

*Fin Maccool and The Daughter of the King of White Nation.*

Hero-tales of Ireland

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ONE day Fin MacCool and the Fenians of Erin set out on a hunt from the Castle of Rahonain, and never stopped till they came near Brandon Creek, and started a hornless deer in a field called Parcnagri.

Over hills and through valleys they chased the deer till they came to Aun na Vian (the river of the Fenians). The deer sprang from one side of this river toward the other, but before reaching the bank was taken on a spear by Dyeermud.

When the hunt was over, Fin and the Fenians went back to the place where the deer had been started at Parcnagri, for they always returned to the spot where they roused the first game, and there they feasted.

The feast was nearly ready when Fin saw a boat sailing in toward the harbor of Ard na Conye (Smerwick Harbor), and no one on board but a woman.

“ ’Tis a wonder to me,” said Fin, “ that one woman should manage a boat under sail on the sea. I have a great wish to know who that woman is.”

“ ’Tis not long I would be in bringing you tidings,” said Dyeermud.

Fin laughed ; for Dyeermud was fond of the women. “ I would not refuse you permission to go, but that I myself will go, and be here before our feast is ready.”

Fin went down from Parcnagri, and stood at the strand of Ard na Conye. Though great was his speed, the woman was there before him, and her boat anchored safely four miles from shore.

Fin saluted the woman with friendly greeting ; and she returned the salute in like manner.

“ Will you tell me, kind man, where I am now ?” asked the woman.

“ In the harbor of Ard na Conye.”

“ Thanks to you for that answer,” said the woman. “ Can you tell where is Fin MacCool’s dwelling-place ?”

“ Wherever Fin MacCool’s dwelling-place is, I am that man myself.”

“ Thanks to you a second time,” said the woman ; “ and would you play a game of chess for a sentence ?”

“ I would,” replied Fin, “ if I had my own board and chessmen.”

“ I will give you as good as your own,” said the woman.

“ I have never refused, and never asked another to play,” said Fin. “ I will play with you.”

They sat down, and Fin won the first game.

“What is your sentence, Fin MacCool?” asked the woman.

“I put you under bonds of heavy enchantment,” said Fin, “not to eat twice at the one table, nor to sleep two nights in the one bed, till you bring a white steed with red bridle and saddle to me, and the same to each man of the Fenians of Erin.”

“You are very severe, O Fin,” said the woman. “I beg you to soften the sentence.”

“No,” answered Fin, “you must give what is asked; I will not soften the sentence.”

“Look behind,” said the woman.

Fin turned, and saw a white steed for himself, and the like for each man of the Fenians of Erin, all with red bridles and saddles.

“Play a second game, now,” said the woman.

They played, and she won.

“Hasten, kind woman,” said Fin, “and tell me the sentence.”

“Too soon for you to hear it,” said she.

“The sooner I hear it, the better,” said Fin.

“I put you, O Fin, under bonds of heavy enchantment to be my husband till a shovel puts seven of its fulls of earth on your head.”

“Soften the sentence, good woman,” said Fin; “for this cannot be.”

“The gad may tighten on my throat if I do,” said the woman; “for you did not soften your sentence on me.”

“Do you stop here,” said Fin to the woman, “till I give my men the steeds, tell them how I am, and return. But where are the steeds?”

“If I was bound by sentence to bring you the steeds, I was not bound to keep them.”

Fin went his way to Parcnagri, where the Fenians were waiting, and though dinner was ready, no man tasted it from that day to this.

Fin posted his men on watch at various harbors, left Dyeermud on Beann Dyeermud (Dyeermud’s peak), just above the harbor of Ard na Conye, and went to the woman. She took his hand; they sprang together, and came down in the woman’s boat, which was four miles from land.

The woman weighed anchor, raised sails, and never stopped ploughing the weighty sea till she came to the White Nation in the Eastern World, where her father was king. She entered the harbor, cast anchor, and landed.

