

Sloinntreachd Bhrìde — Genealogy of Bhrìde

Hymns and Incantations with Illustrative notes on words, rites, and customs, dying and obsolete : orally collected in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Translated into English, by

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The Genealogy of Bride was current among people who had a latent belief in its efficacy. Other hymns to Bride were sung on her festival, but nothing now remains except the names and fragments of the words. The names are curious and suggestive, as : ‘ Ora Bhrìde,’ Prayer of Bride, ‘ Lorg Bhrìde,’ Staff of Bride, ‘ Luireach Bhrìde,’ Lorica of Bride, ‘ Lorig Bhrìde,’ Mantle of Bride, ‘ Brot Bhrìde,’ Corslet of Bride, and others. La Feill Bhrìde, St. Bridget’s Day, is the first of February, new-style, or the thirteenth according to the old style, which is still much in use in the Highlands. It was a day of great rejoicing and jubilation in olden times, and gave rise to innumerable sayings, as : —

‘ Feill na Bhrìde, feis na finne.’
Feast of the Bride, feast of the maiden.

‘ Bhrìde binn nam has ban.’
Melodious Bride of the fair palms.

‘ A Bhrìde chaoìn cheanail,
Is caoimh liom anail do bheoil,
’D uair reidhiun air m’ aineol
Bu tu fein ceann eisdeachd mo sgeoil.’

Thou Bride fair charming,
Pleasant to me the breath of thy mouth,
When I would go among strangers
Thou thyself wert the hearer of my tale.

There are many legends and customs connected with Bride. Some of these seem inconsistent with one another, and with the character of the Saint of Kildare. These seeming inconsistencies arise from the fact that there were several Brides, Christian and pre-Christian, whose personalities have become confused in the course of centuries—the attributes of all being now popularly ascribed to one. Bride is said to preside over fire, over art, over all beauty, ‘ fo cheabhar agus fo chuan,’ beneath the sky and beneath the sea. And man being the highest type of ideal beauty, Bride presides at his birth and dedicates him to the Trinity. She is the Mary and the Juno of the Gael. She is much spoken of in connection with Mary,—generally in relation to the birth of Christ. She was the aid-woman of the Mother of Nazareth in the lowly stable, and she is the aid-woman of the mothers of Uist in their humble homes.

It is said that Bride was the daughter of poor pious parents, and the serving-maid in the inn of Bethlehem. Great drought occurred in the land, and the master of the hostel went away with his cart to procure water from afar, leaving with Bride ‘ faircil buirn agus breacag arain,’ a stoup of water and a bannock of bread to sustain her till his return. The man left injunctions with Bride not to give food or drink to any one, as he had left only enough for herself, and not to give shelter to any one against his return.

As Bride was working in the house two strangers came to the door. The man was old, with brown hair and grey beard, and the woman was young and beautiful, with oval face, straight nose, blue eyes, red lips, small ears, and golden brown hair, which fell below her waist. They asked the serving-maid for a place to rest, for they were footsore and weary, for food to satisfy their hunger, and for water to quench their thirst. Bride could not give them shelter, but she gave them of her own bannock and of her own stoup of water, of which they partook at the door ; and having thanked Bride the strangers went their way, while Bride gazed wistfully and sorrowfully after them. She saw that the sickness of life was on the young woman of the lovely face, and her heart was sore that she had not the power to give them shade from the heat of the sun, and cover from the cold of the dew. When Bride returned into the house in the darkening of the twilight, what was stranger to her to see than that the bannock of bread was whole, and the stoup of water full, as they had been before ! She did not know under the land of the world what she would say or what she would do. The food and the water of which she herself had given them, and had seen them partake, without a bit or a drop lacking from them ! When she recovered from her wonderment Bride went out to look after the two who had gone their way, but she could see no more of them. But she saw a brilliant golden light over the stable door, and knowing that it was not ‘ dreag a bhais ’ a meteor of death, she went into the stable and was in time to aid and minister to the Virgin Mother, and to receive the Child into her arms, for the strangers were Joseph and Mary, and the child was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to earth, and born in the stable of the hostel of Bethlehem. ‘ D uair a rugadh an leanabh chuir Bride tri braona burna fuarain fìoir-uisge air clar a bhathais ann an ainm De, an an ainm Iosa, ann an ainm Spioraid.’ When the Child was born Bride put three drops of water from the spring of pure water on the tablet of His forehead, in name of God, in name of Jesus, in name of Spirit. When the master of the inn was returning home, and ascending the hill on which his house stood, he heard the murmuring music of a stream flowing past his house, and he saw the light of a bright star above his stable door. He knew from these signs that the Messiah was come and that Christ was born, ‘ oir bha e ann an dailgneachd nan daoine gu’m beirte Iosa Crìosda Mac De ann am Betlehem baile Dhaibhidh’—for it was in the seership of the people that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born in Bethlehem, the town of David. And the man rejoiced with exceeding joy at the fulfilment of the prophecy, and he went to the stable and worshipped the new Christ, whose infant cradle was the manger of the horses.

