said they, “ we perceived that ye had been in Paradise, by the goodly smell of your garments ; for often has our abbot himself been there, and the smell of his raiment has been meat to us for the space of forty days.” And, O Brendan,’ said Barinthus, ‘ I remained a fortnight in that place with my son, without eating or drinking, and at the end of forty days I returned to my brethren and my own cell.’

(38) When Brendan and the brethren heard this, they bowed their heads to the ground, and praised God greatly, and said : ‘ *Benedictus*, etc,’ that is, ‘ Blessed is God in His own gifts, and holy in all His works, in that he has revealed so many miracles as these to His servants, and has fed us to the full this day with spiritual food.’ And after this mutual converse Brendan bade his family go with him to spiritual (? bodily) refectio, and the new commandment (*lit*, renewal). When the night was passed, and Brendan had given his blessing to Barinthus, the latter returned to his own place of abode.

(39) And when he had departed, Brendan collected fourteen brethren of his congregation, and went with them to a secluded place ; and among them was an elect youth, illustrious in good works, engaged in the praise of God from the beginning of his life to the end. And who-ever wishes to acquire a knowledge of his acts, let him read his youthful deeds ; and the person whom we allude to is Machutus. Brendan spoke to the brethren, and said : ‘ O beloved fellow citizens,’ said he, ‘ I am asking of you counsel and help, for my heart and thoughts are all fixed on one single desire, if it be God’s desire, to seek the land which Barinthus told us of, the land

which God has promised to the men who shall come after us. And what counsel give ye me hereon ?

(40) When Brendan had made known his desire to the brethren, they all said with one voice : ‘ Beloved father,’ said they, ‘ the counsel that thou wilt, is the counsel that we will. And have we not left our own fathers for thee ? and have we not left our own inheritance for thyself ? and did we not surrender our bodies into thy hands ? And therefore we are ready to take death or life together with thee. There is but one thing besides. Let us seek to ascertain the will of the holy Father, and to fulfil it.’ So Brendan with his family determined to hold a fast of forty days and nights to the Lord, that he would prosper them, and guide them to the end in every path in which they were to go.

(41) Brendan slept after this, and heard the voice of an angel from heaven saying : ‘ Arise, Brendan,’ said he, ‘ that which thou hast requested thou shalt receive of God, that is to visit *the Land of Promise* at last.’

xiii. (42) Thereupon Brendan arose, and his heart rejoiced at the answer of the angel. And he went to a place apart by himself, and scanned the ocean on every side of him. And he saw on the ocean an island wondrous fair with attendance of angels about it. After this Brendan remained in that place [3] some time, and slept again a little in it. The angel of God came to converse with him once more, and said to him : ‘ Henceforth,’ said he, ‘ I will be ever with thee, and I will show thee one day the fair island which thou hast seen, and which thou desirest to find.’ Brendan wept greatly for joy at the answer of the angel, and gave thanks to God.

xiv. (43) Brendan then set forth with his company, leaving their blessing with the prior of the monastery which we spoke of previously, who was afterwards Brendan’s successor among the brethren. And Brendan then went westwards, and fourteen brethren with him, till he reached the island of a holy father named Enda of Aran ; and made a stay of three days and three nights in the island. And they left their blessing with St Enda.

xv. (44) Then Brendan with his company went into the most distant part of his paternal territory ; but he would not approach his father or mother, or go near them, but went to the summit of a lofty mountain near the ocean where their boat was. And that place was thenceforth called Suide Brenainn (Brendan’s Seat). They said that it was time for them to find that island, and they went to their boat to strengthen it with iron and ox hides ; and they then placed in Brendan’s boat equipment of every kind sufficient for two other boats. And they smeared their joinings within and without with myrrh and bitumen, and pitch and rosin.

(45) And when the boat was ready, Brendan bade his company embark in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He himself remained behind them alone on the shore, and blessed the harbour on either side. And after this he saw three monks of his family coming towards him, and they fell on their knees before him, and said : ‘ O holy father,’ said they, ‘ for the love of God let us go with thee where thou goest, or else we will starve ourselves, for we have vowed to make our pilgrimage with thee as long as we live.’

