



CONGAL:  
A POEM,  
IN FIVE BOOKS.  
BY  
SIR SAMUEL FERGUSON.



SECOND EDITION.

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## THE ARGUMENT.

*Ambition, Anger, Terror, Strife and Death,  
Each, here, its Book in Congal's story hath.*

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

TO THE

## SECOND EDITION.

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IN preparing for the press this, the sixth volume of the cheap edition of Sir Samuel Ferguson's works, recently given to the public, it has been thought desirable to prefix to each of the five books of "Congal" an argument, or *précis* of the subject, and also to add a table of the principal characters, in lieu of the learned and voluminous "Notes," which illustrate the first edition. To include these would have doubled the size of this small and handy book, and seemed unnecessary, as the original large volume is not out of print.

The bitter quarrel between Congal Claen, provincial King of Ulster, and Domnal, King of Ireland, in the seventh century of our era, is the theme of the poem. It had its origin, ostensibly, in an insult offered to Congal at a royal banquet; but it was still more the result of previous injuries. The Monarch had evaded his promise to restore to Congal the whole of his Ulster patrimony in reward for the services of the hero

and his friends in assuring to King Domnal the supreme power. It was also "the expiring effort of the Pagan and Bardic party in Ireland, against the newly consolidated power of Church and Crown."

King Domnal triumphed on the battle-field of Moyra, where, after a brave conflict, Congal and his foreign allies were utterly defeated, and the provincial King of Ulster met with his tragic fate.

Although supernatural beings were held to have mingled in the strife, and some of the characters in the Epic are mythical, yet, in the main, the incidents it records are historically true. In the topography of the district names and places even now preserve the local tradition; and the forts which were the residences of some of the heroes who fought at Moyra, are still standing, and are likely to stand, it may be for another thousand years or more, on their ancient sites.

Not far from the town of Antrim are the remains of the earthen fort of Congal Claen, from which he marched to the final conflict. Sir Samuel Ferguson, who knew well that district of Antrim and Down, some 24 years before he published his Epic of "Congal," thus describes Rathmore—Moy-Linny.

"Enough remains of the ramparts of Rathmore to show the former extent of this old residence of the kings of Dalaradia. It must have been a great and strong fort, and has witnessed events that in any other country would have long since been made the subject of heroic story. Here dwelt the proud, unhappy Congal Claen, and here we may picture to ourselves



old Ceallagh Mac Fiachna, carried out upon his brazen *tolg*, to meet his nephew returning from the disastrous feast of Dun-na-n'gedh; and as Congal enumerates the indignities put upon him at the royal banquet, *handling under his gown the sword which none till then suspected the bedridden senior of carrying. We may imagine its walls* resounding to the songs of bards, enumerating the former possessions of the kings of Ulster and the former privileges of the poets, before the statutes of Dromceat transferred their rents and honours to the Christian clergy, and sent twelve hundred of them adrift on Ulster with nothing but their harps and burning words to depend on for life or vengeance; till Congal, at length maddened by a sense of his own wrongs, and by the instigations of the outraged poets, undertakes the fatal expedition which terminated in his defeat and death at Moyra."

That battlefield lies south-east of Lough Neagh, not far from the modern town of the same name, which is a station on the Northern Railway; and thither Congal Claen, with his foreign allies, marched to encounter the royal forces, A.D. 637. The strife was deadly. It was a hand-to-hand conflict of the opposed troops and their leaders. These duels are depicted in the fourth and fifth Books of the Epic, which closes with the death of Congal. Of the scene of this conflict, Ferguson, in an article reviewing "Reeves' Ecclesiastical Antiquities," wrote as follows:—

"We are here upon the borders of the heroic field of Moyra, the scene of the greatest battle, whether we

regard the numbers engaged, the duration of the combat, or the stake at issue, ever fought within the bounds of Ireland. For beyond question, if Congal Claen and his Gentile allies had been victorious in that battle, the re-establishment of old bardic paganism would have ensued. There appears reason to believe that the fight lasted a week; and on the seventh day Congal himself is said to have been slain by an idiot youth, whom he passed by in the battle, in scorn of his imbecility. All local memory of the event is now gone, save that one or two localities preserve names connected with it. Thus, beside the Rath of Moyra, on the east, is the hill Cairn-Albanach, the burial-place of the Scottish princes, Congal's uncles; and a pillar-stone, with a rude cross, and some circles engraved on it, formerly marked the site of their resting-place. On the other hand, the townland of Aughnafoskar probably preserves the name of Knockanchoscar, from which Congal's druid surveyed the royal army, drawn up in the plain below, on the first morning of the battle. Ath Ornaidh, the ford crossed by one of the armies, is probably modernized in Thorny-ford, on the river, at some miles distance. On the ascent to Trummery, in the direction of the woods of Killultagh, to which, we are told, the routed army fled, great quantities of bones of men and horses were turned up in excavating the line of the Ulster Railway which passes close below the old church."

Ferguson's review of the learned work of the late Bishop of Down and Connor was published in 1848



From the pen of this distinguished archæologist, he quotes a description of Rath-Keltar, near Downpatrick, which was the *Dun* of Sweeny, brother of Lafinda, the betrothed bride of Congal. It was from Rath-Keltar that the cavalcade issued on the bright May morning described in the opening lines of this Epic. Dr. Reeves speaks of Rath-Keltar as "one of the noblest remains of a primitive Irish palace which is to be found in Ireland. No one," he adds, "can walk round these fosses and entrenchments without being forcibly struck by their extent and boldness." Harris, an earlier writer, gives its circumference as 2,100 feet, its height 60 feet, and states that of three ramparts that surround it, the most considerable is 30 feet broad. Rath-Keltar is still a conspicuous object in the immediate vicinity of Downpatrick.

It would not be possible for me to review my husband's poem in a critical spirit; yet I may observe that when the first edition of *Congal* appeared, it was reviewed by several unknown, and I assume, therefore, impartial critics, one of whom pronounced it "the production of an imagination of the highest order;" another, as "one of the works in recent poetic literature worthiest of being known and studied." Others have adjudged it to be "the best and greatest work that Sir Samuel Ferguson has left us." "We are not aware of any requisite quality of a great heroic poem which it does not possess." "As a poem, *Congal* is unquestionably one of the finest products of Irish genius." "A noble and

conscientious work which will illustrate his country's genius as well as his own." An American critic also states: "The characteristics of Sir Samuel Ferguson's poetry, aside from its nationality, are a remarkable strength of rhythm, a happy boldness of epithet, and broad touches of description. It is thoroughly manly in spirit and expression, and its lyrical faculty is frequently of the sort that touches the nerves." I will now quote the verdict of two personal friends—themselves admirable poets—Mr. Aubrey de Vere and the late Mr. Justice O'Hagan.

Mr. de Vere says of *Congal*: "This work belongs to the 'great' style of poetry, that style which is characterised by simplicity, breadth of effect, a careless strength full of movement. . . . Obviously, its qualities are those characteristic of the noble, not the ignoble, poetry, viz., passion, imagination, vigour, an epic largeness of conception, wide human sympathies, vivid and truthful description. . . . Its diction is pure, its metre full of variety; and with these merits, common to all true poetry, it unites an insight which only a man of genius can possess, into the special characteristics of those ancient times and manners which are so frequently its subject."

In Judge O'Hagan's volume, *The Poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson*, its author wrote of *Congal*: "No poem so Homeric in the march of the narrative, in the character of the heroes, or in the resonant majesty of the versification has appeared in our time. . . . Sir Samuel Ferguson has achieved a great work for his



country. If a distinctive National Irish Literature in the English tongue is an achievement of which the foundations have been already laid, then to Sir Samuel Ferguson may the greater praise belong. Be this the pillar of his fame."

Appreciation so sincere, generous, and just, of my husband's genius, has encouraged me to do my utmost to make his works accessible to all classes among his countrymen. He lived, and wrote, and worked for Ireland; and of him it may be truly said:—

"He toiled to make our Story stand  
As from Time's reverent, runic hand  
It came, undeck'd  
By fancies false, erect, alone,  
The monumental arctic stone  
Of ages wreck'd."

Sir Samuel Ferguson regarded history as did the Roman orator, "*Historia temporum testis, lux veritatis, vita memoria, magistra vite, et nuncia antiquitatis*," so that, to use his own words—"men may feel they are not come into the world strangers, but members of a family long planted in the land before them, owing reverence to the place and institutions of their forefathers, and by that common sentiment strengthening the social bond among one another."

Again, in his *Mesgedra*, this fervent lover of his country, laments the too prevalent ignorance of her History and Tradition—an ignorance that has hindered

that "strengthening of the social bond" he so earnestly desired.

"The man aspires  
To link his present with his country's past,  
And live anew in knowledge of his sires;  
No rootless colonist of alien earth,  
Proud but of patient lungs and pliant limb,  
A stranger in the land that gave him birth,  
The land a stranger to itself and him."

Believing, as I do, that the study of Sir Samuel Ferguson's writings will do much to remove from us this reproach, and will tend wisely to unite, delight, and instruct, I add this new edition of *Congal* to the volumes already published.

M. C. FERGUSON.

20 NORTH GREAT GEORGE'S STREET,  
DUBLIN, December, 1892.



## PREFACE.

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THE leading incidents of this Poem are derived from the Irish Bardic romance called *Cath Muighe Rath*, or "the Battle of Moyra," with its introductory "Pre-Tale" of the *Fleadh Duin-na n-Gedh*, or "Banquet of Dunangay." When these pieces were first given to the public, through the patriotic labours of the Irish Archæological Society, in 1842, they made a strong and lasting impression on my imagination. They seemed to possess, in a remarkable degree, that largeness of purpose, unity, and continuity of action which are the principal elements of Epic Poetry, and solicited me irresistibly to the endeavour to render them into some compatible form of English verse. After some time, however, I found the inherent repugnancies too obstinate for reconciliation, and, with some regret, abandoned that attempt. But the general tenor of the piece had so strongly impressed itself that I could not wholly reject it from my mind; and the result—long since accomplished—has been this Poem, called "Congal," from the chief actor in it. While growing out of the Irish original, it has taken, in so many respects, an independent outline and structure, that it could not with propriety be given the name of its prototype, although the Battle of Moyra is the principal incident in both. This explanation of the parentage

of the piece will account for some characteristics from which it has been found impossible to dissociate the work, without a loss of congruity causing more injury than will probably be found to have arisen from their retention.

As an historic event, the Battle of Moyra is known to have taken place A.D. 637, and is referred with reasonable certainty to the Tuesday which fell on the 24th of June in that year. I give my adhesion to the views of those who regard it as the expiring effort of the Pagan and Bardic party in Ireland, against the newly-consolidated power of Church and Crown, alleging, for its *casus belli*, the obligations which Domnal, the then monarch, had incurred to Congal, the disappointed Sub-King of Ulster, as indicated in the Poem.

Along with the events entitled to be deemed historical, a largely preponderating amount of romance, and of the supernatural machinery of mediæval Irish fiction, exists both in the original and in this adaptation. Of the persons of the drama, Congal himself; Sweeny, his intended brother-in-law; Domnal, his antagonist, and some of the warriors on that part; Eochaid, King of the Scottish Dalriads, and Domnal Brec, his son, are characters having ascertained places in authentic history. Of the rest, some were probably real personages whose names have been traditionally preserved: but the greater number may reasonably be referred to the invention of the Bards who composed the Irish original.



# CHARACTERS.

DOMNAL, King of Ireland.—Ruling from Dunangay, on the Boyne.  
 GARRAD-GANN.—Envoy of King Domnal to Congal Claen.  
 MALODHAR-MACHA.—Provincial King of Emain-Macha, near Armagh.  
 ULTAN-LONG-HAND.—Chief of Orior, Louth.  
 KELLACH, SON OF MALCOVA.—Provincial King of Leinster.  
 CONAL, SON OF BAEDAN.—Chief of Sil-Setna, North-West Ulster.  
 CAIRBRE CROM, }  
 AULAY OF THE SHIPS, } Leinster, fighting at Moyra  
 ARGNADACH, } on the side of  
 AILILL } King Domnal.  
 FERGUS, }  
 ANGUS, } Sons of King Domnal.  
 ERRIIL, }  
 CARRIL, }  
 COLGU, }

CUANNA.—The idiot son of Ultan-Long-Hand.  
 SWEENEY, }  
 AED-ALAN, } Chiefs of Connaught  
 AED BUIE, } fighting at Moyra on  
 ECCAD BREC, } the side of King  
 CAENFALLA } Domnal.  
 OLLIOLSON.—A learned Doctor. Fought at Moyra on the side of King Domnal.  
 FERCAR FINN.—Steward to Ultan-Long-Hand. Fought at Moyra.  
 MALDUN.—Fought at Moyra on the side of King Domnal.  
 BISHOPS ERC AND RONAN FINN.—Friends of King Domnal.

## FEMALE CHARACTERS.

LAFINDA.—Sister of Sweeney of Rathkeltar, betrothed to Congal Claen.  
 LAYARCAM.—Nurse and attendant on Lafinda.  
 FINGUALA.—Wife of Ultan-Long-Hand.  
 St. Brigid of Kildare, Daughter of Dubtach.  
 Nuns and Monks, Servants of St. Brigid.  
 Wives of Domnal Brec and his Brothers.

## SUPERNATURAL BEINGS.

*The Washer of the Ford.* | *Manannan Mor Mac Lir.*  
*Herdsmen Borchu.*

CONGAL CLAEN.—Provincial King of Ulster, son of Scallan Broad Shield. Ruling from Rathmore-Moy-Linny, near Antrim.  
 KELLACH THE HALT.—Chief of Mourne. Uncle to Congal Claen.  
 CU-CARMODA, } Sons of Kellach the  
 ANDACH, } Halt, slain at Moyra.  
 BRASIL.—Youngest of the seven sons of Kellach the Halt, slain at Moyra.  
 SWEENEY.—King of Dalaradia, a district of Down. Brother of Lafinda. Ruling from Rathkeltar, near Downpatrick.  
 ECHACH BUIE.—King of the Dalriads of Scotland. Grandfather to Congal Claen.  
 DOMNAL BREC, } Sons of Eo-  
 SWEENEY, } chaid Buié.  
 AED GREEN-MANTLE, } King of the  
 CONGAL MENN, } Dalriads of  
 Alba (Scotland). Fought at Moyra on the side of Congal Claen.  
 CONAN RODD.—Son of the King of Britain. Fought at Moyra on the side of Congal Claen.  
 CONAN FINN.—Fought at Moyra on the side of Congal Claen.  
 HOWEL, }  
 ARTHUR, } Cousins of Conan Finn,  
 REES, } slain at Moyra.  
 FERMORE BECC.—Fought at Moyra on the side of Congal Claen.  
 ARDAN.—The Bard.  
 DROSTAN.—The Druid.

# CONGAL.

## BOOK I.

### THE ARGUMENT.

*King Congal, feast-ward bent, is turned aside.  
 Bard Ardan's arts of spleenful song are tried.*

[Congal Claen, Provincial King of Ulster, although dissatisfied at the curtailment of his territory by the Supreme King, Domnal, accepts that monarch's invitation to a banquet at Dunangay, on the Boyne. He rides forth from Rath-Keltar, near Downpatrick, the abode of his sub-king Sweeney, to whose sister Lafinda Congal was betrothed; and, on his journey southwards passes through the mountains of Mourne, a district ruled by Kellach the Halt, brother to Congal's father Scallan. Congal is met by the Chief Bard Ardan, sent by his uncle to invite him to feast and rest. Kellach, who is a pagan, has accorded, in Mourne, an asylum to the banished Bards. Garrad, envoy of Domnal, who is accompanying Congal, protests, but without success. Ardan, referring to the ancient tale of "The Sons of Usnach," of "Cuchullin," and of others, succeeds in detaining Congal. He is welcomed by Kellach, who dwells angrily on the wrongs inflicted by King Domnal. He is answered by that king's envoy Garrad. Kellach's Bards, after the feast sing of the early colonization of Ireland, of the richness and wide extent of Ulster, the patrimony of Congal's ancestors now diminished by the arbitrament of Domnal. Congal bestows on the Bard a golden torque, but refuses to break his treaty of peace with the monarch.]



HE Hosting here of Congal Claen. 'Twas  
 loud-lark-carolling May  
 When Congal, as the lark elate, and radiant  
 as the day,  
 Rode forth from steep Rath-Keltar gate: nor marvel  
 that the King  
 Should share the solace of the skies, and gladness of  
 the spring,



For from her high sun-harbours bower the fortress  
gate above  
The loveliest lady of the North looked down on him  
with love.

"Adieu, sweet heart; a short adieu; in seven days  
hence," he cried,

"Expect me at your portals back to claim my promised  
bride.

"My heart at last has full content: my love's accept-  
ance heals

"All wounds of Fortune: what although Malodhar  
Macha steals,

"By Domnal's false arbitrament, my tributes and my  
land,

"Nor he nor sovereign Domnal's self can steal  
Lafinda's hand.

"Then forward, youths, for Dunangay; this royal  
banquet sped

"That binds our truce, remains no more but straight-  
way back, and wed."

On went the royal cavalcade, a goodly sight to  
see,

As westward, o'er the Land of Light, they swept the  
flowery lea;

Each shining hoof of every steed upcasting high  
behind

The gay green turf in thymy tufts that scented all the  
wind,

While, crossing at the coursers' heads with intersecting  
bounds,

As swift as skimming swallows played the joyous  
barking hounds.

First of the fleet resplendent band, the hero Congal  
rode;

Dark shone the mighty-chested steed his shapely thigh  
bestrode;

Dark, too, at times, his own brow showed that all his  
lover's air

But mantled with a passing light the gloom of inward  
care.

Beside him, on a bay-bright steed, in yellow garb  
arrayed,

Rode Sweeny, King of Dalaray, the brother of the  
maid;

Attendant on his other hand, with eye that never  
ceased

Obsequious watch, came Garrad Gann, the envoy of  
the feast;

A troop of gallant youths behind: 'twas glorious to  
behold

The coursers' motions and the flow of graceful forms  
and gold.

So rode they, till, the flowery plain and bushy  
upland pass'd,

They came at noon where, o'er the woods, Ben-  
Borcha's barriers vast

Rose in mid-sky: here, where the road divided, at the  
bourne

That meared the country of the Lord of gloomy-  
mountain'd Mourne,

Kellach the Halt, the heroes met, in middle of the  
way,

The Master of the Schools of Mourne, the Arch-Bard  
Ardan; they

Alighting made him reverence meet; and Ardan from  
his car

Descending, kissed the King and said,

"Dear youths, ye welcome are

"To Kellach's country. Congal Claen, thine uncle's  
herald, I

"In virtue of the Red-Branch bond, beseech thy  
courtesy



"This day to rest and feast with him."

King Congal, "From knight to knight," replied  
" 'tis a just request, and ill to be  
denied."

"Worse to be granted," Garrad said: "to Domnal  
reconciled,

"Behoves thee that thou rather shun one not the  
Church's child ;

"And, for his bond of brotherhood, a like request  
was made

"Once, with small good to guest or host, when  
fraudful Barach stayed

"With fatal feasts the son of Roy, and from his  
plighted charge

"Detained him in Dunseverick hall, while Conor,  
left at large

"To deal as lust or hate might prompt with those  
who on the faith

"Of weak MacRoy's safe-conduct came, did Usnach's  
sons to death."

"Conor Mac Nessa," said the Bard, "when first he  
sent to spy

"Clan Usnach, where they sat at chess in Creeve-  
Roe's sanctuary,

"Chose for his messenger a nurse, who, straight  
returning, told

"The pious falsehood that the Queen was faded  
grown, and old :

"When, hot with wine, a second time the lustful  
tyrant sent

"To see if Deirdre's beauty still lived on her, his  
intent

"Being to break his guarantees, he for that errand  
base

"Chose, as the fittest man of all his minions there in  
place,

"A Northman herald ; and that spy brought back the  
wicked word

"Of Deirdre's beauty unimpaired, which hearing at  
his board,

"The King, despite his bard's rebuke, from doomed  
Emania's hall

"Went forth and did the sacrilege that wrought his  
kingdom's fall.

"Wherefore it seems to me this tale of Usnach's  
children now

"Sounds not well-timed to such as we, from such a  
one as thou,

"Oh Northman herald : but, oh King, I lay thee as  
before

"In knighthood's bonds, thou pass not by thy father's  
brother's door."

Said Congal: "If the son of Roy to this constraining  
tie

"Yielded, though charged with mighty cares, great  
blame it were if I,

"Who, unlike Fergus, journey forth with neither  
charge nor care,

"Should shun my knightly kinsman's cheer with loyal  
mind to share."

And, climbing by the Poet's side, they took the left-  
hand road,

And through the gap of mountain sought the aged  
Chief's abode.

Far on the steep gap's further side, a rugged tract  
they found,

With barren breasts of murky hills and crags encom-  
passed round :

A hollow sound of blustering winds was from the margin  
sent,

A river down the middle space with mighty tumult  
went ;



And still, as further on they fared, the torrent swifter  
 flowed,  
 And mightier and murkier still the circling mountains  
 showed ;  
 A dreadful desert as it seemed : till Congal was  
 aware  
 Of divers goodly-visaged men and youths resorting  
 there.  
 Some by the flood-side lonely walked ; and other some  
 were seen  
 Who rapt apart in silent thought paced each his  
 several green ;  
 And stretched in dell and dark ravine, were some that  
 lay supine,  
 And some in posture prone that lay, and conn'd the  
 written line.  
 Then to the King's enquiring gaze, where, mounted by  
 his side,  
 He sat and eyed the silent throng, the grey Arch-Bard  
 replied :  
 " See in despite the Clerics' hate, where Kellach's  
 care awards  
 " Rough though it be, a sanctuary to Erin's banished  
 Bards.  
 " A life-time now is well-nigh spent since first our  
 wandering feet,  
 " Compelled by that unjust decree enacted at Drum-  
 keat,  
 " Left home and presidential seat by plenteous board  
 and fire  
 " To sate the rage of impious Aed, ungrateful Domnal's  
 sire.  
 " Twelve hundred men, with one consent, from Erin's  
 utmost ends,  
 " We sought the hills where ruled the Bard's hereditary  
 friends,

" Thy sheltering, song-preserving hills, Ultonia ! cess  
 nor dues  
 " Craved we ; but sat and touched our harps beside  
 the Strand-End Yews.  
 " Of Ulster's Hound, the matchless Hound, pursuer  
 swift and strong  
 " Of all the brutish herds of vice and monster-broods  
 of wrong,  
 " Great, good Cuchullin, was our song ; and how, when  
 once before  
 " All Erin's churls from niggard board and culture-  
 barring door,  
 " Impatient of life's needful charge of knowledge, had  
 expelled  
 " Their Poet-teachers, and the Bards sat by the sea,  
 and held  
 " Dire counsel ; either to turn back, and with avenging  
 swords  
 " Regain their rights, or o'er the seas enrich rude  
 Alba's lords  
 " With our lost lore, Cuchullin came, and ' Let it not  
 be told,'  
 " Said he, ' that men of Erin e'er loved knowledge less  
 than gold.'  
 " And bore them to Dun-Dealga back ; seven hundred  
 Ollaves good  
 " And thrice seven hundred in their train ; where  
 neither fire nor food  
 " Failed them thenceforth for seven full years, until by  
 just degrees  
 " The needs of knowledge drew them back to all their  
 rectories.  
 " Whereby renown of song enures to Ulster, and the  
 fame  
 " Of virtue as of valour still cleaves to Cuchullin's  
 name.



"Hearing which lay, Malcova, son of Deman, standing  
 by,  
 "Was moved with pity and desire to leave his memory  
 "Linked with Cuchullin's. Three full years Malcova  
 spread our board  
 "There, by the Yewry. After him, from bounteous  
 lord to lord  
 "Roamed we the sheltering Land of Song; and so,  
 from year to year  
 "Lived, spite of angry Domnal's hate, till generous  
 Kellach here  
 "Assigned us,—small the remnant now of that  
 illustrious band  
 "Who at Malcova's tables sat,—this tract of rugged  
 land;  
 "And ever in his own good fort, with hospitable  
 care,  
 "For bard and pupil at our will provides us daily fare.  
 "Yes, though the Clerics' grasp on all our fruitful lands  
 be set,  
 "The poet-peopled desert teems with inspiration yet:  
 "And here, despite their bells and books, still 'mid our  
 wilds we teach  
 "The better Bardic utterance and sacred Poet-  
 speech,  
 "Yet to be heard, some happier day when 'mid the  
 shock of spears  
 "The shout of Freedom shall be heard; and blest be  
 he who hears."  
 Said Congal, "Deem not that the Bards by any  
 voice of ours  
 "Are of their lawful rights debarred; or that the  
 lawless powers  
 "The Clerks usurp were gained of me; I love them  
 not; but now  
 "To royal Domnal reconciled, 'tis fitting that I bow

"With willing reverence to the laws."  
 Said Ardan, "Laws in Mourne  
 "Against the law of God decreed, we reverence not,  
 but scorn."  
 "Fear not," said Congal; "while I reign o'er Ulster,  
 none shall dare  
 "Disturb the seats assigned you here by generous  
 Kellach's care."  
 "We fear not for our seats, oh King: these rocks are  
 not the soil  
 "That Clerics choose, when feeble chiefs divide the  
 Church her spoil.  
 "Yet even 'mid these wind-whirling vales, these deserts  
 dumb and dead,  
 "Their Saints invade us. Raise thine eyes to yonder  
 mountain head  
 "That 'twixt us and the eastern sky uplifts its glittering  
 cone:  
 "There, where thou seest the cairn at top, dwelt in his  
 cave of stone  
 "Their hermit Domangart, ten years: the tempests  
 from the sea  
 "On one side dashed him, and on one the wet west  
 blanched him: he  
 "Daily, or from his driving cloud or mountain altar  
 bare,  
 "Loosed 'gainst the nation's ancient gods his searching  
 shafts of prayer;  
 "And, daily, from the rocky crest of Bingian here,  
 hard by,  
 "Alone like him, and raised like him, midway 'twixt  
 earth and sky,  
 "The red Bard Irial, in reply, launched from his rival  
 chair  
 "Athwart the empty fields of space, the deadlier poet's  
*Aeir*;



"Till, when the struggle had endured the tenth year,  
 in his pride  
 "Of prayer and fasting, Domangart sank 'neath the  
*Aeir* and died.  
 "For God imparts the Bardic gift in triplicate degree,  
 "The power to charm, the power to blight, the power  
 to prophesy;  
 "But to the second grade but few, and to the last but  
 one  
 "May in a generation rise; and Aidan's mighty son  
 "Had to the second degree attained; and with his  
 song could rhyme  
 "Crops to decay, and men to death; as in the olden  
 time  
 "Bard Neyid blotched his uncle Caier, and from both  
 throne and bed  
 "Expelled him. 'Love me, Lord of Song,' incestuous  
 Athna said.  
 "But Neyid would not. 'Love me, Lord of Con-  
 naught,' said the dame;  
 "Then Neyid from his burning heart, fired with the  
 double flame  
 "Of lust and of ambition, sped the baleful words of  
 scorn  
 "That made the king a blemished man: he, wretch,  
 at early morn,  
 "When to the healing fount he went, his fevered brow  
 to lave,  
 "Beheld on either evilled cheek, reflected in the wave,  
 "The hideous boil incurable; from sight of human eyes  
 "Abashed he fled, and one year's space in mendicant  
 disguise  
 "Lurked in Dun-Kermna, with the son of Edersgol;  
 meantime  
 "Neyid enjoyed his Queen and crown; but that  
 enormous crime

"Passed not unpunished: when the year in guilty joy  
 was spent,  
 "Mounted in Caier's own royal car the Queen and  
 Poet went  
 "To claim their captive from the son of Edersgol;  
 and, bound  
 "To Neyid's belt, to aid their quest, brought Caier's  
 favorite hound.  
 "Then, through his rags and scars, the King a moment  
 stood revealed;  
 " "He sits within my seat," he cried; and snatched a  
 warrior's shield;  
 "But in the buckler's polished disk beholding once  
 again  
 "His ruined visage, and the dire, disqualifying stain,  
 "Shame-struck, leaped headlong o'er the rocks that  
 from the fortress-mound  
 "Stoop to the sea; and, after him, dragged by the  
 eager hound,  
 "Went Neyid o'er the slippery brink; at whose  
 despairing cry,  
 "As down the airy void he whirled, the chariot-steeds  
 hard by  
 "Fled; and, cast forward where the reins entangling  
 trailed the road,  
 "Her broken limbs for many a mile the rocks of  
 Bearra strowed.  
 "Such power of old a Bard hath owned; and such  
 tremendous power  
 "For evil or for good on thee depending, at this  
 hour,  
 "Here, round us, these, the remnant left of those whom  
 Aed's decree,  
 "Made at Drumkeat, expelled their chairs, reserve in  
 trust for thee,  
 "Their only rightful Lord and King."



Said Congal : " Say not so ;

" 'Tis Domnal now to whom we all a one allegiance owe."

