

A Poem

By

## Mac Liag

A. D. 1015.

Under this year O'Reilly gives the following account of this chief Bard : — “ Mac Liag, Secretary to Brian Boroimhe, monarch of Ireland, died this year, according to the Annals of the Four Masters, who record his death in these words, ‘ Mac Liacc, .i. Muirheartach, mac Conceartaich, ard ollamh an tan righ decc,’ ‘ Mac Liag, i.e. Muirkeartagh, son of Conkeartach, at that time chief doctor (professor) of Ireland, died.’ He was author of the following works : —

“ 1. *Leabhar oiris agus annala chogthaibh agus an chathaibh Eiriond*, ‘ A book of Chronology and Annals on the wars and battles of Ireland.’ This book, notwithstanding its title, is confined to an account of the battles of Munster, during the time of Brian Boroimhe.

“ 2. A Life of Brian Boroimhe. An extract from this work was given by the late General Vallancey, in the first edition of his Irish Grammar.

“ 3. A poem of one hundred and sixty verses, (lines) beginning *Da Mhac Dheag do chinn o Chas*, ‘ Twelve sons descended from Cas,’ upon the descendants of Cas, son of Conall *Each luath*, king of Munster, A.D. 366.

“ 4. A poem of thirty-two verses, beginning *Da Mhac Dheag Chinneididh chaidh*, ‘ Twelve sons of chaste Cinneide,’ giving an account of the twelve sons of Kennedy, father of Brian Boroimhe.

“ 5. A poem of forty-four verses, beginning *A Chinn-Choradh caidhi Brian?* ‘ Oh Cinn-coradh, where is Brian ?’ upon Cinn-coradh, the palace of Brian Boroimhe. This poem is published at p. 196, Vol. II. of Hardiman’s *Irish Minstrelsy*.

“ This beautiful and pathetic poem was written by Mac Liag, after the death of Brian, in which the author laments the death of that hero, and other illustrious chiefs that used to resort to his hospitable mansion.

“ 6. A poem beginning *Aniar tainicc tuitim Briain*, ‘ Westward came the fall of Brian.’

“ 7. A poem of twenty verses, beginning *Fada bheith gan aibhneas* ; ‘ Long to be without delight.’ This short poem was written by the author when he had retired to *Innse Gall* (the Hebrides) after the death of Brian Boroimhe ; and in it he bitterly laments his absence from Cenn-coradh, (Kencora) and his want of the pleasures he was there accustomed to enjoy.”

The poem now published, we believe for the first time, is not mentioned by O'Reilly. There are copies of it in the Book of Invasions, contained in the Books of Leacan and Ballymote. This poem is also given in the Book of Dinseanchus, quoted as an authority for the origin of the name of *Carn-Conall* ; and it is curious to observe that the four copies of it differ from each other, more or less, thus showing that they had been transcribed from four different MSS. in the fourteenth century.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE BOOKS OF LEACAN AND  
BALLYMOTE.

“ The few Firbolgs who survived this battle (of Moy Tuirre) fled before the Tuath-De-Danan, and took up their residence in Arran, Isla, Rachlin, Britain, and many other islands. They afterwards brought the Fomorians with them to the second battle of Moy Tuirre to assist them against the Tuath-De-Danan. They dwelt in those islands until the establishment of the pentarchial government in Erin, when they were driven out of the isles by the Cruitni (Picts). They then came before Carbry the Heroic who gave them lands ; but, however, they could not remain with him in consequence of the weighty taxes which he imposed upon them. They then fled from him and put themselves under the protection of Olioll and Meave, from whom they obtained possessions ; and that is what has been called the Emigration of the sons of Umore. Aengus, the son of Umore, had been their king (chief) in the east. From them have been named the territories which they possessed, namely, Lough Cime got its name from Cime Cethirceann, the son of Umore ; Tawin Point in Meadridhe from Taman, son of Umore ; Dun Aengus in Aran from Aengus ; Carn Conall in Aidhne from Conall ; Magh Adhair from Adar ; Magh Asail in Munster from Asal son of Umore ; also Meann son of Umore, the Bard. So that they possessed forts and islands in and around Erin until they were driven out of them by Cuchulain. It was concerning the emigration of the sons of Umore, and the names of their chiefs and possessions, that the poet (Bard) composed the following poem.” \*