(46) When the father, Brendan, saw their distress, he said to them : ‘ Get into the boat, for I know in what sort ye have come. Good are the works of one man of you, and God has prepared a good place for him ; but he has prepared additional punishment for (the others of) you.’ So after this converse Brendan entered his boat, and his company entered their two other boats. And on this wise were Brendan’s boats, with three rows of oars to each boat, and sails of the skins of animals both wild and domesticated, and twenty men in each boat

(47) Then came a jester to Brendan, and knelt before him, and said to him : ‘ O Brendan,’ said he, ‘ take me with thee for God’s sake, and pity my wretchedness, that I may go with thee.’ Brendan took him with him for God’s sake, and embarked in his boats with sixty men as writings say :

‘ Sixty men of them in the fleet ;
They laboured not on Sunday ;
Their minds were fixed on the dear Creator,
Praising the King of the (heavenly) palace.’

xvi. (48) After this they went on the surface of the sea and mighty ocean and hoisted their sails above their boats, and the wind carried them to the port of Aran again. And Pupa, and Enda of Aran, and Ronad came to see the fleet

xvii. *Here now is the Story of the Isle of Mice.*

(49) Brendan bade farewell to the saints of Aran, and left a blessing with them, and they sailed on due west across the ocean, and saw after a while at a distance from them a notable fair island. And they steered their boats towards it, till they reached the brink of it. And they saw the shore full of hideous furry mice as large as cats. The brethren asked Brendan : ‘ What do yonder mice want ?’ said they. ‘ Their desire is to eat and devour us,’ said Brendan.

(50) Thereupon was revealed to Brendan that it was the death hour of the jester who was in the boat with them. So he said to him : ‘ Arise/ said he, ‘ and take the body and blood of Christ, and depart to the eternal life, for I hear the song of the angels calling thee to . them.’ Then the mind of the jester rejoiced at this sa3dng, and he said : ‘ Ah, Lord/ said he, ‘ what good have I done that I should be taken to heaven so speedily ?’ Brendan answered and said that it was fitting that he should fulfil the will of God.

(51) So when he had received the body and blood of Christ, his spirit leapt forth, and was straightway borne with great joy to heaven, where is Jesus Christ with the nine orders of heaven about Him. His body was then thrown upon the shore, and the mice devoured it, and left nothing but the bare bones upon the shore. The company of Brendan buried his bones afterwards, and his name was inscribed in the Martyrology, for he was a glorious martyr. And herein is seen the kindness of the Lord, that the sinner who came last to the ship should be chosen of Him to go first to heaven.

xviii. (59) After this the company of Brendan hoisted their sails, and it was then the summer season, and they had a favourable brisk wind right behind them, so that they had no need to row, but only to keep their sails hoisted. And after they had spent ten days on this wise the wind lowered its loud voice and whistling, and its force being spent they were compelled to row.

(53) Brendan spake to them and said : ‘ Fear not,’ said he, ‘ for we have our God Himself as our guide and helper. And ship your oars, and do not toil or labour ; and God will guide His own boat and company as He pleases.’ And Brendan and his company used to take their supper every evening. And they got a steady wind, but knew not whither the wind was carry-ing them.

xix. *Story of the Isle of the Bridles.*

(54) After spending forty days on this wise, and all their provisions being exhausted, they saw at a distance a lofty island, stony and sandy. And when they drew near to the island, they found that it had lofty banks, with azure streams of pure water falling down over the banks into the sea. But they could find no harbour where they could land on the island. And the brethren were

harassed and spent for want of food and drink. And they desired to catch the water of the streams in their vessels, and take it with them. Then Brendan said to them : ‘ Do not steal the water of the island, for God will reveal to us at the end of three days a harbour where we may find means to satisfy our weak and strengthless bodies.’

(55) After making a circuit of the island for the space of three days, they found a harbour with room for one boat to land there. Brendan stood up and blessed the harbour before they disembarked. And the rocks were like high walls on either side of it And after they had landed, Brendan said to his company : ‘ Take (nothing), not even a few of your clothes, out of the boat.’