By this they reached the fort, and found the Chieftain  
Kellach there :

Before the outer gate he sat, and took the fresher air :  
A very aged senior he ; his hearing well-nigh gone,  
Nor walked he longer on his feet, but sat a *tolg* upon :  
A brazen-footed bench it was, whereon his serving train  
Could bear him gently in and out.

" My love to Congal Claen,"

He said. " Disabled of my limbs thou find'st me,  
nephew, still ;

" But not yet crippled aught in heart or in the loyal will  
" I bear my brother Scallan's son ; and much my heart  
is grieved

" At hearing of the shameful wrongs thou hast of late  
received

" At hands of this ungrateful King."

" Dear kinsman, grieve no more,"  
Congal returned ; " these wrongs are all forgotten,  
since we swore

" The oaths of peace ; for peace is made, and will be  
ratified

" By taking of the princess fair, Lafinda, for my bride ;  
" And, ere the nuptial knot be tied, on duty's urgent  
wing

" Even now to Dunangay I ride to banquet with the  
King."

Said Kellach ; " Small the good will spring from any  
banquet spread

" At Dunangay, where coward Kings, from spacious  
Tara fled,

" At threat of imprecating Clerks, crouch in their  
narrow den.

" But these are not the days of Kings, nor days of  
mighty men,"

Said Garrad Gann ; " A servant here of Domnal :  
and I say

" No narrow house, oh aged Sire, is that of Dunangay.

" But when Saint Ruan, because the King, Brown  
Dermid, had profaned

" His sanctuary, and his ward, thence ravished, still  
detained

" At Tara contumaciously, denounced by book and bell

" His curse against the royal seat,—which righteous  
judgment well

" Did Dermid merit ; for he pressed his fugitive's  
pursuit

" With sacrilegious fury to the very altar foot

" Of Lorrach ; and, when Ruan himself stood in the  
narrow door

" That led to where his ward was hid beneath the  
chancel floor,

" And Dermid feared to pluck him thence, with pick  
and iron crow

" Did break the floor before his feet, and from the crypt  
below

" Dug out Aed Guara,—afterwards, no King at Tara  
dare

" Longer reside ; but each within his patrimonial share  
" Ordained the royal seat elsewhere—as south Hy-Niall,  
who chose

" Loch-Leyne-Fort ; or as north Hy-Niall, Fort-  
Aileach ; and like those

" Did Domnal choose, when Erin's voice gave him the  
sovereign sway,

" By salmon-full abounding Boyne, the house of  
Dunangay.

" There, following royal Tara's plan, with dyke and  
mound he cast

" Seven mighty ramparts round about, to make the  
mansion fast ;



"And, after the same pattern, did build within  
 the fort  
 "For him and for his household train, a timbered  
 middle-court ;  
 "Also for each Provincial King a fair assembly hall,  
 "A prison and a Poet's lodge, and, fairest work  
 of all,  
 "A single-pillared chamber, like as Cormac, learned son  
 "Of Art, at desert Tara in former times had done.  
 "In which capacious mansion, thou and all thy Bards,  
 old man,  
 "Could lodge, and no man's room be less : so answers  
 Garrad Gann."  
 "Herald, I hear thy words but ill," said Kellach ;  
 "but 'twere well  
 "For Erin, if Dermid Dun, that day he broke the  
 Cleric's cell,  
 "As justly by the law he might, his fugitive to win,  
 "Had, where he took Aed Guara out, put Ruan of  
 Lorrain in.  
 "So should our laws have reverence meet ; nor lawless  
 Clerks exalt  
 "Their crooked staves above the wand of Justice,  
 through the fault  
 "Of such as Dermid. But, oh youths, behold the open  
 gates  
 "Where mountain fare on homely boards your courtesy  
 awaits."  
 They entered : in the hall within abundant boards  
 were spread,  
 Bard, Brehon, Smith, in order set, each at his table's  
 head ;  
 But no Priest sat to bless the meat : now, when the  
 feast was done,  
 Said Kellach, from his middle place,  
 "Oh, learned harmonious one,

"Who sittest o'er the Board of Bards of Erin, be our  
 cheer  
 "Graced with such lay as Rury's sons will not disdain  
 to hear."  
 Then at a sign from Ardan given, a Poet pale and grey  
 Rose at the table of the Smith, and sang an antique lay.  
 Of Cical and his hunter-tribes the varied song began,  
 And how, in Grecian galleys borne, Mæonian Partholan,  
 Sire of great Slanga, on a day, with sight of sail and oar,  
 Amazed the dwellers of the woods by Inver Scena's  
 shore,  
 Where first Invasion first brought in our arts of life ;  
 and how  
 Erin, untill then, from him received the spade and  
 plough.  
 His three chief husbandmen, from whom all reckonings  
 still begin  
 Of Erin's wealth, were Dig and Delve and Gather-  
 Increase-In.  
 His leader-oxen, first and best that Erin ever saw  
 Yoked to the work of livelihood, were sturdy Drive and  
 Draw.  
 His two chief sages, Ask and Tell. His merchants,  
 Take and Give,  
 By whose plain precepts, first and last, must Erin learn  
 to live.  
 But Todga was a comely page, and Dalgnaid warm and  
 frail,  
 And Inis-Saimer's sorrows next engaged the devioustale.  
 Next, how great Slanga, for himself and princely  
 brethren three,  
 Did first in four partition forth the Isle of Destiny.  
 Then sang he how the sudden pest with half the fair  
 and brave  
 Of Erin filled Ben Edar's cairns and Tamlaght's nation-  
 grave.



Forgotten Partholan himself, lies 'neath his royal  
 mound  
 On green Moynalty, hushed at eve by drowsy ocean's  
 sound,  
 And clangorous song of flocks, by night, when through  
 the wintry air  
 The wide-winged wild geese to their pools by Liffey  
 side repair:  
 But promised Slanga, tomb'd aloft on that great  
 mountain's head,  
 Which now, since Domangart hath used the chamber  
 of the dead  
 For Cleric rites, no longer owns its name of old  
 renown,  
 Slieve-Slanga, but Slieve-Donard sounds, awaits his  
 calling-down;  
 At whose return, when time has brought Fate's pre-  
 appointed hour,  
 Long, long withheld, return the days of Ulster's pride  
 and power.  
 "And many a day," the poet said, "I've raised to  
 Slanga's cairn  
 "These eyes of mine, with longing gaze, expecting to  
 discern  
 "Sign of his coming; and methought, as I this  
 very day  
 "Lay high on Bingian's side, and watched the piled  
 stones stern and grey,  
 "They seemed to stir: a sudden light o'er all the  
 landscape spread,  
 "A joyous sound of song burst forth around and  
 overhead;  
 "The wasteful void of air between, that in a lifeless  
 trance  
 "Lay wrapped but now, seemed sudden filled with  
 voice and utterance;

"Strong in me rose desire of song; a thousand thoughts  
 and tones  
 "Melodious thrilled me; still I gazed; and still the  
 sullen stones  
 "Ope'd not; but even as I gazed, I saw the sunshine  
 flame  
 "On Congal's crest, and knew in him our promised  
 Slanga came."  
 He sat; and smiles and plaudits marked the lay's  
 appropriate close:  
 Then at the Brehon's senior board another bard  
 arose.  
 Of Herdsman Borchá was his song: how he, in  
 ancient days,  
 Used sit on craggy Bingian's top to view his bestial  
 graze;  
 Till from his herding-seat disturbed, when to that craggy  
 steep  
 Came Goban with his mason train to build a treasure-  
 keep  
 For mighty Finn. In living layers the jointed rampart  
 rose  
 A spear's length thick; but when the wall should now  
 well-nigh enclose  
 The central summit, Borchá came, by night, and with  
 his staff  
 Scattered the one half of the work; but left the other  
 half  
 Entire, that like a bristling crest on warrior's helmet  
 set,  
 Looks toward Orgallia and the west with front defiant  
 yet.  
 "In shade whereof," the poet said, "as from the  
 sultry beam  
 "Of May-day noon, withdrawn I lay, I slept and  
 dreamt a dream.



"Above me on his ancient seat, obscuring half the  
 skies,  
 "I saw the giant herdsman sit, his mist-grey meteor  
 eyes  
 "Searching the north: 'Gigantic youth, what do'st  
 thou there?' I cried.  
 "'I keep the score of Ulster's kine,' the great Neate-  
 Herd replied.  
 "'To keep the score of Ulster's kine, oh Borchu,'  
 answered I,  
 "'There needs not now, since Scallan's day, a herd-  
 seat half so high.'  
 "He turned and gazing south and west, where once  
 the dun droves ranged  
 "Orgallia, saw the alien brands, and all his aspect  
 changed.  
 "He rose in wrath, and called his dogs, and down the  
 mountain strode,  
 "And, at his parting, with his staff such buffet he  
 bestowed  
 "On Finn's rock-rampart that the earth rebounded at  
 the stroke;  
 "For, lo! the bolt of heaven had fallen hard-by, and  
 I awoke  
 "'Mid rolling thunder and the smoke of shattered  
 crags; but still  
 "Could hear his whistle and his call from distant hill  
 to hill.  
 "And, as the Master-Poet's car," said he, "went by  
 to-day,  
 "Bearing King Congal through the glen where rapt in  
 thought I lay,  
 "I looked and saw him once again, busy on Bingian's  
 brow  
 "Reckoning his kine; but west and south he turned  
 his glances now,

"And smiled to find the tale complete, as, changing  
 hand and hand,  
 "With fingers swift he told the score for each recon-  
 quered land."  
 He sat: and Congal also sat in silence and in gloom,  
 While plaudits fierce and unrestrained rose round the  
 crowded room.  
 Third, Ardan sang. "To God who made the  
 elements, I raise  
 "First praises humbly as is meet, and Him I lastly praise;  
 "Who sea and land hath meted out beneath the ample  
 sky  
 "For man's inhabitation, and set each family  
 "To dwell within his proper bounds; who for the race  
 renowned  
 "Of Rury from old time prepared the fair Ultonian  
 ground,  
 "Green-valley'd clear-streamed, fishy-bay'd, with  
 mountain-mirroring lakes  
 "Belted, with deer-abounding woods and fox-  
 frequented brakes  
 "Made apt for all brave exercise; that, till the end of time,  
 "Each true Rudrician fair-hair'd son might from his  
 hills sublime  
 "Look forth and say, 'Lo, on the left, from where  
 tumultuous Moyle  
 "'Heaves at Benmore's foot-fettering rocks with  
 ceaseless surging toil,  
 "'And, half escaping from the clasp of that stark  
 chain of stone,  
 "'The soaring Foreland, poised aloft, as eagle newly  
 flown,  
 "'Hangs awful on the morning's brow, or rouses  
 armed Cantyre,  
 "'Red kindling 'neath the star of eve the Dalriad's  
 warning fire;



"South to the salt, sheep-fattening marsh and long-  
 resounding bay  
 "Where young Cuchullin camped his last on dread  
 Muirthevne's day;  
 "And southward still to where the weird De Danaan  
 kings lie hid,  
 "High over Boyne, in cavern'd cairn and mountain  
 pyramid;  
 "And on the right hand from the rocks where Balor's  
 bellowing caves  
 "Up through the funnelled sea-cliffs shoot forth the  
 exploding waves,  
 "South to where lone Gweebarra laves the sifted  
 sands that strow  
 "Dark Boylagh's banks; and southward still to where  
 abrupt Eas-Roe  
 "In many a tawny heap and whirl, by glancing  
 salmon track't,  
 "Casts down to ocean's oozy gulfs the great sea-  
 cataract,  
 "The land is ours!—from earth to sea, from hell to  
 heaven above,  
 "It and its increase, and the crown and dignity  
 thereof!  
 "Therefore to God, who gave the land into our hand,  
 I sing  
 "First praises, as the law commands; next to my  
 lawful King,  
 "Image of God, with voice and string I chaunt the  
 loyal strain,  
 "Though well nigh landless here to-day I see thee,  
 Congal Claen;  
 "Spoiled of Orgallia's green domain, of wide Tir-  
 Owen's woods,  
 "Of high Tir-Conal's herdful hills and fishy-teeming  
 floods;

"Of all the warm vales, rich in goods of glebe-  
 manuring men,  
 "That bask against the morning sun along the Royal  
 Glen.  
 "These are no longer ours: the brood of Baedan's  
 sons in these  
 "Shoot proudly forth their lawless barques, and sweep  
 unhostaged seas  
 "Through all the swift-keel-clasping gulfs of ocean  
 that enfold  
 "Deep-bay'd Moy Inneray and the shores of Dathi's  
 land of gold.  
 "In law-defying conscious strength aloft in  
 Dunamain  
 "Rude Ultan Long-hand owns no lord on Orior's  
 pleasant plain;  
 "While o'er Ardsallagh's sacred height, and Creeve  
 Roe's flowery meads,  
 "Malodhar Macha reigns alone in Emain of the  
 steeds.  
 "But come; resound the noble deeds and swell the  
 chant of praise  
 "In memory of the men who did the deeds of other  
 days;  
 "The old bard-honoring, fearless days, exulting Ulster  
 saw,  
 "When to great Rury's fair-haired race tall Scallan  
 gave the law;  
 "When, from Troy-Rury to Ardstraw was neither fort  
 nor field,  
 "But yielded tribute to the king that bore the ell-  
 broad shield.  
 "Hark! what a shout Ben Evenagh pealed! how flash  
 from sea to shore  
 "The chariot sides, the shielded prows, bright blade  
 and dripping oar;



"How smoke their causeways to our tramp: beneath  
 our oarsmen's toil  
 "How, round the Dalaradian prow, foam down the  
 waves of Foyle!  
 "Come forth, ye proud ones of Tir-Hugh, your  
 eastern masters wait  
 "To take their tribute-rights anew at broad-stoned  
 Aileach's gate;  
 "A hundred steeds, a hundred foals, each foal beside  
 his dam,  
 "A hundred pieces of fine gold, each broad as  
 Scallan's palm,  
 "And thick as thumb-nail of a man of churlish birth  
 who now  
 "The seventh successive seed time holds a fallow-  
 furrowing plough:  
 "Three hundred mantles; thirty slaves, all females,  
 young and fair,  
 "Each carrying her silver cup, each cup a poet's  
 share  
 "Who sings an ode inaugural.—Alas! I fondly  
 rave:  
 "Dead, tribute-levying Scallan lies; and dead in  
 Scallan's grave  
 "Glory and might and prosperous days. The very  
 heavens that pour'd  
 "Abundance on our fields and streams, while that  
 victorious lord  
 "Of righteous judgments ruled the land; the stars  
 that, as they ranged  
 "The bounteous heavens, shed health and wealth,  
 above our heads are changed.  
 "Nor marvel that the sickening skies are altered o'er  
 our heads,  
 "Nor that from heaven's distempered heights malign  
 contagion spreads:

"For all the life of every growth that springs beneath  
 the sun  
 "Back to the air returns when once its turn of life is  
 done:  
 "To it all sighs ascend; to it, on chariot-wheels of  
 fire,  
 "All imprecations from the lips of injured men  
 aspire;  
 "And when that lofty lodge of life and growth-store  
 of the world  
 "Is choked with groans from burthened hearts and  
 maledictions hurled  
 "In clamorous flight of accents winged with deadlier  
 strength of song  
 "From livid lips of desperate men who bear enormous  
 wrong,  
 "Heaven cannot hold it; but the curse outbursting  
 from on high  
 "In blight and plague, on plant and man, blasts all  
 beneath the sky.  
 "Burst, blackening clouds that hang aloof o'er perjured  
 Domnal's halls!  
 "Dash down, with all your flaming bolts, the fraud-  
 cemented walls,  
 "Till through your thunder-riven palls heaven's light  
 anew be pour'd  
 "In Law and Justice, Wealth and Song, on Congal's  
 throne restored!"  
 Look how the culprit stands confused before the  
 judge, while one,  
 Who, passing through the woods unseen, has seen  
 the foul deed done,  
 Relates the manner of the fact; tells how with  
 treacherous blow  
 Struck from behind the murdered man sank on the  
 pathway; so



With flushing cheek, contracted brow, and restless,  
 angry eye,  
 Sat Congal till the lay was closed : then with a mighty  
 sigh  
 He breathed his heart ; and standing, spoke ; and,  
 speaking, he unbent  
 The golden torque that clasped his neck, and by a  
 butler sent  
 The splendid guerdon to the Bard.

“For what thy lay doth sound

“In praise of Rury’s glorious race and Uladh’s realm  
 renowned,

“Take, Bard this gift ; but for so much of this untimely  
 song

“As sounds in strife betwixt myself and sovereign  
 Domnal, long

“And far from me, his foster-son, be that disastrous  
 day

“Would break the peace we late have sworn : and  
 therefore for thy lay

“I thank thee and I thank thee not.”

Then round the tables ran

Much murmuring through the Poet-throng : and thus  
 spoke Garrad Gann :

“The lay is easy that a Bard chaunts at his patron’s  
 board,

“With none in presence to repay lewd word with  
 saucier word.

“See how a boy who spends his time playing alone at  
 ball,

“Loitering, belike, from school, beside some lofty  
 smooth-faced wall,

“Strikes softly that the ball may fall convenient to his  
 blow,

“And keeps his private game on foot with easy  
 effort so.

“But, say, two pairs of players arrive, and join an  
 earnest game ;

“Lo, all the easy-taken balls, that late high-curving  
 came,

“Now struck by prompt rebutting hands fly past, shot  
 in and out,

“Direct and rapid, hard to hit, missed once at every  
 bout ;

“The players at stretch of every limb, like flickering  
 bats that ply

“Their dumb quest on a summer’s eve, to balk each  
 other, fly

“Hither and thither ; all their chests heave ; and on  
 every brow

“The sweat-drops glisten. So, me seems, oh King,  
 this minstrel now,

“Much like a Cleric in his desk, having none to strive  
 withal,

“His game being wholly with himself, keeps up the  
 easy ball

“Of safe disloyalty : but, let this song of his be heard

“By Domnal’s Bards, in Domnal’s hall, and take a  
 true man’s word

“Our angry Master here should give his day of  
 harvest-work

“Ere from the field of fair debate he’d bear his golden  
 torque.”

“Enough,” said Kellach. “Now to rest : and with  
 the earliest ray

“Of dawn, my kinsman-king is free to journey on his  
 way.”



# CONGAL.

## BOOK II.

### THE ARGUMENT.

*The Royal Feast. The unintended slight.  
Halt Kellach's Counsel; and the Aids for fight.*

[Congal continues his journey southwards. He encounters at the fords of the Boyne, the hermit Erc, whose goose eggs have been carried off by the purveyors of Domnal. Erc curses feast and guests. Arrived at Dunangay, Congal is cordially welcomed by the King. Domnal asks as a favour, and in token of reconciliation, that Congal will sit at the banquet on his left hand, next his heart. Congal consents, although the right hand was his privileged place, but is indignant when he sees this assumed by his rival Malodhar, to whom Armagh and the surrounding territory, formerly his, had been assigned by Domnal. A further insult—the handing to him of the goose egg on a wooden dish, while the other provincial Kings were served on silver—increases Congal's wrath. He rises, and angrily recounts his grievances; then leaves the banquet with his followers. At the fords of the Boyne Congal again meets the hermit Erc, who had cursed the feast and him. He is pushed aside, and stumbling, falls into the river, and is swept down by the current. King Domnal sends in vain to entreat the return of Congal, and to assure him that no insult was intended. Congal sends gifts to the poets, and continues his journey to Mourne. He recounts his injuries to his uncle. Kellach gives his voice for war; promises his aid, and that of his sons; and advises Congal to proceed to Scotland and seek the help of his grandfather, King Eochaid Buie. Congal first visits Lafinda; on his way to Rath-Keltar has a vision of the Herdsman Borchu. He finds his betrothed with her maidens by a running stream, fulling a splendid cloak; and tells her that their marriage must be postponed. He sails for Scotland, visits his grandsire, who consents to send forces under command of his sons. These princes, Domnal Brec, Congal Menn, Sweeny, and Aed, with their wives, contend for the honour of entertaining Congal. The Bard Drostan predicts

disaster. Congal sails for Britain, arrives at Caer Leon; and finds its King and Queen, whose heir has long been absent, perplexed by the claims of three candidates to be their long lost son. These have been sent to try the ordeal of the Stone Maen Amber, which moved only to the touch of Truth. Congal is deputed to test their pretensions. He decides in favour of Conan Rodd, who is recognised as Prince, and undertakes to lead the British warriors to the aid of Congal Claen.]



AT early blush of morn, the King of Ulster  
and his train

Assumed their southern Meath-ward route  
through craggy Mourne again.

Herd Borchu's peaks behind them left, by Narrow-  
Water side

They rode, and by the Yews that shade Kin-Troya's  
refluent tide.

Thence, lifted lightly on their steeds, up through the  
desert lone,

Where gloomy Gullion overlooks his realm of quag  
and stone,

Passed Brigid's cell; and, issuing forth high o'er  
Muirthevne's plain,

Where Fochard takes the morning sun, passed Brigid's  
cell again.

"Go where you will, their Saints intrude," said  
Congal.

"Nay, 'twas here,"

Sweeny returned, "Lafinda, she to both of us so dear,  
"In all her maid-beseeming arts was nurtured in her  
youth

"By Brigid's maids, and learned from them the lore  
of Heavenly truth."

"And for so dear a pupil's sake," said Congal,  
"shall their schools

"Have favor; and a warrior's arm protect the pious  
fools."



Thence by Dun-Dealga's belted mound, safe in  
 whose triple wards  
 Cuchullin in the days of old caroused his banished  
 Bards,  
 Abashed in awe the warriors rode: nor drew they  
 bridle-rein  
 Till on the woodland height they reached the sacred  
 walls of Slane;  
 And from the verdant Hill of Health, outspread at  
 large beneath  
 On all sides to the bounding sky, beheld illustrious  
 Meath,  
 Cattle and crop, and homes of men, commingling gold  
 and green  
 Refulgent in the noontide ray, and sparkling Boyne  
 between.  
 As down the hill the warriors rode, to reach the level  
 fords,  
 A woman met them by the way. She said—  
 "Oh, gentle lords,  
 "Be witness of the shameful wrong the King's purveyors  
 here  
 "Have done against our hermit, Erc; he, holy man  
 austere,  
 "Eats not of flesh nor viand else that breath of life  
 informs;  
 "But when the winter season comes, amid the northern  
 storms  
 "The wild-geese visit him; and here, around his  
 guardian cell,  
 "In safety leave their silly nests and store of eggs as  
 well:  
 "And all our hermit's hoarded store these proud  
 purveyors now  
 "Have taken for the King's repast: be witness, warrior,  
 thou."

"Good woman," said the courteous King, "this  
 wrong of thine transcends  
 "My power to help: myself a guest, can make thee  
 no amends."  
 And onward passed to reach the fords: here by the  
 rushing flood  
 The aged, angry Erc himself in middle causeway stood.  
 His head was bare, his brow was black, his lips with  
 rage were wan;  
 As stone-crop on a storm-bleached rock stood on the  
 rugged man  
 The hard grey beard, and with a voice as winter shrill  
 and strong  
 He cried,  
 "Oh, hear my prayer; oh God! avenge thy  
 servant's wrong.  
 "Twice twenty years in pinching fast and wasting vigil  
 here  
 "I've served thine altar: let my prayer now reach thy  
 favoring ear:  
 "Cursed be the hands that robbed my store, accursed  
 the board that bears,  
 "The roof that shelters the repast, the bidden guest  
 that shares."  
 And raised, to ring, his altar bell: but with his  
 riding-wand  
 King Congal struck the empty brass from Erc's uplifted  
 hand;  
 And said,  
 "For shame, old wicked man; this impotence of rage  
 "An angry woman would demean; and ill beseems  
 a sage."  
 And pushed him from his path aside, and went upon  
 his way,  
 Regardless, through the flashing fords and up to  
 Dunangay.



Up to the royal gates from all the fords of Boyne  
 that morn  
 Was concourse great of bidden guest on car and  
 courser borne.  
 And many a chief, as Congal rode the crowded ranks  
 between,  
 Would check his steeds and pause to mark the hero's  
 noble mien.  
 Within the courtyard of the fort, and at the open gate  
 That to the spacious wine-hall led, did Domnal's self  
 await  
 The festive throngs; and, when the troop of Congal  
 Claen drew near,  
 Advanced before the threshold-step, and with such  
 gracious cheer  
 As father might returning son, received him; kiss'd  
 his cheek,  
 And said,  
 "Dear Congal, of thy love the boon I first bespeak  
 "Is this; that, as my foster-son, on this auspicious  
 day,  
 "Which reunites affection's bonds no more to part, I  
 pray  
 "Thou wilt, in token to the world of mutual love  
 restored,  
 "Upon my left hand, next my heart, sit at the banquet  
 board."  
 Said Congal, "Royal Sire, although the law of seats  
 be thus,  
 "That when the monarch boasts, as thou, the race  
 illustrious  
 "Of North Hy-Niall, the privilege of Ulster in that  
 case  
 "Is next the king, on his right hand, at banquet to  
 have place;  
 "Yet be it as thy love would prompt."

Then by a royal groom  
 The Ulster guests were to their baths brought in an  
 inner room;  
 And so remained until a steward announced the banquet  
 spread,  
 And led them to the wine-hall; there, at Domnal's  
 table-head,  
 On left hand of the royal seat, was Congal's place  
 assigned,  
 Young Dalaradian Sweeny's next, and Garrad Gann  
 behind.  
 Great was the concourse; all the seats were full, save  
 two alone,  
 The Monarch's, and the vacant chair to rightward of  
 the throne.  
 Expecting who should enter next, was heard a herald's call,  
 "The King of Emain Macha here; and straightway  
 up the hall  
 Came proud Malodhar; round him gazed with calm  
 audacious air,  
 And sitting, as of right, assumed the right hand vacant  
 chair,  
 The Red-Branch banner from the beam depending o'er  
 his head.  
 Then Sweeny to King Congal's ear approached his  
 lips and said,  
 "It bodes no good, oh Congal, that thine ancient  
 rightful place  
 "This upstart of Ardmacha here obtains before thy face."  
 "Hush, Sweeny," answered Garrad Gann; "'tis  
 Domnal's love alone  
 "That places Congal on his left, to heart-ward of the  
 throne."  
 Ere more was said, the herald's voice again rose loud  
 and clear,  
 And all the hall rose with the words—"The King of  
 Erin here!"



And Domnal from his room came forth : his herald  
with him came,  
Proclaiming,

"Erin's Domnal here ; the one son dear to fame  
"Of Aed, the son of Ainmiry ; which Ainmiry for sire  
"Had Setna, son of Fergus : he, his race if ye require,  
"Was son of Conal Gulban, son of Niall the Hostage-  
famed,  
"(Nine Kings he held in hostage, and hence was he  
surnamed) ;

"And up from Niall Nine-Hostager we know we may  
ascend

"From King to King to Adam, up to the very end.  
"But Adam is the primal root of every spreading tree  
"And branch-abounding underwood of genealogy ;  
"In whom all increase of mankind, of every tribe and  
name

"That has been since the earth received her elemental  
frame,

"And shali be henceforth, till on all the final doom be  
passed

"Of the Redeeming Judge's word, do meet and mix at  
last.

"Sprung from which great progenitors is Domnal, for  
whose sake

"Beseech you all with joyous hearts these viands to  
partake."

The herald ceased, and Domnal, still upstanding by  
his chair,

Motioned to Bishop Ronan Finn to give the blessing-  
prayer.

The blessing given, King Domnal sat ; and, smiling  
courteous, spoke,

"My love to all, both King and Prince ; high Chiefs  
and humble folk

"Of Erin, welcome ! now to all, ye noble butlers, bring  
"The Egg of Appetite, and place for each Provincial King

"An Egg of Honor, that our feast—all things being  
duly done,

"From egg to apple—happily be ended as begun."

With ready speed the serving men the King's behests  
obeyed,

And wild-goose eggs before the Kings on silver dishes  
laid,

Save only before Congal Claen : by fate, or by mis-  
chance,

Or cook's default, or butler's haste, or steward's ignor-  
ance,

Through transposition of his seat not rightly understood,  
The egg of many ills for him was served on dish of  
wood.

Which, when the men of Ulster saw, they did not deem  
it meet

That sons of Rury at that board should longer sit or eat ;  
And Dalaradian Sweeny said, "Thou eatest of thy  
shame,

"Meat sent thee on a platter from a King who hates  
thy name !

"Methought no lord of Oriall, with Kinel-Owen to  
boot,

"And Kinel-Conal at his back, should sit without  
dispute

"In Congal's place at banquet. I end as I began :  
"Thou eatest thy dishonor."

Again said Garrad Gann :  
"Hush ! 'twas the cook's or steward's default : mar  
not the feast's repose."

But Congal said, "Be silent, dog !" and from the table  
rose.

Ah ! me, what mighty ills we see from small begin-  
nings rise !

Look how a spark consumes the wood a palace-roof  
supplies.



