

chroniclers let many of these confused stories drop out of their records.

One of the strongest conclusions forced on the believing reader is that the Irish world is a very old world.

As to Finn, *the* ideal hero of the Gaels, "who was always in the woods, whose battles were but hours amid years of hunting, he delighted in the cackle of ducks from the Lake of the Three Narrows, the scolding talk of the black bird of Doire and Cairn; the bellowing of the ox from the valley of armies; the whistling of the eagle from the valley of victories; the grouse of the heather of Cruachan; the call of the otter of Pruim re Coir,"—he was not a wild man of the wild or black woods. Ireland had passed out of the stage of wildness by the time Finn enters upon his great exploits. It is easy to see how began the belief in all far-away times that hunting was royal sport, and that hunters were familiar with nature, in a supernatural way we would say, but it was quite natural to them to talk with gods. Those were the men and women who went on from childhood to old age with the undiminished imagination of childhood, living in daily expectation of wonders. Yeats thinks mankind, as a whole, had a dream once that like children they were playing at being great and wonderful people with great ambitions, which they will put away before they grow into ordinary men and women; that the dream was built up bit by bit by nobody and by everybody. The business of the old story-tellers is to make us remember what mankind would have been like, had not fear and the failing will and the laws of nature tripped up its heels. The Fianna are whatever we want them to be, and what extravagant thing will one not want after the spell of those enchanted woods has worked upon the heart and fancy? What may one not do, where may one not go and be amused if not happy, when one knows the "stags are as joyful as the leaves of a tree in the summer-time?" Joy, yes, that is the word, that is uttered from every leaf and blade, as well as in every sound of bird, or beast, or man. Is it Paradise, such as all the world believes in? Oh, but what a disturbing element comes in when the Christian truth prevails! No æsceticism in the days of Finn, but they are all visionary. The god Midhir sings to Queen Etain in one of the most beautiful of the stories: "the young never grow old; the fields and the flowers are as pleasant to be looking at