\* It may not be inappropriate to give here a brief sketch of the History of the Firbolg, for the better understanding of the subject of this poem and of the argument prefixed to it. The Firbolg are said to have landed in Ireland about thirteen centuries before the Christian era. One division of them under Slainge landed at a place called from him Invear Slainge, or the Bay of Slainge, now the harbour of Wexford, and from this Bay the river Slaney derives its name. Another division of them landed on the western coast, at the bay called Iorrus Domhnon, now Erris in Mayo, probably in Blacksod Bay. At the time of the arrival of the Firbolg, the Fomorians were masters of the country, and had reduced to a state of slavery the Nemedians who had remained in Ireland ; but the Firbolg, together with their kindred race the Nemedians, again conquered the Fomorians, and became in their turn masters of Ireland. The five Firbolg leaders divided the island amongst them into five equal parts, and the colony appears to have been formed into two great tribes, namely, the *Fir-Gallian*, a name signifying spearmen, who possessed Leinster, and are mentioned by different writers under the name of *Galenians*. The other tribe called *Fir-Domhnon* (deep diggers in the earth, i.e. agriculturists or miners or both) possessed Connaught, and are mentioned by O’Flaherty and other writers, under the name of *Firdomnians* and *Damnonians*. The Firbolg race, under nine successive kings, ruled over Ireland for a period of about eighty years, when they were conquered by the Tuath-De-Danans. The most of them fled to those places above stated and such as remained in Ireland were reduced to a state of slavery by the Danans for a period of about two hundred years. On the arrival of the Milesians from Spain, the Firbolgs assisted them in the conquest of the Danans, and they were partly restored to their ancient possessions by the Milesians, and were chiefly located in Leinster and Connaught. Some of the Firbolgs became Kings of Leinster, and they were kings of Connaught, under the Milesians, for several centuries.

MAC LIAG'S POEM.

Findaig in seanchus dia ta,  
Uair ni haithesc imarga,  
Carn for ndesich a nosa,  
Conaill caem mac Aengusa. 4

Aengus mac umoir anall,  
Do siden fa mac conall  
Is do conall do rad meadb,  
Aidne alaind ni hindearb 8

Lotur a tir chruthnech choir,  
Tar in muir muintir umoir,  
Do raigid chairfri nia fer,  
Co midi meadon gaeidel. 12

Con aitcheadar fearand dind,  
Inasdeach breag buaine dind,  
Raith cheltchair (rath cendaig) raith comair cain,  
Cnodba breag brug mna elcmair, 16

Aenach tailltean treb chearmna,  
Tlachtga na tri finneamna,  
Ach sidi sligi bridam,  
Ba head iath conaitheadur. 20

Is and conatacht cairpri  
Tar na fearaib tar fairrgi,  
Fognam teamrach la cach tuaith,  
Do threbsad erinn eachluaith. 24

Gabsad sin ceathru curu,  
Gan ni is mo gan ni is luga,  
Gabais ceithri ratha ris,  
Im urfhognam a mor lis. 28

Ceat mac meagach a muig main,  
Ros mac deadad a druim chain,  
Conall Cearnach cruas fo thuind,  
Fear incleasraid cuchulain. 32

On lo an coraigead thair,  
Na tuatha im theamraid thond glain,  
Tromaigis cairpri nia fear,  
Cis forro nas fhuilngeadar. 36

Do lotur nada co seilb,  
Co hailill agus co meidh,  
Beansat siar re fairrgi faind,  
Co dun aengusa in arrind. 40