How smallest sounds call greatest forth ; as when a  
 singer draws  
 A long clear-warbled note to end, the theatre's applause  
 Follows tempestuous ; and again the artist must begin  
 With nice throat-fingering dexterous his thread of sound  
 to spin  
 Finer and finer ; then the crowd enraptured more and  
 more  
 Thunder back plaudits, and the roof re-echoes to the  
 roar.  
 Or as a pilgrim, lone and poor, without a guide who  
 goes  
 Through an Alp's gap, where hang aloof the silence-  
 balanced snows,  
 Deeming himself alone with God, will break the aerial  
 poise  
 With quavering hymn ; the shaken bulks sliding with  
 dreadful noise  
 Sheer from their rock-shelved slippery lofts, descend in  
 ruinous sweep,  
 And spill their loud ice-cataracts down all the rattling  
 steep.  
 The horrid rumble heard remote by shepherd on his  
 lawn,  
 He looks, and from the naked peak sees that the snows  
 are gone ;  
 Then sighs, and says, "Perchance but now 'twas some  
 poor traveller's hap  
 "To journey in the pass beneath." He meanwhile, in  
 his gap,  
 Lies lifeless underneath his load of ruin heavy and bare,  
 And awful silence once again possesses all the air.  
 And as the heaping-up of snows in mountain sides  
 apart  
 By winds of many wintry years, so heaped in Congal's  
 heart

Wrong lay on wrong ; and now at last in wrath's resist-  
 less flood  
 The long-pent mischief burst its bounds. Up at the  
 board he stood  
 And spurned the table with his foot, and from his  
 shoulders drew  
 The festal robe, and at his feet the robe and viands  
 threw.  
 Rose also eager Garrad Gann. "Oh, King, I pray  
 thee sit,  
 "And thou shalt have attendance due and honor as is  
 fit."  
 But angry Congal, turning in the middle of the hall,  
 Dashed down Gann Garrad to the ground. Amaze-  
 ment seized on all,  
 And terror many. But he stood and spoke them :  
 "Have no fear ;  
 "For grievous though my wrongs have been, I do not  
 right them here.  
 "But here, before this company of Kings and noble  
 Lords,  
 "I shall recount my wrongs, oh King ; and mark ye  
 all my words.  
 "Thy royal predecessor, oh King, was Sweeny Menn ;  
 "And him thou didst rebel against ; and into Ulster  
 then  
 "Came, seeking our allegiance, and leagued with us,  
 and I  
 "Was given thee in fosterage to bind our amity ;  
 "And with thee here was nurtured, till thou before the  
 might  
 "Of Sweeny Menn, thy rightful King, wast forced to  
 take thy flight  
 "To Alba's hospitable shore ; where generous Eochaid  
 Buie,  
 "Mymother's father, for her sake, and for his love of me,



"Did entertain thee and thy train till summers seven  
 were flown,  
 "When I, a youthful warrior, and aged Sweeny grown  
 "No longer at the lance expert, nor on the whirling  
 car,  
 "With bent bow able as of old to ride the ridge of  
 war,—  
 "As when through Moin-an-Catha's pools, waist-deep  
 in shameful mire,  
 "He chased thee on Ollarva's banks,—thou of my  
 mother's sire  
 "Didst crave and didst obtain a barque, and with thy  
 slender band  
 "Sett'st sail for Erin secretly ; and where we first made  
 land  
 "Was at Troy Rury : there we held a council ; and  
 'twas there,  
 "Standing on those brown-rippled sands, thou didst  
 protest and swear,  
 "If I by any daring feat that warrior-laws allow  
 "Of force or stratagem, should slay King Sweeny  
 Menn, and thou  
 "Thereby attain the sovereignty, thou straightway  
 wouldst restore  
 "All that my royal forefathers were seized of theretofore.  
 "Relying on which promise to have my kingdom  
 back,  
 "I left thee at Troy Rury ; nor turned I on my track  
 "Till I came to broad-stoned Aileach. There, on the  
 sunny sword  
 "Before the fort, sat Sweeny Menn, amid his royal  
 guard,  
 "He and his nobles chess-playing. Right through the  
 middle band  
 "I went, and no man's license asked, Garr-Congail in  
 my hand,

"And out through Sweeny's body, where he sat against  
 the wall,  
 "'Twas I that sent Garr-Congail in presence of them all.  
 "And out through Sweeny's body till the stone gave  
 back the blow,  
 "'Twas I that day at Aileach made keen Garr-Congail go.  
 "But they, conceiving from my cry—for, ere their  
 bounds I broke,  
 "I gave the warning warrior-shout that justified the  
 stroke  
 "By warrior-law—that Eochaid Buie and Alba's host  
 had come,  
 "Fled to their fortress, and I sped safe and triumph-  
 ant home.  
 "Then thou becamest Sovereign ; and, Scallan Broad-  
 Shield dead,  
 "I claimed thy promise to be made King in my  
 father's stead ;  
 "Not o'er the fragment of my rights regained by him,  
 alone,  
 "But o'er the whole Rudrician realm, as erst its  
 bounds were known,  
 "Ere Fergus Fogha sank before the Collas' robber  
 sword ;  
 "That thou had'st promised ; and to *that* I claimed to  
 be restored.  
 "But thou kept'st not thy promise ; but in this did'st  
 break the same,  
 "That thou yielded'st not Tir-Conal nor Tir-Owen to  
 my claim ;  
 "And the nine cantreds of Oriall to Malodhar Macha,  
 he  
 "Who now sits at thy shoulder, thou gavest, and not  
 to me.  
 "And him to-day thou givest my royal place and seat,  
 "And viands on a silver dish thou givest him to eat,



"And me, upon a wooden dish, mean food which I disdain :

"Wherefore upon this quarrel, oh King," said Congal Claen,

"I here denounce thee battle."

Therewith he left the hall,  
And with him, in tumultuous wise, went Ulster one and all,

And leaped in haste upon their steeds, and northward rode amain,

Till 'twixt them and the men of Meath they left the fords of Slane.

That morn, on thirsty Bregia's breast abundant heaven had poured

Much rain, and now with risen Boyne red ran the flooded ford.

There, still beside the slippery brink, indenting all the ground

With restless stampings to and fro, the angry Erc they found.

"Ah, wretch," cried Sweeny, "stand aside : avoid thy victim's way :

"Thine eggs have hatched us ills enough for one disastrous day."

"I thank thee, God," cried aged Erc, "that through the wastes of air

"My voice has reached thy throne, and thou hast heard thy servant's prayer."

"Go thank the fiend thou call'st thy God, where only fiends abide,"

Cried Sweeny ; and with furious hand dashed aged Erc aside :

The tottering senior stumbled back, and from the slippery verge

Boyne caught him in an onward whirl ; thence through the battling surge

Below the fords, as 'neath the feet of vigorous youths at play

A rolling football, Erc was rolled, engulfed, and swept away.

While yet from tawny whirl to whirl, the warriors marked him cast,

His right hand, as in act to curse, uplifted to the last, Adown the hill they late had left, in swift pursuit appeared

The royal chariot, and therein, with white conspicuous beard,

The Household bishop, Ronan Finn : while yet in middle tide

The coursers plunged before the car, "Son Congal, stay," he cried.

"King Domnal prays thee to forgive the grievance undesigned

"His herald's and his steward's default have caused thy manly mind.

"Love in excess it was did prompt the placing of thy chair

"At Domnal's left ; and, on his right, had not Malodhar there

"Sat uninvited, Domnal's love did further still design

"That Ulster's vacant seat should stand a symbol and a sign

"Of double honour done thee, both as Foster-son and King :

"Wherefore I come, by Domnal sent, his pardon back to bring."

"Cleric," said Congal, "tell the King, and let all Erin hear,

"I credit not the weak excuse invented by his fear."

Then Ronan showed his bishop's staff and bell ; and said, "Be these

"For truth of all that I avouch, thy certain guarantees."







He held it up, and, "Take," said he, "a warrior's word  
 in pledge,  
 "If thou take other recompense than reckoning at  
 sword-edge  
 "For these affronts, this sword of mine which, many a  
 time before  
 "I've sheathed in valiant breasts, shall find a bloody  
 sheath once more  
 "Here in this breast: for life for me has long while  
 lost its grace,  
 "By palsied limbs debarred the joy of combat and of  
 chase,  
 "And all my later years I've lived for that great day  
 which now  
 "Seems surely coming: for full cause and warrant good  
 hast thou  
 "For war with Domnal. Far less cause had Broad-  
 Shield when he slew  
 "Cuan of Clech, and set his head on the wall-top to  
 view,  
 "For calling him 'Shrunk Scallan': less cause than  
 this by far,  
 "Though Mordred's Queen had slapped the cheek of  
 British Gwynevar,  
 "Had Arthur when he fought Camlan; from which  
 pernicious fray  
 "Where joined thrice twenty thousand men, but three  
 men came away.  
 "What cause had Pictish Gwendolen, compared with  
 this of ours,  
 "When, for his broken apple-branch, he summoned all  
 the powers  
 "Of Caledonia, dale and fell, and, on Arderidd's  
 height,  
 "Made theme perpetual for the Bards in Merlin Wilt's  
 affright,

"Who lost his reason in that fight, and ever after ran  
 "Wild in the woods, a sacred seer, and vision-gifted  
 man?  
 "What! and the great breach of Goddeu, was it not  
 also fought  
 "In recompense of an affront contemptible, if brought  
 "Into comparison with thine? Yet there, of Britain's best  
 "Fell full ten thousand, in amends of one poor field-  
 fare's nest.  
 "No! warrant good for war thou hast, and cause of  
 strife to spare,  
 "And kindly-well beseems us all thine enterprise to  
 share.  
 "Go, summon me my seven good sons; my young men  
 brave and strong  
 "Shall with their royal kinsman in this Hosting go  
 along.  
 "And if my limbs would bear me, as they bore me like  
 the wind,  
 "When once I fought by Scallan's side, I would not  
 stay behind.  
 "Nor will I, far as men are found to bear me in the  
 front,  
 "Decline the face of battle yet, when comes the final  
 brunt.  
 "But for so great a strife as this, dear nephew, thou'lt  
 have need  
 "Of other friends and councillors, and other aids indeed.  
 "So get thee hence to Alba; to thy grandsire Eochaid  
 Buie:  
 "Thy mother was his daughter; and thy mother's  
 mother, she  
 "Was daughter, one and well-beloved, of other  
 Eochaid, king  
 "Of Britain. Claim the help of each, and here to  
 Erin bring



"Such aids as they will grant to thee ; meantime 'twill  
be my care

"Our own fraternal warrior tribes for combat to  
prepare."

This counsel to the King seemed good ; but, ere he  
sought the aid

Of Alban Eochaid, he devised to speak the royal maid.  
As through the desert of the Bards, at coming close  
of day,

On this design intent, the King of Ulster took his way ;  
Where fell the shadows vast, and grey from crag and  
spike of stone

The curling mists began to rise, tidings before him  
flown

Of war denounced, had filled the waste with battle-  
glorying songs,

And through the dusky glens the Bards, in loud exulting  
throngs,

On each side ran, with augury of conquest and renown  
Crowning their champion ; and when now untimely  
night came down,

With blazing links they lit the way ; when lo, a rushing  
sound,

As of immeasurable herds a-droving all around,  
Was heard, and presently was heard to fill the mountain  
hall

With hollow clamour far and wide, a whistle and  
a call.

"Borcha," cried Congal, "if 'tis thou art Drover of  
the night,

"Be patient : thou shalt have again, ere long, the  
oversight.

"Of all thy herds." A sound as though the mountain's  
shingly side

Shook down a sheet of rattling stone, through night's  
expanse replied.

"He climbs his Herd-seat as of old," cried Ardan ;  
"Oh ye Powers

"Unseen that round us live and move, grant, in this  
strife of ours,

"Your favour to the Poets' cause ! Like us apart ye  
dwell

"In woods and wilds ; like us, they say, from happier  
state ye fell."—

Exclaimed King Congal, "'Tis not well ! While  
ground beneath me stands,

"Succour or counsel will not I at any demon's hands.

"But whether victor, as I hope, or whether overthrown,  
"I in this contest live or die in manly arms alone."

The red round moon o'er Slanga's cairn ascending  
soon dispelled

The darkness, and by moon and stars attended, Congal  
held

His course to Sweeny's friendly fort ; a sleepless while  
he stayed

In Sweeny's halls ; then journeyed on to speak the  
royal maid.

The Princess with her women-train without the fort  
he found,

Beside a limpid running stream, upon the primrose  
ground,

In two ranks seated opposite, with soft alternate  
stroke

Of bare, white, counter-thrusting feet, fulling a splendid  
cloak

Fresh from the loom : incessant rolled athwart the  
fluted board

The thick web fretted, while two maids, with arms  
uplifted, poured

Pure water on it diligently ; and to their moving feet  
In answering verse they sang a chaunt of cadence clear

and sweet.



Princess Lafinda stood beside ; her feet in dainty shoes  
 Laced softly ; and her graceful limbs in robes of radiant  
 hues  
 Clad delicately, keeping the time : on boss of rushes  
 made  
 Old nurse Levarcam near them sat, beneath the haw-  
 thorn shade.  
 A grave experienced woman she, of reverend years, to  
 whom  
 Well known were both the ends of life, the cradle and  
 the tomb ;  
 Whose withered hands had often smoothed the wounded  
 warrior's bed ;  
 Bathed many new-born babes, and closed the eyes of  
 many dead.  
 The merry maidens when they spied the warlike king  
 in view,  
 Beneath their robes in modest haste their gleaming feet  
 withdrew,  
 And laughing all surceased their task. Lafinda blush-  
 ing stood  
 Elate with conscious joy to see so soon again renewed  
 A converse, ah, how sweet, compared with that of nurse  
 or maid !  
 But soon her joy met cruel check.  
 "Lafinda," Congal said,  
 And led her by the hand apart ; "this banquet of the  
 King's  
 "Has had an ill result. His feast has been of fare  
 which brings  
 "Hindrance to all festivity. Great insult has been  
 shown  
 "Me by King Domnal ; such affront as has not yet  
 been known  
 "By any other royal guest in Erin ; therefore now  
 "I come not, as I thought to come, to ratify the vow

"We made at parting, I and thou : our bridal now  
 must wait  
 "Till this wrong done be made aright : for I to Alba  
 straight  
 "Am gone to ask my grandsire's aid, and thence  
 returning go  
 "First and before all other calls in field to meet  
 my foe.  
 "And, trust me, I shall not bestow such thoughts as  
 fill my heart  
 "On any maid, and, least of all, on thee, dear maid,  
 who art  
 "By birth and by thy bringing-up entitled best to  
 claim  
 "Pleasure and peace within thy halls ; for I have  
 nought but flame  
 "Of indignation and of wrath since this ill-omened  
 feast,  
 "Left, to bestow on any one ; and these on thee at  
 least  
 "I wreak no further. Fair, farewell ; think of me while  
 away,  
 "And trust with me, our nuptial rites shall not have  
 long delay."  
 She answered, "For a maid like me, the daughter  
 of a King,  
 "To grieve for nuptial rites deferred, were not a seemly  
 thing.  
 "Yet, were I one of these, and loved, as humblest  
 maiden can,  
 "And shame would suffer me to shew my tears to any  
 man  
 "Shed for his sake, I well could weep. Oh, me ! what  
 hearts ye own,  
 "Proud men, for triviallest contempt in thoughtless  
 moment shown,



"For rash word from unguarded lips, for fancied  
 scornful eye,  
 "That put your lives and hopes of them you love, in  
 jeopardy.  
 "Yet deem not I, a Princess, sprung myself from  
 warrior sires,  
 "Repine at aught in thy behoof that Honor's law  
 requires.  
 "Nor ask I what affront, or how offended, neither  
 where  
 "Blame first may lie. Judge thou of these: these are  
 a warrior's care.  
 "Yet, oh, bethink thee, Congal, ere war kindles, of  
 the ties  
 "Of nurture, friendship, fosterage; think of the woful  
 sighs  
 "Of widows, of poor orphans' cries; of all the pains  
 and griefs  
 "That plague a people in the path of battle-wagering  
 chiefs.  
 "See, holy men are 'mongst us come with message  
 sweet of peace  
 "From God himself, and promise sure that sin and  
 strife shall cease;  
 "Else wherefore, if with fear and force mankind must  
 ever dwell,  
 "Raise we the pardon-spreading cross and peace-  
 proclaiming cell?"  
 "Raise what we may, Preceptress fair," the sullen  
 King replied,  
 "Wars were and will be to the end." And from his  
 promised bride  
 Took hurried parting; for he feared to trust a lover's  
 lips  
 With all his secret heart designed. Bealfarsad of the  
 ships

That night received him; and, from thence, across the  
 northern sea  
 Went Congal Claen to seek the aid of Alban Eochaid  
 Buie.  
 Druid Drostan, on the Alban shore, come forth to  
 view the day,  
 Beheld the swift ship from the south sweep up the  
 shining bay,  
 And hailed the stranger-warriors as they leaped upon  
 the strand.  
 "My love be to the goodly barque, and to the  
 gallant band:  
 "Say courteous sons, whence come ye?"  
 Congal said, "From Erin we  
 "Come, seeking aid and counsel of my grandsire,  
 Eochaid Buie."  
 "Dear Congal," cried the Druid, "thou art stately  
 grown and tall  
 "Since first I nursed thee on my knee in Yellow  
 Eochaid's hall."  
 And embraced him and caressed him, and conducted  
 him where sate  
 Alban Eochaid at the chess-tables before Dun-Money  
 gate.  
 He told the King his errand: when the tale of  
 wrongs was done,  
 Said Eochaid, "It shall ne'er be said that Alba's  
 daughter's son  
 "Took affront of Erin's Domnal without reckoning at  
 sword-edge  
 "Had duly upon stricken field; and, though my  
 ancient pledge  
 "Forbids that I should raise the spear 'gainst one who  
 'neath my roof  
 "In former times had shelter, not the less in thy  
 behoof



"Shall Alba's hosts be forward. Four princely sons  
are ours,  
"Thy mother's brothers; they shall lead thine allied  
Alban powers;  
"Domnal, Sweeny, Aed, and Congal. Thou shalt  
tarry here to-day:  
"To-morrow, sail for Britain."  
Then said Congal Menn, "I pray  
"My nephew-namesake Congal that to-day he feast  
with me."  
"Nay, rather," answered Domnal Brec, "I, by  
seniority,  
"Have better right to feast the King."  
"For me," said Sweeny, then,  
"Though younger I than either, yet neither Brec nor  
Menn  
"Takes Congal Claen's indignity to heart with warmer  
mind."  
"And I," said Aed Green-Mantle, "will not fall far  
behind,  
"If by that line ye measure."  
"Peace, Princes," said the King:  
"Your wives are present; and meseems it were a  
seemlier thing  
"That they before your nephew should advance your  
kindly claims;  
"For good men's praises worthier sound on lips of  
lovely dames."  
Then said the wife of Domnal Brec, "There has not  
yet been found  
"A man so bountiful as mine on Erse or Alban  
ground.  
"If green Slieve Money were of gold, Slieve Money  
in a day  
"From Freckled Domnal's hand would pass: wherefore,  
oh King, I pray,

"In virtue of the open hand, that thou to-day decree  
"The feasting of the royal guest to Domnal and to  
me."  
The wife of Congal Menn spoke next. "Of plunder-  
ing lords is none  
"Who knows to turn unlawful spoil to lawful, like the son  
"Of Yellow Eochaid, Congal; he whose sword con-  
verts the prey  
"To lawful riches in his house, to keep or give away  
"As best his proper mind may prompt, is he, oh King,  
whose plea  
"Should stand alike in suit of arms and hospitality."  
Said Sweeny's wife: "What gold and gems ye find  
in Sweeny's hall  
"Adorn his drinking-cups, whereof one hundred serve  
the call  
"Of daily guests: what other wealth his liberal hand  
provides  
"Smokes daily on his open board: he makes no claim  
besides."  
Aed Green-Cloak's fair-faced blooming wife spoke  
last. "Let Congal feast  
"With whom his own free will inclines. In breast of  
Aed at least  
"Twill breed no grudge nor envy. Aed's pleasure is  
the same,  
"Feasting, or feasted by his friends." So spoke the  
prudent dame.  
Then said the King, "Good reasons have you given,  
my daughters dear;  
"But royal Congal, for to-day, feasts with his grandsire  
here:  
"And here let Domnal come with gifts, and Congal  
Menn with prey,  
"And Sweeny with his hundred guests invited  
yesterday;



"And here come Aed Green-Mantle, with his free ungrudging mind,  
 "Better than cups and cattle-spoil and hundred guests combined."

So there the banquet-board was spread. Across the tables wide  
 Gazing, the fit on Drostan fell. He stood and prophesied.

"I see a field of carnage. I see eagles in the air.  
 "Grey wolves from all the mountains. Sons of Eochaid Buie, beware.

"A fair grey warrior see I there. Before him, east and west,

"A mighty host lies scattered."

But Domnal and the rest  
 Of Eochaid's sons and courtiers made light of what he said,

Saying, "See us happier visions, or we'll get us, in thy stead,

"A clerk of Columb's people from Iona's friendly cell,  
 "Who will cast us better fortunes with his book and sacreing bell."

And made their banquet merrily, from jewelled cup and horn,  
 Quaffing till sunset.

Soon as light sufficed, at coming morn,  
 For sharp-eyed husbandman to note, upon his farm-ward way,

The difference twixt the aspen leaf and feathery ashen spray,

Impatient Congal, and the youths of Ulster, once again,  
 With salient surge-compressing prow, launched on the dusky main.

Arrived at Caer Leon, and his weighty errand told;  
 Said British Eochaid:

"I myself am waxen stiff and old.

"And chief in Eochaid's stead to lead our warriors we have none,

Till, first, Maen Amber's judgment shall in this behalf be known.

"For here three youths come claiming, each, to be our Conan Rodd,

"Heir of my crown and kingdom, who, journeying abroad

"Upon a sudden boyish feud these many years ago,

"We deemed him dead, and mourned a loss that made us lasting woe.

"Till, on the sudden, here to-day those youths of noble mien

"Are come, perplexing mightily my courtiers and my Queen:

"Each ruddy as the rising morn; each on his blooming cheek

"Bearing the well-remembered mole that marks the son we seek;

"Each telling tales of former days to Conan only known:

"Wherefore we take this judgment; for the prudent, holy Stone

"Stirs not at touch of Falsehood, though an hundred pushed amain;

"But nods at finger-touch of Truth."

Then answered Congal Claen:

"Entrust to me, oh King," said he, "the easy task, to prove

"For which of these three candidates Maen Amber ought to move."

"Do as thou wilt," replied the King.

Then Congal in the gate,  
 His short spear in his hand, sat down, the youths' return to wait.



First came a ruddy youth, who cried, "Make way—  
The Amber Stone,

"Steadfast as Skiddaw to the rest, moved free for me  
alone."

Said Congal, "None may enter here, till first he  
answer me

"My question: See this gateway wide: now, hero, if  
thou be

'The royal son thou boast'st thyself; resolve me with  
what sort

"Of gate wilt thou, when thou art King, make fast this  
royal fort?"

"When I am King," replied the youth, "my subjects  
shall behold

"My gates resplendent from afar with plates of yellow  
gold."

"A proud Churl's answer," Congal said. "Pretender,  
stand aside.

"If false Maen Amber bowed to thee, the juggling  
demon lied."

Next came another ruddier youth, saying, "Although  
the Stone

"Moved but a little at my touch, I am the heir  
alone."

Then Congal questioned him in turn; and prompt  
in turn he spoke—

"Steel-studded, cross-barr'd, bolted down on native  
heart of oak."

"That thou art not a Churl, as he, thy prompt  
words well evince,"

Said Congal; "but they also show that neither art thou  
Prince."

Last came a hero ruddiest and tallest of the three,  
Saying, "Although the Amber Stone moved not at  
all for me,

"I not the less am Conan Rodd."

Then Congal Claen once more  
Put him his question, like as put to either youth before.

The hero answered: "Were I King in Britain's  
Dragon-den,

"The gate-planks of my house should be the boardly  
breasts of men;

"For kinglier sight by sea or land doth no man's eye  
await,

"Than faces bright, in time of need, of good men in  
the gate."

"Embrace me, Prince," cried Congal. "Thou art  
the royal son;

"And thou shalt lead my British aids." And so the  
thing was done.

Thence Congal sailed to Frank-land and to Saxon-  
land afar,

Aids from the ocean-roaming Kings engaging for the  
war;

Wherewith and with his British aids, and allied Alban  
power,

For Erin, from Loch Linnhe side, he sailed in evil hour.



# CONGAL.

## BOOK III.

### THE ARGUMENT.

*The rising-out of Erin's guardian Ghosts.  
Conan's Resolve; and re-encouraged Hosts.*

[Congal having sought for aids in Frank-land and Saxon-land, returns with them to Ulster. They encounter evil omens. The ships are burned by lightning. Kellach the Halt addresses the discouraged allies. He asserts that the conflagration of the fleet is a good omen. They march inland and encamp. The tramp of giant footsteps is heard at night. Congal leaves the camp; challenges the Spectre, but obtains no answer. He seeks Ardan in his tent. The Bard pronounces the Demon to be Manannan Mor Mac Lir, whose office it was in Pagan days to protect from invasion the coasts of Ireland. Those who had courage to interrogate the Demon, learned from him future events, but if unanswered, were doomed to die within the year. Congal heroically accepts his destiny. Next day the hosts reach his Fort of Rathmore. After rest and refreshment they prepare to cross the Ollarva. In the river they encounter a horrible Spectre; a woman steeping in the water bloody mantles and mutilated corpses. She announces herself as the Washer of the Ford, and holds aloft to Congal what seemed his own severed head. The dauntless King, sword in hand, plunges into the ford and swears he will not turn back while a single warrior adheres to him. Conan Rodd follows, and grasps his hand. The Spectre vanishes. Kellach, contemptuous of the auguries, addresses the army. They cross the river, and dejectedly continue their march. At early dawn, Lafinda, attended by an aged woman, approaches in a chariot. She recounts to Congal a vision of St. Brigid to Kildare, enjoining her to meet the hosts, and tell them to "turn back or perish." Congal is incredulous. Lafinda tenderly appeals to him, but in vain, and intimates that she will take the veil. The horses are turned, lashed by the attendant, who stands revealed as St. Brigid, and with Lafinda all dis-

appear within a wood. Congal springs after, but in vain. The dispirited leaders hold council. Some advise retreat to the coast, there to entrench themselves, till a fleet is fitted out to bear them to their homes. Aed, Conan Rodd, and the King of Lochlan, advise a courageous advance. The Bard Ardan encourages them. Congal thanking God for the gift of such friends, appeals to the Hosts. They march onward with renewed courage to the battlefield of Moyra.]



HE dusky Dalaradian heights at hand appearing now,  
King Congal, as apart he stood, and from his galley's prow  
Beheld the swift ships far dispersed across the ocean dark,  
As harnessed steers, when, for a prize, within some rich man's park,  
They cut in clay, with coulter clean, the onward-reddening line,  
With slant keels ceaseless turning up the white-foam'd barren brine,  
And black, pernicious, woe-charged sides, and tall masts forward bow'd,  
Intent to launch their fatal freight on Erin, groaned aloud:  
And "Much-loved native hills," he said, "I grieve that thus I come  
"Not charged with cups or cattle-spoil, nor carrying captives home,  
"Nor bearing boast of friends relieved or enemies confused,  
"As other ship-returning Kings have heretofore been used;  
"But laden deep with death and woe, of all my race the first  
"To bring the hireling stranger in, I come in hour accurst."



Exclaimed an aged mariner who by the main-mast stood—  
 “O’er all the Dalaradian hills there hangs a cloud of blood.  
 “Gore-drops fall from its edges.”  
 “Peace, fool,” the King returned,  
 “’Twas but the early morning mist that in the sunrise burned.”  
 And cried to thrust the barques ashore where in a winding bay,  
 Far camped along the margent foam, the hosts of Ulster lay  
 Expectant. Forth the anchors went; and shoreward swinging round,  
 The lofty poops of all the fleet together took the ground,  
 Harsh grinding on the pebbly beach: then, like as though a witch,  
 Brewing her charm in cauldron black, should chance at owl’s scritch  
 Hooting athwart the gloom, to turn her head aside, the while  
 Winds bellow, and the fell contents on all sides overboil;  
 So, down the steep, dark galley’s sides leaped they: so, spuming o’er,  
 They crowded from the teeming holds, and spread along the shore  
 In blackening streams. The Ulster hosts with acclamation loud  
 Gave welcome; and the ranks were filled.  
 But while they stood, a cloud  
 Stood overhead; and, as the thought a dreaming man conceives,  
 Which he, the while, some wondrous thing of import vast believes,

Grows folly, when his waking mind scans it; so, in the frown  
 Of that immense, sky-filling cloud the great hills dwindled down;  
 And all the sable-sided hulks that loomed so large before  
 Small now as poor men’s fisher-craft showed on the darkened shore.  
 Awed in the gathering gloom, the hosts stood silent; till there came  
 A clap of thunder, and therewith a sheet of levin-flame  
 Dropt in white curtain straight from heaven between them and the ships:  
 And when the pale day-light returned, after that keen eclipse,  
 In smoke and smouldering flame the ships stood burning: o’er their sides  
 The sailors leaped: while moaning deep, sudden, the reflux tides  
 Gave all their dry keels to the wind: the wind whose waftings fair  
 Had borne them thither through the deep, thence bore them off through air,  
 In fire and smoke: through all the host, like flakes of driving snow,  
 The embers fell; and all their cheeks scorched in the fervid glow.  
 Then thus exclaimed the Frankish King: “Our first step on this land  
 “Is with no cheering omen, friends; for if Jehovah’s hand  
 “It be that casts this thunderbolt, but small success, I fear  
 “Attends our enterprise; but come, give all your labours here  
 “To quench the galley first that lies to windward of the fleet;  
 “For ill betides Invader left without way of retreat.”