“ When you were at home,” said the woman to Fin, “ you were Chief of the Fenians of Erin, and held in great honor ; I will not that men in this kingdom belittle you, and I am the king’s only daughter. From the place where we are standing to my father’s castle there is a narrow and a short path. I’ll hasten forward on that. There is another way, a broad and long one ; do you choose that. I fear that for you there will not be suitable seat and a place in the castle, unless I am there to prepare it before you.”

Fin went the long way, and the woman took the short path. It was many a day since the woman had seen her own father. For twenty-one years she had travelled the world, learning witchcraft and every enchantment. She hurried, and was soon at the door of the castle. Great was the welcome before her, and loud was the joy of her father. Servants came running, one after another, with food, and one thing better than the other.

“ Father,” said she, “ I will taste neither food nor drink till you tell me the one thing to please your mind most.”

“ My child,” said the king, “ you have but small chance of coming at that. The one thing on earth to delight my mind most is the head of Fin MacCool of Erin. If there was a poor man of my name, he would not be myself if I had that head.”

“ Many a year do I know your desire, my father ; and it was not for me to come back after twenty-one years without bringing Fin’s head. You have it now, without losing one drop of your blood or a single night’s rest. Fin is coming hither over the broad road ; and do you put men out over against him with music to meet him, and when he comes between your two store-houses, let the men dash him against one corner and the other, and give every reason worse than another to bring him to death.”

The king obeyed his daughter, and sent out guards and musicians.

Fin, going over the broad road, saw men coming with music, and said to himself, “ Great is my joy, or may be my sorrow, for I fear that my life will be ended in trouble.”

The men received Fin with shouts, and, running up, pushed him from side to side till he was bruised and bleeding ; then they brought him into the castle.

Glad was the king, and far was the laugh heard that he let out of himself at sight of Fin MacCool.

The king gave command then to bind the captive, putting seven knots of cord on every joint of his body, to throw him into a deep vault, and give him one ounce of black bread with a pint of cold water each day.

Fin was put in the vault, and a very old little woman brought his daily allowance of food.

On his eighth day in prison, Fin said to the old little woman, “ Go now to the king, and say that I have a petition. I ask not my head, as I would not get it ; but say that my right arm is rotting. I ask to be free in the garden for one hour ; let him send with me men, if he chooses.”

The old woman told the request ; and the king said, “ I will grant that with willingness ; for it will not take his head from me.”

Thirty armed men were sent, and Fin was set free in the garden. While walking, he asked the chief of the thirty, “ Have you musical instruments ?”

“ We have not,” said the chief ; “ we forgot them. If they were here, we would give music; for I pity you, Fin MacCool.”

“ When I was at home,” said Fin, “ having the care and charge over men, we had music ; and, if it please you, I will play some of the music of Erin.”

“ I would be more than glad if you would do that,” said the chief.

The Fenians of Erin had a horn called the borabu ; and when one of them went wandering he took the borabu with him, as Fin had done this time. It was the only instrument on which he could play. Fin blew the horn, and the sound of it came to Beann Dyeermud from the Eastern World. Dyeermud himself was in deep sleep at the moment ; but the sound entered his right ear and came out through the left. The spring that he made then took him across seven ridges of land before he was firm on his feet. Dyeermud, wiping his eyes, said, “ Great is the trouble that is on you, Fin ; for the sound of the borabu has never yet entered my right ear unless you were in peril.”

Then, going at a spring to Cuas a Wudig, he found the remains of an old currachan, and, drawing out a chisel, knife, and axe, made a fine boat of the old one. With one kick of his right foot, he sent the boat seven leagues from land, and, following with a bound, dropped into it. He hoisted sails, not knowing whither to go, north, south, east, or west, but held on his way, and ploughed the mighty ocean before him, till, as good luck would have it, he reached the same harbor to which the woman had come with Fin MacCool.

Dyeermud saw the boat which had brought them, and said, laughing heartily, “ I have tidings of Fin ; he’s in this kingdom in some place, for this is the boat that brought him from Erin.”