Atnadur cimi ara loch,  
Adnadur cutru as cutloch,  
Ro gni adar theas a theach,  
Atnadur mil ar murbech. 44

Adnadur daelac ar dail,  
Raidne endach duind re thaibh,  
Adnadur beara ar a rind,  
Adnadur mod ar moid lind. 48

Ro gab ingar ceand mboirne,  
Ro gab cind ar iath oigle,  
Ar laignindi nochochel,  
Bairnech agus barannbel. 52

Ro gob chonchraid a chuid choir,  
Ar muir a ninis meadoin,  
Ro gob lathrach tulaig teand,  
Ro gab taman tamin rind. 56

Luid asal a tuaid tar tuind,  
Co riacht sa mummain morgluind,  
A tuaid na laiding do luid,  
Ar uaid druim naibind nasail. 60

Ro gob conall crich aidne,  
Conall caem cia bad shaidbri,  
Ise sin suideadug sloig,  
Muintire uile umoir. 64

On lo ro cualaig cairfri,  
Ro lia agnead a nairdi,  
Focairtear uad cidbead de,  
For a cheitri hoidide. 68

Do lodur chuici co thech.  
A craeib ruaid na cairbthech,  
luid rosa hernaib sair,  
Do luid ceat a conachtaib. 72

Tabraid damsa ar cairfri coir,  
Mor imirci mac numoir,  
No fearaid cath ceann iceand,  
Naidmmeas foraib co foirteand. 76

Lodar as co raith cruachan,  
Cethrur anglonnach uathmar,  
Traillaid troscad dein in smacht,  
Ar faichdi cruachna condacht. 80

Con atacht dib mac magach,  
Cairdi cus ara marach,  
Co ndearnad aengus in ri,  
Re cairdib a chomairli. 84

An ar cul do radad soir,  
No in tiar do biad i cruachain,  
No a triar brathar is a mac,  
Laesead dia chind i comrac. 88

Isi comairli ro chind,  
A ceand rosa do rad cing,  
Co conaill cearnach mead ngell,  
Ro lai cimi ceithir chend. 92

Do rad irgas ilar cath,  
Inadaig cheit mac magach,  
Do rat inas tech dia chloind,  
Conall iceann conclulain. 96

In cethrur tainig anair,  
lodur uaithib fon arm goil,  
Iar marbad incheathroir choir,  
Fa dech do muintir umoir. 100

Adnacht conall ria athair,  
fon carnnsa cus na clachaib,  
Findad cach seanchaid ro sloind,  
Conad de ita carn conaill. 104

Ro adnacht in trair aile,  
A ndumachaib findmaigi,  
Is de ita cnocan na ceand,  
Tuas araith umaill imtheand 108

Co seara in coimde ar cach ceas,  
Mac liag lindi na négés,  
A criost do ronam do tal,  
Fiada find ro findabar. 112

F. I. N. D. A. I. G.

TRANSLATION.

Historic records thus testify,  
And it is an indubitable fact,  
That the Carn (erected) as ordained by usage  
Is that of Conall the mild, the son of Aengus.<sup>[1]</sup> 4

Aengus the son of Umór from across the seas,  
To him Conall was a son ;  
To this Conall Meave granted  
Delightful Aidhne for a certainty. 8

They came from the land of the cruel Picts,  
Over the seas came Umór's sons ;  
They arrived at the seat of Carbry Niafer <sup>[2]</sup>  
Situated in Meath in the midst of the Gael. 12

They obtained fair lands to dwell on (such as)  
Anastach, delightful and durable its fort,  
Rath Cealtchar (or Rathkenny) and splendid Rath Comar,[3]  
Delightful Knowth the palace of Elcmar's wife.[4] 16

The Aenach (fair plain) of Telton, the tribe of Cearmna,[5]  
Tlachtga of the three Finemnas,[6]  
The Ford of Sidi, the highway of Bridam, [7]  
Were the lands which they obtained as habitations. 20