Then many a man with rueful eye looked o'er the  
naked main,  
And wished himself, with neither spoil nor glory, at home  
again.

But "Fear not, friends," cried Congal Claen. "Ye  
have not sought us here  
"For stay so short, ye need repine if portion of the year  
"Be spent in fitting forth a fleet; for in our Ulster ports  
"Both ships we have and artizans accomplished in allsorts  
"Of naval workmanship; strong smiths, and carpenters  
whose stroke  
"To every form man's need demands can shape the  
knotted oak.

"Wherefore keep cheerful hearts. No loss but time  
and care replace.

"A stumble at the start is oft the winning of the race."  
So counselled Congal; and the hosts with better  
courage strove

To quench the flames; but still the flames intenser-  
rising drove

Wide through the fleet, from barque to barque: then,  
in the midst, a cry

Was heard from Kellach:

"Lift me up, companions; raise me high  
"That all may see me, and my words of all be under-  
stood.

"Sons, hold your hands. Desist," he cried. "Let  
burn! The omen's good.

"Fire is the sire of Life and Force. The mighty men  
of yore

"Still burned the barques that landed them on what-  
soever shore

"They chose for conquest. Warriors then were men  
indeed, and scorned

"Alike the thought and means of flight. From battle  
none returned

"Then but the victors. Heroes then, untaught the art  
to yield,

"Ere standing fight would slay the steeds that bore  
them to the field;

"Ere joining battle by a bridge, would leave the bridge  
behind

"Broken, lest lightest thought of flight should enter  
any mind.

"Thus when, in Gaulish galleys borne, invading  
Asclepid

"Had passed the guardian British ships, in misty  
mantle hid,

"And landed Cæsar's hosts, for march direct on startled  
Thames,

"His fortunes to the Gods he gave, his galleys to the  
flames.

"'Twas in Constantius' days, when, 'gainst the Imperial  
rule rebelled,

"Allectus, in Carausius' room, the throne of Britain  
held.

"Thus Nuad of the Silver-Hand from Dover setting  
sail,

"Charged with the King-discerning might of vocal Lia  
Fail,

"When first for Erin's coasts he steered, and made  
the sacred strand,

"Waited for no chance lightning-flash, but with his  
proper hand

"Fired all his long-ships, till the smoke that from that  
burning rose

"Went up before him, herald-like, denouncing to his  
foes

"Death and despair: they deeming him a necromancer  
clad

"In magic mists, stood not, but fled: wherefore be  
rather glad



"That what your own irresolute hands this day have  
 failed to do  
 "Heaven's interposing hand hath done; and bravely  
 done it, too:  
 "Since even so this rolling cloud with all its embers  
 red,  
 "That like a mighty spangled flag now waves above my  
 head,  
 "Announces to that coward King of Tara that, once  
 more,  
 "The heroes of the North have burned their barques  
 on Erin's shore."  
 He ended, and from gown and beard shook forth the  
 falling fire,  
 While all the hosts with loud acclaim approved the  
 sentence dire;  
 And leaving there their blackening barques consuming  
 by the wave,  
 Marched inland, and their camp at eve pitched by  
 King Teuthal's grave,  
 Twixt Ullar's and Ollarva's founts.

Around the Mound of Sighs  
 They filled the woody-sided vale; but no sweet sleep  
 their eyes  
 Refreshed that night: for all the night, around their  
 echoing camp,  
 Was heard continuous from the hills, a sound as of the  
 tramp  
 Of giant footsteps; but so thick the white mist lay  
 around  
 None saw the Walker save the King. He, starting at  
 the sound,  
 Called to his foot his fierce red hound; athwart his  
 shoulders cast  
 A shaggy mantle, grasped his spear, and through the  
 moonlight passed

Alone up dark Ben-Boli's heights, toward which, above  
 the woods,  
 With sound as when at close of eve the noise of falling  
 floods  
 Is borne to shepherd's ear remote on stilly upland  
 lawn,  
 The steps along the mountain side with hollow fall  
 came on.  
 Fast beat the hero's heart; and close down-crouching  
 by his knee  
 Trembled the hound, while through the haze, huge as  
 through mists at sea,  
 The week-long-sleepless mariner descries some mountain-  
 cape,  
 Wreck-infamous, rise on his lee, appeared a monstrous  
 Shape  
 Striding impatient, like a man much grieved, who walks  
 alone  
 Considering of a cruel wrong: down from his shoulders  
 thrown  
 A mantle, skirted stiff with soil splashed from the miry  
 ground,  
 At every stride against his calves struck with as loud  
 rebound  
 As makes the mainsail of a ship brought up along the  
 blast,  
 When with the coil of all its ropes it beats the sounding  
 mast.  
 So striding vast, the giant pass'd; the King held fast  
 his breath;  
 Motionless, save his throbbing heart; and chill and  
 still as death  
 Stood listening while, a second time, the giant took the  
 round  
 Of all the camp: but when at length, for the third  
 time, the sound



Came up, and through the parting haze a third time  
 huge and dim  
 Rose out the Shape, the valiant hound sprang forth and  
 challenged him.  
 And forth, disdaining that a dog should put him so to  
 shame,

Sprang Congal, and essayed to speak.

"Dread Shadow, stand. Proclaim  
 "What would'st thou, that thou thus all night around  
 my camp should'st keep

"Thy troublous vigil ; banishing the wholesome gift of  
 sleep

"From all our eyes, who, though inured to dreadful  
 sounds and sights

"By land and sea, have never yet in all our perilous  
 nights

"Lain in the ward of such a guard."

The Shape made answer none ;

But with stern wafture of its hand, went angrier striding  
 on,

Shaking the earth with heavier steps. Then Congal  
 on his track

Sprang fearless.

"Answer me, thou Churl," he cried. "I bid thee  
 back !"

But while he spoke, the giant's cloak around his  
 shoulders grew

Like to a black bulged thunder-cloud ; and sudden  
 out there flew

From all its angry swelling folds, with uproar unconfined,  
 Direct against the King's pursuit, a mighty blast of  
 wind :

Loud flapped the mantle tempest-lined, while fluttering  
 down the gale,

As leaves in Autumn, man and hound were swept into  
 the vale,

And, heard o'er all the huge uproar, through startled  
 Dalaray

The giant went, with stamp and clash, departing south  
 away.

The King sought Ardan in his tent ; and to the  
 wakeful Bard,

Panting and pale, disclosed at length what he had seen  
 and heard ;

Considering which a little time, the Master sighed and  
 spoke.

"King, thou describest by his bulk and by his  
 clapping cloak

"A mighty demon of the old time, who with much  
 dread and fear

"Once filled the race of Partholan ; Manannan Mor  
 Mac Lir,

"Son of the Sea. In former times there lived not on  
 the face

"Of Erin a sprite of bigger bulk or potenter to raise

"The powers of air by land and sea in lightning, tempest,  
 hail,

"Or magical thick mist, than he ; albeit in woody Fail

"Dwelt many demons at that time : but being so huge  
 of limb,

"Manannan had the overward of the coast allotted him,

"To stride it round, from cape to cape, daily ; and if  
 a fleet

"Hove into sight, to shake them down a sea-fog from  
 his feet ;

"Or with a wafture of his cloak flap forth a tempest  
 straight

"Would drive them off a hundred leagues ; and so he  
 kept his state

"In churlish sort about our bays and forelands, till at last

"Great Spanish Miledh's mighty sons, for all he was  
 so vast



"And fell a churl, in spite of him, by dint of blows,  
 made good  
 "Their landing, and brought in their Druids: from  
 which time forth, the brood  
 "Of Goblin people shun the light; some in the hollow  
 sides  
 "Of hills lie hid; some hide beneath the brackish  
 ocean-tides;  
 "Some underneath the sweet-well springs. Manannan,  
 Poets say,  
 "Fled to the isle which bears his name, that eastward  
 lies halfway  
 "Sailing to Britain; whence at times he wades the  
 narrow seas,  
 "Revisiting his old domain, when evil destinies  
 "Impend o'er Erin: but his force and magic might  
 are gone:  
 "And at such times 'tis said that he who, 'twixt twilight  
 and dawn,  
 "Meets him and speaks him, safely learns a year's  
 events to be."  
 "But he who speaks him," Congal said, "and gains  
 no answer—he?"  
 "Within the year, the Seers agree," said Ardan, "he  
 must die;  
 "For death and silence, we may see, bear constant  
 company."  
 "Be it so, Bard," replied the King. "To die is  
 soon or late  
 "For every being born alive the equal doom of Fate.  
 "Nor grieve I much; nor would I grieve if Heaven  
 had so been pleased  
 "That either I had not been born, or had already ceased,  
 "Being born, to breathe; but while I breathe so let my  
 life be spent  
 "As in renown of noble deeds to find a monument."

By this the moonlight paled in dawn; and onward to  
 Rathmore  
 Of green Moy-Linny marched the hosts, and round  
 King Congal's door  
 Pitched camp again; where copious feasts, by Kellach's  
 care prepared,  
 Refreshed them, and the gift of sleep their weary eye-  
 lids shared.  
 And now, at dawn, to cross the fords, hard-by the  
 royal town,  
 The fresh, well-ordered, vigorous bands in gallant ranks  
 drew down:  
 When, lo, a Spectre horrible, of more than human  
 size,  
 Full in the middle of the ford took all their wondering  
 eyes.  
 A ghastly woman it appeared, with grey dishevelled  
 hair  
 Blood-draggled, and with sharp-boned arms, and fingers  
 crook'd and spare  
 Dabbling and washing in the ford, where mid-leg deep  
 she stood  
 Beside a heap of heads and limbs that swam in oozing  
 blood,  
 Whereon and on a glittering heap of raiment rich and  
 brave  
 With swift, pernicious hands she scooped and pour'd  
 the crimson'd wave.  
 And though the stream approaching her ran tranquil,  
 clear and bright,  
 Sand-gleaming between verdant banks, a fair and peace-  
 ful sight,  
 Downward the blood-polluted flood rode turbid, strong  
 and proud,  
 With heady-eddying dangerous whirls and surges dash-  
 ing loud.



All stood aghast. But Kellach cried, "Advance me  
to the bank ;  
"I'll speak the Hag."  
But back, instead, his trembling bearers shrank.  
Then Congal from the foremost rank a spear-cast  
forward strode,  
And said,  
"Who art thou, hideous one ; and from what  
curst abode  
"Comest thou thus in open day the hearts of men to  
freeze ;  
"And whose lopp'd heads and severed limbs and  
bloody vests are these ?"  
"I am the Washer of the Ford," she answered ;  
"and my race  
"Is of the Tuath de Danaan line of Magi ; and my  
place  
"For toil is in the running streams of Erin ; and my cave  
"For sleep is in the middle of the shell-heaped Cairn  
of Maev,  
"High up on haunted Knocknarea ; and this fine  
carnage-heap  
"Before me, and these silken vests and mantles which  
I steep  
"Thus in the running water, are the severed heads and  
hands  
"And spear-torn scarfs and tunics of these gay-dressed,  
gallant bands  
"Whom thou, oh Congal, leadest to death. And this,"  
the Fury said,  
Uplifting by the clotted locks what seemed a dead  
man's head,  
"Is thine own head, oh Congal."  
Therewith she rose in air,  
And vanished from the warriors' view, leaving the river  
bare

Of all but running water. But Congal drew his  
sword  
And with a loud defying shout, plunged madly in the  
ford,  
Probing the empty pools ; then stood, and from the  
middle flood  
Exclaimed :  
"Here stand I, and here swear that till the  
tide of blood  
"Thus laves my knees, I will not turn for threat of  
Devil or Ghost,  
"Fairy or lying Spirit accurst, while one of all this host  
"Follows my leading."  
Conan Rodd sprang kindling forth and cried,  
"I fail thee not, for one, my King : " and stood by  
Congal's side,  
Grasping his hand. Halt Kellach wept, and cried,  
"Ah, recreant ones,  
"Great Rury's cheek is red for shame, to see Ultonian  
sons  
"Like goblin-daunted children small, scared at a  
nurse's lay,  
"Thus hanging back on Honor's track, while Britons  
lead the way.  
"Fear not the Hag ; I know her well, accurst one !  
She appears  
"To battle-entering warriors once in every seven  
years ;  
"And seven and seven years, exact, it is since last  
before  
"I saw her foul ill-favoured face, the day that Domnal  
Mor  
"And Scallan Broad-Shield gave the breach on royal  
Sweeney Menn  
"At red Troy-Brena : 'twas at dawn ; and in the cressy  
fen



"By the loch-side, where afterwards, crossing the  
 treacherous quag,  
 "So many of us sank engulfed, we saw the hideous  
 Hag  
 "Stoop'd at her washing. Not a man of all the gazing  
 host  
 "But shook to see the carnage-pile before the grizly  
 ghost;  
 "Each deeming that his own lopp'd head, conspicuous  
 'mid the pile,  
 "Lay glaring; and this very head, gathering defilement  
 vile,  
 "Saw I among them; yet I came from that fight  
 scatheless forth;  
 "And therefore hold her prophecies are but of little  
 worth.  
 "But, would to God, these limbs had then been stiff  
 as now they are,  
 "Ere I for thankless Domnal's sake had part in such  
 a war;  
 "Or now were strong and supple-swift as then indeed  
 they were,  
 "So should ye never see me here, and British Conan  
 there."  
 So Kellach spoke; and all their hearts grew great  
 with manly shame;  
 And as a flood flows through a flood, up through the  
 fords they came,  
 Raising Ollarva: all their shields and shining belts  
 were wet  
 With clear, cold, fishy-streaming floods against the  
 strong bar set  
 Of limbs heroic and deep chests. But when the fords  
 were pass'd  
 And the long columns drew their strength forth on the  
 campaign vast,

Fear fell again on Congal's host, and much oppressed  
 with awe,  
 They pondered what they late had heard, and what,  
 but now, they saw.  
 Southward in gloomy-gliding ranks, hushed all in  
 dumb dismay,  
 The hosts across the upland bare, and through the  
 morning grey,  
 As drifting cloud at close of day that tracks the heaven  
 serene,  
 Held on their dark unechoing march athwart the  
 Fassagh green,  
 Till on a car afar were seen, by two swift coursers  
 drawn,  
 Herself, Lafinda, and her Nurse, advancing through  
 the dawn.  
 Swift they approached: the ruddy blaze of sunrise  
 round them spread  
 Seemed with a diadem of rays to crown each radiant  
 head.  
 "Congal," the royal maiden said, "be not incensed,  
 I pray,  
 "That thus in presence of the hosts I cross thy war-  
 like way;  
 "For need admitting no delay/impels me; and the  
 ire  
 "Of one I dare not disobey/constrains the message  
 dire.  
 "Last night, at midnight, by my bed an awful form  
 there stood,  
 "Whom by her vermeil-lettered book, and by her  
 purple hood,  
 "And hoary, glory-beaming locks, that shone like sun-  
 lit snow,  
 "For Blessed Brigid of Kildare I could not choose but  
 know;



"And said, 'Awake : arise : go forth : thy nurse,  
 Lavarcam, waits  
 "With car and ready-harnessed steeds without the  
 fortress gates :  
 "Mount by her side, and northward forth ride fearless  
 till the dawn  
 "Show thee an army on its march across the upland  
 lawn ;  
 "Then to the King who leads that host say thus, Oh  
 mighty King,  
 "From Duftach's daughter of Kildare I thee this  
 message bring :  
 "Turn back or perish : thou and all thy Hosting : for  
 the path  
 "From hence to Moyra on both sides is hedged about  
 with wrath,  
 "And paved for foot of every man who in thy con-  
 duct treads  
 "With slippery, horror-staring floor of slaughtered  
 heroes' heads.'  
 "So spoke she ; I by strong constraint drawn to the  
 gates, obeyed ;  
 "And here, through shadows of the night, as in a  
 dream conveyed,  
 "Now find myself, but in no dream ; and, horror-filled,  
 I see  
 "These mighty-marching, death-devoted heroes led by  
 thee,  
 "Oh Congal."

Congal, answering, said : "Dear maid,  
 thou art deceived :

"These visions of the feverish night are not to be believed.  
 "But come ; such poor refreshment now as warriors'  
 tents afford,  
 "Take ; and when seasonable rest thy strength shall  
 have restored,

"A noble escort shall attend thy home-returning car,  
 "Such as befits thy father's child : and when this short-  
 lived war  
 "Is ended—for this host shall soon abate the tyrant's  
 pride—  
 "With Erin for thine escort, thou, a crowned and royal  
 bride,  
 "I, crowned and happy, by thy side, kings by our  
 bridle-rein,  
 "Shall up to fair Rath-Keltar ride, never to part again."  
 "Congal," the Princess pale replied, "no bridal  
 pomp for me  
 "Is destined, if thou harkenest not to Brigid's embassy ;  
 "Save haply such a bridal pomp as, entering Brigid's  
 cell,  
 "A handmaiden of Christ may hope."  
 Said he, "The powers of hell  
 "Have sought to turn me, and have failed ; and  
 though in thee I find  
 "My only heaven, yet neither thou shalt bend my  
 steadfast mind."  
 "Ah me," she cried. "What fate is mine ! The  
 daughter of a King,  
 "Wooed by a King, and well content to wear the  
 marriage ring ;  
 "Who never knew the childish want not granted, nor  
 desire  
 "Of maiden bosom, but good saints and angels would  
 conspire  
 "To bring the innocent wish to pass : who with the  
 streams and flowers,  
 "So happy was I, turned to joy the very passing hours,  
 "From flowery earth and fragrant air, and all sweet  
 sounds and sights  
 "Filling my heart, from morn to eve, with fresh and  
 pure delights,—



"Just when, in bloom of life, I said, 'this world is wondrous fair,'

"Now in one hour see nothing left, to live for, but despair."

"Damsel," said Kellach from his chair, "these dreams that haunt the bed

"Of timorous virgins vanish all when once the maids are wed.

"And royally thou shalt be wed, and gallantly be brought

"Home to a dream-defying bed when once this breach is fought."

"Ah, aged Scornor," cried the Nurse, who by the Princess stood,

"Thou never wanted'st ribald taunt for aught was pure or good.

"Beware, lest on both soul and limb God's angry judgments fall,

"For to thy crooked counsellings we owe these mischiefs all."

Said Kellach: "If a withered Hag, with prophecies of death,

"Had power to turn sword-girded men back upon Honor's path,

"Thou hadst no need to waste thy breath on us who, even now

"Are here despite the menaces of uglier witch than thou."

"Wretch," cried the dame, "abide thy fate;" and car and coursers wheeled,

Her aspect changing awfully; and, as she swept the field,

Brigid, they thought, stood plain revealed: and steeds and car became

Bright in her presence as in glow of forge-excited flame.

But with a greyhound's bound, the King leaped to the reins, and cried,

"Daughter of Duftach, stay thy steeds: turn back: restore my bride!"

But Brigid lashed the spurning steeds: they by the sharp whip stung,

Off, with a foam-dispersing snort, the baffled hero flung:

But back again fierce Congal sprung, with lion's leap and roar

Terrific, shouting as he ran,

"Thou robber Saint, restore

"My bride!"

And at the wide-maned steeds, where side by side they flew

With earth-and-heaven-defying hand, his mortal javelin threw.

But Brigid motioned with her hand, and from the chariot seat,

Glancing oblique, the spear returned innocuous to his feet.

The eyes of all the astonished host Garr-Congail's flight pursued;

And, when they looked again, the car was lost within the wood.

Mute stood the hosts, in awe subdued; and fear blanched many a cheek,

Ruddy till then; then thus began the Frankish King to speak:

"God wars against this war, oh Kings; and pledged albeit I be

"To succour valiant Congal Claen against the enmity

"Of Domnal, King of Erin, no promise have I given

"To succour valiant Congal Claen 'gainst God the King of Heaven,



"Who, by His Saints, this day declares for Domnal.  
 Therefore now  
 "Thus I advise: here found we straight a splendid cell,  
 and vow  
 "The same to Brigid of Kildare, bestowing gems and gold  
 "Such as we have, and dowsing it with tributes  
 manifold  
 "From our respective territories; then in our Patron's  
 name  
 "Proffer we royal Domnal peace; and of his bounty claim  
 "Ships and safe conduct to our homes. Meantime,  
 enclose a space  
 "For our encampment; and, meseems, no more  
 convenient place  
 "Could skill devise than where we stand; and so our  
 work would speed  
 "Safely, surrounded by the camp; for, trust me, ye  
 have need ~  
 "To dedicate your shrines with speed, if, from God's  
 vengeful hand  
 "Escaped, ye hope to see again your wives and native  
 land."  
 Cried Druid Drostan, "Stone nor lime yon eagles'  
 maws shall sate.  
 "These wolves that track our morning march no Cleric-  
 rites await.  
 "For God has given presaging power to beasts and  
 birds of air;  
 "And dreams of bloody banquetings, in bestial dens,  
 declare  
 "Approaching havoc, even as dreams foretell approach-  
 ing rain  
 "In troubled towns of crows by night. Now, for the  
 destined slain,  
 "All Erin's eyries flap the wing; and every forest den  
 "Of Erin whets the tooth for flesh of horses and of men."

"Peace, fool," Albanian Congal said. "Since first  
 Columba's bell  
 "Was heard in Alba, all thy clan's prophetic function fell  
 "Under constraint and under spell. Ambiguous,  
 fatuous, vague  
 "Have been the empty words wherewith, from that day  
 forth, ye plague  
 "The judgments of the credulous men of Alba: to  
 such words  
 "Let not the men who love their wives, and look with  
 loyal swords  
 "Here to win spoil to please their wives and deck their  
 halls at home,  
 "Give heed or credence. But, because invading  
 strangers come  
 "To prey the land, its patriot Ghosts and tutelary Sprites  
 "Rise out to thwart us. Now, we know no exorcising  
 rites  
 "To lay or to propitiate them; except this sacrifice  
 "The Clerics make pretence to make: and therefore,  
 my advice  
 "Goes with the counsel of the King; to raise an altar  
 here  
 "To Brigid whom amongst them all wise men may  
 chiefly fear  
 "As owning most main power in act; but, Brigid's  
 wrath appeased,  
 "My mind no longer is the King's; for then she may  
 be pleased,  
 "Haply, to aid us; or, at least, to leave in even scale  
 "The balanced chances of the war, till greater might  
 prevail."  
 Prince Sweeny Menn spoke next, He said:  
 "Sirs, since no man can say  
 "How strife untried may terminate, methinks the wiser  
 way



"Were to prepare against the worst ; which, seeing our  
 galleys' loss,  
 "I thus advise. Draw to the coast. There camp; and  
 dig a fosse,  
 "With rampart suitable, across some jutting foreland's  
 height;  
 "So shall we sit secure till friends get warning of our  
 plight;  
 "And send their ships to aid our flight; if such be  
 God's decree  
 "That after all our splendid hopes of spoil and victory,  
 "Flight needs must be our last resource. But here in  
 open field,  
 "Far from supplies, I counsel not to camp, nor yet to  
 build."  
 Said Aed Green-Mantle, "Kings, our plight is even  
 as the case  
 "Of venturous fowler who pursues his game into a place,  
 "High up a slippery sea-rock's face, where jutting rocks  
 impend,  
 "Which, though too steep for going down, a man may  
 yet ascend,  
 "Being bold and cautious; but behoves such climber  
 that he cast  
 "No backward, hesitating glance on any peril past  
 "Until he gain the level land, where he can stand, and  
 say,  
 "'So have I reached to Safety's height by Danger's  
 only way,'  
 "And so it is; between the sea and Domnal's gathering  
 host,  
 "We climb a precipice where he who looks behind is lost:  
 "But he who, scorning to turn back or make a doubt-  
 ful stop,  
 "Looks and strives upward, lays his hand on Safety at  
 the top.

"Wherefore, since doubt is, doubtless, death; and  
 ways of flight are none,  
 "For Life's and Honor's sake alike, I counsel, up, and  
 on!"  
 Next Conan Rodd stepped forth to speak; and as  
 his head he raised  
 Men's hearts rose with him, and the sun with fresh  
 effulgence blazed.  
 Said Conan: "As I judge great Kings and Princes,  
 'twere but vain  
 "To promise, if the word, gone forth, were now recalled  
 again  
 "On show of first impediment: and vainer still it  
 were  
 "For warriors to devote themselves forth from their  
 seventh year  
 "To feats of arms, if when at length indulgent Fates  
 provide  
 "Heroic opportunity, they left the boon un-  
 tried.  
 "For me, when first within my breast I felt the  
 generous flame,  
 "And said, 'I'll be a warrior,' my youthful dream of  
 fame  
 "Was all of more than mortal foes, such as great  
 Chiefs of yore  
 "Were wont to meet in desert vast or shadowy forest  
 hoar;  
 "Tree-wielding Giants, mighty Churls who, through  
 the echoing glades  
 "Of dreary forests, to their dens, would drag lamenting  
 maids;  
 "Fell Sorcerers by enchanted gates; or in his earthy  
 hold  
 "The fire-exhaling wakeful worm coiled round the  
 guarded gold:



" Or haply still more glorious foes, such as, with eager  
 joy,  
 " I've heard our Poets sing were those that fought the  
 breach of Troy,  
 " When Gods from Heaven came down in arms, and  
 godlike men beneath  
 " Withstood them, mortal foot to foot immortal, to the  
 death.  
 " Fired by which noble fantasy, ere yet my youthful  
 cheek  
 " Bore manly down, I left my home, in foreign lands  
 to seek  
 " Glorious adventure: many lands I visited; and saw  
 " Many renowned cities of men, each by its proper law  
 " Governed, and by its proper hosts guarded; and  
 mighty wars  
 " In all lands waging; yet I found neither in field of  
 Mars,  
 " Nor on the long-shipped deep, nor yet in fell or  
 forest arear,  
 " The shape or substance could withstand a brave  
 man's searching spear;  
 " But, by the keen steel tried, would all confess an  
 equal birth  
 " Drawn, death-obnoxious as my own, from dust of  
 vulgar earth.  
 " And, for their mighty miracles and prodigies sublime,  
 " Of antique Gods, and holy Saints, these from the  
 olden time  
 " Had, as they said, ceased utterly; and now were  
 only known  
 " In lays and legends of their Clerks, as idle as our own.  
 " Wherefore, with glory-thirsting heart, that still in-  
 satiate burned,  
 " I from their barren battle-fields and empty camps  
 returned,

" Resolved amid my native woods, and in the sacred  
 gloom  
 " Of Stones of power, to seek again some conqueror  
 of the tomb;  
 " Great Arthur, with the apple-bloom of green Avallon's  
 bowers  
 " Still redolent; or Uther's self from Caër Sidi's towers;  
 " But sought in vain: my scornful steel on vulgar foes  
 employed,  
 " Nor dread of Deity conceived, nor love of man  
 enjoyed;  
 " Till, glorious in a castle gate, like lion in the road,  
 " Couchant, I first saw Congal Claen; and at first  
 sight bestowed  
 " Faith and affection on the King; for never had I seen  
 " In all the earth a potentate of countenance or mien  
 " Royal as his, and as a youth amid the virgin throng  
 " Will move with unembarrassed heart, in gay in-  
 difference, long;  
 " Till, in a moment, some one maid's unconscious  
 glance constrains  
 " His soul to homage, and he thence bound in her  
 thrall remains;  
 " So I, who all my prime of years 'mongst noblest men  
 had passed,  
 " And seen no man I'd deign to call or friend or lord;  
 at last,  
 " Taken in a moment, saw and owned my captain,  
 friend, and King;  
 " In whose just quarrel being engaged, I hereto Erin bring  
 " My British aids; and here at last, in open day behold  
 " Immortal beings visibly commingling, as of old,  
 " In mortal struggles. Here at length I find my  
 youthful dream  
 " Made real. Here the mighty deeds of antique heroes  
 seem



"No longer all inimitable. Here Hercul's self might  
 own  
 "Fit labour for another Toil, nor ask the task  
 alone.  
 "Wherefore with awful joy elate, I stand; and bid  
 thee hail,  
 "Last hero-stage of all the world, illustrious  
 Innisfail!  
 "Land of the lingering Gods! green land, still spark-  
 ling fresh and fair  
 "With morning dew of heroism dried up and gone  
 elsewhere!  
 "Wherefore, no penitential cell for me! But rather  
 raise,  
 "Here, where old Honor stands revived, the Stone of  
 other days,  
 "Grey, vast, majestic; such as when degenerate men  
 behold,  
 "They'll say, 'Some noble thing was done here in the  
 days of old.'  
 "Such as when Poets view, they'll say, when ages  
 hence are flown,  
 "Great hearts and mighty hands were theirs who raised  
 the Standing Stone."  
 He said; and on a great grey rock, half-buried in  
 the field,  
 Stood in the flaming of his arms, and waved his golden  
 shield.  
 Loud cheered the Welshmen; and the King of Lochlan  
 to his side  
 Leaped with a rivalling flash and clash; and caught  
 his hand, and cried,  
 "I swear by Woden and the might of hammer-  
 hurling Thor,  
 "I love thee, Conan; and with thee am henceforth  
 through this war

"True comrade, good or ill betide. I, too, have seen  
 the homes  
 "Of mightiest Caesars; and beneath Byzantium's  
 proudest domes  
 "Have borne the Waring's guardian axe, in shelter of  
 whose blade  
 "The laws that bind the Imperial world, both Priest  
 and King, are made.  
 "But gilded arch, nor marble porch, nor incense-  
 scented air,  
 "Nor silken couch had ever charm, for me, that could  
 compare  
 "With home in Lochlan: with the burg beside the  
 Northern sea,  
 "Where runs the roebuck on the hill, where floats the  
 pinnacle free:  
 "Where still the ancient Gods receive, in forest and  
 in cave,  
 "With rites of sacrifice unfeigned, the worship of the  
 brave;  
 "And for their smoking altar-meeds sincere, return us  
 still  
 "The conscious courage dominant, the power and  
 kingly will  
 "To rule the fore-shores of the world, with all their  
 citied sides,  
 "Where'er the wandering moons uplift the ship-uplifting  
 tides.  
 "Ill would beseem the sea-borne kings of Letha's mid-  
 most coasts  
 "Here, in this outer spot of earth, to blench at sight  
 of ghosts,  
 "Earthmen, or beldames of the cells; though clad in  
 shapes of air  
 "And owning shows of strength divine, that martial  
 men elsewhere



"Meet not, nor ever deemed they'd meet, since Woden  
 to their dens,  
 "In Lappish deserts and the depths of Finmark's icy  
 fens,  
 "Cast out the Trolls. My sentence then is, march,  
 and meet your foes  
 "Of mortal mould with mortal arms. Let be the feud  
 of *those*  
 "As fate hereafter may dispose. We reck not: neither  
 crave  
 "Their aid prophetic to foresee well-filled, the foeman's  
 grave.  
 "This is my sentence.  
 "Fairy nor Fire-drake  
 "Keep back the Kemper.  
 "At home, in the burg,  
 "Leaves he the maiden  
 "Boon for the bridal;  
 "Abroad, on the holme,  
 "Leaves he the harvest  
 "Ripe for the reaper;  
 "The bowl, on the board  
 "In the hall of the banquets,  
 "Leaves he untasted,  
 "When lances uplift  
 "The foe in field.  
 "Noting the Norsemen  
 "Out on the water-throng,  
 "Hark! how the Eagle  
 "Vaunts to the Vulture.  
 "'Spread the wing, Scald-neck,'  
 "Says she and screams she;  
 "'Seest thou the Sea-Kings,  
 "'Borne o'er the gannet-bath,  
 "'Going to garner  
 "'Every bird's eyrie?'

