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PRECOGNITIVE DREAMS IN CELTIC LEGEND

(*A lecture delivered before the Oxford University Anthropological Society on 28th November, 1946*)

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“ When the body is awake the soul is its servant, and is never her own mistress. . . . But when the body is at rest, the soul, being set in motion and awake . . . has cognisance of all things—sees what is visible, hears what is audible, walks, touches, feels pain, ponders.”

*Hippocrates, Dreams*¹

In this paper we shall deal rather with the Celtic attitude towards dreams than with the dreams themselves. Preference has been given to dreams which concern the entire community by leading to the election of a king, announcing his approaching death, referring to political events or to the issue of warfare. The material at our disposal has been divided into three groups: (1) unsolicited dreams; (2) dreams which were expected; (3) induced dreams. Related subjects, e.g. incubation for the purpose of healing, visions, and divination have been taken into account in order to substantiate or supplement certain statements. The words “vision” and “dream” will be used in accordance with Professor A. Guillaume’s definitions: a vision “is seen in a state other than sleep”, while “a dream that one knows to be a dream is not a vision”.²

The strikingly close resemblance between omens and dreams, which led to the assumption that dreams have greatly contributed to the belief in omens, is clearly revealed in the following episode taken from Irish legend:

“ On the arrival of the Tuatha De Danann in Ireland, a vision was revealed in a dream to Eochaid, son of Erc, high king of Ireland. He pondered over it with much anxiety, being filled with wonder and perplexity. He told his wizard, Cesard . . . ‘I saw a great flock of black birds . . . coming from the depths of the Ocean. They settled over all

* I am greatly indebted to Dr. John Layard who very kindly read my manuscript and made many useful suggestions.

¹ Tr. by W. H. S. Jones (London, 1931), vol. iv, p. 421.

² *Prophecy and Divination* (London, 1938), p. 217.

of us, and fought with the people of Ireland. They brought confusion on us, and destroyed us. One of us, methought, struck the noblest of the birds and cut off one of its wings. And now, Cesard, employ your skill and knowledge, and tell us the meaning of the vision.' Cesard did so, and by means of ritual and the use of his science the meaning of the king's vision was revealed to him ; and he said :

"I have tidings for you: warriors are coming across the sea, a thousand heroes covering the ocean ; speckled ships will press in upon us ; all kinds of death they announce, a people skilled in every art, a magic spell ; an evil spirit will come upon you, signs to lead you astray(?) ; . . . they will be victorious in every stress."³

Four features of this narrative coincide with records of Celtic omens :⁴ (1) the large flock of black birds ; (2) its appearance at an anxious moment ; (3) the king instantly considered the dream to convey a warning ; (4) the magician connected the dream with imminent events. There is, however, one essential difference ; while in Celtic literature bird-omens were intelligible to everybody, the dream-appearance of birds required a professional interpreter. This incident shows that although the Celts differentiated between objective facts and dream-perceptions, they " did not find it unreasonable to seek illumination for the problems of the (waking) world in the phenomena of the (sleeping) world ".⁵ There is no doubt that the colour of the birds—black is a universal symbol for misfortune and death— influenced the ill-foreboding prediction. Details of the ritual which preceded Cesard's revelation are missing, but the consultation of a magician, corresponding to the greater part of the legendary evidence,⁶ permits us to assume that the ceremony was rather elaborate. Dreams were only in exceptional cases interpreted by a poet or a cleric.

"It was when Dermot was of a night, and he sees two draw near him : the one man, as he deems, wears a cleric's semblance ; the other one a layman's. They come up to him, take off his king's diadem, make of it a diadem apiece (either man of them having one half, for so they divide it between them), and with that depart from him. Dermot starts out of his sleep then, and tells his vision. 'Just so,' said Beg mac Dé and said Cairidh son of Finnchaemh (his mother) that was Dermot's poet : " thy dream's interpretation we have for thee : Thy kingdom is deter-

³ "The First Battle of Moytura," tr. J. Fraser, *Ériu*, viii (Dublin, 1915), p. 19.