Thus Bride is called ‘ ban-chuideachaidh Moire,’ the aid-woman of Mary. In this connection, and in consequence thereof, she is called ‘ Muime Chrìosa,’ foster-mother of Christ ; ‘ Bana-ghoistidh Mhic De,’ the god-mother of the Son of God ; ‘ Bana-ghoistidh Iosda Crìosda nam bann agus nam beannachd,’ god-mother of Jesus Christ of the bindings and blessings. Christ again is called ‘ Dalta Bride,’ the foster-son of Bride ; ‘ Dalta Bride bith nam beannachd,’ the foster-son of Bride of the blessings ; ‘ Daltan Bride,’ little fosterling of Bride, a term of endearment.

John the beloved is called ‘ Dalta Moire,’ foster-son of Mary, and ‘ Comhdhalta Chrìosda,’ the foster-brother, literally co-foster, of Christ. Fostership among the Highlanders was a peculiarly close and tender tie, more close and more tender even than blood. There are many proverbs on the subject, as, ‘ Fuil gu fichead, comhdhallas gu ceud,’ blood to the twentieth, fostership to the hundredth degree. A church in Islay is called ‘ Cill Daltain,’ the Church of the Fosterling.

When a woman is in labour, the midwife or the woman next her in importance goes to the door of the house, and standing on the ‘ fad-buinn,’ sole-sod, door-step, with her hands on the jambs, softly beseeches Bride to come :

‘ Bhride ! Bhride ! thig a steach Bride !

Tha do bheatha deanta,
Tabhair cobhair dha na bhean,
'S tabh an gein dh'an Triana.'

Bride ! come in,
Thy welcome is truly made,
Give thou relief to the woman,
And give the conception to the Trinity.

When things go well, it indicates that Bride is present and is friendly to the family ; and when they go ill, that she is absent and offended. Following the action of Bride at the birth of Christ, the aid-woman dedicates the child to the Trinity by letting three drops of clear cold water fall on the tablet of his forehead.

The aid-woman was held in reverence by all nations. Juno was worshipped with greater honour than any other deity of ancient Rome, and the Pharaohs paid tribute to the aid-women of Egypt. Perhaps, however, appreciation of the aid-woman was never more touchingly indicated than in the reply of two beautiful maidens of St. Kilda to John Macdonald, the kindly humorist, and the unsurpassed seaman and pilot of Admiral Otter of the West Coast Survey : ' O ghradhanan an domhain agus an t-saoghail, carson a Rìgh na gile 's na greine ! nach 'eil sibh a posadh us sibh cho briagh ? ' ' A ghaol nan daona, ciamar a phosas sinne ? nach do chaochail a bhean-ghlun ! ' ' Oh ! ye loves of the domain and of the universe, why, King of the moon and of the sun ! are ye not marrying and ye so beautiful ? ' ' Oh ! thou love of men, how can we marry ? has not the knee-wife died ! '

On Bride's Eve the girls of the townland fashion a sheaf of corn into the likeness of a woman. They dress and deck the figure with shining shells, sparkling crystals, primroses, snowdrops, and any greenery they may obtain. In the mild climate of the Outer Hebrides several species of plants continue in flower during winter, unless the season be exceptionally severe. The gales of March are there the destroyers of plant-life. A specially bright shell or crystal is placed over the heart of the figure. This is called ' reul-iuil Bride,' the guiding star of Bride, and typifies the star over the stable door of Bethlehem, which led Bride to the infant Christ. The girls call the figure ' Bride,' ' Brideag,' Bride, Little Bride, and carry it in procession, singing the song of ' Bride bhoidheach oigh nam mìle beus,' Beauteous Bride, virgin of a thousand charms. The ' banal Bride,' Bride maiden band, are clad in white, and have their hair down, symbolising purity and youth. They visit every house, and every person is expected to give a gift to Bride and to make obeisance to her. The gift may be a shell, a spar, a crystal, a flower, or a bit of greenery to decorate the person of Bride. Mothers, however, give ' bonnach Bride,' a Bride bannock, ' cabag Bride,' a Bride cheese, or ' rolag Bride,' a Bride roll of butter. Having made the round of the place the girls go to a house to make the ' feis Bride' Bride feast. They bar the door and secure the windows of the house, and set Bride where she may see and be seen of all. Presently the young men of the community come humbly asking permission to honour Bride. After some parleying they are admitted and make obeisance to her.