"Fell from her fishy perch  
 "Answers the Bald-beak,  
 "'Scream no more, little one;  
 "'Feeders are coming.'  
 "Hearkening their colloquy,  
 "Grins the grey beast,  
 "The wolf on wold.  
 "This is my sentence:  
 "These are the Norseman's  
 "Pandect and Canon.  
 "Thyrfing is thirsty;  
 "Quern-biter hungers;  
 "Shield-walker wearieth  
 "Shut in the scabbard.  
 "This is my sentence:  
 "Bring us to battle."

Fierce response gave three parts of the field;  
 And loud the Eastman's iron axe on many a target pealed  
 "What then," cried Ardan; "and ye thought, land-  
 ing on Erin's shore,  
 "Ye trod the common soil of earth, where Fortune  
 asks no more  
 "Of Valour's votaries, when for fame they've ransack'd  
 field and flood  
 "To the world's end, than simple feats of vulgar  
 hardihood?  
 "What! and ye never, then, had heard the old  
 renowned tale  
 "Of Ever and his Spanish ships caught in the wizard gale  
 "When all mist-mantled Innisfail showed of no bigger size  
 "Than black hog's back, above the wrack, before their  
 glamour'd eyes;  
 "When, boiling from their fluent depths, the sands  
 with solid wave  
 "Caught from his main-mast, Arannan, and made  
 mid-air his grave,



"Mingling land, sand, sea, sky in one? But Ever and  
 his hosts  
 "Through magic mists, and boiling sands, and senti-  
 neling ghosts,  
 "Cut their brave path to Tara top : which Ever and  
 his sept  
 "Of Clanna-Milidh ever since their sovereignty have  
 kept  
 "Supreme o'er Erin, hill and plain, air, water, land and  
 sea ;  
 "They and their sub-kings under them in five-fold  
 potency.  
 "What then, and came ye hither,  
 "Expecting common foemen,  
 "To combat the descendants  
 "Of seer-taught Clanna-Nemed,  
 "Who erst from broad Bœotia  
 "Repelled the invading Syrians ;  
 "Though still the Syrian magic  
 "Revivified the corpses  
 "Of those that fell at evening  
 "To fight their morning-battle  
 "With stark limbs demon-animated ?  
 "Ghastly they stood ; the living  
 "And dead, shoulder to shoulder :  
 "From pale cheeks flew the arrow ;  
 "The sword in clammy fingers  
 "Of slaughtered men, dealt slaughter ;  
 "And dusky spears went leaping  
 "Forth from insensate shoulders  
 "Neath which no hearts were throbbing.  
 "Horrible strife, and hopeless :  
 "For what could human valour  
 "Could human wit or counsel,  
 "Avail in such a contest ?  
 "Everything ! Wit and valour

"Know not the thing they cannot.  
 "For, with sharp daggers hewing  
 "Green stakes of holy hazel,  
 "Fast as they slew, they pinned them  
 "To earth ; the baffled demons,  
 "Around the warded corpses,  
 "Shrieking, like shrilly breezes  
 "That twirl the leaves in Autumn,  
 "Shook them, but found no entrance.  
 "No ; ye who come as conquerors to Erin's sacred  
 shores,  
 "Come as to mysteries sublime within a temple's doors  
 "Shut to mere soldiers. Comrades you of Achil ;  
 Prince of Greece ;  
 "Free shipmates of the fearless crew that won the  
 Golden Fleece ;  
 "Soldiers of Mithra, who have learned through earth,  
 air, fire and sea,  
 "To press unblenching to the goal of life and light,  
 be ye ;  
 "Else steer not here your craven barques, but seek  
 some vulgar strand  
 "Where easy-purchased victory invites the Coward's  
 hand."  
 As when the tree-tops of a wood first feel a blast of  
 wind,  
 One rustling oak begins to stir, then stirs the oak  
 behind ;  
 Thence on in gradual-deepening grooves, and on in  
 widening rings,  
 The tree-commingling tumult moves till all the forest  
 swings ;  
 So battle-impulse through them went ; so, at the bard's  
 appeal,  
 With thirst of combat, far and wide, they leaped and  
 clashed the steel.



Then Congal, staying where he strode infuriate to  
 and fro,  
 With fair white hand dashed from his cheek the briny  
 overflow,  
 And cried,

“ Oh, this it is, oh God, to have, in time of need,  
 “ Men in the gate ! and therefore I, though little used  
 indeed  
 “ To call on any name of God, yet, by whatever name  
 “ Men call Thee, Thou who givest to men wives,  
 children, riches, fame,  
 “ And rarer than the worth of wives, and which the  
 wealth transcends  
 “ Of fame, as fame the worth of gold ; who givest a  
 man his friends,  
 “ I thank and praise Thee. Oh, brave friends, what  
 though this goblin crew  
 “ From all their earth-wombs foul, where'er they lurk  
 from general view,  
 “ Be by our coming thus stirred up ; even as I've  
 seen elsewhere  
 “ The coming of a young rich man into a public fair  
 “ Set all the banded cheats astir ? 'Tis, that a com-  
 mon fear  
 “ Besets them—being in a bond, leagued and consort-  
 ing here,—  
 “ That their united reign is o'er, once we achieve the  
 crown  
 “ Of Erin, and set up the law that casts all phantoms  
 down.  
 “ For, by the all-conspicuous Sun, and by the invisible  
 Wind,  
 “ Two the most awful of all names whereby a man  
 may bind  
 “ His soul with adjuration tremendous : by which two  
 “ Laery Mac Neal did bind himself, remitting the Boru

“ Of Leinster ; notwithstanding which, and in contempt  
 of these,  
 “ He sought next year to levy it ; wherefore his guar-  
 antees,  
 “ The much-dishonored Wind and Sun, slew him : but  
 Laery still  
 “ Looks for his tribute from the brow of Tara's royal  
 hill,  
 “ Where, spear in hand and helm on head, they tomb'd  
 him stern and tall,  
 “ Brass-armed complete for standing fight, in Cahir-  
 Laery's wall,  
 “ With his great angry countenance turned toward  
 the hated race  
 “ Of Brasil Brec. Suns rise and sink : but Laery from  
 his place  
 “ Turns never : though its frown have dropped off  
 from the fleshless brow,  
 “ The gaunt hand still sustains the spear ; and still the  
 avenging vow  
 “ Upholds him, to the impious man a warning portent  
 grim :—  
 “ But may the Sun and may the Wind, even as they  
 dealt with him,  
 “ So deal with me, gaining this crown, and failing to  
 restore  
 “ The poets to their privileges, whate'er they held be-  
 fore  
 “ Drumkeat's pernicious Parliament ; cessings, pre-  
 eminence, lands,  
 “ All that that Synod's decree usurped, to fill the Clerics'  
 hands,  
 “ By them to our confusion turned : So may the Wind  
 and Sun  
 “ Deal with me, gaining Erin's crown, if, ere a year  
 have run



" Its seasonable course complete, I leave within the  
 pale  
 " Of the four brine-exhaling seas that compass Innisfail  
 " One of these proud curse-fulminers ! What though  
 with specious shows  
 " Of love and charity they come ; yet see the fate of  
 those  
 " Who first were here their chiefest friends : Murkertach  
 son of Erc,  
 " For all his base compliances, pursued with curses  
 dark  
 " By his own paid familiar priest, till, plunged in butt  
 of wine,  
 " He drowned, to give the ban effect, at Sletty on the  
 Boyne.  
 " Lewy Mac Laery, son to him who first gave Patrick  
 room,  
 " While yet an unborn harmless babe, cursed in his  
 mother's womb ;  
 " Then by priest-imprecated fire struck on the hateful  
 hill  
 " Of Achadarcha ; thus with mulcts and maledictions  
 still  
 " Repaying us our slavish fears ; if but the smallest jot  
 " Of blind obedience be denied,—commendable or not,  
 " Righteous or not, the thing commanded :—but this  
 King  
 " His ready acquiescent ' yea ' concedes to anything  
 " So they support his tyrannous power. Now, there-  
 fore, here at length  
 " His time has come, to put in ure this so-much boasted  
 strength  
 " Of these his Coursers : for methinks but few around  
 me here  
 " Will hold his hand from hearty blows, at Moyra, out  
 of fear

" For such as they ; after our march this morning  
 undismayed  
 " Through all their phantasms. For, unless he bring  
 the power in aid  
 " Of God himself, which he can not ; God being just,  
 and he  
 " Most unjust ; we have now to fear no greater  
 enemy  
 " Than these weak ghosts, which, having in vain spent  
 all their spiteful force,  
 " Leave us at large to prosecute our unembarrassed  
 course,  
 " Free as the eagle which, indeed, when he has  
 stooped to prey  
 " His quarry in a hollow vale, at first must make his  
 way  
 " With gyres contracted 'twixt the hills ; till to a level  
 run  
 " With his horizon ; but he then soars straightway at  
 the Sun :  
 " Or as a seaman, being embayed, heaves oft his  
 swerving boom  
 " Starboard and larboard ; then, at last, having attained  
 sea-room,  
 " Lies his straight course, with keel direct cutting the  
 ocean vast,  
 " While sun and rain, and wind and tide, and day and  
 night flit past :  
 " So, flitting past our constant march, let these weak  
 shades troop on :  
 " We, to our own hearts' level arisen ; we, Doubt's last  
 headlands gone,  
 " Launched on our main-sea enterprise, go forth with  
 steadfast mind,  
 " Nor turn a wavering look aside, nor cast a glance  
 behind,



"While God betwixt us and our foes, impartial, leaves  
 the event :  
 "For no man can contend with God, He being  
 omnipotent ;  
 "But far removed from human strife, leaves to the  
 daring man  
 "By force of valour to achieve such conquest as he  
 can,  
 "Whether o'er other mortal men less valiant ; or o'er  
 those  
 "Inferior demons of the air. 'Tis through such over-  
 throws,  
 "Given in just quarrel, comes renown a man no other  
 way  
 "Can compass ; for such conqueror, the Bard's heroic  
 lay  
 "Gives perpetuity of fame : the Statue-smith for  
 him  
 "To forms of glory consecrates each marble-moulded  
 limb :  
 "For him, when on his nation's behalf he rises up to  
 speak,  
 "The council of the wise sit hushed : for him young  
 Beauty's cheek  
 "Glow with the rose : all lips disclose their smiles for  
 him whose arm  
 "Protects all life's delights for all : to him in war's  
 alarm,  
 "As to the husband of the State, the trembling mothers  
 run,  
 "Holding their little ones : to him each generous-  
 nurtured son  
 "Hurries instinctive ; as at sea when tempests over-  
 whelm  
 "Faint hearts with horror in the hold, then chiefly  
 round the helm

"Gather brave seamen. But the man whose sullen  
 breast, exempt  
 "From generous impulse, prompts him forth upon no  
 brave attempt,  
 "Lives sordidly and dies despised. He dares no  
 stormy sea.  
 "Outflying Honor upon the wings of wintry tempests  
 he  
 "Smiles at no spiteful impotent trick malicious  
 Fortune plays ;  
 "Follows no friend with loyal steps through ghost-  
 prohibited ways ;  
 "Burns with no emulous thirst of fame, when glowing  
 tongues declare  
 "Brave aspirations ; as ye now, oh friends, stand  
 burning there.—  
 "For lo, I see on all your cheeks the blush of manly  
 shame ;  
 "Lo, now I see in all your eyes the generous sparkling  
 flame,  
 "Presage of conquest. Lo, the path to Moyra, where  
 the foe  
 "Waits us, lies open. Forward, sons of Rury, forward,  
 ho !  
 "Grandsons of Woden ; clans of Hû ; before us lies  
 renown,  
 "Safety and strength and native laws, revenge and  
 Erin's crown."  
 He said : and while with shouts on shouts the  
 echoing heavens were rent,  
 The mighty hosts with courage renewed, all with a one  
 consent  
 Moved onward. As a great black barque, compact of  
 many a tree,  
 That, on her launch from some high beach, shoots  
 down at once to sea ;



Or like as when, in time of thaw, a snow-drift deep and wide,  
 By strong winds in a hollow place lodged on a mountain side,  
 Fetches away with loosening crash ; or like as when, a cloud  
 Lumbering the sky, strong winds arise, and all the aerial crowd  
 Fall on at once ; it bulges, bursts, rolls out, and over-spreads  
 The face of heaven with ominous gloom above amazed men's heads ;  
 So ominously, so all at once, with clash and muttering jar  
 Swift, dark, on Moyra's fated field rolled down the cloud of war.

# CONGAL.

## BOOK IV.

### THE ARGUMENT.

*King Domnal's muster, ere the fight proceeds.  
 Mad Sweeny's flight ; and Northern Conal's deeds.*

[Garrad rejoins King Domnal, and tells of the approach of Congal and his forces. He describes to the Monarch their array ; Scottish troops on the right, Northmen on the left, Franks in the centre, with Britons behind ; and, over all, Ulster, with Congal Claen. King Domnal advances to Moyra and takes up his position. The Leinster hosts were on his right, or eastern flank ; those of Connaught on the left ; the household troops of Meath in the centre, in line with those of Lea Moha, or South Ireland. Behind his eastern wing as most exposed in situation were placed renowned Clan Colla and other Northern clans. The Monarch addresses his hosts. First those of Connaught, whom he reminds of the achievements of Queen Maev, King Dathu, and Owen Bell. Next the descendants of Mainy Mor, fighting under the Crozier of St. Grellan. Afterwards he confides to the Leinster troops his five sons, who are enrolled in their ranks. He reminds the Firbolg soldiers of their ancestry. To his household troops of Meath he repeats the peaceful overtures he had made in vain to Congal. To the Southern contingent he speaks of the heroism of Curoi Mac Daire. To his kinsman of Clan Colla he tells the tale of their champions Colla-Uais, Coll-da-Cree, Colla-Menn, and impresses on Malodhar of Armagh, and Ultan Long-Hand of Orior, that their fortunes depend on the issue of this fight. He recounts to his own Ulster clan the Kinel-Owen, their descent from Niall-Nine-Hostager, and reminds them that they had received St. Patrick's benediction. He calls on God to bless his cause. The hostile armies, now face to face, engage in deadly conflict. Sweeny the brother of Lafinda, fighting on Congal's side, is seized with frenzy ; the curse denounced by Erc haunts him, and, in sight of both armies, he flies in terror from the field. His comrades would have slain him for his cowardice, but are assured by



Ardan the Bard, that Sweeny's terror was supernatural. The leaders on both sides engage in personal encounters. The four sons of Eochaid of Alba rush on four provincial chiefs of Leinster, who are slain by these Scottish uncles of Congal Claen. Three of King Domnal's sons attack three of the victors; all receive their death wounds. His two younger sons assault Domnal-Brec, who surrenders to them. King Domnal on his appeal, though lamenting the death of his sons, admits him to ransom. The subsequent fortunes of Domnal Brec, afterwards King in Scotland. His successors crowned at Scone on the Stone of Destiny, now removed to Westminster for the coronation of British Sovereigns. Congal's Frankish aids encounter, and are defeated by Clan Conail. The victors attack the warriors of Mourne, posted on the hill of Augnafoskar, on whose summit sits Kellach the Halt, borne on his chair. He sends son after son into the thickest of the fight. They fail to break the ranks, and attack Clan-Colla. Congal goes to the aid of Kellach. His friend Conan Rodd, with his contingent from Wales, assaults the Connaught forces. Conan Rodd engages in turn, and slays four of their chiefs. Conan Finn, who had also embraced the cause of Congal, fights with Kellach, son of Malcova, nephew, and afterwards successor of King Domnal, who kills him. Congal Claen, with his Ulster troops, attacks Clan-Conail, led by Conal, son of Baedan. They wrestle together. Conal flings Congal to the ground; Conan Rodd comes to his rescue, and slays Conal. He is attacked by Kellach, son of Malcova, who falls from the impetuosity of his charge. Conan Rodd refrains from taking advantage. Kellach rises and renews the fight; Conan falls. Congal interposes, and challenges Kellach, Ultan-Long-Hand interferes; and the warriors on both sides join in deadly strife.]



UDDEN as wild-drake from his reeds beside the sedgy Bann,  
Forth from his rushy covert flew swift-watchful Garrad Gann  
Scout of the North; nor turned aside for dyke or mearing-mound,  
Till, in the gorge of green Glen Ree, the King himself he found

With gathered Erin in his tents, fast camped beside the fosse  
That in the magic days of old the Black Boar scooped across  
Orgallia's border: he who now, from dry land banished far,  
No longer casts up rampart dykes to stem the tide of war,  
But rooting round the island rocks where Brecan's cauldrons boil,  
Turns up the ridgy-rolling sea with ever-fruitless toil;  
For fast as still with furrowing tusk he grooves the wave, so fast  
The fluent-rising wave forbids to champ the illusive mast.

Said Garrad, "King, Clan-Congail comes: I saw Magabra's height  
"At sunset flaming with his spears; and all the woods in sight  
"Far as the lake-reflected light their passes gave to view  
"With arms and standards sparkling bright, and war-cars thronging through."  
"What standards show they?" said the King, "and in what order, say  
"Does my unhappy foster-son his impious aids array?"  
Said Garrad, "On his battle's right the standards were to see  
"Of Alba's hosts in all the fields of frightened Aghalee;  
"While Lochlan's ravens, birds accurst in many a widow's dirge  
"Flapped o'er his far-extended left to green Kilultagh's verge.  
"The ensigns of his middle front shone bright with silken sheen;  
"White, swarmed with golden bees, they were; and men of warlike mien



"Long-hair'd and blue-eyed marched beneath. Once,  
 when I sailed beyond  
 "The Ictian sea, and saw, on march, the sons of  
 Pharamond,  
 "('Twas on the Catalaunian plain, in dusty war-cloud  
 rolled,  
 "They passed me as I rode the route King Dathi  
 took of old),  
 "Such seemed the ensign, and such seemed the fair,  
 bee-blazon'd ranks :  
 "Wherefore I deem the centre-front of Congal's host  
 are Franks ;  
 "Yet little-trusted, as I judge ; for close behind them  
 came,  
 "Led by a lofty chief whose locks shone red as bicker-  
 ing flame,  
 "The fierce, sharp-vengeful, savage men of Britain ;  
 and again  
 "Behind the Britons, over all, Ulster and Congal  
 Claen."  
 Said Domnal, "While I live and reign, it never shall  
 be said  
 "The hosts of Erin, with the King of Erin at their  
 head,  
 "Sat in the shelter of a camp, or shunned the open  
 ground,  
 "While foreign foe or rebel King within the realm was  
 found.  
 "And since on Moyra openly their hosts encamp to-  
 night,  
 "On Moyra openly at dawn shall Erin give them  
 fight."  
 Whereon throughout the expectant camp's four  
 quarters, Domnal sped  
 The welcome word to arm and march ; and soon the  
 measured tread

Of tramping legions told there passed by moor and  
 quaking fen,  
 From Domnal's camp to Lagan bank, thrice twenty  
 thousand men.  
 Arrived on Moyra's southern verge, beneath the  
 stars they lay,  
 Wrapped in their warrior cloaks, till morn advanced  
 her ensigns grey.  
 Dawn-early, Domnal,—offering done,—athwart the  
 dusky glade  
 In long-drawn battle, east and west, the royal host  
 arrayed.  
 And this the order of the line. To left of all the field,  
 Fast flanked by forest and by fen, as by a natural  
 shield,  
 Connacia kept the western wing : thence stretching to  
 the right,  
 The many-legged Leinster hosts prolonged the beam  
 of fight  
 To where, in midmost place of all, a plashed imper-  
 vious wood  
 Embattled thick around himself, Meath's household  
 phalanx stood.  
 Lea-Moha next in order fair took up the spiky line,  
 And bore it with a bristling edge to where your battle-sign  
 Renowned Clan-Colla, flaunted high above the eastern  
 wing :  
 Here, on the wide unsheltered wold, the careful-valiant  
 King  
 In mutual-succouring order close his Northern strength  
 arrayed ;  
 First, Kindred-Owen ; Orgiall next ; to take or tender aid  
 When needful ; and beyond them both, as valour's  
 meet reward,  
 You, clans of Conal, of them all the glory and the  
 guard.



The hosts embattled, Domnal now, drawn in the  
 royal car,  
 An Animating-Progress made down all the front  
 of war ;  
 And first Connacia's host he spoke,

"Descendants of the brave  
 Who from Ultonia once before, with cattle-plundering  
 Maev,

"Bore spoil immense and deathless fame ; to you, of  
 all the host,

"Is given the hero-coveted, much-envied, outmost  
 post

"Of all the field. Maintain it well. My presence  
 shall impart

"The conscious might of lawful power to every arm  
 and heart.

"For wondrous is the might that clothes a true king's  
 countenance,

"In life or death. Remember how, when through  
 the fields of France

"Your sires the thunder-blackened limbs of glorious  
 Dathi bore,

"No shelter from the Gauls' pursuit had they, from  
 Alp to shore,

"But the dread visage of the King turned backward  
 as they fled ;

"Yet safely sped they through them all, home, with  
 their mighty dead.

"Third in descent again from whom, your Monarch,  
 Owen Bel,

"Tomb'd, armed and facing to the foe, even as in  
 fight he fell,

"Upon the Sligo's southern bank, throughout a year  
 and day,

"By mere enchantment of his gaze, kept all the North  
 at bay ;

"Nor could their bravest cross the fords so overlooked,  
 until

"They stole King Owen from his cairn, and northward  
 by Loch Gill

"Tomb'd him, face-downward ; from which time the  
 disenchanted fords

"Are won or lost, as greater might or less impels your  
 swords.

"But here, with better auspices, you keep the battle-  
 wing,

"To-day, in presence of a crowned and lawful living  
 King."

The Crohan warriors, pleased to hear North-  
 nurtured Domnal learned

In legends of the distant West, a glorying shout  
 returned.

Next where Hy-Mainy's haughty ranks, 'neath  
 Grellan's staff arrayed,

Stood ruddy in the reddening morn, the King his  
 chariot stayed.

"Brave youths," said Domnal, "what although the  
 breadth of Erin lies

"Between us and the splendid seats which under  
 western skies

"Ye wrested, by Saint Grellan's aid, from Bolgic  
 hordes of yore,

"Ere Morne's and Colla's names were merged in name  
 of Mainy Mor ?

"Yet neither lapse of time nor tract of distance can  
 efface

"From Ulster's breast the glorious name of Cradle of  
 your Race.

"Lo, yonder see the mountains blue, to whose  
 recesses borne

"Your tide of overteeming life flowed out from  
 full Cremorne,



"Ere yet lean Dartry's plenteous loins that mightier  
 swarm sent forth  
 "To plant beyond smooth Shannon's flood the  
 manhood of the North ;  
 "Whence now returned, by many a plain and many a  
 waving wood,  
 "As sea-run salmon that at last ascend the parent flood,  
 "All other bays and forelands pass'd, in needful hour  
 ye come  
 "Exulting in your strength, to strike for kindred and  
 for home.  
 "But exhortation none of mine need ye to whet the  
 swords  
 "Oft edged to victory before by better-spoken words—  
 "Mighty men, sons of Mainy,  
 "By the Staff and its wonders  
 "Ye bear for your banner,  
 "By the Crozier of Grellan  
 "Hy-Mainy's sole Standard ;  
 "That wand at whose waving  
 "The flower of the Firvolg,  
 "Of old on Moy-Liagh,  
 "For their falsehood sank swallowed,  
 "Thirty hundred together,  
 "In a moment, without remnant,  
 "In the maw of the Moy :  
 "By your taxes, by your tributes,  
 "By your freely-offered firstlings  
 "On the door-sills of Kilcloony :'  
 "By Grellan's own warrant,  
 "Saying 'surely while ye pay me  
 "My taxes and my tributes,  
 "And exalt me my Crozier,  
 "God and I will give you conquest.'  
 "Now remember ye the manhood of the days of  
 Mainy Mor."