⁴ E. Ettlinger, "Omens and Celtic Warfare," *Man*, xliv (London, 1943), No. 4.

⁵ Havelock Ellis, *The World of Dreams* (London, 1922), p. 266.

⁶ *Irische Texte*, tr. Wh. Stokes and E. Windisch, vol. iv, Heft 1 (Leipzig, 1900), p. 302 ; *Revue Celtique*, xxiv (Paris, 1903), pp. 174-175.

mined, of thy reign there is an end, and for the future thy princely grasp of Ireland is cast off: division between Church and Lay namely, that is what shall subsist now; and that which thy royal diadem's partition forbodes is even such another apportioning of Ireland's sovereignty betwixt Church and State." . . .⁷

"One night as Domhnall slept in this house, he had a vision and a dream: he saw a greyhound whelp, Fearglonn by name, which had been reared by himself, go forth from him, even from his knee, with rage and fury, gathering the dogs of Erin, Alba, Saxonland and Britain; and they gave the king and the men of Erin around him seven battles during the seven days of the week, and a slaughter of heads was made between them each day, but on the seventh day the dogs were worsted, and in the last battle the king's own hound, as he thought, was killed. The king then awoke from his sleep, and he sprang affrighted from his bed, so that he was naked on the floor of the house. . . ."

(The queen quieted him and) requested him to relate to her what he had seen in the vision. "I will not tell it to thee, O queen . . . nor to any one else, until I reach the place where Maelcobha, the cleric, my brother, is, for he is the best interpreter of dreams in Erin."

(A month later) the king proceeded with a hundred chariots to Druim Dilair, where Maelcobha was dwelling . . . Domhnall fully revealed his dream to Maelcobha . . . (who) grew red on hearing the dream, and said, "It is long since the events shown in that dream were predicted. . . . A greyhound whelp in a dream . . . is the same as a king's son: thou hast two foster-sons, O king. . . . Either of these will rise up against thee, O king, and will bring the plunderers and the doers of evil of Alba, France, Saxonland, and Britain with him to Erin, who will give seven battles to thee and the men of Erin, so that great slaughter shall be made between you both, and in the seventh battle . . . thy foster-son shall fall. . . ."

"Now it is proper for thee, O king . . . to prepare a banquet, and to invite to it the men of Erin, and to obtain the hostages of every province in Erin, and also to detain in fetters, to the end of a year, these two foster-sons of thine . . . because the venom goes out of every dream within the year"⁸ (i.e. "its fulfilment need not be dreaded after the lapse of that time").⁹

⁷ St. H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* (London, 1892), vol. ii, p. 84; for a saint as a dream-reader see *Vita Sancti Lasriani*, § 32.

⁸ *The Banquet of Dun Na N-gedh*, tr. J. O'Donovan (Dublin, 1842), pp. 9-13.

⁹ C. Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910), vol. i, p. clx, note 5.

Two details disclose the great significance which the king attributed to his dream: (1) he concealed its content even to his queen; presumably in order to prevent any enemy learning about it and using his knowledge to the king's own detriment. An Irish gnome says: "Do not tell your secret to women. The secret of a woman is not well kept."¹⁰ (2) The king's travelling with a hundred chariots gives to Maelcobha's consultation the nature of a state proceeding. The number seven is of little importance in Celtic legend. It is mainly found "in works which were composed in their present form long after Christianity had worked upon the Celts".¹¹ The cleric's favourable interpretation is based upon the Christian notion which associates the number seven with final victory if one is threatened and resurrection.