Dyeermud cast anchor, and, landing, drew his sword ; and a man seeing his look at that moment would have wished to be twenty miles distant. On he went, walking, till he had passed through a broad tract of country. On the high-road, he saw men, women, and children all going one way, and none any other. High and low, they were hurrying and hastening ; the man behind outstripping the man in front.

Dyeermud sat on a ditch to rest, and soon a wayfarer halted in front of him. “ Where are these people all hastening ?” asked Dyeermud.

“ From what country or place are you,” asked the man, “ not to know whither all these people are going ?”

“ Surely I am not of this place or your country,” said Dyeermud ; “ and I care not to know whither you or these people are going, since you cannot give a civil answer to an honest question.”

“ Be patient, good man,” said the wayfarer. “ From what country or place are you ?”

“ From Erin,” said Dyeermud.

“ I suppose, then, you have known Fin Mac-Cool, or have heard of him ?”

“ I have, indeed,” said Dyeermud.

“ If you take my advice,” said the wayfaring man, “ you’ll go out on the same road by which you came in, or else not acknowledge Fin Mac Cool of Erin, for that man will be hanged this day before the king’s castle ; the gallows is ready and built for him. When the life is gone out of him, his head will be struck off, and left as a plaything to please the king’s mind forever. The body is to be dragged between four wild horses ; and the same will be done to you, if you acknowledge Fin MacCool of Erin.”

“ I thank you for your answer,” said Dyeermud ; “ and only because I don’t like to lay a weighty hand on you, you would never again give advice like that to a man of the Fenians of Erin. But show me the way to the castle.”

“ If you were on the top of that mountain,” said the wayfarer, pointing northward, “ you would see the king’s castle.”

Dyeermud went on in strong haste, and from the mountain-top saw the king’s castle. On the green field in front of it so many people had gathered to see Fin MacCool’s death, that if a pin were to drop from the middle of the sky it could not fall without striking the head of man, woman, or child. When Dyeermud came down to the field, it was useless to ask for room or for passage, since each wished himself to be nearest the place of Fin’s death. Dyeermud drew his sword ; and as a mower goes through the grass of a meadow on a harvest day, or a hawk through a flock of starlings on a chilly March morning, so did Dyeermud cut his way through the crowd till he came to the gallows. He turned then toward the castle, struck the pole of combat, and far was the sound of his blow heard. The king put his head through the window.

“ Who struck that blow ?” asked the king. “ He must be an enemy !”

“ You could not expect a friend to do the like of that,” replied Dyeermud. “ I struck the blow.”

“ Who are you ?” cried the king.

“ My name when in Erin is Dyeermud.”

“ What brought you hither ?” asked the king.

“ I came,” replied Dyeermud, “ to succor my chief, Fin MacCool.”

The king let a laugh out of him, and asked, “ Have any more men come besides you ?”

“ When you finish with me, you may be looking for others,” said Dyeermud.

“ What do you want to-day ?” asked the king.

“ I want to see Fin MacCool, or to fight for him.”

“ Fight you may,” said the king ; “ but see him you will not.”

“ Well,” said Dyeermud, “ it is too early in the evening for me to rest without having the blood of enemies on my sword, so send out against me seven hundred of your best-armed

men on my right hand, seven hundred on my left, seven hundred behind me, and twenty one hundred before my eyesight.”

Fin’s death was delayed ; and the men that he asked for put out against Dyeermud. Coming sunset, he had the last head cut from the last body, and, going through his day’s work, made heaps of the bodies, and piles of the heads.

“ Will you give me shelter from the night air ?” asked Dyeermud, then turning to the castle.

“ I will, and welcome,” said the king, pointing to a long house at a distance,

Dyeermud went to the long house, and to his wonder saw there a troop of wild small men without faith, but no food, fire, or bed. These men were the agents of the king, who put to death all people who went against his law. Though a small race of people, they were strong through their numbers.