(56) As they were traversing the island after this, they saw a little dog coming to meet them, which fawned at the feet of Brendan. Brendan said to the brethren : ‘ Is not this a good messenger that God has sent you? Follow it, till it leads you home.’ And the brethren were following it as Brendan bade. And he said to them : ‘ Take good heed that the evil spirit beguile you not ; and I myself see the adversary inciting (one of) the three brethren who followed us from the monastery to commit theft. And pray ye earnestly for the soul of one of the three, for his body is in the power of the devil.’ And the house in which they were was indescribably long and wide, with many chased vessels and gold-mounted bridles in it

(57) And Brendan said to the clerk who was wont to distribute their portion to them : ‘ Serve to us the portion which God has sent us.’ And the clerk arising quickly found the boards spread with a covering of all various colours, and bread of a strange whiteness, and a quantity of excellent fish. Then Brendan blessed the board, and said to the brethren : ‘ Do honour and reverence to Almighty God, who satisfieth all creatures with food and drink.’ Then they seated themselves at the board, and gave great praise to God, and blessed the drink and food, and ate as much as sufficed them.

(58) And when they had finished their supper, Brendan said to them : ‘ My brothers,’ said he, ‘ take sleep and rest, for ye are weary after your travel and voyage.’ And when they had fallen asleep, Brendan saw the evil spirit as a hideous little creature, with a golden bridle in his hand, which he threw into the bosom of one of the brethren. The brother [4] awoke from his sleep and prayed to God till the morrow came; and when the day arrived, Brendan said to his company : ‘ Let us proceed to our work, that is to our (canonical) hours,’ and they did so. And when they had finished their hours, Brendan said to them : ‘ Let us make for our boat now.’ And when they arose from their beds they found the same boards set as was customary. And they were on this wise to the end of three days and three nights.

(59) After this Brendan and his company prepared to set forth; and he said to the brethren : ‘ See, dear friends, that none of you hath taken anything belonging to this island in which we are.’ They all said : ‘ Mary forbid, dear father, that any theft should stain our journey.’ Brendan said : ‘ There is a golden bridle under the armpit of the brother of whom I spoke to you last night, a theft which the devil gave him.’ When the brother heard this, he cast the bridle from him, and prostrated himself before Brendan, and said : ‘ O beloved father, I have sinned beyond doubt ; but pity me, and pray for my soul that my soul and body be not damned.’

(60) When the brethren heard this, they fell on their knees, and prayed for the soul of the brother. And when they rose from their prayers, they saw the little dark hideous man falling from the bosom of the brother with loud lamentations, and this is what he kept saying : ‘ Why hast thou expelled me, O cleric, from the inheritance and abode wherein I have been dwelling for seven years ?’ Brendan answered him and said : ‘ I command thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not to torment or trouble any single human being till the Day of Judgement.’ The devil then departed.

(61) Brendan said further to the brother : ‘ Receive the body and blood of thy Lord Jesus Christ, for it is now that thy soul shall part from thy body, and in this spot is the place of thy burial ; and as to one of the brothers who came with thee from the monastery, it is in hell that his resurrection will be very shortly.’ Then the brother’s spirit departed from him after he had received the Sacrament, and angels came to meet him, and took him with them to heaven. And his body was afterwards buried honourably by Brendan and his company.

(62) And after this they went themselves to the shore where their boat was ; and as Brendan was entering his boat, a youth met him carrying. one vessel full of bread, and another full of water ; and he said to them : ‘ Receive this present at the hands of your servant, for ye have a long journey before you. However, ye shall have no lack of bread or water till Easter.’ Having bidden farewell to one another they entered their boats, and were voyaging on the ocean for some time afterwards.

xx. (63) One day as they were traversing the ocean, they saw an island at some distance from them. And they steered their boat towards it, and landed on it. And on making a circuit of the island, they found goodly streams full of fish in it. Brendan said to the brethren : ‘ Let us perform divine service here, and consecrate the immaculate Lamb to God, for to-day is the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ And they remained thus till Easter Eve ; and they found numerous herds of sheep, large and pure white, so that they could hardly see the ground through them for the multitude of the sheep. Brendan said to them : ‘ Take with you, brethren, from yonder herds as much as ye require for Easter.’ The brethren then took one of the sheep ; and as they were binding it, the (other) sheep followed them thenceforth.