Geoffrey's account of King Arthur's dream is well-known:

"Arthyr and his hosts went to the port of Northhamtwn; and when he got a fair wind he sailed for ffraink. And when he had reached the middle of the ocean, a sleep as of the dead held him much of the night, and he saw a dream. He saw flying from the south a sort of monster, with a terrible voice, alighting on the shore of ffraink; and he saw a dragon coming from the west, and by the glare of its eyes the sea was lighted up. And he saw the dragon and the Bear (Arth) engaging; and when they had fought for a long time, he saw the dragon spitting out gleaming flames of fire upon the Bear, and burning him up completely. And perplexing was the dream to Arthyr. And then he awoke and told his comrades of the vision; and thus did they make interpretation: 'Thou, Lord, shalt fight some monster of a giant and conquer him, for the dragon signifies thyself.' But Arthyr put no trust in this, for he believed that it should be between the emperor and himself."¹²

The conventional setting of this dream belongs certainly to that type which caused Dr. John Layard to write:

"they have clearly been selected by a process of elimination of the more personal elements so as to present a picture readily understandable by the general community. . . ."¹³

In Geoffrey's story there is nothing remarkable with regard to our present subject apart from the fact that the king communicated his

¹⁰ H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge, 1932), vol. i, p. 380, quoted from "Mac Datho's Pig", cap. 3.

¹¹ A. B. Keith, "Numbers," Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ix, p. 411a.

¹² *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, tr. A. Griscom, (London, 1929), pp. 468-9.

¹³ *Man*, vol. xxxviii (London, 1938), No. 158.

dream to "his comrades". I think we may deduce from the doubts which he expressed about their interpretation that there was no professional dream-reader among the king's attendants.

Celtic literature reflects the belief that supernatural agencies were confined to selected natural places. "On the bank of the stream called 'cas' or 'the crooked' the Elements meted out death to (the perjurer) Laeghaire."¹⁴ Does this passage purport that of all the elements water was most intimately associated with death? There is an entire group of death-foreboding dreams and visions occurring on river-banks which may well confirm such a surmise.

"Cormac slept for a little space at the end of the ford, and an awful vision was shewn to (the doomed king). Thereafter Cormac awoke."¹⁵

When the sons of Usnech "went forward to Finncharn of the Watching, on Sliab Fuait, Deirdre remained behind them in the glen, and her sleep fell upon her there," (a dream appeared to her there). "I beheld each (of the sons of Usnech) without a head, and Illann the Fair without a head. . . ."¹⁶

The king Mes-gegra stayed behind the host alone with his charioteer (at a ford) at the Path of Clane. "I will sleep at present," saith the charioteer to Mes-gegra, "and thou shalt sleep then." "I deem it well," said the king. Now while Mes-gegra was looking at the water he saw a wonderful nut floating along the river towards him. Larger than a man's head was the nut. And he himself went down, and brought it to him, and cleft it with his skene, and left half the kernel for the gillie. And he saw that the gillie was lifted up in his sleep from the ground; and after that the gillie awoke from his sleep. "How is it with thee, my lad?" saith the king. "I have seen an evil vision," saith the gillie. . . . Both died immediately afterwards.

This unique case of levitation may be ascribed to the influence of Christian legend perceptible throughout the story of "The Siege of Howth".¹⁷

It was also at a ford that the war-goddess Badb announced approaching death to doomed heroes by appearing in the shape of a woman washing

¹⁴ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 407.

¹⁵ "Da Choka's Hostel," tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, xxi (Paris, 1900), p. 159.

¹⁶ "The Death of the Sons of Usnech," *Irische Texte*, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, Heft 2 (Leipzig, 1887), p. 161.

¹⁷ Tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, viii (Paris, 1887), pp. 57-9; R. Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle, 1921), p. 507, note 2.

their blood-stained armour.¹⁸ The relation between the Celtic Washer-at-the-Ford and the superhuman woman who predicted Drusus' death at the river Albis¹⁹ has been remarked upon. The question arises—but can unfortunately not be answered—whether these prophetesses are reminiscences of priestesses living at sacred fords similar to those women who were in charge of certain wells?²⁰ However this may be, the stories of heroes dreaming of their approaching death or seeing visions which convey to them that death is imminent are probably based upon the ancient notion that doomed men are prescient. (North Britons denote the uncanny prophetic power of men whose death is close at hand with the word “fey”.)²¹

The main difference between fortuitous, unsolicited dreams and those which were expected can be seen in the meditation and preparation preceding the latter. It is a universal belief that those who seek contact with supernatural powers are in great danger if they approach the spirits without being in a state of purity. In order to remain unharmed the suppliant has to undergo lustration, to submit to an ordeal or to make a sacrifice before calling upon the spirits for supreme guidance. After the purification-rite the consulter lay down in the dwelling-place of the spirit or on the hide of the sacrificed animal and fell asleep. The most detailed record of preliminaries to incubation, including the sacrifice of a bull, the consumption of sacred food, and a druidical ceremony, can be met with in the Irish legend “The Sickbed of Cuchulain”.