Then all the pleased Hy-Manian host with loud  
 and proud acclaim  
 Shouted ; and Domnal to the front of Leinster's  
 legions came.  
 "Lagenians of the palm-broad spears," the Monarch  
 said, "and ye  
 "Fair-tunic'd warriors of Leix and festive  
 Ossory,  
 "From you, in manhood's joyous prime, my gentle  
 spouse I chose ;  
 "To you, in age, I now assign the guardianship of  
 those  
 "Five war-accomplished youths, our sons, whom 'mid  
 your ranks enrolled,  
 "In duty's place, with proud delight I even now  
 behold.  
 "My Fergus Fair ; my Angus dear ; my Erril Open-  
 Hand ;  
 "My Carril, and my Colgu gay. Be ye a rallying  
 band  
 "Impervious round the youths beloved ; that, when  
 our work is done,  
 "The anxious mother may again embrace each  
 princely son."  
 Proud Leinster closer round the youths arrayed her  
 spear-thick hedge ;  
 And warranted with warrior oaths the safety of the  
 pledge.  
 Next with the allied Firvolg ranks, where 'mid the  
 florid Gael  
 They darkly showed, King Domnal stayed, and bade  
 the slim ones hail.  
 "Clans of the Martin unsubdued ; sole remnants of  
 your race  
 "Who, 'mid the elsewhere conquering Gael, retain  
 your ancient place ;



"Think not I deem you strangers come to render  
 service due  
 "To stranger masters : no, ye come as willing kinsmen  
 true  
 "To aid your kindly cousin Scots against the alien  
 throng  
 "Of Lochlan and the Gentile Gauls. The sacred  
 Poet's song  
 "And learned Historian's tale agree, that from one  
 parent stem,  
 "Scyth, Agathys and Gelon sprang ; and sprung  
 direct from them  
 "The Scot, the Pict, and Bolgmen come ; who, in  
 their several turns,  
 "To Erin came ; and you the first, escaped the  
 galling scorns  
 "Of Thracian tyrants, and the toil immense in  
 leathern bags  
 "Of carrying soil to fertilise the terraced mountain  
 crags ;  
 "And here, through full a thousand years of freedom  
 and of fame,  
 "Nought of your former servile state remembered but  
 the name,  
 "You've held the lands that still ye hold, and proved  
 superior still  
 "In every art of elegance and work of graceful skill ;  
 "For which old patrimonial lands, and for the homes  
 made bright  
 "By these hereditary arts, we stand to-day in fight,  
 "Firvolg and Gael in one accord ; all Erin in a band  
 "Against the robbers of the sea and traitors of the land."  
 The light of darkly-kindling eyes and fervid faces  
 glanced  
 Down all the beaming Bolgic line, while Domnal next  
 advanced

To speak the household Meathian troops.  
 "Ye men of Meath," said he,  
 "Are witness that this day's debate has not been  
 sought by me.  
 "Whate'er a King with honor might, I offered Congal  
 Claen ;  
 "And offered oft ; which he, as oft, rejected with  
 disdain,  
 "Demanding crowns and kingdoms back which have  
 not, since the days  
 "Of the three Collas, appertained to any of his  
 race.  
 "Three hundred years and three and one, it is, since,  
 at the date  
 "Three hundred-thirty-three from Christ, these three  
 laid desolate  
 "Emania, Ulster's royal seat till then, and over-  
 ran  
 "All that Clan Rury theretofore to westward of the  
 Bann  
 "And southward of the Yewry held ; from which time  
 hitherto  
 "Ultonia's bounds embrace no more than at this day  
 they do,  
 "From Mourne to Rathlin : small the tract : yet in  
 that little space  
 "Ambition how exorbitant, how huge a pride has  
 place !  
 "And from Clan-Colla, in their turn, a hundred years  
 have flown,  
 "Since Earca's son, Murkertach, wón Tyrconnell and  
 Tyrone ;  
 "O'er which Rudrician ne'er shall reign. So nothing  
 at our hands  
 "Remains to give King Congal but the battle he  
 demands."



"Battle for battle! Spear for spear!" from thousand  
 throats upflew  
 The voice of fight-accepting Meath. The Monarch,  
 in review,  
 Thence passed along Lea Moha's line.  
 "Sons of the South," he said;  
 "Thus far beneath our Northern stars with fearless  
 steps ye tread,  
 "Remembering, as beseems your race, the olden  
 glorious days  
 "When Curoi and his Ernaan Knights divided Erin's  
 praise  
 "With all our bravest of the Branch. On Cahir-  
 Conroi's crest  
 "The hero from his tomb looks down where 'neath the  
 glowing west  
 "The strand of Ventry shines at eve: again the hollow  
 roar  
 "Of trampling tides is in his ears: locked on the level  
 floor  
 "The glorious wrestlers stamp the sands: let come the  
 waves: let burst  
 "All ocean downward on their heads: none parts his  
 hold, till first  
 "He casts the invader to his feet. The invading  
 galleys ride  
 "Regardant on the heaving blue, behind the white-  
 maned tide:  
 "The white-maned, proud-neck-arching tide leaps to  
 their feet; it leaps  
 "Around their arms; it leaps with might above  
 expiring heaps  
 "Of Gauls and Gaels in mutual clasp washed o'er the  
 wreck-strewn sands,  
 "Where drowned they rather than desert their first  
 defensive stands.

"Such heroes hath Momonia nursed; Momonia's  
 sacred shore  
 "By you defended, grates beneath invading keels no  
 more:  
 "But, driven from hero-guarded coasts, our new in-  
 vaders swarm  
 "In Ulster's unprotected ports: yet, even here, thine  
 arm,  
 "Momonia, reaching all the length of Erin through,  
 shall draw  
 "MacDaire's blade again, and make a Ventry at  
 Moy-rah."  
 Well pleased, Momonia's warriors heard the Mon-  
 arch's flattering words;  
 And Domnal to Clan-Colla came.  
 "Kinsmen, illustrious lords  
 "Of Orgiall," said he: "since the day our three fore-  
 fathers stood  
 "In Tara's wine-hall, to provoke to shedding of their  
 blood  
 "King Muredach (for 'mongst the four, whiche'er  
 should first be slain,  
 "With his posterity the crown was destined to  
 remain);  
 "No day has risen so full of need for Eochaid Domlan's  
 race  
 "As this which now above our heads begins to rise  
 apace.  
 "In Tara's wine-hall, 'mid his guards, they came before  
 the throne,  
 "Unbid, from Alba: in their train nine haggard men  
 alone,  
 "Survivors of three hundred youths condemned in  
 bleak Cantyre  
 "To expiate the secret stroke that slew the Monarch's  
 sire.



"Amid their snows the vision came, at midnight, in  
 their tent ;  
 "To each the same it seemed ; and said, 'Up ; hence,  
 incontinent :  
 "'Seek ye the son of him ye slew, at Tara, where  
 a crown  
 "'Waits the first self-devoting hand, will pluck the  
 peril down.'  
 "Back sped the three through sleet and spray ; nor  
 stretched they side until  
 "They stood upon the wine-hall floor of Tara's royal  
 hill.  
 "'What tidings, now, from Alba, sirs ?' exclaimed the  
 wondering King :  
 "Said Colla Uais, 'King Muredach, the tidings that I  
 bring  
 "'Are these : this hand it was did slay thy father ; and  
 this head,  
 "'As good as his, is here to take in eric for the  
 dead.'  
 "Said Coll da-Cree, 'This hand it was did aid my  
 brother dear  
 "'To take thy father's head ; and, see, a better head is  
 here.'  
 "Said Colla Menn, 'Behold the head, best of the  
 three, that plann'd  
 "'The work of slaughter well achieved by either  
 brother's hand :'  
 "And nearer pressed, to court the stroke : but  
 Muredach withdrew  
 "His hand approaching to the hilt ; for on his memory  
 grew  
 "Remembrance clear of what the seer in visioned  
 trance had said,  
 "That 'mongst four cousins, in that hall, who first  
 should lose his head,

"His childrens' should the crown remain : wherefore  
 his hand he stayed,  
 "And answered, 'This magnanimous avowal ye have  
 made  
 "'Atones for all. Behold, the North,—where rude  
 Clan Rury's lords  
 "'Revolt against my lawful rents,—lies open to your  
 swords.  
 "'Win there a kingdom for yourselves, where'er ye  
 will and can,  
 "'From proud Emania to the sea ; from Farsad to the  
 Bann ;  
 "'Myself shall furnish forth a host.' Said Colla Uais,  
 'Our laws  
 "'Forbid that, even to gain a crown, we war without a  
 cause.'  
 "'And is it not then, cause enough, or have ye never  
 heard,'  
 "Said Muredach, 'how Black-Tooth's slave did singe  
 thy grandsire's beard  
 "'In this same hall ? Still unavenged that insult.'  
 "'I will suffice,'  
 "Said Colla Uais. 'In conquest's case needs never  
 reason nice.'  
 "And so, exchanging issues dark of doubtful  
 prophecy  
 "For even chance of open war, with Tara's host, the  
 Three  
 "Invaded Ulster that same year ; and, ere the year was  
 spent,  
 "In green Cremorne sat Coll da-Cree, a prince  
 magnificent.  
 "Great lords from all their loins have sprung ; Kings  
 from the loins of some,  
 "And other mightier monarchs thence are destined yet  
 to come :



"Yea, though perchance in after days forgetful of their stem,  
 "The rulers of the Western world shall draw their race from them.  
 "And thou, Malodhar, eldest born, and noblest of them all,  
 "This day must hold or lose the lands so won by mighty Coll:  
 "For, other cause of enmity proud Congal Claen has none  
 "Than this, that I refuse to strip Clan Colla of its own;  
 "And have confirmed, and do hereby, as far as in me lies,  
 "Confirm Malodhar of Armagh in all the seignories  
 "Won by his sires, as I have told. And, Ultan Long-Hand, thou  
 "Who rulest Orior, his sub-King, yea, all who hear me now,  
 "Remember, that not mine alone the fortune, that endures  
 "Or passes with this day's event, but his, and thine, and yours."  
 "King," said Malodhar, "have no fear: the voice of Fate that gave  
 "The Collas in Cantyre their call to cross the wintry wave,  
 "To thee alike assigns the realms of Erin, and to me  
 "Orgallia's rule subordinate, in perpetuity.  
 "Nor other change will Erin feel from Congal's mad essay  
 "That this, belike, that Orgiall's bounds, meared by Glen Ree to-day,  
 "May march to-morrow with the sea; for so the license ran,  
 "'From proud Emania to the sea; from Farsad to the Bann,'"

"Conquer thy wish;" discreetly said the prudent King, aloud.  
 But also said, "This under-King is somewhat over-proud."  
 So pondering, to the Kinel-Owen, his own familiar clan,  
 He came, and, still his ancient lore recalling, thus began:  
 "Twin branches of one stately stem are Conal's race and yours,  
 "Children of Owen; at one birth our great progenitors  
 "Owen and Conal Gulban, sons of many-hostaged Neal,  
 "Sprang from one womb: one blessing both of holy Patrick's zeal  
 "Had in one cradle: equal power through Erin far and wide  
 "By blessed Kearnach, from one bed, for both was prophesied;  
 "When to their hands the dying saint confided Patrick's Bell  
 "And Columb's Gospels; charging them, as oft as it befell  
 "That either martial tribe should stand in combat's ordered line,  
 "That Bell or Book should ever be its proper battle-sign.  
 "And promised, oft as either host, arrayed as now ye are,  
 "Should muster for defensive fight or just aggressive war,  
 "The Word of saving Truth with them, the Tongue of Power with you  
 "Respectively, that victory should all your steps pursue:—  
 "A prophecy in part fulfilled; in ampler measure still  
 "Remaining for a ripper day of glory to fulfil.



"This present day well nigh brings round an even  
 hundred years  
 "Since, in his just aggressive war, Murkertach's western  
 spears  
 "Flashed thro' Clan-Colla's broken bounds, in cantred-  
 covering sweep,  
 "From Erne to smooth Mayola's meads and proud  
 Ben-Evenagh's steep:  
 "And so it is; one century, if but to-day's event  
 "March with the words of prophecy, shall see your  
 tribe's extent  
 "Meted by mountain, and by sea: for surely never yet  
 "Was juster war defensive waged than this, wherein,  
 beset  
 "As deer in hunter's narrowing ring, or ring'd bull at  
 his stake,  
 "We needs must fight for leave to live, if not for glory's  
 sake.  
 "Behold, there breathes not on the earth the creature  
 born so base  
 "But will, to spending of its life, defend its dwelling-  
 place;  
 "Be it the wolf's leaf-bedded lair, the rook's dark tops  
 of trees,  
 "Or bare shelf of the barren rock, where, over yeasty seas,  
 "The artless gull intends her brood; and baser than  
 the beasts  
 "Were we, if, having to defend our homes of love, our  
 feasts  
 "Of joyous friendship, our renown, our freedom, and  
 above  
 "All else, our heavenly heritage of Christ's redeeming  
 love,  
 "From this rude inroad unprovoked of Gentile robbers,  
 we  
 "Fought not the fight of valiant men to all extremity;

"As well beseeming those for whom the sacred lay was  
 sung:  
 "Lo, the perverse Pagan remnant  
 "And the God-denying Gentile,  
 "Linked in mischief, would deprive us  
 "Of our hope and of our solace  
 "Neath the noble tree of shelter  
 "Planted here by holy Patrick.  
 "Would uproot it; lay it prostrate;  
 "And, amid its broken branches,  
 "Re-erect the fanes of demons.  
 "How blind; how unthankful  
 "Are the insolent ungodly!  
 "When they walk with cool footsteps,  
 "In the dews of morn and even,  
 "Mid the tender blade providing  
 "Meat and drink for men in season,  
 "Then laud they their ploughshares,  
 "Then exult they in their oxen;  
 "But their hearts have no refreshment  
 "From the hot airs unwholesome  
 "Of hate and of ambition.  
 "From the felon flood escaping  
 "In their rough rocking galleys,  
 "They say, ha! strong cordage,  
 "Brave mast, and good anchor:  
 "But they deem not He who keepeth  
 "The wind in His palm-hollow  
 "Hears their boasting, and abhors them.  
 "But God shall the proud ones,  
 "The rebellious, the unfaithful,  
 "Behold with derision  
 "In the dark hour tremendous  
 "Of death and of departure;  
 "When, mad with blank horror,  
 "They sink, they know not whither,  
 "Dizzy down into perdition.'



"Up, God! and let the fces of God, and them that  
 hate him, fly :  
 "As wax consumes within the fire, as smoke within the  
 sky,  
 "So let them melt and perish quite : but he who loves  
 Thy laws  
 "His head in battle cover Thou, and vindicate his  
 cause."  
 "Amen," Cloc-Patrick's clerks replied ; and clear  
 above the swell  
 Of thousand hoarse-applauding throats, was heard the  
 Standard-Bell.  
 Last to his own illustrious tribe, though first in power  
 and fame,  
 In danger's gap, to right of all the embattled hosts, he  
 came.  
 "Kinsmen," he said, "to other tribes I've offered;  
 on my way,  
 "Words of incitement to renown ; as fitting for the day  
 "Just rising on so great a strife as, since the days of  
 Con  
 "The Hundred-Battled, morning sun has never looked  
 upon.  
 "But from these hortative harangues,—since vain were  
 the attempt  
 "To add to valour infinite,—Clan-Conail stands exempt.  
 "For why, what says the noble verse?—  
 "'Clan-Conail for the battle  
 "'Never needed other prompting  
 "'Than the native manly vigor  
 "'Of a King-descended people,  
 "'Whose own exulting prowess,  
 "'Whose own fight-glorying valour,  
 "'And old ancestral choler,  
 "'And hot blood overboiling,  
 "'Are war-goads self-sufficing.

"'Would'st see them war-excited?  
 "'Would'st see the Clans of Enna  
 "'Let loose their native fury?  
 "'Would'st see the Sons of Conang  
 "'How they look in time of slaughter?  
 "'Sil-Angus at their spear-sport,  
 "'Sil-Fidrach at their sword-play,  
 "'Sil-Ninid rout-enforcing,  
 "'Sil-Setna panic-pouring?  
 "'Set before them then the faces  
 "'Of foemen in their places,  
 "'With lances levelled ready,  
 "'And the battle, grim and bloody,  
 "'Coming onward o'er the tramp-resounding plain :  
 "'But insult not Conal's nation  
 "'With a battle-exhortation  
 "'When with battle's self their hands you entertain.'  
 "And lo, the very valour-rousing sight the Bard  
 prescribes  
 "Presents itself before our eyes ; for yonder Congal's  
 tribes  
 "Begin to move. Up Book, and march ! God and  
 Columba be  
 "Your wanted warrant that ye march to glorious  
 victory !"  
 And, as when fire by chance has caught a furzy  
 mountain-side,  
 Behind its bickering front of flame, in blackness swift  
 and wide,  
 The spreading ruin onward rolls ; so down King Dom-  
 nal's van,  
 Flashed back from glittering helm and shield, the  
 morning radiance ran ;  
 So, dark behind their fiery front, in far evolving throng  
 The enlarging legions spread, and poured their serried  
 strength along.



And as, again, when Lammas floods from echoing  
uplands go  
Down hurrying to the quaking vale that toils in foam  
below ;  
So wide, so deep, so terrible, so spreading, swift and vast,  
With tempest-tramp from Congal's camp the adverse  
columns pass'd :

Every phalanx like a castle ; every captain, at its head,  
Like pillar of a castle-gate, when camping Kings have  
spread

Their leaguer to the rampart-foot, and pick and broad-  
axe play

Rebounding on the sounding plank that holds the war  
at bay.

Ah ! many a brave young son was there, to hang on  
whose broad breast  
Was joy to the proud mother ; many a brother much  
caressed

By white-arm'd smiling sisters ; many a lover who yet  
bore

The parting kiss from virgin lips his lips should meet  
no more ;

And sons who stood by fathers' sides, with pious ardour  
warm,

Each deeming death were well-incurred to shield *that*  
head from harm,

Blooming in love and manly strength ; and many a  
faithful pair

Of milk-united fosterers and ancient friends was there.  
Swiftly they cleared the narrowing space of plain  
ground interposed ;

And, bearing each an even front, from wing to wing  
they closed.

A shudder at the closing shock thrill'd through the  
grassy plain,

And all the sedgy-sided pools of Lagan sighed again.

In balanced scale, in even fight,—no thought on  
either side

Of yielding back,—the eager hosts their work of battle  
plied,

Stern, dark, intense, incessant, as forging smiths that  
smite

In order on the stithy head through spark-showers  
hailing white.

And, as when woodsmen to their work, through copse  
and stubble go,

Grasping the supple red-skinned twigs with darting  
bill-hooks, so

With frequent grasp and deadly grip plucked from their  
slippery stand,

They went continual to the earth : the grassy-vestured  
land,

Stamped into dust, beneath them glowed ; the clear  
fresh morning air

Vexed with the storm of twirling arms, and tossing  
heads and hair,

Around them reeked ; while, overhead, in dense  
unwholesome pall,

A sweat-and-blood-engendered mist rose steaming over  
all.

Dire was the front-rank warriors' case ; nor, in their  
deadly need,

Did son of father longer think, or friend of friend take  
heed ;

But each deemed all the strength and skill his prowess  
could command

But scant enough to serve the need that claimed his  
proper hand ;

Fresh hands with deadlier-wielded blades, new foes  
with angrier frown,

Succeeding ceaseless in the front, fast as the old went  
down.



Fed from behind the ranks renewed ; from these  
 continual fed  
 The intermediate heaps increased. Still no man turned  
 or fled  
 Till on the Dalaradian King, unhappy Sweeny, fell  
 The terrors of a dreadful fate, in manner strange to tell.  
 To Sweeny, as the hosts drew near, ere yet the fight  
 should join,  
 Seemed still as if between them rolled the foam-strown  
 tawny Boyne :  
 And as the swiftly-nearing hosts consumed the narrow-  
 ing space,  
 And arrow-flights and javelin-casts and sword-strokes  
 came in place,  
 Through all the rout of high-raised hands and wrathful  
 glaring eyes,  
 Erc's look of wrath and lifted hand before him seemed  
 to rise ;  
 Through all the hard-rebounding din from breasts of  
 Gaels and Gauls,  
 That jarred against the vault of heaven, when clashed  
 the brazen walls,  
 Through all the clangorous battle-calls and death-shouts  
 hoarse and high,  
 Erc's shriller curse he seemed to hear and Erc's  
 despairing cry.  
 Much did the hapless warrior strive to shake from  
 breast and brain  
 The illusion and the shameful wish fast rising, but in vain ;  
 The wish to fly seized all his limbs ; the stronger dread  
 of shame  
 Contending with the wish to fly, made spoil of all his  
 frame.  
 His knees beneath him wavered, as if shaken by the  
 stress  
 Of a rapid-running river ; his heart, in fear's excess,

Sprang to and fro within him, as a wild-bird newly  
 caged,  
 Or a stream-ascending salmon in a strong weir's trap  
 engaged.  
 Room for escape the field had none : and Sweeny  
 there had died  
 Perforce in front ; his shame unknown ; his name a  
 word of pride  
 To all his race, for many a feat of valour nobly done,  
 And much renown from conquered Chiefs in former  
 battles won ;  
 But that the terror in his soul at length to madness grew,  
 And, with a maniac's strength of ten, he burst the rere  
 rank through,  
 And fled in presence of both hosts.  
 So light and swift he ran,  
 It seemed as if exalting fear had left, of all the man,  
 Only the empty outward show. Then many cried to  
 slay  
 The flying Chief ; but Ardan stood between :  
 " Insane ones, stay  
 " Your idle impious shafts," he cried ; " no coward's  
 flight is here ;  
 " But sacred frenzy sent from Heaven. The wings of  
 vulgar fear  
 " Ne'er lifted weight-sustaining feet along the airy ways  
 " In leaps like these : but ecstasies there be of soul,  
 that raise  
 " Men's bodies out of Earth's constraint ; and, so  
 exalted, he  
 " Acquires the sacred Omad's name, and gains immu-  
 nity  
 " From every earthly violence. 'Twas thus Wood  
 Merlin gained  
 " His seership on Arderidd field : else Britain had  
 remained



"Still unenriched of half her lore. So, turn you, and engage

"Your spears where men who fly you not, await your juster rage."

So Ardan counselled; and the line of battle stood renewed,

While Sweeny o'er the distant plain his lonely flight pursued,

Noiseless, as flits, at daylight-gone, the level-coasting crane  
Meantime, on Moyra, shout and clang of battle rose again,

As, singling from the vulgar sort, the chiefs of note began

In feats of separate hardihood, to mingle in the van.

And first the royal sons who led the allied Alban host,  
Despite the strength of circling quags and Dathi's guardian ghost,

Thrice on Connacia's line of fight, four island ospreys flew,

And twice and thrice with grasp of might broke Grellan's staff in two.

But at their third swift-swooping charge, where Leinster stood arrayed

Beneath her four Provincial Kings, their course was rudely stayed.

Which four illustrious Kings who led the Broad-spear ranks, were these; \*

First, Cairbre Crom, the wealthy lord of tunic-bleaching Leix; \*

Next, haughty Aulay of the Ships, who exercised his rule  
Where hurdle-causeways span the mire of Liffey's dusky pool;

Argnadach next, whose grassy dun o'er green Hy-Drone presides

Where bright by brown Bahana wood the fishful Barrow glides;

And lastly Ailill, hapless lord of wide domains, for whom Hy-Faily's serfs no more need till the sunny slopes of Bloom.

These four before the Albanian four their armoured breasts opposed,  
And straight the eight in fell debate, for life and glory, closed.

But valiant though these Leinster Kings, and war-accomplished too,

'Twas not for them the royal hope of Alba to subdue,  
Who oft had trained adventurous arms on Saxon and on Gaul,

With brass-hook'd halbard oft had plucked the Briton from his wall;

And oft, twixt beetling brow above and slippery brink below,

Had wrestled with the Fortren Pict, knee-deep in Grampian snow.

Argnadach, first, beneath the spear of Aed Green-Mantle died;

Tall Ailill next lay stretched in death, by Sweeny, at his side;

To Domnal of the Freckled Brow imperious Aulay then  
Resigned his head; and Cairbre Crom succumbed to Congal Menn.

When Domnal's own illustrious sons beheld the carnage made

Of Leinster's leaders, to the front they also sprang in aid;  
Fergus and Angus side by side; young Erril Open-Hand,

Carril and Colgu; five to four: the war-flushed conquering band

Of Alban brothers, four to five, as loud the Princes cried

"Sons of the King of Erin here," with louder shout replied,



"Sons here of Alba's mightier King, to match them,  
man to man."

And, three at once selecting three, an equal strife began;  
Equal in youth; in royal birth, in eager warlike will,  
Equal; and in the athlete's art and warrior's deadly  
skill,

Alas! too equal; for, ere long, by many a mutual  
wound,

Each slain by each, three princely pairs pressed all the  
equal ground.

But Domnal Brec, by Carril and by Colgu both assailed,  
Although 'gainst either single foe he had in fight  
prevailed,

Withstood not their conjoint attack: but, casting down  
his shield,

Said, "Cousins, I claim benefit of gossipred, and yield."

So, leaving there the princely six stretched 'mongst the  
common dead,

Carril and Colgu to the King their Alban captive led.

Then thus the captive Domnal said,

"Oh King, these youthful sons  
"Have done me warrior-wrong in both assailing me at  
once;

"Which is no deed of princely-nutured youths: and  
therefore, I

"Am put to plea of fosterage and consanguinity;

"Shewing unto your Clemency, my father Eochaid Buie

"Was foster-son of Columb-Kill, the son of Felimy,

"The cousin of thy father Aed: wherefore, oh King,  
I claim

"Safety and ransom at thy hands in holy Columb's  
name."

"And in that venerable name," said Domnal—and  
he crossed

His breast devoutly as he spoke,—“thy suit shall not  
be lost;

"For precious-sweet at every time the ties of nurture  
are,

"But most so when they mitigate, as now, the woes of  
war:

"Woes which beseems not that a King in battle-armour  
dressed

"Should further speak of, here a-field. But Thou who  
seest my breast,

"Thou knowest, oh God, how sharper far than foe's  
dividing brand—

"My Fergus fair; my Angus dear; my Erril Open-  
Hand!—

"Are this day's pangs of death and shame. But,  
Kinsman, for thy share,

"A goshawk for a captured King, subdued in fight  
impair,

"Shall answer all the ransom's need. And, for the  
wrong thee done,

"Thou shalt, in duel, have amends; if either culprit  
son

"Escape the labour of to-day."

And therefore so it was  
That Freckled Domnal, set at large, for the abovesaid  
cause,

Which neither Prince might contravene, though for the  
issue loth,

In equal single combat had the conquest of them  
both;

Yet neither slew; but gave their lives in barter of his  
own:

Which Freckled Domnal afterwards sat on the Alban  
throne,

A famous sovereign: and his race in Yellow Eochaid's  
hall

Reigned after him; till Selvach, son of Fercar, named  
the Tall,



To proud Dunolly's new-built burg transferred the  
 royal chair.  
 ('Twas in his time Columba's Clerks, because they  
 would not bare  
 The head-top to the tonsuring shears of Ceolfrid,  
 neither count  
 Their Easters by the Roman moons, were sent beyond  
 the Mount  
 By Necton and his Fortren Picts ; when, in the Gael's  
 despite,  
 His Saxon builders, from the Tyne, brought North the  
 general rite.)  
 And after Selvach, once again to shift the wandering  
 throne,  
 Came conquering Kenneth Alpinson, the first who sat  
 at Scone,  
 Full King of Scotland, Gael and Pict ; whose seat  
 to-day we see  
 A third time moved, there permanent and glorious to  
 be,  
 Where, in Westminster's sacred aisles, the Three-  
 Joined-Realm awards  
 Its meed of solemn sepulture to Captains and to  
 Bards ;  
 And to the hands pre-designate of awful right,  
 confides  
 The Sceptre that confers the sway o'er half of ocean's  
 sides.  
 But Domnal's brothers in one grave on Irish Moyra  
 lie ;  
 And to this day the place from them is called Cairn-  
 Albany.  
 The hardy Saxon little recks what bones beneath  
 decay,  
 But sees the cross-signed pillar stone, and turns his  
 plough away.

So on the battle's western verge the doubtful strife  
 was waged :  
 Meantime, upon King Congal's left, the Frankish host  
 engaged  
 Clan-Conail ; and Clan-Conail marched o'er prostrate  
 Franks, until  
 They pressed the battle to the plain beneath the very  
 hill  
 Where ranked the warrior-hosts of Mourne. Halt  
 Kellach in his chair  
 Placed on the summit of the slope, sat 'midst his  
 bravest there :  
 And, as a hunter, having his dogs leashed on a rising  
 ground,  
 A tall stag drinking in the vale, slips swift hound after  
 hound ;  
 Or as a man who practises against a mark, hurls  
 forth  
 Dart after dart ; or as a youth whose time is little  
 worth,  
 Goat-herd or poet idly bent, from some bald sea-cliff's  
 crown  
 Dislodges fragments of the rock, to send them rolling  
 down,  
 And claps his hands to see them leap, as, gathering  
 speed, they go  
 With high whirls smoking to the foot ; with such fierce  
 rapture so  
 Son after son the Halt one sent, and smoking charge  
 on charge.  
 Hurled down from Augnafoskar's brow against the  
 glittering marge  
 Of levelled spear and burnished targe that, 'mid the  
 throng below,  
 Marked where Clan-Conail's front advanced o'er  
 Frankland's overthrow.