When Dyeermud entered, they rose, and began to fill every cranny and crack they could find in the building.

“ Why are you doing that ?” inquired Dyeermud.

“ For fear that you might escape ; for it’s our duty to eat you.”

Dyeermud then seized by the ankles the one who gave him this answer, and flailed the others with this man, till he wore him down to the two shin-bones ; all the others were killed saving one, who was chief. The small chief untouched by Dyeermud fell on his knees, and cried out, “ Spare my head ! O Dyeermud, there is not a place where you will put one foot, in which I will not put my two feet, nor a place on which you’ll put one hand, in which I will not put my two hands ; and I can be a good servant to you.”

“ No man ever asked his head of me with peace, but I gave it to him,” said Dyeermud.

Sitting down then, Dyeermud asked, “ Have you any food ?”

“ I have not,” said the small chief. “ We have nothing to eat but men sent here from one time to another. If you go to the king’s bakery ; you may find loaves of bread.”

Dyeermud went to the baker, and asked, “ Will you give me two loaves of bread ?”

“ Hardened ruffian,” said the baker, “ how dare you come to this place for bread, or any other thing, you who killed so many of our friends and near neighbors ? Go out of this, or I’ll burn you in the oven.”

“ I am thankful,” said Dyeermud ; “ but before you can do to me what you threaten, I will do the same to you.”

With that he opened the oven-door, threw in the baker, and burned him to death. Then he caught up as much bread as he could carry, and went to the long house ; but, being used to good food, could not eat bread alone, and asked the small chief, “ Where can I find drink and meat to go with the bread ?”

“ There is a slaughter-house behind us, not far from here,” said the chief, “ and the head butcher might give you a piece to roast or boil.”

Dyeermud went then to the butcher. “ Will you give me meat for supper ?” asked he.

“ You scoundrel from Erin, if you don’t leave this place I’ll cut off your head on the block here, and separate it from the body.”

“ Never have I met better people to oblige a stranger ; but before you can do to me what you promise, I will do the like to you.”

So Dyeermud caught the butcher, stretched him across the block, and with the butcher’s own cleaver struck the head off him.

Turning around, Dyeermud saw two fine stalled bullocks dressed for the king’s table. Taking one under each arm, he brought them to the long house, and cut them up with his sword ; then the small chief cooked nicely what was needed. The two ate a hearty supper.

Next morning Dyeermud rose up refreshed, and went to the castle, where he struck the pole of combat.

“ What is your wish ?” asked the king.

“ To see Fin MacCool, or get battle.”

“ How many men do you wish for ?”

“ One thousand of your best armed men on my right hand, as many on my left, as many behind me, and twice three thousand in front of my eyesight.”

The champions were sent out to Dyeermud. They went at him, and he at them ; they were that way all day, and when the sun was setting there was not a man of the nine thousand that had his head on him.

In the evening he made piles of the bodies and heaps of the heads.

Then he went back to the long house, and it was better there than the first night ; the small chief had food and drink ready in plenty.

The combats continued for seven days in succession as on this day. On the eighth morning, when Dyeermud appeared, the king asked for a truce.

“ I will grant it,” said Dyeermud, “ if you give me a sight of Fin MacCool.”

“ A sight of Fin MacCool you are not to have,” said the king, “ till you bring the hound-whelp with the golden chain.”

“ Where can I find that whelp ?” inquired Dyeermud.

“ The world is wide,” said the king. “ Follow your nose. It will lead you. If I were to say ’t is in the west the whelp is, maybe ’t is in the east he’d be ; or in the north, maybe he’d be in

the south. So here and now you cannot blame me if I say not where he is.”

“ Well,” said Dyeermud, “ as I am going for the whelp, I ask you to loose Fin MacCool from what bonds he is in, to place him in the best chamber of your castle, to give him the best food and drink, the best bed to lie on, and, besides, the amusements most pleasing to his mind.”

