

pathetic farewell to fair Alba, the mountain, cliff, and dun, and her green sheeling on the shores of Glen-Etive.

Barach meets them on their landing, and detains Fergus, who reluctantly assigns his charge to his two sons, Red Buiné Borb and Illan Finn, to conduct them in safety to their journey's end. Deirdré's fears are more and more excited; she has dreams and visions of disasters. She urges Naisi to go to Dunseverick or to Dundelgan (Dundalk, the residence of Cuchullin), and there await the coming up of Fergus. Naisi is inflexible. It would injure the honour of his companion in arms to admit any apprehension of danger while under his pledge of safe conduct. The omens multiply. Deirdré's sense of danger becomes more and more acute. Still Naisi's reply is, "I fear not; let us proceed." At length they reach Emania, and are assigned the house of the Red Branch for their lodging. Calm, and to all appearance unconscious of any cause for apprehension, Naisi takes his place at the chess-table, and Deirdré, full of tears, sits opposite. Meanwhile the king, knowing that Deirdré was again within his reach, could not rest at the banquet, but sends spies to bring him word "if her beauty yet lived upon her." The first messenger, friendly to Clan Usnach, reports that she is "quite bereft of her own aspect, and is lovely and desirable no longer." This allays Conor's passion for a time; but growing heated with wine, he shortly after sends another messenger, who brings back the intelligence, that not only is Deirdré "the fairest woman on the ridge of the world," but that he himself has been wounded by Naisi, who had resented his gazing in at the window of the Red Branch, by flinging a chess-man at his head, and dashing out one of his eyes. This was all that Conor wanted; he starts up in pretended indignation at the violence done his servant, calls his body guard, and attacks the Red Branch. The defence now devolves on the sons of Fergus. Clan Usnach scorn to evince alarm, or interfere in any way with the duties of their protectors. But Deirdré cannot conceal her consciousness that they are betrayed. "Ah me!" she cries, hearing the soldiery of Conor at the gates, "I knew that Fergus was a traitor." "If Fergus hath betrayed you," replied Red Buiné Borb, "yet will not I betray you." And he issues out and slays his "thrice fifty men of might." But when Conor offers him Slieve Fuad for a bribe, he holds back his hand from the slaughter, and goes his way. Then calls Deirdré, "Traitor father, traitor son!" "No," replies Illan Finn, "Though Red Buiné Borb be a traitor, yet will not I be a traitor. While liveth this small straight sword in my hand I will not forsake Clan Usnach!" Then Illan Finn, encountering Fiachra, the son of Conor, armed with Ocean, Flight, and Victory, the royal shield, spear, and sword, they fight "a fair fight, stout and manly, bitter and bloody, savage and hot, and vehement and terrible," until the waves round the blue rim of Ocean roared, for it was the nature of Conor's shield that it