It was then that Carbry demanded taxes  
To be paid to Tara by those seafaring men,  
For such was the law with all tribes who lived  
On the plains of Erin of swift steeds. 24

They appointed (or accepted) four champions,  
Without any thing more, without any thing less ;  
Carbry accepted those four guarantees  
As sureties for their great fortresses. 28

Those were Ceat, son of Magach, of the plain of Main, [8]  
Ross the son of Deada of Drum-Cain,[9]  
Conall Cearnach, valorous on the seas,  
And Cuchullain the hero of the feats of arms. 32

From the first time of the settlement in the east  
Of these tribes about Tara of limpid waters (or streams),  
Carbry Niafeair so much increased  
The rent upon them which they could not endure. 36

They fled from him with their properties  
To Oilíoll and to Meave ;  
They settled westward along the pleasant coasts  
As far as Dun Aengus in Aran.[10] 40

They settled Cime at his lake,[11]  
They planted Cutru at Cut-Lough,[12]  
Adar made his residence in the south,[13]  
They stationed Mil at Murbech.[14] 44

They placed Daelach at Dail,  
Aenach constructed a *Dun* in his neighbourhood,  
They settled Beara at his Headland,[15]  
They fixed Mod at Moidlinn.[16] 48

Irgas took possession of Ceann Boirne,[17]  
Cing obtained the district of Oigle[18]  
At Laidlinni, I do assert,  
Were Bairnech and Barannbel. 52

Concraid obtained his just portion  
At sea on the Mid Island.  
Lathrach obtained Tully-teann (fortified hill),  
Taman took possession of Taman point.<sup>[19]</sup> 56

Asal proceeded from the north across the water (Shannon)  
Till he arrived in Munster of great vallies ;  
From the north in his boat he passed over,  
From him charming Drom-Asail derived its name.<sup>[20]</sup> 60

Conall obtained the district of Aidhne (Ayne),  
Conall the mild who was the wealthiest ;  
Such were the settlements of the host  
Of the entire people of Umore. 64

From the day that Carbry heard (of their flight)  
His mind was highly incensed ;  
He called upon, as a matter of course,  
His four guaranteeing chieftains. 68

They marched to him at his palace  
From Creeve Roe of the chariots ;  
Rossa marched eastward from the Erneans (of Munster),<sup>[21]</sup>  
And Ceat proceeded from Connaught. 72

Restore unto me, said the justice-seeking Carbry  
The great emigration (or flight) of the sons of Umór,  
Or give them battle at close quarters,  
I firmly bound you to that compact. 76

From thence they marched to Rath Croaghan,  
The four dread and stern champions ;  
They moved fasting, severe the restraint,  
On Croaghan's plains in Connaught. 80

The son of Magach (Ceat) to them granted  
A truce until the following day,  
That Aengus the king might hold  
A consultation with his friends. 84

Would they return to the east  
Or remain under (the government of) Croaghan in the west,  
Or that his three brothers and son  
Should decide the case by combat. 88

The resolution they came to was  
That Cing should meet Rossa in combat,  
That Conall Cearnach of many hostages  
Should be opposed by Cimi Cethir-kenn. 92

That Irgas of many battles should go  
To oppose Ceat the son of Magach,  
That Conall should (a loss to his tribe)  
Meet Cuchulain in the conflict. 96

The four (champions) who came from the east  
Departed from them with victorious arms,  
Having slain the righteous four,  
A ruin to the race of Umór, 100

Conall was interred along with his father  
Beneath this Cairn composed of stones,  
Every historian who mentioned it asserts  
That from thence it is (called) Carn-Conaill. 104

The three others were interred  
In the tombs of Finnmaighe (delightful plain),  
Hence the Mound of the *Khans* (chiefs) is so called,  
Above at the strongly fortified *Rath Umaill*.<sup>[22]</sup> 108

May the Godhead from all evils free  
Mac Liag of the order of the Bards ;  
Christ may thy will be done,  
Unerring proofs thou hast testified. 112

H. I. S. T. O. R. I. C.

[1] *Carn-Connaill* lay in the territory of *Aidhne*, according, to Keating and O'Flaherty, which was co-extensive with the diocese of Kilmacduagh, in the county of Galway. Doctor O'Donovan is of opinion that the place where this carn stood, is now called Ballyconnell, in the parish of Kilbecanty, near Gort.