(64) So they prepared all things that they needed against the venerable day of Easter. Then they saw one coming towards them, bearing a vessel full of bread, and with it all that they needed for their consumption. He set it down before Brendan, and then threw himself on the ground, and wept bitterly (*lit.* repented earnestly), and said : ‘ O father, though I am not worthy to feed thee with the work of my hands, accept (this) food of me in these holy days.’

(65) And Brendan raised him from the ground, and kissed him, and asked him : ‘ Where has our Lord Jesus Christ ordained for us to celebrate Easter ?’ The holy man answered him and said ; ‘ Here are ye to keep (*lit.* hear) this Saturday and vigil, and on yonder island that ye now see in the offing shall ye celebrate the Easter Masses.’ And having said thus he began to render the service (of the day, i. e. the foot washing) to Brendan and the other brethren. And after this they filled their boats with such things as they required. The man then said to Brendan : ‘ Ye cannot carry anything more in your boats ; but after eight days I will send you all that ye will need of food and drink till Pentecost.’

(66) Brendan said to him : ‘ Knowest thou where we shall be after eight days ?’ The holy man said : ‘ Ye will be on that island that ye see yonder to-night, and tomorrow till midday ; and then ye shall go to the island which is called *the Paradise of Birds*, and remain there till the octave of Pentecost.’ Brendan said : ‘ What makes yonder sheep so large, living as they do in this island ?’ for each sheep of them was bigger than a fatted ox. The holy man said : ‘ The reason is that no milk is ever collected from them, nor are their fleeces ever sheared, and no winter or darkness ever comes upon them. And therefore it is that they are of that excessive size, owing to their being always out at grass. Therefore they are larger here than in any other land in the world.’

xxi (67) Brendan then put out from land, and rowed with his company till they reached the Paradise of Birds. And when they reached this island they landed there. And the island was extraordinary in appearance, for there were many excellent fruits there, and marvellous birds discoursing joyously from the tops of their trees, and little bees gathering and collecting their

harvest and household store for their own dwellings, and strangely beautiful streams flowing there, full of wondrous jewels of every hue. And there were many churches there, and a monastery in the middle of the island full of an excellent variety of things of every hue ; and a venerable wise decorous and devout order in it.

(68) And thus was this monastery, with its own light burning in it, to wit four lights before the high altar, and three before the middle altar. And their chalices were made of crystal. And there were fourteen seats opposite one another in the choir, and the abbot's place in the middle between them ; and when the abbot began to recite a verse the choir responded humbly, and none of them dared to recite a single verse except the abbot himself ; and none spoke without permission, except when they were praising the Lord, unless the abbot permitted ; and even then they did not speak in words, but by making it known by some intelligible sign with eye, or lip, or hand, to indicate what they desired to say. And the abbot would write on a tablet with a style every answer that he gave them.

(69) And the abbot said to Brendan after this : ' It were time for us to seek our dormitory.' Thereupon they went to compline ; and after reciting compline the brethren went to their separate cells, and took Brendan's company with them, each brother taking one of them.

(70) And Brendan and the abbot remained in the minster ; and while they were there Brendan asked the abbot how men still in human flesh could maintain such silence and quiet. The abbot answered him with humility, and said : ' I confess before Christ that it is four score years since we came to this place, and none of us has spoken to another with human voice, save when we are praising the Lord ; but it is (only) through sign of finger or eyes that speech is manifested between us. And further there has been no sickness of body or soul or spirit on any of us all that time.'

(71) On hearing this Brendan spoke with tears, and said : ' May we remain here for the space of a year ?' The abbot said : ' Ye may indeed. Dost thou not know what was ordained for thee to do before thou camest hither ? For thou must needs return to thine own place with thy fourteen brethren ; and as to the two others that joined thee later, one of them will go to his pilgrimage to the island called *the island of Antomus*, [5] and the other (will go) to an evil death, for he will be damned to hell.' And all this was fulfilled

(72) Brendan asked : ' Who extinguishes yonder lights when morning comes ?' The abbot said : ' Consider for thyself, O Brendan, each thing of them according to thine own wisdom and knowledge. Dost thou not see the lights burning brightly without aught of them being consumed, and without exhausting themselves? And they will remain so till morning, and no one will see any remains left of them from the beginning of day till they come in the shape of fiery arrows through yonder window, to which they come habitually.' Brendan said : ' How can an incorporeal creature cause a corporeal light ?' The abbot answered him, and said : ' Hast thou not heard, and hast thou not read of the bush that burned on Mount Sinai all the night, yet on the morrow no diminution or defect appeared in it ?'