But neither swift Cu-Carmoda, for all his greyhound  
 spring,  
 Nor headlong Anlach hurling down with force of  
 javelin-fling,  
 Nor Brasil bounding from his bank with crash of  
 whirling crag  
 Could bend the steadfast beam of fight stretch'd out  
 beneath thy flag,  
 Oh son of Baedan ; but, as dogs entangled 'mong the  
 brakes,  
 Or mark-short darts that by the butts uplift their  
 quivering stakes,  
 Or rolling rocks that at the foot break into pieces  
 small,  
 So clung, transfixed ; so, sounding, broke against that  
 brazen wall  
 Charge after charge. But as a pack of curled waves  
 clamouring on  
 Divide 'and ride' to either side, / resurging, round a  
 stone  
 That makes the tide-mark ; or as storms, rebounding  
 from the breast  
 Of some impassive mountain huge, go raving forth in  
 quest  
 Of things prehensible, broad oaks, or wide-eaved  
 homes of men,  
 To wreak their wrath on ; bellowing forth from every  
 hollow glen  
 That girds the mighty mountain foot, they on the open  
 vale  
 Issue tremendous : groan the woods : the trembling  
 mothers pale  
 Beneath their straining rafters crouch, or, driven from  
 hut and hall,  
 Hie to the covert of some rock or rock-built castle  
 wall :

So Brasil's battle, burst in twain against the steadfast  
 face  
 Of Kinel-Conail, still pursued, oblique, its headlong race  
 Past the impenetrable ranks ; and, swift as winter  
 wind,  
 Fell thundering down the lanes of death, on Orgiall's  
 host behind.  
 Clan-Colla split before the shock : Clan-Brassilagh  
 poured in ;  
 And dire confusion filled the plain, and dreadful grew  
 the din.  
 Grief and great heat of anger filled the breast of  
 Congal Claen  
 When tidings reached him that the sons of Eochaid  
 Buie were slain.  
 Till now, with Conan by his side, the King had, from  
 his car,  
 Ordained the onsets of the hosts, and overseen the  
 war.  
 Now, "Conan, noble friend," he said, "whate'er at  
 either's hand  
 "The duty of a field-arraying sovereign can demand  
 "We see accomplished ; and the time is come when  
 thou and I  
 "Are free to feed our proper souls with war's satiety ;  
 "Thou to achieve increase of fame amid the warlike  
 throng,  
 "And I to sate enormous hate bred by a life of wrong.  
 "Lo, where the generous Alban chiefs, who, for the  
 love they bore  
 "Me, hapless wretch, left all they loved on lone Loch  
 Etive's shore,  
 "Lie wrapped in death or deadlier bonds. There lies  
 the path for thee  
 "To reinstate our battle's right ; and fame and  
 fortune be



"Attendant with thee. Leave to me this Northern  
 robber horde  
 "Whose march insulting on our left needs some  
 robust sword  
 "Than aged Kellach's: he, I judge, will not long sit  
 at ease,  
 "Unless with some impediment of weightier mould  
 than these  
 "I bar the access to his chair. Farewell a while; and  
 now  
 "For vengeance I and destiny; for fame and friend-  
 ship thou."  
 As lightning that divides a bolt forkwise in upper  
 air,  
 To left and right, from Congal's car, forth sprang the  
 glittering pair.  
 First on Connacia's shaken ranks impetuous Conan  
 flew.  
 Four chiefs in turn engaged him there. All these the  
 hero slew;  
 And the lopp'd head of each in turn took from the  
 collar'd neck;  
 Sweeny, to wit; Aed Alen, Aed Buie and Eccad  
 Brec;  
 In rough Tir-Eera Sweeny ruled, the son of Carrach  
 he;  
 Aed Alen in Moy-Fola; in Hy-Mainy, Aed the  
 Buie;  
 In castled Leyny, Eccad Brec. These Conan Rodd  
 subdued;  
 And Welshmen, with him, of the rest a mighty  
 multitude.  
 Meanwhile the main Britannie host 'neath Conan  
 Finn arrayed,  
 Who, midmost, fought the men of Meath, much  
 missed true Conan's aid.

He of the Gates of Heart of Oak had freely, as  
 became  
 One who in Congal's choice of Kings the second place  
 might claim,  
 Followed his glorious judge to war; and now with loyal  
 heart  
 Matched against Kellach Mor performed a valiant  
 warrior's part.  
 Son of Malcova, erewhile King, was Kellach:  
 nephew so  
 Of Domnal; and of all who came to Congal's over-  
 throw,  
 Conal Mac-Baedan sole except, in prowess and  
 renown  
 Foremost; and destined afterwards, himself, to wear  
 the crown.  
 With him contended Conan Finn: but Kellach lopped  
 his head,  
 And cast it to his shouting friends; then mingled rage  
 and dread  
 Fell on the thick-Welsh-speaking host; and forth in  
 reckless rage  
 Three cousins of the vanquished chief sprang, eager to  
 engage  
 The victor; Howel, Arthur, Rees; together forth they  
 sprung  
 And with three far-exulting leaps their spears together  
 flung;  
 And with three mutual-echoing shouts their blades  
 together drew:  
 But Kellach from the collared necks of these three sons  
 of Hû  
 Took their respective glittering spoils, and, holding up  
 the same,  
 Said, "Who will stake another cast upon the noble  
 game?"



There marched that day 'mong Congal's host a  
 valiant-hearted man,  
 But little-bodied, Fermorc Becc: he, standing in the  
 van,  
 Beheld his allies' fate, and heard the conqueror's  
 taunting call,  
 And said,

"Although thou be the Great, and though I  
 be the Small,  
 "Yet have I seen it so befall, oh Kellach, that, at play,  
 "The puniest piece upon the board has borne the  
 prize away:

"And for that glorious prize, thy head—and I shall lay  
 it low  
 "Right soon,—I play this cast, and stake my life upon  
 the throw."

He played his spear-cast manfully; no man of all  
 the host  
 Could but admire: but, gamesomely, the prize he played  
 for, lost.

Then many hearts beat thick, and tears from some  
 stern eyes there broke  
 At seeing dauntless Fermorc stand to bide the answer-  
 ing stroke.

But generous Kellach, with a smile, reversed his lifted  
 spear,  
 And 'mid the laughter of the hosts pushed Fermorc to  
 the rere.

The soul of Fermorc swelled with shame; and but that  
 eager bands  
 Of friends all round restrained him, he had on himself  
 laid hands.

Such feats of arms by Conan Rodd and Kellach Mor  
 were done  
 To right and centre of the field. Meantime the royal  
 son

Of Scallan Broad-Shield, on the left, in gloomy-  
 vengeful wrath,  
 At head of Ulster, toward the host of Conal held his  
 path.

As when a grampus makes among the ripple-raising  
 shoals  
 Of landward-coasting ocean-fry, the parted water  
 rolls

Before the plunging dolphin, so the hosts on either  
 side  
 Fell off from Congal as he came in swiftess and in  
 pride.

On each hand scattering death he went: with sword-  
 strokes some he smote  
 In handed fight: with javelin-casts he others slew  
 remote;

Till, 'twixt him and the steadfast front of Conal's host,  
 the plain  
 Lay unimpeded to his charge save by the fall'n and  
 slain.

Clan-Conail, now lock close your shields, make fast  
 your battle-front;  
 The might, the might of Ulster comes, and Congal  
 gives the brunt.

And proudly kept thy host their place, oh Conal, till  
 the stroke  
 Of Congal's own close-wielded mace a bloody passage  
 broke.

Then, though your battle-border long had baffled all  
 his best,  
 Shield-lock'd and shoulder-riveted, with many a valiant  
 breast

That burned with Northern valour as courageous as  
 his own,  
 Yet before the face of Congal ye were crushed and  
 overthrown,



Chaff-dispersed and ember-scattered ; till the strong  
 fraternal arm  
 Of Kindred-Owen reached between, and stayed your  
 further harm.  
 Ill brooked Sil-Setna's generous Chief, young Conal,  
 to behold  
 The noblest warriors of his race in confluent tumult  
 roll'd  
 Like sheep to shelter of the fold ; and, as fierce Congal  
 closed  
 His rallying ranks to charge anew the fresh foes  
 interposed,  
 Strode forth 'twixt gathering host and host, and said  
 "Behold, I claim  
 "Safety and single combat, King, and proffer thee the  
 same."  
 "Who art thou," Congal said, "who thus would  
 stay the swelling tide  
 "Of Ulster's might, to aggrandize a single warrior's  
 pride?"  
 "The Son of Baedan I," replied the Chief, "who  
 from thy race  
 "Wrested Moy Inneray ; and who used, once, make  
 my dwelling-place  
 "In broad-stoned Aileach ; but who now in Conang's  
 halls abide,  
 "Since Aileach's gate-posts have of late been stained by  
 parricide."  
 "No need for further woman's words," said Congal ;  
 and his cheek  
 Grew shameful red : "Accept the fate thy folly dares to  
 seek."  
 So closed their parley ; and the hosts kept each its  
 former place ;  
 While they, with deadly-lifted spears, moved through  
 the middle space.

High beat heroic Conal's heart. In every  
 exercise.  
 Of Erin's athletes hitherto his arm had borne the  
 prize.  
 Of all the fearless footsteps, formed 'twixt cliff and  
 climbing sea,  
 From dizzy League to Torrey's straits, the fearlesst  
 had he :  
 And oft, when, on the heaving skiff, mid baffled waves  
 he hung,  
 Ere up grey Maulin's eyried lofts or Balor's Stairs he  
 sprung ;  
 Oft, when, a-fowling, poised, he swung between the  
 slippery brow  
 And thundering deep, his soul had longed for danger  
 such as now,  
 Guerdoned with glory, called him forth, before a  
 nation's eyes,  
 To strive, in Country's righteous cause, for Fame's  
 eternal prize.  
 They cast their spears together. Each resounding  
 weapon stood  
 To socket in the opposing shield ; and Congal's point  
 drew blood.  
 Then forth, to snatch his weapon back, the King of  
 Ulster sprung ;  
 But Conal, with a wrestler's leap, his arms around him  
 flung ;  
 By flank and shoulder taking hold : nor was King  
 Congal slow  
 With ready-darted hands expert to grapple with his  
 foe,  
 Shoulder and flank : a moment thus stood either  
 mighty man ;  
 Then, in a gathering heave, their game the athlete pair  
 began,



With lifts and thrusts impetuous ; with swift-reversing  
 pulls,  
 And solid stands immovable, as young encountering  
 bulls ;  
 And counter-prancing dizzy whirls ; till, in the rapid  
 round,  
 The feet of either hero seemed to leave the circling  
 ground,  
 Though firm as palace-pillars stood their feet beneath  
 them still ;  
 For neither yet felt any lack of athlete force or skill ;  
 But each deemed victory his own : for Congal, where  
 he stood,  
 Saw the fast-falling drops that soon would sink the  
 swelling flood  
 Of Conal's strength ; and Conal, still unconscious of  
 the waste,  
 Invoked his glorious sires, and all his loins with rigour  
 braced ;  
 Son of the son of Nindid, son of Fergus, as he was,  
 Son of great Conal Gulban ;—and he pushed him  
 without pause ;—  
 Son of renowned Nine-Hostager ;—and one great  
 heave he gave  
 Of his whole heroic body, as the sea upheaves a wave,  
 A long strong-rising wave of nine, that from the  
 wallowing floor  
 Of ocean, /when a storm has ceased, nigh to some  
 beachy shore,  
 Shows with a sudden black-piled bulk, and swallowing  
 in its sweep  
 Accumulated water-heaps from all the hollowed deep,  
 Soars, foams, o'erhangs its glassy gulfs ; then, stooping  
 with a roar  
 Immeasurable of sea-cascades, stuns all the sounding  
 shore :

With such a heave great Conal rose, rushed onward,  
 overhung  
 His down-bent foe, and to the earth the King of  
 Ulster flung,  
 As seaweed from the sunken rock the wave's return  
 leaves bare,  
 From Congal's head unhelmeted forth flew the  
 spreading hair,  
 Soiled in the dust. Exulting shouts, and shouts of  
 rage and grief  
 Rose from the breathless hosts around, as Conal,  
 conquering Chief,  
 Stood ;—so some arch-built buttress stands in bending  
 strength inclined ;—  
 Preparing with his belt of war the captive King to  
 bind.  
 But Conan Rodd, whom conquering rage had sped  
 from wing to wing,  
 Drawn by the clamour, from afar beheld the prostrate  
 King.  
 Unconscious of the truce, that yet had not had lawful  
 end,  
 He ran, he leaped, as shaft from string, he flew, to  
 save his friend ;  
 And valiant Conal scarce beheld, scarce felt the fatal  
 thrust,  
 Till his great heart was split in twain, and he too in  
 the dust.  
 Up started Congal ; Conan's arms the reeling  
 warrior raised ;  
 And Conan's shoulder stayed his steps, as, panting  
 and amazed,  
 He gained his chariot-seat ; but while with inspirations  
 deep  
 He breathed his breast, from 'midst of Meath forth  
 sprung with clanging leap



Great Kellach, King Malcova's son : with rage and noble scorn

Dilating, in the midst he stood, and cried—

“Base Briton, turn.

“From me receive the meed of death that warrior-law decrees

“The impious wretch who violates his combat-guarantees.”

Said Conan, “Though my love could dare the breach of sterner laws

“At friendship's call ; this judgment thou dost give without a cause.

“For nought, in truth, of any pause or parleying truce I knew

“When, newly on the field arrived, to aid my King I flew.

“If for his life a life be due, take thou a warrior's word,

“No freer soul e'er paid a debt more loyally incurred.”

He wrung the hand that Congal reached ; their hearts within them burned

With tenderness they might not speak ; and to the combat turned.

Conan his cast delivered first. The spear, from Kellach's shield

Glancing oblique, struck socket-deep, innocuous, in the field.

Then Kellach, with a dreadful smile, in towering strides drew near ;

And, with the might of both his hands upheaving high his spear,

Smote Conan's buckler in the midst : the brazen bosses flew

Disrupted : but, with sudden sleight, the agile warrior threw

Shield and shield-cumbered spear aside ; and Kellach, overborne

By his own force, as sinks an elm from yielding roots uptorn,

Went prone amid the brazen wreck. Three paces back withdrew

Conan, and bared his blade, and said,

“Rise, Kellach, and renew

“An equal combat, if thou wilt. I shall not fear in thee

“Defect of generous soul, or breach of warrior-warranty.”

“Conan, my life is in thy hands,” said Kellach.

“Take or give.”

“Thou hast in me a foe to death, whilst thou and I shall live.”

Then, spear and buckler laid aside, his sword he slowly bared ;

Cast on dead Conal's form, a glance ; and stood for fight prepared.

As when two mastiffs chance to meet upon a public way,

And break their leashes, and engage ; their keepers in dismay

Back from the fang-commingling fray on either hand recoil ;

So stood the hosts at gaze, while they resumed their deadly toil.

And well might wearied combatant his own dread work forbear

To view the warlike practice of the sword-accomplished pair ;

So, timing, with instinctive sway, consenting eye and hand,

They wove the dazzling woof of death 'twixt gleaming brand and brand ;



So, mingling their majestic steps in combat's rapid  
round,  
They trod the stately brawls of Mars across the listed  
ground.

At every strong-delivered stroke Red Conan dealt his  
foe,

The Welshmen clapped applauding hands; at every  
answering blow

Heard with the crush of hauberk burst, or shivering  
helm, the voice

Of Erin, Ulster's host except, went up with cheerful  
noise.

But, valiant swordsman though he be, the bravest,  
soon or late,

Must, in his proper time, expect the even stroke of  
fate:

And slower motions, and a mist of darkness round his  
brow,

Warned Conan that his stately head to fate should  
also bow.

When Kellach felt his force abate, and saw his  
sight was gone,

He yielded back; but darkly still blind Conan  
battled on,

Till, not, indeed, like lofty elm in leafy time of  
year,

But like a storm-dismantled mast, that, with its  
tattered gear,

(The long-tormented keel, at last, heaved by a  
landward swell

Against the rock,) goes overboard, at Kellach's feet he  
fell.

But Kellach took no trophy; for, with dark brows  
newly helmed,

Congal approached and said,  
"Although that hand hath overwhelmed

"My soul with woe; and righteous rage would justify  
my spear

"In piercing, shieldless, as thou art, and combat-  
wearied here,

"The author of so huge a grief; yet for the sake of him  
"Whose clear renown no breath of thine shall e'er

have power to dim,  
"Go, arm thee, and have needful rest: anon, when

apt to mate  
"With one fresh-breathed and armed as I, return and

have thy fate."  
"Congal, I swear I go not hence without my meed

of fame,"  
Cried Kellach, and seized Conan's crest, to drag him.

As the flame  
Bursts, at the breath of outer air, through fire-conceal-  
ing smoke,

So, forth in fiercer blaze anew the wrath of Congal broke;  
And at the chief he aimed a stroke had stretched upon

the field  
War's noblest victim offered yet; but swift, with

guardian shield,  
Huge Ultan Long-Hand thrust between; and others

not a few  
From Conal's and Clan-Colla's ranks to aid their

champion flew.  
The Ultonian warriors, hitherto regardant, as behoved

Just combatants, and clans of Hû that yet no step  
had moved,

Though seeing him they chiefly loved before their  
faces slain,

And all the remnant of the Franks at once burst in  
amain:

Amid the concourse, Congal Claen rushed to a deadly  
close

With Ultan, and o'er all the plain enormous tumult rose.



# CONGAL.

## BOOK V.

### THE ARGUMENT.

*The Shrew; the Fool; the final overthrow.  
What else remains, the verse, itself, will show.*

[Cuanna, the idiot son of Ultan-Long-Hand, armed with a bill-hook, follows in the track of the armies to Moyra. He learns that his father has fallen by the javelin of Congal, and vows revenge. He meets Congal returning from a combat with Caenfalla, and challenges him, but the hero declines the unequal conflict. Cuanna from behind gives him a mortal wound with the bill-hook, which Congal will not revenge. The idiot youth makes his way to King Domnal, and recounts his story. Congal straps his belt over the wound, and though conscious that he is dying, prepares to resist Maldun, who attacks him, strikes off his right hand, yet flees before him. Kellach, son of Malcova, comes forth refreshed to attack Congal, but seeing his disabled condition will not fight; he calls on the hero to yield. Congal swoons from loss of blood. A terrible storm of wind and hail blinds the hosts, who seem to hear in the thunder the flapping cloak of Manannan Mac Lir, and the whistle of the giant Herdsman. When the storm sweeps past Congal has disappeared. His army fly the field and are hotly pursued by the forces of King Domnal. Kellach the Halt alone remains on his seat, and seeks—in vain—to arrest the flight of the fugitives. He hears that his seven sons are slain; the youngest, however, has survived and seeks his father. Bras'l comes to carry his parent from the field, but in the act of raising Kellach on his shoulders, is slain by an arrow. Kellach is carried on his chair into the presence of King Domnal and his Bishops. They exhort him to repentance and accuse him of being the author of the war. He dies a pagan; and, like King Laery—buried erect, weapons in hand, in the outer rampart on Tara—is interred, sitting upright on his brazen chair. Congal, withdrawn, he knows not how, from the battle-field at Moyra, revives from his swoon, and finds himself in his native vale in

Antrim, with Ardan by his side. The thought of the ruin he has brought on the friends who fought for him agonizes his heart, and he weeps bitter tears. A veiled nun, in whom he recognises his Lafinda, approaches from a neighbouring convent and kneels to aid him. Her unhappy brother Sweeny, doomed to perpetual wanderings, appears in the distance; Lafinda grows red with shame, but is assured by Ardan that he is a victim—demon driven—not a coward. As Sweeny addresses his sister, a splendid vision of Manannan Mac Lir passes before their eyes, disappears, and Sweeny also vanishes. Lafinda addresses herself to Congal: while they converse he dies. She performs for him the last offices of the dead, and re-enters the convent of St. Brigid. Ardan, left alone, prays for one ray of Heavenly light, such as had been vouchsafed to Congal. Four Seniors of the fraternity come from the convent, and raising the dead hero on a bier, bear him in. They invite the Bard to enter, and promise him safety from the vengeance of the approaching hosts. He thanks them, but elects to remain outside. They re-enter; close the gate, while up the hill the hosts of Domnal came.]



IN Ultan Long-Hand's house, that day, at pleasant Dunamain, It chanced, his Queen, Finguala, and the women of her train Were busied heating water for the bath; and with them there Went, moping idly, Cuanna, long-handed Ultan's heir; An orphan and an idiot. While as yet a little page He had been sent to Tara, to the King, in fosterage; But, ere the second week was passed within the royal school, King Domnal's tutors finding him, or deeming him, a fool, Had sent him to Hy-Brazil back: where Cuanna whiled away His hours amongst the women. Now his stepmother, that day,



Had bade him fetch fresh firewood for the heating of  
the bath ;  
And Cuanna, like an idiot, had raked up from pool  
and path  
Green birchen twigs, and oziers dank, and brambles  
clogged with mire,  
And with the smoky fuel green had well nigh quenched  
the fire.

"Done like thee," cried the stepmother, with angry  
bitter taunt ;

"Done like an idiot, as thou art ! Aye, wo is me ;  
we want

"Another sort of son this day, than such an one as  
thou,

"Thou good-for-nothing imbecile ! Know'st thou not  
that even now

"Thy sire and royal foster-sire on Moyra's bloody  
plain

"Are fighting for their lives, like men, 'gainst cruel  
Congal Claen ;

"Are fighting for their lives and crowns, their wives  
and children dear,

"Like valiant men, at Moyra, and thou stand'st idling  
here ?"

"Show me the way to Moyra," Cuanna answered, all  
a-flame.

"Small skill there needs to find it," replied the  
bitter dame :

"Get thee down to Neur-Kin-Troya, where the hosts  
have left their track

"Plain enough for even an idiot to follow there and  
back."

"Bestow me arms and armour," cried Cuanna.

"Spear or shield  
"There is not left within the house since Ultan took  
the field,"

Replied the Queen : but this was false : for much she  
stood in dread

Lest Cuanna's scattered sparks of sense should gather  
to a head,

And all her hopes to see her own first-born assume  
the sway

Be, in the elder son's return to reason, swept  
away.

Wherefore she sought to urge him forth with words of  
taunt and scorn,

Naked, to war, that so perchance the youth might not  
return.

"Arms yet enough are left behind," said Cuanna ;  
and he strode

To where the bill-hook lay wherewith, that morning, he  
had mowed

The dank soft twigs as with a scythe ; and scythe-sharp  
was the blade,

And spear-keen was the iron spike the skilful smith  
had made

Projecting from the burnished hook ; and javelin-long  
the shaft

Of tough ash twixt its brazen straps.

"Spear here," he cried, and laughed :

And, to the bath-house turning next, with ready art  
undid

The bolts that to the cauldron-head secured the brazen  
lid.

"Shield here," he cried, and laughed again ; and with  
a leathern thong

Passed through the handle's inner eyes, in cross-lapped  
bandage strong

He braced the great disk to his arm. But when the  
Queen beheld

Young Cuanna's practice, fear and rage her jealous  
bosom swelled ;



And, "Fool," she cried, "thou wouldst destroy the  
cauldron that thy Sire  
"Bought with three hundred kine : restore the cover,  
I desire,  
"Instantly to its former place."

But Cuanna laughed in scorn;  
And when the Queen laid hands on him, and would,  
herself, have torn  
The boss'd brass from his arm, with force so sudden  
Cuanna shook  
Her weak grasp off, and gave withal so terrible a look  
Of bloody meaning, that the Queen and all the maids  
and wives

About her fled a spear-cast off in terror of their lives,  
Clapping their hands and raising loud their helpless  
*ulaloos,*

While Cuanna took his downward route straight for  
the Strand-End-Yews.

Arrived at Neur-Kin-Troya, all the Strand-End  
brown and vast  
Was scored with tracks where chariot-wheels and  
weighted steeds had passed,  
The hoof-prints pointing to the North ; and northward,  
on the trail  
Of horse and chariot, all alone, went Cuanna up the  
vale.

On came the royal idiot on the strong track of the war,  
Till past the fords of Ornav he descried the fight afar:  
And the first man he encountered on the borders of  
the strife

Was Fercar Finn, his father's steward : he had escaped  
with life,

But deeply wounded ; and he cried, his labouring  
gasps between,

"Good, my dear Cuanna, wherefore thou in such  
a bloody scene?"

"I come to slay false Congal," the generous fool  
replied ;

"And learn to be a warrior by my royal father's  
side."

"Alas, dear child, since long ere noon thy royal  
Sire lies slain,

"Pierced by a javelin, through the heart, by cruel  
Congal Claen."

"Right soon will I revenge his death," cried Cuanna.

"Tell me where  
"The traitor fights."

"Where thickest ranks thou seest recoiling, there  
"Be sure, is Congal. But beware : thou canst not  
bear the shock

"Of battle with thy youthful frame : besides, they all  
would mock

"Thine arms fantastic : for who yet ere sought a  
battle-field

"With bill-hook for a spear, and lid of cauldron for a  
shield?"

"Let mock who will," the youth replied ; "for see ;  
the tide of war

"Seeths like the rising seas I've seen on Cuan Car-  
linne's bar !

"And all the hosts are this way driven. Now for the  
first essay

"In arms of Cuanna, called the Fool no longer from  
to-day."

And heading onward through the press, within a little  
space,

He found himself with Congal Claen confronted, face  
to face.

Triumphant Congal just ere then had, with his  
sword, achieved

A feat of more than swordsman-skill, yet fit to be  
believed,



Upon Caenfalla Olliolson, a doctor even then  
 Accounted wiser than the most of Erin's learned men.  
 He, when he saw the King that way direct his slaugh-  
 tering path,  
 Had in his heart conceived the hope, himself, to quell  
 his wrath;  
 And for a little while withstood his onset: but his  
 heart  
 At the third sword-stroke failed him quite; and all his  
 warrior-art  
 He clean forgot; and public shame embracing, turned  
 and fled;  
 While Congal with a following stroke cut through his  
 hinder head,  
 Letting the lower brain exude. Caenfalla there had  
 died  
 Upon the field; but Erc and Flan, old pupils, drew  
 aside  
 The fainting master, and on poles conveyed him to  
 the rere  
 To Bishop Senach, where he breathed through that  
 good leech's care;  
 And Senach next committed him to the physician-  
 seer,  
 Mild Brecan, in whose hospital he lay, at cure, a year;  
 And at the twelvemonths' end was found, such virtue  
 is in store  
 In purging of the hinder brain, twice wiser than before.  
 And now for all Caenfalla's books of wit and hopeful  
 aid  
 To learning, Ir's and Ever's sons give thanks to  
 Congal's blade.  
 When, therefore, Congal saw the fool stand where  
 the sage had stood,  
 He stood himself, and loudly laughed; and cried in  
 scornful mood,

"A mighty hosting, by my head; a terrible  
 array  
 "This potent King of Erin makes against me here  
 to-day,  
 "Who brings his valiant sages and grammarians from  
 their schools,  
 "And also, in amazing arms, his lunatics and  
 fools."  
 "Mock no man's son," said Cuanna, "who comes  
 to do his best,  
 "And give his day of battle for his country with the  
 rest."  
 "Take not my words in anger, I beseech thee,  
 brother mine,"  
 Said Congal; "well I know that strife is no concern  
 of thine."  
 And would have passed him by in scorn: but Cuanna,  
 as he pass'd,  
 Pressed hard his foot against the ground, and made a  
 mighty cast  
 Of the great bill-hook from behind: just where the  
 rings were laced  
 Whereby the brass-seamed coat of mail round Congal's  
 side was braced  
 The weapon entered: through the rings of brittle brass,  
 and through  
 The deer-skin war-shirt underneath the rugged weapon  
 flew,  
 And deep within his flank hung fixed: but, deep as  
 was the wound,  
 It did not yet suffice to bring strong Congal to the  
 ground.  
 He turned, and might have slain the fool; but  
 Congal's heart disdained  
 That weapons of a warrior should with idiot blood be  
 stained.



He laid his glittering weapons on the green grass at his feet,  
 And with both hands essayed to drag the weapon from its seat,  
 But failed : a second time he tugg'd with painful sick essay,  
 And failed : but at the third attempt the javelin came away.  
 Then round his lacerated side he drew his glittering belt,  
 Resumed his arms, and stood erect, as though he scarce had felt  
 The wound that through his vitals was diffusing death the while ;  
 And said,

"It grieves me, Cuanna, that the weak hands imbecile  
 "Of one devoid of reason, should have dealt the fatal blow ;  
 "For, that it is a mortal hurt thou'st given me, well I know :  
 "And well I knew my death to-day at Moyra stood decreed :  
 "But thought to find my destiny at other hands indeed.  
 "Had many-battled Kellach dealt the final blow of fate,  
 "I by a King, and like a King, had died with mind elate.  
 "Or Crunvall, to whose royal Sire the stroke of fate I gave,  
 "To die by him had been to feed the vengeance of the brave :  
 "But thus at last to perish by thy weak, inglorious spear,  
 "Forgive me, foolish Cuanna ; this is hard indeed to bear."

Nought answered Cuanna ; but caught up his weapon where it lay,  
 And towards the royal standard straight proceeded through the fray,  
 Where Domnal stood among his Chiefs and Bishops : hard bested  
 He was to pass the thronging groups, 'mongst whom already spread  
 The rumour that a stranger youth had slain the dreaded King :  
 But, ever pressing on, at length he stood within the ring  
 Before the Monarch ; and exclaimed, in eager accents clear,  
 Laying his bill at Domnal's feet, "The blood of Congal here."  
 Then, some who saw the feat achieved, avouching it for truth,  
 The King exclaimed, "Oh glorious deed ; and thou, oh happy youth,  
 "Say who thou art, and ask such boon as Domnal can bestow,  
 "For this, thy realm-enfranchising and mischief-ending blow."  
 Then Cuanna from his brow and face put back the matted hair,  
 And drew his body to its height, and with a graceful air,  
 For tall and comely was the youth, and of a manly mould,  
 His simple story to the King with modest freedom told.  
 "My name is Cuanna, eldest son of Ultan, who, sometime,  
 "Was King in Orior. When a child, my wicked Nurse, whose crime



"Goes still unpunished, with a doll, dressed as a  
 goblin, so  
 "Scared me, that ever since I've lost my reason; but  
 I know  
 "Enough to know that cunning wretch, ere yet my  
 mother died,  
 "Inveigled Ultan to her bed; and now, where once  
 she plied  
 "Her menial office, sits his Queen. Now, when I  
 grew of age  
 "For nurture, I to thee, oh King, was sent in  
 pupilage:  
 "But, ere I spent the second week within your  
 Highness' school,  
 "Thy tutors, finding, or, at least, supposing, me a  
 fool,  
 "Returned me home; and as a fool and idiot ever  
 since  
 "I've had their usage—used, indeed, not as an idiot  
 prince,  
 "But as a menial slave, by her who longs to see me  
 dead,  
 "That her own son, without dispute, might reign in  
 Ultan's stead.  
 "Wherefore, to-day, she would have urged me forth  
 to battle here,  
 "Naked, pretending that the house held neither shield  
 nor spear,  
 "Although in Ultan's inner hall a hundred men might  
 find  
 "Weapons and tackle competent, and still leave store  
 behind  
 "And so, with such rude substitutes as these which  
 here ye see  
 "Perforce I came: and God to these has given the  
 victory.