“ What you ask shall be granted,” said the king, who thought to himself, “Your head and Fin’s will be mine in the end.”

Dyeermud went home to the long house, sat down in his chair, and gloomy was his face.

“ O Dyeermud,” said the small chief, “ you are not coming in with such looks, nor so bright in the face, as when you left here this morning. I’ll lay my head as a wager that you are sent to bring the hound-whelp with the golden chain.”

“ True,” said Dyeermud, “ and where to find him I know not.”

“ Eat your supper, then sleep, and to-morrow I’ll show you where that whelp is. Indeed, it is the task you have on you ; for many a good champion lost his head in striving to come at that whelp.”

Next morning Dyeermud and the small chief set out, and toward evening they came within sight of a grand, splendid castle.

“ Now,” said the small chief, “ this castle was built by the Red Gruagach Blind-on-One-Side ; within is the hound-whelp with the golden chain ; and now let me see what you’ll do.”

Dyeermud entered the castle, where he found a great chamber, and in it the gruagach asleep. The hound was tied to the gruagach’s bed with a golden chain. Untying the chain from the bed, Dyeermud carried whelp and chain with him under his arm, and hurried on homeward. When he had gone three miles of road, he turned to the small chief and said, “ That was a mean act I did to the gruagach.”

“ What’s on you now ?” asked the small chief.

“ It would be hard for a man to call me anything higher than a thief ; for I have only stolen the man’s whelp and golden chain.” So Dyeermud went back to the gruagach, and put the hound-whelp and chain where he had found them. As the gruagach was sleeping, Dyeermud struck a slight blow on his face to rouse him.

“ Oh,” said the gruagach, “ I catch the foul smell of a man from Erin. He must be Dyeermud, who has destroyed the champions of our country.”

“ I am the man that you mention,” said Dyeermud ; “ and I am not here to ask satisfaction of you or thanks, but to wear out my anger on your body and flesh, if you refuse what I want of you.”

“ And what is it that you want of me ?” asked the gruagach.

“ The hound-whelp with the golden chain.”

“ You will not get him from me, nor will another.”

“ Be on your feet, then,” said Dyeermud. “ The whelp is mine, or your head in place of him ; if not, you’ll have my head.”

One champion put his back to the front wall, and the other to the rear wall ; then the two went at each other wrestling, and were that way till the roof of the house was ready to fly from the walls, such was the strength in the hands of the combatants.

“ Shame on you both !” cried the gruagach’s wife, running out. “ Shame on two men like you to be tumbling the house on my children.”

“ True,” said Dyeermud. And the two, without letting go the hold that they had, went through the roof with one bound, and came down on the field outside. The first wheel that Dyeermud knocked out of the gruagach, he put him in the hard ground to his ankles, the second to his hips, and the third to his neck.

“ Suffer your head to be cut off, O gruagach.”

“ Spare me, Dyeermud, and you’ll get the hound-whelp with the golden chain, and my good wish and desire.”

“ If you had said that at first, you would not have gone through this hardship or kindled my anger,” said Dyeermud. With that he pulled out the gruagach, and spared his head.

The two spent that night as two brothers, eating and drinking of the best, and in the morning the gruagach gave Dyeermud the whelp with the golden chain.

Dyeermud went home with the small chief, and went to the castle next morning.

“ Have you brought the hound-whelp with the golden chain ?” asked the king.

“ I have,” answered Dyeermud ; “ and I had no trouble in bringing them. Here they are before you.”

“ Well, am I to have them now ?” asked the king.

“ You are not,” answered Dyeermud. “ If I was bound to bring them, I was not bound to give them to you. The man who reared this whelp has a better right to him than you or I.”

Then Dyeermud went home to the long house, followed by the small chief ; and the next morning he asked battle of the king.

“ I am not ready for battle to-day,” said the king.

“ Am I to get sight of Fin MacCool ?” inquired Dyeermud.

“ You are not,” said the king, “ till you bring me an account of how the Rueful Knight Without-Laughter lost his eye and his laugh.”