Much dancing and singing, fun and frolic, are indulged in by the young men and maidens during the night. As the grey dawn of the Day of Bride breaks they form a circle and sing the hymn of ' Bride bhoidheach muime chorr Chrìosda,' Beauteous Bride, choice foster-mother of Christ. They then distribute ' fuidheal na feisde,' the fragments of the feast—practically the whole, for they have partaken very sparingly, in order to have the more to give—among the poor women of the place.

A similar practice prevails in Ireland. There the churn staff, not the corn sheaf, is fashioned into the form of a woman, and called ' Brideog,' little Bride. The girls come clad in

their best, and the girl who has the prettiest dress gives it to Brideog. An ornament something like a Maltese cross is affixed to the breast of the figure. The ornament is composed of straw, beautifully and artistically interlaced by the deft fingers of the maidens of Bride. It is called ' rionnag Brideog,' the star of little Bride. Pins, needles, bits of stone, bits of straw, and other things are given to Bride as gifts, and food by the mothers.

Customs assume the complexion of their surroundings, as fishes, birds, and beasts assimilate the colours of their habitats. The seas of the ' Garbh Chriocha' Rough Bounds in which the cult of Bride has longest lived, abound in beautiful iridescent shells, and the mountains in bright sparkling stones, and these are utilised to adorn the ikon of Bride. In the districts of Ireland where the figure of Bride is made, there are no shining shells, no brilliant crystals, and the girls decorate the image with artistically interlaced straw.

The older women are also busy on the Eve of Bride, and great preparations are made to celebrate her Day, which is the first day of spring. They make an oblong basket in the shape of a cradle, which they call ' leaba Bride,' the bed of Bride. It is embellished with much care. Then they take a choice sheaf of corn, generally oats, and fashion it into the form of a woman. They deck this ikon with gay ribbons from the loom, sparkling shells from the sea, and bright stones from the hill. All the sunny sheltered valleys around are searched for primroses, daisies, and other flowers that open their eyes in the morning of the year. This lay figure is called Bride, ' dealbh Bride,' the ikon of Bride. When it is dressed and decorated with all the tenderness and loving care the women can lavish upon it, one woman goes to the door of the house, and standing on the step with her hands on the jambs, calls softly into the darkness, ' Tha leaba Bride deiseil,' Bride's bed is ready. To this a ready woman behind replies, ' Thigeadh Bride steach, is e beatha Bride,' Let Bride come in, Bride is welcome. The woman at the door again addresses Bride, ' A Bhrìde ! Bhrìde thig a steach, tha do leaba deanta. Gleidh an teach dh'an Triana,' Bride ! Bride, come thou in, thy bed is made. Preserve the house for the Trinity. The women then place the ikon of Bride with great ceremony in the bed they have so carefully prepared for it. They place a small straight white wand (the bark being peeled off) beside the figure. This wand is variously called ' slatag Bride,' the little rod of Bride, ' slachdan Bride,' the little wand of Bride, and ' barrag Bride,' the birch of Bride. The wand is generally of birch, broom, bramble, white willow, or other sacred wood, ' crossed' or banned wood being carefully avoided. A similar rod was given to the kings of Ireland at their coronation, and to the Lords of the Isles at their instatement. It was straight to typify justice, and white to signify peace and purity—bloodshed was not to be needlessly caused. The women then level the ashes on the hearth, smoothing and dusting them over carefully. Occasionally the ashes, surrounded by a roll of cloth, are placed on a board to safeguard them against disturbance from draughts or other contingencies. In the early morning the family closely scan the ashes. If they find the marks of the wand of Bride they rejoice, but if they find ' lorg Bride,' the footprint of Bride, their joy is very great, for this is a sign that Bride was present with them during the night, and is favourable to them, and that there is increase in family, in flock, and in field during the coming year. Should there be no marks on the ashes, and no traces of Bride's presence, the family are dejected. It is to them a sign that she is offended, and will not hear their call. To propitiate her and gain her ear the family offer oblations and burn incense. The oblation generally is a cockerel, some say a pullet, buried alive near the junction of three streams, and the incense is burnt on the hearth when the family retire for the night.