"And now, oh King, the boon I crave is, to be set at  
 large  
 "Forthwith from Queen Finguala's thrall; and from  
 the shameful charge  
 "Of women tutors; and to wear a good sword by my  
 side,  
 "And have my hound to chase the deer, and have my  
 horse to ride,  
 "As other princely youths are wont: and, when I'm  
 older grown,  
 "To have a fair and pleasant wife and household of  
 my own;  
 "But first of all the boons I crave is this, that, back  
 again,  
 "While she sits there, I be not sent to live at  
 Dunamain.  
 "For, rather would I be the dog that stands upon the  
 watch  
 "Beside the board of some poor man, to see what it  
 may snatch,  
 "At peril of the housewife's staff, with rib and back-  
 bone clung,  
 "Than live, a King, within the reach of that fell  
 vixen's tongue."  
 "All that thou wouldst," replied the King, "dear  
 Cuanna, shall be done.  
 "And furthermore, I make a vow, thy wicked  
 stepdame's son  
 "Shall never sit in Ultan's place: and if in  
 Dunamain  
 "Arms but for one be found, she wears, for life, the  
 captive's chain."  
 "'Tis good," said Cuanna; and sat down; and  
 from the gravelly soil  
 Picking the pebbles smooth, began to toss, with  
 patient toil,



The little stones from hand to hand, alternate back  
and palm,  
Regardless of the presence round, and lapsed in  
childish calm.

But Congal, conscious that his strength by slow  
degrees decayed,  
Resolved, while yet his arm had nerve to lift the  
wearying blade,  
To spend his still-remaining power in one supreme  
attack,  
That Ulster so with victory, though Kingless, might  
go back.

Then once again the lines of fight were stretched  
from wing to wing  
Of Congal's battle; and the hosts led by the vigorous  
King,

For so to all their eyes he seemed, once more in dense  
array  
Across the corpse-encumbered mead moved to renew  
the fray.

An onset terrible it was: in all the fight till then  
Fell not so many of the flower of Erin's youths and men.  
Full on Momonia fell the brunt; the burst Momonian  
host

An arrow-flight on either hand recoiled; and well nigh lost  
For Domnal seemed the day; when lo, forth came  
Aed Bennan's son,

His bedfellow and fosterer in former days, Maldun,  
And challenged Congal to the strife: thrice had he  
thought before

To raise his courage to the feat; and thrice his feet  
forbore

To bear him past the sheltering ranks: but now, that  
Cuanna's blow,  
Through Congal's ghastly cheek, proclaimed that life  
was ebbing low,

He deemed the hour at length arrived when he might  
safely dare

The King's encounter: and he cried, "Turn, Congal,  
and prepare

"To meet a traitor's recompense. No second rumour  
vain

"Shall now delude us, heralding the King of Ulster  
slain."

The force of scorn, a moment's space, recalled the  
rallying blood

To Congal's cheek. Between the hosts with form  
erect he stood,

And cried, "Oh, hardy enterprise! Oh, rare  
adventurous wight!

"And hast thou strung thy soul at length to venture  
forth to fight?

"I know thee well, thou coward! Never yet, from  
childhood's hour,

"Hadst thou for any manly deed the purpose or the  
power.

"But ever since thy childhood, 'twas thy chiefest pride  
and praise

"To imitate the dark, insidious, battle-shunning  
ways

"Of thy politic preceptor; and a right Domnalian  
feat

"It were, mine idiot slayer of his just reward to  
cheat."

Replied Maldun, "Thy railing words, injurious  
King, I hold

"But as the womanish recourse of tongue-puissant  
scold;

"And, for thy guilty insults to thy sovereign and thy  
sire,

"Small the amount of warrior-art or valour 'twill  
require



'To quell a wretch devoted by his crimes to every  
 harm  
 "That heaven decrees the impious man ; upon whose  
 palsied arm  
 "Hangs parricide's foul fetter ; and whose halting  
 foot is bound  
 "By the iron spencil of the Church's curses to the  
 ground."

And therewithal he cast his spear. But Congal's  
 rallying look,  
 For all the boldness of his speech, his heart within  
 him shook ;  
 And feebly, with a wavering flight, the aimless javelin  
 strayed

Past Congal's shoulder. Then the King swung high  
 his glittering blade,  
 And gathering all the force that still lodged in his  
 mighty frame,

Struck on the helmet of Maldun ; but struck with luck-  
 less aim,  
 For, even as crest and crashing helm half yielded to  
 the stroke,

Short from its rivets, at the hilt, the faithless weapon  
 broke ;  
 And, high as from a tree-top, in the pairing time of  
 spring,

A warbling bird springs up to heaven, its lay of love to  
 sing,  
 So high above the warriors' heads leaped Congal's  
 flickering blade :

But the blind counter-stroke Maldun, with aimless  
 instinct, made,  
 As Congal from his crest drew back the remnant of the  
 brand,

Sheer from the King's extended wrist smote off the  
 good right hand.

The empty far-projected hand whirled, grasping o'er  
 and o'er ;  
 And sank, to deal heroic blows and generous gifts no  
 more.

Then maddened Congal would have closed ; but, at  
 his aspect dread,  
 Maldun, unconscious of his own achievement, turned  
 and fled.

"Aye, go thy ways," exclaimed the King, in bitter  
 scornful ire ;

"Thou now art treading worthily the footsteps of thy  
 sire.

"I little thought, though well prepared to meet a  
 warrior's doom,

"That 'twas from hands like *his* and thine the stroke  
 of fate should come."

With this, the Meathmen's parting ranks to Congal's  
 gaze revealed

Kellach, new-armed, and fresh from rest, advancing  
 on the field.

So from his cloud the eagle comes ; so from the leafy  
 walks

Of brown Gaetolian thicket-sides the lordly lion  
 stalks.

Darkness came with him : all the heavens with sudden  
 gloom were spread,

And gathering mists of faintness closed round Congal's  
 drooping head ;

But still he kept his wavering feet, still waved his  
 flickering shield,

And said,  
 "Oh Kellach, thou art late. My conquest  
 now can yield

"Small fame ; but if Malcova's son desire, in future lays,  
 "With idiot Cuanna and with *him* to share inglorious  
 praise,



"Approach and slaughter Congal Claen, where maimed  
and bare he stands,  
"An easy prey to butcher-swords, left by ignoble  
hands."

"No, Congal," generous Kellach said: "no blood  
of thine shall dim

"The weapons of Malcova's son, while armed and  
whole of limb

"He; mutilated, swordless thou; nor shall this spear  
deprive

"Young Cuanna of his just renown: but yield thyself  
alive."

He sank his spear half-raised to cast, and sprang to  
seize the King;

But, ere he reached him, Congal dropped; and with  
a swooping wing,

Sudden and black, the storm came down: with  
scourge of hissing hail

It lashed the blinded, stumbling hosts: a shrill loud-  
whistling wail

And thunderous clamors filled the sky, it seemed,  
with such a sound

As though to giant herdsman's call there barked a  
giant hound

Within the cloud above their heads; and loud re-  
bounding strokes

They also heard, or seemed to hear, and claps of  
flapping cloaks

Within the bosom of the cloud: so deemed they; but  
anon

The storm rolled northward; and the hosts perceived  
the King was gone.

Light from the sun, and panic-dread diffusive as the  
light,

From heaven at once together fell on Congal's line of  
fight;

And though they held no counsel, nor did man confer  
with man,

Yet through the whole invading host, from wing to  
centre, ran

The desperate simultaneous wish to turn from Domnal's  
face

Their firm opposing bucklers, and expose him, in their  
place,

Their shoulders and their hollow spines, exchanging  
strength and fame,

Safety and pride, for helpless flight, destruction, death  
and shame.

Then dire was their disorder, as the wavering line at  
first

Swayed to and fro irresolute; then, all disrupted,  
burst

Like waters from a broken dam effused upon the  
plain,

The shelter of Killultagh's woods and winding glens to  
gain.

To expedite their running, in their shameful-viceing  
race,

Helmet and shield they cast away, long lance and iron  
mace.

Gold-sparkling swords and shirts of mail in glittering  
heaps were spread,

Resplendent, gleaming 'mongst the heaps of wounded  
and of dead.

But, though prodigious plunder so encumbered all their  
track,

For beaten gold nor cloth of gold would Domnal's  
Chiefs hold back

Their eager hands from vengeance, or their feet from  
warrior-toil;

But, leaving slave and horse-boy to collect the glitter-  
ing spoil,



Themselves, with leaps and spurnings amid the entangling throes  
 Of writhing, prostrate enemies, with close, limb-severing blows,  
 Urged on the pitiless pursuit; the helpless flying crowd  
 Consumed beneath the wasting sword as melts the morning cloud.

Death levels all: and where they ran, hard by the brink of death,  
 Speed was the last distinction left; and he whose store of breath  
 Sufficed to bear him farthest forth, was deemed of all the rest,

Richest: nor ran there there a man who, if he had possessed  
 The world and all its cattle, would have grudged to give the whole

For one hour's fleetness of a deer to gain the sheltering goal,  
 Leaving friend and foe behind him. Many a son was there, in sooth,

Outrunning his own father; many a fleet, deep-chested youth,  
 Spent and breathless overtaken; many an elsewhere valiant man,

As, among the hindmost flyers, in the crowded rere he ran,  
 Crying, "Halt, and make a stand, my friends," to those who fled in front;

But with no intent, himself, to halt; but only that the brunt  
 Might fall on any other, friend or brother, whom-soe'er

His wile could cast behind him in the deadly-crowded rere.

There many a haughty noble ran, of stripe and badge bereft;

Ran many a lithe-ham'd vaulter, without leap or breathing left;

And men who, in the morning, would have rather died than fled,

Now, even as wide-winged running birds, with labouring arms outspread

And shoulders raised alternate, bounded forward like the wind,

Eager only in their horror to leave friend and foe behind.  
 Of all the field Halt Kellach on his chair alone sat still,

Where placed to view the battle on the airy, green-sloped hill:

And, like a sea-rock that alone of all around stands fast,  
 Mid scudding clouds, and hurrying waves, and hoarse tides racing past,

So sat he rooted mid the rout; so, past his brazen chair  
 Was poured the heavy-rolling tide of ruin and despair:

And oft he cried to those who fled, with shrill, disdainful call,

"Stand fast: fear nothing: turn like men!" but none gave heed at all;

Till, Druid Drostan hurrying by, like maniac horror-driven,

He hailed him mid the long-hair'd rout, "Bald-head, how fare my Seven?"

"Slain all," was all the sage replied, as labouring on he went:

Then Kellach leaned upon his couch, and said, "I am content."

Nor spoke he more till Elar Derg cried, "Old man of the chair,

"Courage: young Brasil still survives, and seeks thee everywhere."



And Brasil's self, emerging from the flying throng, appeared,  
 Bloody and faint, but calling out incessant as he neared,  
 "Ho, father, I am with thee. Courage, father; I am here:  
 "Up; mount upon my shoulders: I have strength to bear thee clear."  
 And ran and knelt beside the chair, to heave him on his back;  
 But as he stopped, even through the curls that clustered on his neck,  
 An arrow smote him. Kellach said, "Best so. I thank thee, God,  
 "That by no son of mine the path of shame will now be trod."  
 And leaned again upon his couch; and set his hoary head,  
 Awaiting death, with face as fixed as if already dead.  
 But keen-eyed Domnal, where he stood to view the rout, ere long  
 Spying that white unmoving head amid the scattering throng,  
 Exclaimed, "Of all their broken host one only man I see  
 "Not flying; and I therefore judge him impotent to be  
 "Of use of limb. Go: take alive," he cried, "and hither fetch  
 "The hoary-haired unmoving man: 'tis Kellach, hapless wretch,  
 "The very author of the war. There lives not on the face  
 "Of earth a man stands so in need of God's forgiving grace:  
 "And,—for he was my father's friend, and that white helpless head  
 "Stirs my compassion,—though my foe, I would not see him sped

"Unshrived to that accounting dread; if yet your pious care,  
 "Oh, Pontiffs, may prevail to bend his stubborn heart to prayer."  
 Said Bishop Erc,—the kinsman he of Erc of Slane,—  
 "The ban  
 "Already has gone duly forth against the impious man:  
 "And till the power that laid it on, that sentence shall reverse,  
 "He who to Kellach proffers grace, is partner in his curse."  
 Said Senach, "No authentic note to me has yet arrived  
 "Of such a sentence. If he will, the Senior shall be shrived."  
 "I know the man," said Ronan Finn. "A Pagan strong: beware  
 "Lest he repay with blasphemy your proffered call to prayer."  
 While thus the Prelates; from their side, as strong—  
 cast javelin, sent  
 From palm of long-armed warrior, a swift battalion went  
 And, breaking through the hindmost line, where Kellach sat hard by,  
 Took him alive; and chair and man uphoisting shoulder-high,  
 They bore him back, his hoary locks and red eyes gleaming far,  
 The grimmest standard yet displayed that day o'er all the war;  
 And grimly, where they set him down, he eyed the encircling ring  
 Of Bishops and of chafing Chiefs who stood about the King.



Then, with his crozier's nether end turned towards him, Bishop Erc  
 Said, "Wretch abhorred, to thee it is we owe this bloody work ;  
 "By whose malignant counsel moved, thy hapless nephew first  
 "Sought impious aid of foreigners ; for which be thou accurst."  
 And turned and left them.

Senach then approaching, mildly said,  
 "No curse so strong, but in the blood for man's redemption shed,  
 "May man dissolve ; and also thou, unhappy, if thou wilt,  
 "May'st purchase peace and pardon now, and every stain of guilt  
 "That soils thy soul, may'st wash away ; if but with heart sincere  
 "Thou wilt repent thee, and embrace the heavenly boon which here  
 "I offer."

"Speak him louder, Sir," said harsher Ronan Finn.  
 "Kellach, repent thy sins," he cried ; "and presently begin :

"For few the moments left thee now ; and, ere the hour be past,  
 "Thy lot may, for eternity, in Heaven or Hell be cast."

"Repent thy sins," said Domnal ; "and implore the Church's grace ;

"So shall thy life be spared thee yet a little breathing-space."

Then Kellach from the Bishops' gaze withdrew his wavering glance,  
 And, fixing his fast-glazing eyes on Domnal's countenance,

Said, "I am old, and mainly deaf ; and much of what they say

"I hear not : but I tell thee this ; we'd not be here to-day

"But for this trick of cursing ; wherein much more expert

"Are these front-shaven Druids than in any manly art."

"Injurious Kellach," said the King, "beware the chastening rod

"The Church of Christ reserves for those who mock the priests of God."

"Of no good God are these the priests," said Kellach ;  
 "and, for me,

"I ne'er sought evil Spirit's aid 'gainst any enemy :

"But what I've learned in better times among my noble peers,

"That I have practised and upheld for well nigh four-score years ;

"And never asked from clerk or witch, by sacrifice or charm,

"To buy a demon's venal help to aid my own right arm :

"But in my house, good Poets, men expert in song and lay,

"I've kept, in bounteous sort, to teach my sons the prosperous way

"Of open truth and manliness : for, ever since the time

"When Cathbad smothered Usnach's sons in that foul sea of slime

"Raised by abominable spells at Creeveroe's bloody gate,

"Do ruin and dishonour still on priest-led Kings await.

"Wherefore, by Fergus, son of Roy, ere that year pass'd away,

"Emania was left bare and black ; and so lies at this day :



"And thou in desert Tara darest not, thyself, to dwell,  
 "Since that other bald magician, of Lorrh, from his bell  
 "Shook out his maledictions on the unoffending hill."  
 Said Domnal, "By my valour, old man, thou doest ill,  
 "Comparing blessed Saints of Christ with Pagan priests of Crom."  
 "Crom, or whomever else they serve," said Kellach;  
 "them that come  
 "Cursing, I curse."

Then Ronan Finn, upheaving high his bell,  
 Rang it, and gave the banning word; and Kellach therewith fell  
 Off his *tolg* side upon the ground, stone dead. The Poets there,  
 Next night, in secret, buried him upon his brazen chair.

Brass-armed complete for standing fight, in Cahir-Laery's wall,  
 Sun-smitten Laery, rampart-tomb'd, awaits the judgment-call,  
 Facing the Leinstermen; years roll; and Leinster is no more  
 The dragon-den of hostile men it was in days of yore;  
 Still, constant till the day of doom, while the great stone-work lasts,  
 Laery stands listening for the trump, at whose wall-bursting blasts  
 He leaps again to fire thy plain, oh Liffey, with the glare  
 Of that dread golden-bordered shield: thus ever, on his chair,

Kellach awaits, from age to age, the coming of the time  
 Will bring the cursers and the curs'd before the Judge sublime.

But, rapt in darkness and in swoon of anguish and despair,  
 As in a whirlwind, Congal Claen seemed borne thro' upper air;

And, conscious only of the grief surviving at his heart,  
 Now deemed himself already dead, and that his deathless part

Journeyed to judgment; but before what God's or demon's seat  
 Dared not conjecture; though, at times, from tramp of giant feet

And heavy flappings heard in air, around and underneath,  
 He darkly surmised who might be the messenger of death

Who bore him doomward: but anon, laid softly on the ground,  
 His mortal body with him still, and still alive he found.

Loathing the light of day he lay; nor knew nor reck'd he where;  
 For present anguish left his mind no room for other care;

All his great heart to bursting filled with rage, remorse and shame,  
 To think what labour come to nought, what hopes of power and fame

Turned in a moment to contempt; what hatred and disgrace  
 Fixed thenceforth irremovably on all his name and race;—



Till Ardan's voice beside him rose, "Lo, Congal, we are here,  
 "Not, I attest all Earth and Heaven, through willing flight or fear:  
 "But, when from Kellach's last assault I caught thee to my car  
 "Fainting, a frenzy seized the steeds, and swept us from the war;  
 "And all night long, with furious hoofs, and necks that scorned control,  
 "They've borne us northward, and have here attained their fated goal."  
 Then Congal raised his drooping head, and saw with bloodshot eyes  
 His native vale before him spread; saw grassy Collin rise  
 High o'er the homely Antrim hills. He groaned with rage and shame.  
 "And have I fled the field," he cried; "and shall my hapless name  
 "Become this byeword of reproach? Rise; bear me back again,  
 "And lay me where I yet may lie among the valiant slain."  
 "The steeds," said Ardan, "'neath the yoke, behold, lie stiff in death.  
 "Here fate has fixed that thou and I shall draw our last of breath;  
 "For I am worn with weight of years, and feebly now inhale  
 "The vital air: and newer life from mountain and from vale  
 "Rises and pushes me aside. A voice that seems to cry,  
 "'Make way; make straight another way,' is filling earth and sky."

A thought came into Congal's mind,—how sent let faith divine,—  
 He said, "No man had ever shame or grief compared to mine.  
 "A fugitive against my will: in sacrilegious feud,  
 "A proud invader, shamefully by idiot hands subdued.  
 "But more than for myself I mourn my generous friends deceived,  
 "And all their wives and little ones of lord and sire bereaved."  
 Tears sent from whence the thought had come,—let faith divine their source,—  
 Rose at the thought to Congal's eyes, and pressed with tender force  
 Unwonted passage; and he wept, with many bitter sighs,  
 In sudden vision of his life and all its vanities.  
 As when a tempest—which, all day, with whirlwind, fire and hail,  
 Vexing mid-air, has hid the sight of sunshine from the vale,—  
 Towards sunset rolls its thunders up; fast as it mounts on high,  
 A flood of placid light re-fills the lately troubled sky;  
 Shine all the full down-sliding streams, wet blades and quivering sprays,  
 And all the grassy-sided vales with emerald lustre blaze;  
 So, in the shower of Congal's tears, his storms of passion pass'd;  
 So, o'er his long distempered soul came tranquil light at last.  
 Ere wonder in his calming mind had found reflection's aid,  
 There came across the daisy'd lawn a veiled religious maid



From wicket of a neighbouring close ; and, as she  
 nearer drew,  
 The peerless gesture and the grace indelible he knew.  
 She, when she saw the wounded man was Congal,  
 stood and prayed  
 A little space, and trembled much : then came, and  
 meekly said,  
 "Sir, thou art wounded ; and I come from Brigid's  
 cell hard by  
 "To tend thy wants, if thou wilt brook a sister's  
 charity."  
 "And is my aspect also, then, so altered," Congal  
 cried,  
 "That thou, Lafinda, knowest me not, that shouldst  
 have been my bride ?"  
 "Bride now of Christ," she answered low ; "I know  
 thee but as one  
 "For whom my heavenly Spouse has died."  
 "Desire I for thee now," he said ; "for nothing now  
 is mine,  
 "Save the fast-fleeting breath of life I hasten to  
 resign."  
 She knelt to aid him. As she knelt, light-wafted  
 o'er the green,  
 In shadow of a passing cloud, was flying Sweeny  
 seen.  
 Whom, when, at first, Lafinda knew, her cheek, so  
 pale but now,  
 And all the veil allowed to view of neck and marble  
 brow,  
 Grew red with shame. But Congal said,  
 "Although the assembled host  
 "Have seen him fly, yet scorn him not, nor deem thy  
 brother lost,  
 "More than his Chief, who also fled."

"The red blood on thy cheek,"  
 Said Ardan, "maid, mis-seems thee not. Though  
 vowed submissive and meek,  
 "Thou art a royal daughter still. But deem not that  
 he flies,  
 "Impelled by dread of mortal foe. The demons of  
 the skies,  
 "Wielding the unseen whips of God, are they who  
 drive him on,  
 "Mad, but in no disgraceful flight unworthy Colman's son."  
 "Sister," said Sweeny ; and he came, with light foot,  
 gliding nigh ;  
 "I come not hither as *he* comes, in sight of home to die.  
 "My day, indeed, is distant yet : and many a wander-  
 ing race  
 "Must I with wind and shower maintain ; and many  
 a rainbow chase  
 "Across the wet-bright meads, ere I, like him, obtain  
 release  
 "From furious fancy's urgent stings, and lay my limbs  
 in peace.  
 "Lo, all is changed. In Brigid's cell thou, now, a  
 close-shut nun,  
 "That wert the assemblies' pride before. I, with the  
 clouds and sun,  
 "And bellowing creatures of the glade, for comrades  
 of my way,  
 "Roam homeless ; I, that was a king of thousands  
 yesterday."  
 "Grieve not for me," Lafinda said. "In Brigid's  
 cell I find  
 "The calm-enforcing discipline and humbleness of mind  
 "My nature needed, and yet needs. And thou, my  
 brother wild,  
 "Take ghostly counsel ; and thou, too, may'st yet be  
 reconciled



"To God and reason."

Sweeny said; "Some holy man, perchance  
"May aid me; but unless he dwell where morning,  
sunbeams dance

"In spray of upland waterfalls, or tell his beads  
below

"Where, deep in murky mountain-clefts the moon-  
white waters flow,

"Small chance is his and mine to meet: for there my  
path must lie;

"And thither rise my feet to run o'er crags and hill-  
tops high.

"But not alone I course the wild. Although apart  
from men,

"Shapes of the air attend my steps, and have me in  
their ken."

Even as he spoke, soft-rustling sounds to all their  
ears were borne,

Such as warm winds at eve excite 'mongst brown-ripe  
rolling corn.

All, but Lafinda, looked: but she, behind a steadfast  
lid,

Kept her calm eyes from that she deemed a sight  
unholy, hid.

And Congal reck'd not if the Shape that passed before  
his eyes

Lived only on the inward film, or outward 'neath the  
skies.

No longer soiled with stain of earth, what seemed  
his mantle shone

Rich with innumerable hues refulgent, such as  
one

Beholds, and thankful-hearted he, who casts abroad  
his gaze

O'er some rich tillage-country-side, when mellow  
Autumn days

Gild all the sheafy foodful stooks; and broad before  
him spread,—

He looking landward from the brow of some great sea-  
cape's head,

Bray or Ben-Edar—sees beneath, in silent pageant  
grand,

Slow fields of sunshine spread o'er fields of rich, corn-  
bearing land;

Red glebe and meadow-margin green commingling to  
the view

With yellow stubble, browning woods, and upland  
tracts of blue;—

Then, sated with the pomp of fields, turns, seaward,  
to the verge

Where, mingling with the murmuring wash made by  
the far-down surge,

Comes up the clangorous song of birds unseen, that,  
low beneath,

Poised off the rock, ply underfoot; and, 'mid the  
blossoming heath,

And mint-sweet herb that loves the ledge rare-air'd, at  
ease reclined,

Surveys the wide pale-heaving floor crisped by a  
curling wind;

With all its shifting, shadowy belts, and chasing scopes  
of green,

Sun-strown, foam-freckled, sail-embossed, and blacken-  
ing squalls between,

And slant, cerulean-skirted showers that with a drowsy  
sound,

Heard inward, of ebullient waves, stalk all the horizon  
round;

And—haply, being a citizen just 'scaped from some  
disease

That long has held him sick indoors, now, in the  
brine-fresh breeze,



Health-salted, bathes ; and says, the while he breathes  
reviving bliss,  
"I am not good enough, oh God, nor pure enough for  
this !"—

Such seemed its hues. His feet were set in fields of  
waving grain ;

His head, above, obscured the sun : all round the leafy  
plain

Blackbird and thrush piped loud acclaims : in middle  
air, breast-high,

The lark shrill carolled : overhead, and halfway up  
the sky,

Sailed the far eagle : from his knees, down dale and  
grassy steep,

Thronged the dun, mighty upland droves, and mountain-  
mottling sheep,

And by the river-margins green, and o'er the thymy  
meads

Before his feet, careered, at large, the slim-knee'd,  
slender steeds,

It passed. Light Sweeny, as it passed, went also  
from their view :

And conscious only of her task, Lafinda bent  
anew

At Congal's side. She bound his wounds, and asked  
him, "Has thy heart

"At all repented of its sins, unhappy that thou  
art?"

"My sins," said Congal, "and my deeds of strife  
and bloodshed seem

"No longer mine, but as the shapes and shadows of a  
dream :

"And I myself, as one oppressed with sleep's decep-  
tive shows,

"Awaking only now to life, when life is at its  
close."

"Oh, grant," she cried with tender joy, "Thou, who  
alone canst save,  
"That this awaking be to light and life beyond the  
grave!"

'Twas then the long-corroded links of life's  
mysterious chain

Snapped softly ; and his mortal change passed upon  
Congal's Caen.

As sank the limbs relaxed in death, from Brigid's  
neighbouring cell,

With clang importunate began the Sisters' morning  
bell.

She closed the eyes ; the straightened limbs in comely  
posture laid ;

And, going with submissive steps, the call to prayer  
obeyed.

Then Ardan spread his hands to heaven, and said,  
"I stand alone,

"Last wreck remaining of a Power and Order over-  
thrown,

"Much needing solace : and, ah me, not in the empty  
lore

"Of Bard or Druid does my soul find peace or comfort  
more ;

"Nor in the bells or crooked staves or sacrificial  
shows

"Find I the help my soul desires, or in the chaunts of  
those

"Who claim our Druids' vacant place. Alone and  
faint, I crave,

"Oh God, one ray of Heavenly light to help me to  
the grave,

"Such even as thou, dead Congal, hadst ; that so,  
these eyes of mine

"May look their last on earth and heaven with  
calmness such as thine."



The wicket opened once again, and forth came  
Seniors four,  
Who, raising Congal on a bier, the royal body bore  
Into the consecrated close. While yet half open lay  
The wicket-gate, the distant sounds of tumult and  
affray  
Came on the breeze.

"Old man," said one; "approaching foes begin  
"To fill the vale with death. If thou wouldst save  
thy life, come in."

"Servants of Brigid," Ardan said. "To God be  
thankful praise,  
"Who turns the hearts of men like you towards me in  
tender ways :

"Yet, since my King has found the peace I seek to  
share, outside

"Your Saint's enclosure, here will I the will of Heaven  
abide."

"On his own head, Lord, not on ours," they said,  
"let lie the blame."

And closed the gate ; while up the hill the hosts of  
Domnal came.



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