“ Where can I find that knight ?” asked Dyeermud.

“ The world is wide,” said the king ; “ and it is for you alone to make out where that man is.”

Dyeermud went home to the long house, sat in his chair, dropped his head, and was gloomy.

“ O Dyeermud,” said the small chief, “ something has gone wrong to-day, and I’ll lay my head that you are sent to get knowledge of the Rueful Knight Without-Laughter ; but sit down and take supper, then sleep, and to-morrow you’ll not go astray ; I’ll lead you to where that man lives.”

Next morning the two set out together, and that evening reached the gruagach’s castle, where there was many a welcome before them, and not like the first time. The whelp was returned to his owner ; and that night was spent in pleasure by the gruagach, Dyeermud, and the small chief.

The next morning Dyeermud went forward attended by his two friends, and toward evening, came in sight of a large splendid castle. Dyeermud approached it, and when he went in, saw that he had never before set foot in a grander building.

The Rueful Knight Without-Laughter was sitting alone in his parlor at a great heavy table. His face, resting on the palm of one hand, was worn by it ; his elbow, placed on the table, had worn a deep trench in the table ; and there he sat, trusting to the one eye that was left him.

Dyeermud shook the sleeping man gently ; and when he woke, the knight welcomed Dyeermud as one of the Fenians of Erin. Dinner was made ready for all ; and when they sat down at the table, Dyeermud thrust his fork in the meat as a sign of request. “ Is there something you wish to know ?” asked the knight.

“ There is,” answered Dyeermud.

“ All in my power or possession is for you, except one thing,” said the knight, “ and ask not for that.”

“ It is that thing that brought me,” said Dyeermud. “ I’ll take no refusal. I’ll have your head or that knowledge.”

“ Well, Dyeermud, eat your dinner, and then I will tell you ; though I have never told any one yet, not even my own lawful wife.”

When the dinner was over, the knight told his story to Dyeermud, as follows—

“ I was living once in this place here, both happy and well. I had twelve sons of my own and my own wife. Each of my twelve sons had his pack of hounds. I and my wife had one pack between us. On a May morning after breakfast, I and my sons set out to hunt. We started a deer without horns, and, rushing forward in chase of her, followed on swiftly all day. Toward evening the deer disappeared in a cave. In we raced after her, and found ourselves soon in the land of small men, but saw not a trace of the deer.

“ Going to a great lofty castle, we entered, and found many people inside. The king of the small men bade us welcome, and asked had I men to prepare us a dinner. I said that I had my own twelve sons. The small men then brought in from a forest twelve wild boars. I put down twelve kettles with water to scald and dress the game. When the water was boiling, it was of

no use to us ; and we could not have softened with it one bristle on the wild boars from that day to this. Then a small man, putting the twelve boars in a row with the head of one near the tail of the other, took from the hall-door a whistle, and, blowing first on one side of the row and then on the other, made all the twelve white and clean ; then he dressed, cut, and cooked them, and we all ate to our own satisfaction.

“ In the course of the evening, the king of the small men asked had I any one who could shorten the night by showing action. I said that I had my own twelve sons. Twelve small men now rose, and drew out a long weighty chain, holding one end in their hands. My sons caught the other end, pulled against the twelve small men, and the small men against them ; but the small men soon threw a loop of the chain around the necks of my twelve sons, and swept the heads off them ; one of the small men came then with a long knife, and, opening the breasts of my sons, took out their twelve hearts, and put them all on a dish ; then they pushed me to a bench, and I had to sit with my twelve sons stretched dead there before me. Now they brought the dish to make me eat the twelve hearts for my supper. When I would not, they drove them down my throat, and gave me a blow of a fist that knocked one eye out of me. They left me that way in torment till morning ; then they opened the door, and threw me out of the castle.