In the Highlands and Islands St. Bride's Day was also called ' La Cath Choileach,' Day of Cock-fighting. The boys brought cocks to the school to fight. The most successful cock was called ' coileach buadha,' victor cock, and its proud owner was elected king of the school for the year. A defeated bird was called ' fuidse,' craven, ' coileach fuidse,' craven cock. All the

defeated, maimed, and killed cocks were the perquisites of the schoolmaster. In the Lowlands ‘ La Coinnle,’ Candlemas Day, was the day thus observed.

It is said in Ireland that Bride walked before Mary with a lighted candle in each hand when she went up to the Temple for purification. The winds were strong on the Temple heights, and the tapers were unprotected, yet they did not flicker nor fail. From this incident Bride is called ‘ Bride boillsge,’ Bride of brightness. This day is occasionally called ‘ La Fheill Bride nan Coinnle,’ the Feast Day of Bride of the Candles, but more generally ‘ La Fheill Moire nan Coinnle,’ the Feast Day of Mary of the Candles—Candlemas Day.

The serpent is supposed to emerge from its hollow among the hills on St. Bride’s Day, and a propitiatory hymn was sung to it. Only one verse of this hymn has been obtained, apparently the first. It differs in different localities : —

‘ Moch maduim Bhrìde,
Thig an nimhir as an toll,
Cha bhoin mise ris an nimhir,
Cha bhoin an nimhir num.’

To-day is the Day of Bride,
The serpent shall come from the hole,
I will not molest the serpent,
Nor will the serpent molest me.

Other versions say : —

‘ La Feill ua Bhrìde,
Thig nighean Imhir as a chnoc,
Cha bhean mise do nighean Imhir,
’S cha dean i mo lochd.’

The Feast Day of the Bride,
The daughter of Ivor shall come from the knoll,
I will not touch the daughter of Ivor,
Nor shall she harm me.

‘ La Fheill Bhrìde brisgeanach
Thig an ceann de ’n chaiteanach,
Thig nighean Iomhair as an tom
Le fonn feadalaich.’

On the Feast Day of Bride,
The head will come off the ‘ caiteanach,’
The daughter of Ivor will come from the knoll
With tuneful whistling.

‘ Thig an nathair as an toll
La donn Bhrìde,
Ged robb trì traighean dh’ an t-sneachd
Air leachd an lair.’

The serpent will come from the hole
On the brown Day of Bride,
Though there should be three feet of snow
On the flat surface of the ground.

The ‘ daughter of Ivor ’ is the serpent ; and it is said that the serpent will not sting a descendant of Ivor, he having made ‘ tabhar agus tuis, ’ offering and incense, to it, thereby securing immunity from its sting for himself and his seed for ever.

‘ La Bride nam brig ban
Thig an rigen ran a tom,
Cha bhoin mise ris an rigen ran,
’S cha bhoin an rigen ran rium. ’

On the day of Bride of the white hills
The noble queen will come from the knoll,
I will not molest the noble queen,
Nor will the noble queen molest me.

