

TALES OF THE JURY ROOM

THE SIXTH JURYMANS TALE

THE SWANS OF LIR

CHAPTER I

After the battle of Tailtean, the Tuatha Danaans assembled together from the remotest corners of the five provinces of Ireland...

When Lir heard that the crown was to be given to Bógh Dearg, indignant at the choice, he returned to his own home...

The ceremony being concluded, the assembled tribes called on the new monarch to lead them in pursuit of Lir...

"Let us burn and spoil his territory," said they. "Who dares he, who never had a king in his family, presume to slight the sovereign we have chosen?"

"We will follow no such counsel," replied Bógh Dearg. "His ancestors and himself have always kept the province in which he lives in peace..."

The assembly, not fully satisfied with this reply, debated much on the course they had best take, but after much discussion, the question was allowed to rest for a time...

"Now," said the monarch, "if Lir were willing to accede to it, I could propose a mode of redoubling the present friendship which I entertain for Lir..."

The three daughters were sitting on chairs richly ornamented, in a hall of their father's palace. Near them sat the queen, wife of Bógh Dearg...

"Nevertheless," said the monarch, "what has occurred need not dissolve the connection between Lir and us..."

This speech, as was intended, soon found its way to Lir, who set out immediately for the palace of Bógh Dearg...

When the monarch returned to his house with Aoife, where he received her with all the love and honour which she could expect...

One morning she ordered her chariot, to the surprise of Lir, who, however, was well pleased at this sign of returning health...

Aoife continued her journey until she arrived at Fionnach, where dwelt some of her father's people...

"Ah," replied the Druids, "we would not kill the children of Lir for the whole world. You took an evil thought into your mind..."

Saying these words, she rushed out with her drawn sword, but through her womanhood she lost her courage when she was about to strike at the children...

Aoife resumed her journey, and they all drove on until they reached the shores of Lough Dairvreae, on the Lake of the Speckled Oak...

In the meantime Lir, returning to his palace, missed his children, and finding Aoife not yet come home, immediately guessed that she had deserted her jealousy...

language, he asked them how they became endowed with that surprising gift.

"None," replied Fingula, "there is no man in existence able to affect that change, nor can it ever take place until a woman from the south, named Deochta..."

"Are you satisfied," said Lir, "since you retain your speech and reason to come and remain with us?"

When Lir had heard these words, he ordered his followers to unharness their steeds, and they remained during the whole night on the strand, listening to the music of the birds...

Lir departed from the lake, and still following the track of Aoife, came to the palace of Ard-Righ, or Chief King, as Bógh Dearg was entitled...

"Alas, poor that I am!" said Lir "it is not I who would keep my children from your sight, but Aoife yonder, once your darling, and the sister of your mother..."

The monarch started at these words, and looking on Aoife immediately became convinced that Lir had spoken the truth. He began to upbraid his daughter in a rough and angry tone...

"Malicious as you were," said he, "you will suffer more by this cruel deed than the children of Lir, for they in the progress of time will be released from their sufferings, and their souls will be made happy in the end..."

"Speak," said he, "for it is not in your power to avoid telling me the truth."

Aoife, thus constrained, replied with a horrible look and tone, that there was no form which she more abhorred than that of a Deamhain Eihdir, or Demon of the Air.

pective encampments, during the space of thirty years. At the end of that time, Fingula addressed her brethren as follows:

"Are you ignorant, my brothers, that but one night is left of the time which you were to spend upon the lake?"

On hearing this, the three brethren grew very sorrowful, and uttered many plaintive cries and sounds of grief; for they were almost as happy on that lake, enjoying the company of their friends and relatives, talking with them and answering their questions...

THE CHILDREN Receive, O royal sage, our last farewell. Thou of the potent spell! And thou, O Lir, deep skilled in mystic lore— We meet—we meet no more!

CHAPTER II Sadly, O, Moyle, to thy winter wave weeping, Fate bids me languish long ages away, Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping.

Having ended those verses, the swans took wing, and arising lightly on the air, continued their flight until they reached the Struih na Maoile, or the Sea of Moyle, as those waters were called which flowed between Ireland and Scotland...

"My loving brothers," said Fingula, "we make very unwise provision against the coming night if we do not keep close together, and lest by any mischance we should lose sight of each other, let us appoint a place where we may meet again as soon as it may be in our power."

"In that case, dear sister," said the three brothers, "let us meet at the Carrig na Roin, (or the Rock of Seals), for that is a place with which we are all acquainted."