“ From that day to this I have not seen my children, nor a trace of them ; and ’tis just twenty-one years, coming May-day, since I lost my twelve sons and my eye. There is not a May-day but the deer comes to this castle and shouts, ‘ Here is the deer ; but where are the hunters to follow ? ’ Now you have the knowledge, Dyeermud, of how I lost my eye and my laugh.”

“ Well,” asked Dyeermud, “ will May-day come soon in this country ? ”

“ To-morrow, as early as you will rise.”

“ Is there any chance that the deer will come in the morning ? ”

“ There is,” said the knight ; “ and you’ll not have much of the morning behind you when she’ll give a call.”

Next morning the deer shouted, “ Here is the deer ; but where are the hunters to follow ? ” and made away swiftly.

Dyeermud, the small chief, the gruagach, and the knight hurried on in pursuit. Coming evening, the knight saw the cave, and called out to Dyeermud, “ Have a care of that place ; for ’tis there she will enter.”

When the deer reached the cave, Dyeermud gave a kick with his right foot, and struck off one half her hind-quarter.

Barely was this done, when out rushed a dreadful and ugly old hag, with every tooth in her upper jaw a yard long, and she screaming, “ You hungry, scorched scoundrel from Erin, how dared you ruin the sport of the small men ? ”

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when Dyeermud made at her with his fist, and sent jaws and teeth down her throat. What the old hag did not swallow, went half a mile into the country behind her.

The hag raced on through the land of the small men, and Dyeermud with his forces made after her. When they came to the castle, the king let a loud laugh out of him.

“ Why do you give such a laugh ?” inquired Dyeermud.

“ I thought that the knight had enough the first time he came to this castle.”

“ This proves to you that he had not,” said Dyeermud ; “ or he would not be in it the second time.”

“ Well,” asked the king of the knight, “ have you any man now to cook dinner ?”

“ He has,” said Dyeermud ; “ and it’s long since you or he had the like of him. I’ll cook your dinner, and we’ll find the food.”

Out they went to a forest, and brought in twelve wild boars. Dyeermud skinned the game with his sword, dressed, cut, and cooked it. All ate to satisfaction.

Later on in the evening, the king asked the knight, “ Have you any man to show action ?”

“ He has,” said Dyeermud, “ if you will put out the same twelve men as you did the first evening.”

The king put them out ; and Dyeermud took the end of the chain to pull against them. He pulled till he sank in the floor to his ankles ; then he made a whirl of the chain, and swept their twelve heads off the small men. He opened the twelve, put their hearts on a plate, and made the king eat them. “ You forced the knight to swallow the hearts of his own sons,” said Dyeermud.

“ Walk out of the castle, and punish us no more,” cried the king. “ I’ll let out to the knight his sons, with their horses and hounds, and his own horse and hounds, if you will not come to this kingdom again.”

“ We will go if you do that,” said Dyeermud ; “ but you are not to offend the knight or his people ; if you do, I am a better guide to find you a second time than I was the first.”

The king took his rod of enchantment, went out to twelve stones, struck the first, out came the first son on horseback, and a pack of hounds after him. The king struck stone after stone till he put the twelve sons in front of the castle, with their horses and hounds ; then he struck the thirteenth stone, and the horse and hounds of the knight appeared.

The knight looked around, and saw his eye in the hole of the chimney, and as much soot on it as would manure land under two stone of seed-potatoes.

“ Look at my eye,” said the knight.

Dyeermud looked. Then the king put the eye in the head of the knight, who could see with it better than when he had it before.

Out they went now from the king, safe and sound, and never stopped till they reached the knight’s castle for dinner. When dinner was over, Dyeermud, the gruagach, and the small chief hastened on to the gruagach’s castle, and slept there.

Next day Dyeermud and the small chief went home. On the following morning, Dyeermud went to the king, told him the Rueful Knight's story, and said, "Now I must have battle, or a sight of Fin MacCool."

"Battle I'll not give you," said the king ; "and a sight of Fin MacCool you'll not have till you tell me what happened to the Lad of True Tales."