These lines would seem to point to serpent-worship. One of the most curious customs of Bride’s Day was the pounding of the serpent in effigy. The following scene was described to the writer by one who was present :—‘ I was one of several guests in the hospitable house of Mr. John Tolmie of Uignis, Skye. One of my fellow-guests was Mrs. Macleod, widow of Major Macleod of Stein, and daughter of Flora Macdonald. Mrs. Macleod was known among her friends as “ Major Ann. ” She combined the warmest of hearts with the sternest of manners, and was the admiration of old and young for her wit, wisdom, and generosity. When told that her son had fallen in a duel with the celebrated Glengarry—the Ivor MacIvor of *Waverley*—she exclaimed, “ Math thu fein mo ghiullan ! math thu fein mo ghiullan ! gaol geal do mhathar fein ! Is fearr bas saoidh na gras daoidh, cha bhasaich an gaisgeach ach an aon turas, ach an gealtair iomadaidh uair ! ” —“ Good thou art my son ! good thou art my son ! thou the white love of thine own mother ! Better the hero’s death than the craven’s life ; the brave dies but once, the coward many times. ” In a company of noblemen and gentlemen at Dunvegan Castle, Mrs. Macleod, then in her 88th year, danced the reel of Tulloch and other reels, jigs, and strathspeys as lightly as a girl in her teens. Wherever she was, all strove to show Mrs. Macleod attention and to express the honour in which she was held. She accepted all these honours and attentions with grace and dignity, and without any trace of vanity or self-consciousness. One morning at breakfast at Uignis some one remarked that this was the Day of Bride. “ The Day of Bride, ” repeated Mrs. Macleod meditatively, and with a dignified bow of apology rose from the table. All watched her movements with eager curiosity. Mrs. Macleod went to the fireside and took up the tongs and a bit of peat and walked out to the doorstep. She then took off her stocking and put the peat into it, and pounded it with the tongs. And as she pounded the peat on the step, she intoned a “ rann, ” rune, only one verse of which I can remember : —

“ An diugh La Bride,
Thig an righinn as an tom,
Cha bhean mise ris an righinn,
Cha bhean an righinn rium. ”

This is the day of Bride,
The queen will come from the mound,
I will not touch the queen,
Nor will the queen touch me.

‘ Having pounded the peat and replaced her stocking, Mrs. Macleod returned to the table, apologising for her remissness in not remembering the Day earlier in the morning. I could not make out whether Mrs. Macleod was serious or acting, for she was a consummate actress and the delight of young and old. Many curious ceremonies and traditions in connection with Bride were told that morning, but I do not remember them. ’

The pounding in the stocking of the peat representing the serpent would indicate destruction rather than worship, perhaps the bruising of the serpent's head. Probably, however, the ceremony is older, and designed to symbolise something now lost.

Gaelic lore is full of sayings about serpents. These indicate close observation. 'Tha cluas nathrach aige,'—he has the ear of a serpent (he hears keenly but does not speak); 'Tha a bhana-bhuitseach lubach mar an nathair,'—the witch-woman is crooked as the serpent; 'Is e an t-iorbhall is neo-chronail dhiot, cleas na nathrach nimhe,'—the tail is the least harmful of thee, the trick of the serpent venomous.

'Ge min do chraicinn
Is nimheil gath do bheil,
Tha tlui mar an nathair lachdann,
Gabh do rathad fein.'

Though smooth be thy skin
Venomous is the sting of thy mouth,
Thou art like the dun serpent,
Take thine own road.

'Bean na niaise te neo-fhialaidli,
'S i Ian do na briatbra blath,
Tha i mar an nathair riabhach,
'S gath na spiocaicheachd na dail.'

The beauteous woman, ungenerous,
And she full of warm words,
Is like the brindled serpent,
And the sting of greed is in her.

The people of old practised early retiring, early rising, and diligent working : —

'Suipeir us soillse Oidhch Fheil Bride,
Cadail us soillse Oidhch Fheil Paruig.'

Supper and light the Night of St. Bride,
Sleep and light the Night of St. Patrick.

The dandelion is called 'bearnan Bride,' the little notched of Bride, in allusion to the serrated edge of the petal. The linnet is called 'bigein Bride,' little bird of Bride. In Lismore the oyster-catcher is called 'gille Bride,' page of Bride : —

'Gille Bride bochd,
Gu de bhigil a th' ort?'

Poor page of Bride,
What cheeping ails thee?

In Uist the oyster-catcher is called 'Bridein,' bird of Bride. There was once an oyster-catcher in Uist, and he was so elated with his own growing riches that he thought he would like to go and see something of the great world around him. He went away, leaving his three beautiful, olive-brown, blotched black-and-grey eggs in the rough shingle among the stones of the seashore. Shortly after he left the grey crow came hopping round to see what was doing in the place. In her peering she saw the three eggs of the oyster-catcher in the hollow among the rocks, and she thought she would like to try the taste of one of them, as a variant