(73) And they remained thus till morning ; and then Brendan sought permission to depart ; but the saint did not grant it to him, but said : ' Thou must remain with us till we celebrate (*lit*, hear) the coming Christmas, that ye may console us till the octave of the Epiphany.' Brendan and the brethren remained for this period in the island called *the island of Ailbe*, And when this time was fulfilled, Brendan bade farewell to the abbot and to the brethren there, and went to his boats, and they were traversing the ocean till the beginning of the following Lent.

xxii. *Here follows the Story of the Island of the Intoxicating Water.*

(74) One day when they were travelling over the azure-rimmed abyss, they saw an island some distance off, and they began to make for it joyfully, for till then they had not seen an island for a long time, and their provisions had been exhausted three days previously. And they landed on the island, and found a clear bright fountain there, and abundance of every herb also, and many kinds of fish swimming to and fro in the stream that flowed down from the fountain towards the sea. Brendan said : ‘ Of a surety,’ said he, ‘ God hath given you comfort after your labour ; and take as much as ye need of the fish, and gather as many herbs as ye please.’ The brethren began eagerly to drink the water of the river, and to gather herbs as their master bade them.

(75) Brendan said to them : ‘ Take heed, brethren, that ye drink not much of the water, lest ye be upset thereby more than ye are at present.’ But the brethren did not abide by the command of their father, but drank abundantly, some drinking two draughts, some three, while the third part drank one draught. And thus were they affected by the drink ; some of them fell into a sleep and torpor of three days and three nights, and a sleep of two days and nights fell on others of them, and sleep and torpor of a day and a night on the third part of them. Then was Brendan earnestly entreating the Lord on behalf of his company, because it was through ignorance this danger had befallen them.

(76) And when this time had passed, Brendan said to his company : ‘ Seeing that God has given us abundance, but ye have turned it into want for us, let us quit this island now, and take with you as much as ye please of the fish and the water (sufficient to last) for the space of three days and three nights.’ And they did as Brendan bade, and filled the boat with the things the father had said to them. And after this they moved over the surface of the sea, and a great tempest fell upon them. At the end of three days and three nights after their quitting the above-mentioned island, the storm and foul weather ceased, and the sea was made calm for them. And Brendan said to them : ‘ Take your crew (a mistake for *oars*) into the boat, and let God direct us to whatever place He pleases.’ And they were on this wise for the space of twenty days and twenty nights.

xxiii *Here is the instruction of the Procurator to Brendan, and the finding of the paradise of birds the second time.*

(77) Then they saw an island in the distance, and Brendan asked his company : ‘ Do ye recognize yonder island that we see now ?’ said he. ‘ We do not indeed,’ said they. ‘ It is otherwise with me,’ said Brendan ; ‘ Yonder is the island on which we were last year on the day of the Lord's Supper, and on it is the procurator with whom we were.’ When the brethren heard this, they began to row furiously.

(78) And Brendan said to them : ‘ Do not vex and rack your limbs. Is not God our Pilot and our Shipman ? Let Him bring us to whatever place He will.’ And they did as Brendan bade ; for they let the boat drift, and God steered them to the island of the procurator. And when they had landed, the procurator came to them with great joy ; and kissed the feet of Brendan and of the brethren, and began loudly to praise the Lord. And when he had finished his praise, he speedily prepared a bath for them, for it was the day of the Lord's Supper at that time. And he clad them all with new garments, and they celebrated the Lord's Passion there till Easter Eve.