[2] *Cairbre Niafer*, Carbry the heroic man, was King of Tara at the birth of Christ. He is mentioned in the Book of Armagh, (a MS. it is said of the 8th century) in the following words as spoken by a revived giant, whom St. Patrick raised from his tomb. "Ego sum Mace maic Cais maicc Glais qui fui subulcus Rig Lugin, rig hi Rotie ; jugulavit me Flan mac maicc Con in regno *Coirpre nith fer*." "I am the grandson of Cas, the son of Glas, who was a swineherd to King Lugin, a King in Rotius ; Flan, the son of Mac Con, slew me in the kingdom of Carbry the heroic man." — See Antiquarian Researches, Appendix, p. xxxi.

[3] *Raith Celtchair*, but in another copy of the poem called *Rath Cendaigh*, now Rathkenny, a vicarage in the barony of Slane, county of Meath.

[4] *Ealcmar* was the son of Dealbaeth, a Tuath-De-Danan King, who reigned ten years over Ireland.

[5] *Cearmna* and Sobairce, the grandsons of Heber, reigned jointly over Ireland for forty years.

[6] The three *Fineamhnas* were the three sons of Eohy Feidlioch, monarch of land, and probably they had their residence at Tlachtga.

- [7] *Ath Sigi* or Sidi was a ford on the river Boyne, from which it appears the parish of Assey, in the barony of Deece, county Meath, derives its name. *Bridam*, a hill in the parish of Geshill, King's county.
- [8] *Ceat, son of Magach*, a Connaught champion and a ferocious wolf to the men of Ulster. He was afterwards slain, in single combat, by Conall Cearnach ar Ath-Ceit, or the Ford of Ceit. *Keating's Ireland, Haliday's Edition*, p. 384. Magh Main is supposed to be Hy Maine in Galway, or Kilmain in Mayo.
- [9] *Drum Cain*. This place seems to have been in West Munster, and probably was the same as Dun-Caoin, now Dunqueen, a parish in the barony of Corcaaguinny, county of Kerry.
- [10] *Dun Aengus*, on the great Island of Aran, in the Bay of Galway, where still may be seen the remains of this cyclopean fortress erected by Aengus, son of Umore, the chief of this Firbolg tribe.
- [11] *Lough Cime*, according to O'Flaherty, is situate in the barony of Clare, county Galway, and is now called Lough Hackett.
- [12] *Lough Cutru*, now Lough Cutre or Cooter at Gort, in the County of Galway.
- [13] *Magh Adhair*, or the plain of Adhar, in which stood *Bile-Magh-Adhair*, or the tree of the plain of Adhair at which the O'Briens, princes of Thomond, were inaugurated. This tree grew on a mound in the parish of Clooney, barony of Bunratty, county of Clare, under which probably Adhar the Firbolg chief was buried.
- [14] *Murbech* is a central bay in the great Island of Aran. Kilmurvey lies at its head at a short distance from the great fort of Dun Engus. The Church Kilmurvey (St. Duach's) is a fine specimen of the most ancient Cyclopean masonry. In the Book of Leacan, folio 83, *Tragh Murbagh*, or the Strand of Murbagh, is explained by *Tragh Ceall*, which lies to the west of Killalla in the county of Mayo.
- [15] *Rinn Beara* or *Cinn Bheara*, now Kinvarra at Galway, a locality which has been so well described by our esteemed friend Thomas L. Cooke, Esq., Parsonstown, in his excellent note on *Durlus Guaire*.
- [16] *Moidlinn*, or Moylinn, according to O'Flaherty, lay in the barony of Kiltartan county of Galway ; but in Petty's map it is placed to the east of Tir-lough in the barony of Clare.
- [17] *Ceann Boirne*, Burren Head, now called Black Head, in the barony of Burren, county of Clare.
- [18] *Iath Oigle* or the district of *Oigle*. *Cruachan Oigle* was the ancient name Croagh Patrick, in the barony of Murisk, county of Mayo.
- [19] *Taman Rinn* or Tawin point, lies to the south of the city of Galway, not far from Clarin's Bridge.
- [20] *Drum-Asail* or the long hill of Asal, lay in Magh-Asail or the plain of Asal, in the barony of Coshma, county of Limerick.