upon the refuse of land and shore. So she drove her strong bill through the broad end of an egg, and seizing it by the shell, carried it up to the mossy holm adjoining. The quality of the egg was so pleasing to the grey crow that she went back for the second, and then for the third egg. The grey crow was taking the last suck of the last egg when the oyster-catcher was heard returning with his usual fuss and flurry and hurry-scurry. He looked at his nest, but there were no eggs there—no, not one, and the oyster-catcher knew not what to do or say. He flew about to and fro, hither and thither in great distress, crying out in the bitterness of his heart, ‘ Co dh’ ol na h-uibhean ? Co dh’ ol na h-uibhean ? Cha chuala mi riamh a leithid ! Cha chuala mi riamh a leithid !’ Who drank the eggs? Who drank the eggs ? I never heard the like! I never heard the like! The grey crow listened now on this side and now on that, and gave two more precautionary wipes to her already well-wiped bill in the fringy, friendly moss, then looked up with much affected innocence and called out in deeply sympathetic-tones, ‘ Cha chuala na sinne sinn fhein sin, ged is sinn is sine ’s an aite,’ No, nor heard we ourselves that, though we are older in the place.

Bride is said to preside over the different seasons of the year and to bestow their functions upon them according to their respective needs. Some call January ‘ am mios marbh,’ the dead month, some December, while some apply the terms, ‘ na tri miosa marbh,’ the three dead months, ‘ an raidhe marbh,’ the dead quarter, and ‘ raidhe marbh na bliadhna,’ the dead quarter of the year, to the winter months when nature is asleep. Bride with her white wand is said to breathe life into the mouth of the dead Winter and to bring him to open his eyes to the tears and the smiles, the sighs and the laughter of Spring. The venom of the cold is said to tremble for its safety on Bride’s Day and to flee for its life on Patrick’s Day. There is a saying : —

‘ Chiur Bride miar ’s an abhuinn
 La na Feill Bride
 Us dh’ fhalbh mathair ghair an fhuachd.
 Us nigh i basan anns an abhuinn
 La na Feill Padruig
 Us dh’ fhalbh mathair ghair an fhuachd.’

Bride put her finger in the river
 On the Feast Day of Bride
 And away went the hatching mother of the cold,
 And she bathed her palms in the river
 On the Feast Day of Patrick
 And away went the conception mother of the cold.

Another version says : —

‘ Chuir Brighid a has ann,
 Chuir Moire a cas ann,
 Chuir Padruig a chlach fhuar ann.’ (?)

Bride put her palm in it,
 Mary put her foot in it,
 Patrick put the cold stone in it,

alluding to the decrease in cold as the year advances. In illustration of this is ‘ Chuir Moire meoirean aims an uisge La Fheill Bride us thug i neimb as, ’s La Fheill Padruig nigh i lamhan aim ’s dh’ fhalbh am fuachd uil as,’ Mary put her fingers in the water on Bride’s Feast Day and the venom went out of it, and on Patrick’s Feast Day she bathed her hands in it and all the cold-went out of it.

Poems narrating the events of the seasons were current. That mentioning the occurrences of Spring begins : —

‘ La Bride breith an earraich
Thig an dearrais as an tom,
Theircar “ tri-bhliadhnaich ” ri aighean,
Bheirear gearrain chon nam fonn.’

The Day of Bride, the birthday of Spring,
The serpent emerges from the knoll,
‘ Three-year-olds ’ is applied to heifers,
Garrons are taken to the fields.

In Uist the flocks are counted and dedicated to Bride on her Day.

‘ La Fheill Bride hoidheach
Cunntar spreidh air mninteach.
Cuirear fitheach chon na uide,
’S cuirear rithis rocais.’

On the Feast Day of beautiful Bride
The flocks are counted on the moor.
The raven goes to prepare his nest,
And again goes the rook.

‘ Nead air Bhright, ugh air Inid, ian air Chasg,
Mar a bith aig an fhitheach bithidh am bas.’

Nest at Brigit, egg at Shrove, chick at Easter,
If the raven has not he has death.

The raven is the first bird to nest, closely followed by the mallard and the rook. It is affirmed that —

‘ Co fad ’s a theid a ghaoth ’s an dorus
La na Feill Bride,
Theid an cabhadh ainn an dorus
La na Feill Paruig.’