"I am sorry," said Dyeermud, "that this was not said by you sooner. It is late for me now to be tearing my shoes on strange roads, and tiring my feet in a foreign land." With that he sprang at the king, brought him down by the throat from the window to the ground, and there broke every bone in his body. Then he put the castle foundation upward, looking for Fin, and destroying all that he met, but could not find Fin till he met the old little woman.

"O Dyeermud," said she, "spare my head. I am more than a hundred years old. I have been faithful to Fin since he came here. I have never refused to do what he asked of me."

"Your head shall be spared," replied Dyeermud, "though old life is as dear to you as it is to young people ; and take me now to where Fin is."

Dyeermud went with the old little woman to the door of Fin's chamber, and knocked. Fin knew the knock, and cried out, "Reach me your sword."

"Take it," said Dyeermud.

Fin's strength was trebled at sight of Dyeermud ; and when he grasped the sword, he swore by it, saying, "I will cut off your head if you come a foot nearer."

"You are not in your mind to speak thus to the man who has gone through so much for you."

"I am in my mind," said Fin ; "but if we were to close our arms embracing each other in friendship, we could not open them for seven days and nights. Now, the woman who brought me from Ard na Conye, the bay which we love most in Erin, save Fintra, will be here soon. Though there was nothing on earth to please the King of the White Nation more than my head, there is another good man in the world, and the king wishes his head as greatly as mine. The daughter has gone, and is using her highest endeavor to bring that head to her father ; so hasten on to the boat, Dyeermud, I will follow. If you find food, take it with you."

Dyeermud hurried off. In passing through the king's meadow he saw two fat bullocks grazing. He caught them, and, clapping one under each arm, ran off to the boat. When Fin came, he found both bullocks skinned and dressed there before him.

They weighed anchor now. and raised sails for Erin, ploughing the weighty sea before them night and day. Once Fin said to Dyeermud, "Look behind." Dyeermud looked, but saw nothing.

Three hours later, Fin said, "Look behind, and look keenly."

Dyeermud looked, and cried, "I see behind us in the sky some bird like an eagle, and flashes of fire blazing out from her beak."

“ Oh, we are caught at last, and it’s a bad place we are in on the sea ; we cannot fight here.”

The bird was coming nearer, and gaining ; but the wind favored, filled every sail, and sent them bounding along till they were within five leagues of land ; then they made one spring, and came down in Ferriter’s Cove.

No sooner had they landed, than the bird perched on the boat, turned it over, stood on the bottom, and from that saw Fin and Dyeermud on land. She made for them ; and the moment she touched shore became a woman.

She rushed to Fin, caught him in her arms most lovingly, and said, turning to Dyeermud, “ You are the wicked man who put words between me and my husband and parted us.”

Then, turning to Fin, she said, “ Now, my darling, come home with me. You will be King of the White Nation, and I, your loving wife.”

“ Right and true for you,” said Dyeermud. “ It’s the good wife and friend you were to this man ; and now I ask how long must he be your husband ?”

“ Till a shovel puts seven of its fulls of earth on his head.”

Dyeermud drew his sword, and struck a champion’s blow on a ridge of land that was near him ; he was so enraged that he made a deep glen with that blow ; then he caught Fin, and, stretching him in the glen, thrust his sword in the earth, and, throwing it as with a shovel on Fin, counted one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. “ Your time is up with Fin,” said he to the king’s daughter ; “ he is in his own country, and you are a stranger. Take him a second time if you can, and I pledge you the faith of a champion that I will not put words between you.”

The woman stooped down to put away the seven shovels of earth, and said to Fin while she was working, “ We’ll both be happy this time.”

With that Dyeermud gave her one blow of his fist on the left ear, and sent her spinning through the air. She never stopped till she fell at the edge of the ocean, and became Fail Mahisht ; and not another cliff in Erin has so many limpets and periwinkles on it as that one.

So the daughter of the King of the White Nation gives much food to people in Erin from that day to this.

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