[21] *Erna Mumhan*. The following brief account relating to this tribe has been collected from Keating and O'Flaherty. *Erna Mumhan*, the Erneans of Munster, were also called *Clanna Deaghaidh*, anglicised Degadians. They were the posterity of Aengus Tuirmeach, who was a monarch of Ireland of the race of Heremon, about 150 years before the Christian era. Fiach, son of Aengus Tuirmeach, had a son named Oilioll Aronn, who got great possessions in Ulster, and O'Flaherty states that his descendants were called *Erneans*. Sen, son of Oilioll Aronn, had a son named Deag, and he and his brethren, of the race of the Erneans, being Heremonians, were expelled from Ulster by the Irians (the posterity of Ir, son of Milidh), or Clanna Rory, the ancient possessors. Deag, being a celebrated warrior, went with his followers to Munster, and was favourably received by Duach, king of that province, and afterwards monarch of Ireland of the race of Heber. After the death of Duach, Deag became King of Munster, and his tribe got extensive possessions in that province. The Degadians got their tribe name Clanna Deaghaidh from' this Deag. The Erneans or Degadians were a war-like race, and chiefly formed the military body of the Fianna or Fenians of Munster.

[22] *Rath Umail*. Tireachan, in his collections concerning St. Patrick states at the end of his first Book that, "it ends in the country of the posterity of Niall (Meath). The second begins and concludes in the country of Connaught." In this second Book we find St. Patrick's journey through Connaught described. After crossing the river Shannon from the kingdom of Meath, he proceeds to Eilphin and Croaghan in the county of Roscommon, from which he goes into the county of Mayo. He travels to the termination of Hy Mally (barony of Burris-Umal or Burrisoole), where *Achad Fobuir*, a church in which bishops were ordained, stood. From this place St. Patrick proceeded to the mountain of Egle, i.e. Croagh Patrick in the barony of Murrisk, county of Mayo, and immediately after we find the following passage. "And he (St. Patrick) came to the regions of Cortutemne to the fountain of *Sini*, where he baptized thousands of men ; and he also founded two churches in Toga. And he came to the fountain of *Findmaighe* which is called *Slan*, because it was indicated to him that the magi honoured this fountain, and made donations to it as gifts to God." In the foregoing passage the plain on which *Rath Umail* stood, as mentioned in this verse, is identified, viz. *Findmaighe* (literally the white or fair plain). In the sentence preceding this passage are the following words, — "et plantavit ecclesiam in campo Umail," "and he (St. Patrick) built a church in the plain of *Umal*." It is very probable that the *campus Umail*, in this passage, took its name from the strongly fortified *Rath Umail* of the Irish poem. The Lordship of *Umhall*, according to O'Dugan, was divided into two territories called *da Umhall*, i.e. the two Umhalls, which comprised the present baronies of Muriisk and Burrishoole, in the county of Mayo. The name has been latinized *Umalia* and *Hy Malia*, and rendered by English writers into *The Owles*. The O'Malleys were chiefs of this territory, and are styled Lords Umhall (Uwall), in the Annals of the Four Masters from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. *Achad Fobuir* is now the parish of Aughagower, partly in the barony of Murrisk, but chiefly in that of Burrishoole, County Mayo.

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