On the Feast Day of Patrick.
As far as the wind shall enter the door
On the Feast Day of Bride,
The snow shall enter the door

In Barra, lots are cast for the ‘ iolachan iasgaich,’ fishing-banks, on Bride’s Day. These fishing-banks of the sea are as well known and as accurately defined by the fishermen of Barra as are the qualities and boundaries of their crofts on land, and they apportion them with equal care. Having ascertained among themselves the number of boats going to the long-line fishing, the people divide the banks accordingly. All go to church on St. Bride’s Day. After reciting the virtues and blessings of Bride, and the examples to be drawn from her life, the priest reminds his hearers that the great God who made the land and all thereon, also made the sea and all therein, and that ‘ murachan na mara agus tachar na tire,’ ‘ cuilidh Chaluim agus cuilidh Mhoire,’ the wealth of sea and the plenty of land, the treasury of Columba and the treasury of Mary, are His gift to them that follow Him and call upon His name, on rocky hill or on crested wave. The priest urges upon them to avoid disputes and quarrels over their fishing, to remember the dangers of the deep and the precariousness of life, and in their fish-

ing to remember the poor, the widow and the orphan, now left to the fatherhood of God and to the care of His people. Having come out of church, the men cast lots for the fishing-banks at the church door. After this they disperse to their homes, all talking loudly and discussing their luck or unluck in the drawing of the lots. A stranger would be apt to think that the people were quarrelling. But it is not so. The simultaneous talking is their habit, and the loudness of their speaking is the necessity of their living among the noise of winds and waves, whether on sea or on shore. Like the people of St. Kilda, the people of Barra are warmly attached to one another, the joy of one and the grief of another being the joy and grief of all.

The same practice of casting lots for their fishing-banks prevails among the fisher-folks of the Lofodin Islands, Norway.

SLOINNEADH na Ban-naomh Bride,
Lasair dhealach oir, muime chorr Chrìosda.
Bride nighinn Dughail duinn,
Mhic Aoidh, mhic Airt, mhic Cuinn,
Mhic Crearair, mhic Cis, mhic Carraig, mhic
Carruinn.

Gach la agus gach oidhche
Nì mi sloinntireachd air Bride,
Cha mharbhar mi, cha spuilllear mi,
Cha charcar mi, cha chiurar mi,
Cha mhu dh' fhagas Chrìosd an dearmad mi.

Cha loisg teine, grian, no gealach mi,
Cha bhath luin, li, no sala mi,
Cha reub saighid sithich, no sibhich mi,
Us mi fo chomaraig mo Naomh Muire
Is i mo chaomh mhuime Bride.

From these traditional observations, it will be seen that Bride and her services are near to the hearts and lives of the people. In some phases of her character she is much more to them than Mary is.

Dedications to Bride are common throughout Great Britain and Ireland.

The genealogy of the holy maiden Bride,
Radiant flame of gold, noble foster-mother of Christ.
Bride the daughter of Dugall the brown,
Son of Aodh, son of Art, son of Conn,
Son of Crearair, son of Cis, son of Carmac, son of
Carruin.

Every day and every night
That I say the genealogy of Bride,
I shall not be killed, I shall not be harried,
I shall not be put in cell, I shall not be wounded,
Neither shall Christ leave me in forgetfulness.

No fire, no sun, no moon shall burn me,
No lake, no water, nor sea shall drown me,
No arrow of fairy nor dart of fay shall wound me,
And I under the protection of my Holy Mary,
And my gentle foster-mother is my beloved Bride.

BRIDE BAN-COBHAIR

THAINIG thugam cobhair,
Moire gheal us Bride ;
Mar a rug Anna Moire,
Mar a rug Moire Criosda,
Mar a rug Eile Eoin Baistidh
Gun mhar-bhith dha dhi,
Cuidich thusa mise 'm asaid,
Cuidich mi a Bhrìde !

Mar a gheineadh Criosd am Moire
Comhliont air gach laimh,
Cobhair thusa mise, mhoime,
An gein a thoir bho 'n chnaimh,
'S mar a chomhn thu Oigh an t-solais,
Gun or, gun odh, gun ni,
Comhn orm-sa, 's mor m' orrais,
Comhn orm a Bhrìde !

BRIDE THE AID-WOMAN

There came to me assistance,
Mary fair and Bride ;
As Anna bore Mary,
As Mary bore Christ,
As Eile bore John the Baptist
Without flaw in him,
Aid thou me in mine unbearing,
Aid me, O Bride !

As Christ was conceived of Mary
Full perfect on every hand,
Assist thou me, foster-mother,
The conception to bring from the bone,
And as thou didst aid the Virgin of joy,
Without gold, without corn, without kine,
Aid thou me, great is my sickness,
Aid me, O Bride !

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