They continued thus until about the middle of the night. The wind then increased to a storm, the waters arose, and the mountains of brine, as they rolled and broke around them, sparkled in the gloom as if they had taken fire. So great was the tempest that the children of Lir were separated by the waves...

Beloved alike, O loved so well, That made your sister's breast your pillow, Tell me, wandering brethren tell, Where roam you o'er the billow.

IV Hid by what rocks or secret caves, Hid what beneath my wings to slumber, I fear the dead will leave the graves, Ere time restore our number.

V Toss'd by the surge and sleety storm At random o'er this briny water; Wee, wee to all who share the form Of Lir's unhappy daughter.

Fingula remained that night on the Rock of the Seals. At sunrise the next morning, looking out in every direction along the water, she saw Cornu coming towards her with head drooping and feathers drenched with spray, so cold and feeble that he could not answer her questions.

FINGULA I Hard is our life and sharp with ill, My brethren dear; The snow so thick, the wind so chill, The night so drear.

FINGULA II Sad is our hap this mournful night, With mangled feet and plumage bleeding, Our wings no more sustain our flight, Wee comes to linked wee succeeding.

FINGULA III Sad is our hap this mournful night, With mangled feet and plumage bleeding, Our wings no more sustain our flight, Wee comes to linked wee succeeding.

FINGULA IV Sad is our hap this mournful night, With mangled feet and plumage bleeding, Our wings no more sustain our flight, Wee comes to linked wee succeeding.

They drew close to the shore, in order to observe more accurately. When the horsesmen saw them coming, they hastened towards them, until they came within speaking distance. The persons of note who

were amongst them were Aodh Aithiosach, or Merry Hugh, and Feargus Fithcoll, (of the Complete Armour), the two sons of Bógh Dearg the Monarch, and the third part of his body-guard. The horsemen were for a long time shifting their place, in order to come near the birds, and when at length they did so, they saluted each other very lovingly, with the affection which became relations.

FINGUAL We four are well, Though in keen want, and sombre grief we dwell. Happy are they Who sit in Lir's bright hall and share his banquet gay.

FINGUAL III A mournful change! Now with faint wings, these dreary shores I range. O'er Moyle's dark tide, Plume touching plume, we wander side by side.

FINGUAL IV The horsesmen returned soon after to the house of Lir, and told the principal man of the Tuatha Danaans where they had seen the birds, and the dialogue they had held together.

FINGUAL V The children of Lir meantime returned northwards to the sea of Moyle, where they remained until their time in that place had expired. Then Fingula spoke to her brothers, and said:

FINGUAL VI At length we leave this cheerless shore, Unblest by summer's sunshine splendour; Its storm for us shall howl no more, Our time on gloomy Moyle is ended.

FINGUAL VII After that time, the children of Lir left the sea of Moyle, and flew until they came to the most westerly part of the ocean. They were there for a long time suffering all kinds of hardship, until they happened to see a man, a tiller of the ground, who used often watch them when they came near the shore...

They drew close to the shore, in order to observe more accurately. When the horsesmen saw them coming, they hastened towards them, until they came within speaking distance. The persons of note who

Sad are my suffering brethren's piercing cries, This dreary night! Sharp drives the snow shower, o'er the moonless skies, With ceaseless flight! Where'er they search the frost-bound ocean o'er

FINGUAL II O thou dread monarch, who to sea and coast, Their being gave, And led'st, as shadowy rumour tells, a host, Through the deep wave! Behold these wretched birds with plying eyes,

FINGUAL III "Brothers," said Fingula, "confide in Him who made heaven and the elements, the earth with all its fruit, and the sea with all its wonders, and you will find comfort and relief."

FINGUAL IV "It is time for us to go to Fionnach, where Lir and his people dwell, and our people also."

FINGUAL V This was not in our father's time of old, A loveless, lightless waste, Without a cup the sparkling wine to hold.

FINGUAL VI Now do I know the deep devouring grave, Holds all who once were dear! Sad was our life on Moyle's tempestuous wave, But keener grief is here.

FINGUAL VII No one would have thought him a romantic figure to look at Carlo Leone that night as we sat in his window watching the sun go down. It was a dingy little window, without even the grace of a fire escape, and the room behind it was more dingy still.

Carlo's mouth grew sterner as he watched the face of his dream, but his eyes were tenderer than ever. Presently he rose and knocked the