(79) And when they had recited the service for Saturday, the procurator said to Brendan : ‘ Embark, and keep (*lit.* hear) Easter as thou didst last year. And from Easter onwards go ye to the Paradise of Birds, and take with you what ye need of food and drink. And I will pay you a visit on the second Sunday that is coming.’ The brethren departed at this saying to the island where they had made their Easter the previous year.

xxiv. (80) And they departed thence to the Paradise of Birds, and stayed there till the octave of Pentecost. And the procurator came to them as he had promised, and brought with him all things which they required ; and they greeted one another right joyfully, as they were wont.

(81) And when they sat down to table, a bird alighted that moment on the prow of the ship, and made music sweet as an organ with its wings, beating them on the sides of the boat And Brendan perceived that it was telling something ; and the bird said : ‘ Four seasons have been ordained for you during the time of your journey, to wit, the day of the Lord’s Supper with the procurator, Easter on the back of the monster, and from Easter to Pentecost with us, and Christmas in the isle of Ailbe up to Mary’s feast of Candlemas. And at the end of the seventh year ye shall be borne to the land which ye are seeking, and ye shall be there forty days, and after that ye shall be borne to your own land.’ On hearing this Brendan bowed himself to the ground, and wept and cried (*lit.* repented) and gave praise and thanks to God, the Creator of all things. Then when they had finished all these things, the bird returned to its own place.

(82) The procurator said : ‘ I will leave you now, and will come to you again together with all things, that ye will require, as the Holy Procurator came to the apostles of old.’ The procurator then departed leaving his blessing with Brendan and the rest ; and Brendan remained there during the time appointed him. And when this time expired, Brendan prepared to set forth, and was putting out from the land, when he saw the procurator coming to him with a boat full of provisions, and he gave these to Brendan, and then returned himself the way by which he came. And Brendan was thus on the ocean for the space of forty days and forty nights.

xxv. Celebration of Easter on the back of the Monster.

(83) When, however, Easter drew near, Brendan’s company began say to him that he should land for the celebration of Easter. ‘ God is able,’ said Brendan, ‘ to find a land for us in any place He pleases.’ When then faster came, a great whale raised its shoulders high above the surface of the waves, so that it formed dry land. And then they landed, and celebrated Easter on it. And they were there one day and two nights. When they had entered their boats, the whale dived into the sea at once. However, it was thus that they celebrated Easter to the end of seven years on the back of the sea monster. For when it was near Easter each year, it would lift its back above the sea, forming regular dry land.

xxvi. Here whirlpools threaten to swamp Brendan’s expedition.

(84) Now on one occasion when they were on the wondrous azure-rimmed ocean, they saw deep floodlike currents and black vast whirlpools. Then it seemed as if the boats must be swamped by the greatness of the storm. Each of them began to look in Brendan’s face, for the danger in which they were was wondrous great. Brendan lifted up his voice on high, and said : ‘ It is enough, O thou great sea, that I be drowned, but spare this company.’ Then the sea became calm at once, and the boiling of the whirlpools abated, and from that time forth it has never injured any one.

xxvii. Alighting of the Devil on the prow of Brendan’s boat, when he revealed to him the pains of hell.

(85) One day when they were on the sea, the devil came in an accursed and dreadful form, and settled on the mast in front of Brendan, and none of them saw him save Brendan only. Brendan then asked the devil why he had come before his proper time, that is before the time of the great resurrection, the Day of Judgement ? The devil said at once : ‘ To be tortured in the depths of this black dark sea am I come.’ Brendan then asked him : ‘ How so ? where is that infernal place ?’ ‘ Sad is that,’ said the devil ; ‘ no one can see it [6] and survive.’ How-ever, the devil showed Brendan the door of hell, and he saw its pains and misery.

(86) Then his company asked the holy monk : ‘ Who art thou talking with ?’ said they. Brendan told them what he saw, and told them some small portion of the pains which, as we have said, he saw, as is found in the writings of the Old Testament. Then said one of his company to Brendan : ‘ Let me see some of those pains.’ On being permitted to see the varied pains of hell, he died forthwith, and said as he expired : ‘ Woe, woe’, said he, ‘ for all who have come, and come, and shall come into this prison.’ Thereupon Brendan prayed, and re-stored to life his companion who had died.

xxviii. Here followeth the Story of the Dead Woman.

(87) They had not gone far from there when they found a fair young maiden, with golden tresses, as white as snow or the foam of the wave, lying dead from the thrust of a spear which had entered between her shoulders and come out between her two breasts. Vast was the size of the maiden, she was a hundred feet high, nine feet between her breasts, her nose was four feet long, and her middle finger seven feet long. Brendan restored her to life, and baptizes her at once. He asked her further of her race. She said : ‘ I am of the dwellers in the sea,’ said she ; ‘ the folk who pray and entreat for resurrection.’ Brendan asked her which she preferred : ‘ Wilt thou go to heaven at once, or to thy country ?’ She answered in a language, which no one but Brendan understood, and said : ‘ To heaven in sooth,’ said she, ‘ for I hear the voices of the angels praising together the mighty Lord.’ So after receiving the body and blood of Christ, she died there without a struggle, and was buried honourably by Brendan.

xxix. Finding of the Waxed Tablet with writing on it.

(88) One day they were on the sea, rowing prosperously, when they saw a beautiful island, very lofty, but could not find any practicable harbour by which to enter it. Brendan’s company said to him that they should continue coasting round it for a week. They did so, but could not effect an entrance all that time. They heard, however, in it the voices of men praising the Lord, and saw in it a fair and noble church. After hearing the sound of the voice of the island folk, Brendan and his company slept a spiritual sleep.

(89) And as they were not admitted to the island, a waxed tablet was let down to them with writing on it to this effect : ‘ Labour not to enter this island, for ye will never enter it. But the island which ye seek, ye shall find, and this is not it. Depart to thine own land, O Brendan, for there are many seeking thee there, who would fain see thee. And search the Holy Scriptures, in which it is said : “ Many are the mansions of God” ; as if it said : “ Many places and abodes has the Lord besides this island.” After this they turn away from the island, taking with them that waxed tablet as a sign of the island-folk’s welcome and care for them ; and it was read aloud to them every day, as if it had been from God that it was sent to them.

xxx. Here the Devil attempts to beguile the company of Brendan through their thirst.

(90) One day they were on the ocean, rowing, when a violent thirst seized them, so that they well nigh died. Then they saw fair streams of water distilling and dropping from the crags. The brethren asked : ‘ May we drink some of yonder water ?’ said they. ‘ Bless it first,’ said Brendan, ‘ to ascertain what it is’. When they had blessed the water and chanted ‘ Alleluia’ over it, the streams dried up at once, and they saw the devil darting from the water, and he would kill all who drank of it. Thus were Brendan’s company saved by his power, and their thirst vanished at once. And the place was closed upon the devil, that he might do no harm to any man thenceforth.

xxxii. *Here Brendan returns to Ireland from his First Voyage.*

(91) Now when Brendan had been five [7] years on this voyage, he returned to his own land and country, as was enjoined him in the island we spoke of. Then the people of his land and tribe came to meet him, and were asking him what profit he had had of his boats [8] ; and they gave gifts and treasures to him as to God. And many of them forsaking the world followed Christ And he did many mighty works and miracles there, and sick folk and prisoners were made whole, and demons and vices were expelled. He then addressed himself to his foster-father. Bishop Erc.

(92) He next went to the place where his foster-mother, Ita, was, and asked her what he should do with reference to his voyage. Ita gave him welcome as she would have bidden welcome to Christ and His apostles, and said to him : ‘ Ah, dearly beloved son, why didst thou go on thy journey without taking counsel with me ? For the country which thou art seeking from God, ye will never find on these dead soft skins, for it is a holy consecrated land, and no blood of man was ever shed in it. But let timber boats be made by thee. Belike thou wilt find that land on this wise.’ Thereupon Brendan went into the region of Connaught ; and an excellent large boat was made by him, and he embarked with his company and people ; and they took various herbs and seeds to store the boat withal, and wrights and smiths who had prayed Brendan to let them go with him.

[1] filled Fenit L.

[2] one year MS.; corrected from L and 1 11 *infra*.

[3] An obviously erroneous gloss is omitted.

[4] *Sic* MS.; read : Brendan.

[5] MS. Antorius.

[6] MS. tell it (corrected from L and Br. iL { 8).

[6] seven L.

[7] expedition L (better).

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