Seven years after the death of Conaire there was at Tara a meeting of the four great provinces of Erinn . . . “to see if they could find a person whom they would select, to whom they would give the sovereignty of Erinn. . . . There was then prepared a bull-feast . . . in order that (the kings who were in that meeting) should discover out of it to whom they would give the sovereignty. Thus was that bull-feast prepared, namely: a white bull was killed, and one man ate enough of his flesh, and of his broth; and he slept under that meal; and a charm of truth was pronounced on him by four Druids; and he saw in a dream the shape of the man who should be made king there, and his form, and his description, and the sort of work that he was engaged in. The man screamed out of his sleep and described what he saw to the kings,

¹⁸ “Da Choka’s Hostel,” *op. cit.*, pp. 157-9; E. Hull, *The Cuchullin Saga* (London, 1898), p. 247; T. Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk-Custom* (London, 1930), p. 107.

¹⁹ Dio’s *Roman History*, iv, 1.

²⁰ (Sir) John Rhŷs, *Celtic Folklore* (Oxford, 1901), vol. i, pp. 396-7.

²¹ W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination* (London, 1913), p. 203 and note 2.

namely, a young, noble, strong man, with two red streaks around him, and he sitting over the pillow of a man in a decline in Emain Macha."²²

This story is absolutely credible. Bull-sacrifices have been repeatedly recorded from the various parts of the British Isles up to the seventeenth century.²³ Pliny's statement (*H. N.*, XVI, 44) about the Gaulish sacrifices of white bulls may also be recalled. In the sagas as well as in *Ptolemy* (II, 2, 7) there are references to white cattle, which is even believed to survive in the white "park-cattle" heard at Chillingham.²⁴ The choice of a white bull points either to the careful selection of a sacrifice without any blemish or to its dedication to some divinity of light to whom chiefly light-coloured offerings were due.²⁵

The participation of the druids deserves particular consideration. Since the dreamer communicated his revelation to the assembled kings (probably because it was their privilege and duty to elect Conaire's successor), it seems as if the druids left the sleeper after having pronounced the charm of truth.²⁶ Assemblies of exactly four assistants in magical rites can be found in other legends.²⁷ The reason why just four men were required becomes apparent in the following passage :

"A day that Conn was in Tara, he went up at early morn upon the royal rath, and with him his three druids. Every day he went up there with that number to view all the points of the heavens that the 'sid' men should not rest on Ireland unperceived by him"²⁸

When Aengus appeared to Cuchulain,²⁹ four persons were placed at the four cardinal points around his sickbed, possibly with the intention of forming a magic circle for his protection.

Windisch has stated that the dreamer at Tara slept upon "a bull-hide",³⁰ while in the bull-feast scene in "The Destruction of Dá Derga's

²² Tr. Eugen Curry, *Atlantis*, i (London, 1858), p. 385.

²³ A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present* (Edinburgh, 1880), pp. 148-9, 275; J. A. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts* (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 243.

²⁴ Cormac's *Glossary*, tr. J. O'Donovan, ed. Wh. Stokes (Calcutta, 1868), pp. 71, 72, 134; O'Grady, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 131; Sacheverell Sitwell, *Primitive Scenes and Festivals* (London, 1942), pp. 44-5.

²⁵ Mengis, "Weiss," *Handwörterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens*, vol. ix (Berlin, 1938), p. 344.

²⁶ D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Littérature Celtique* (Paris, 1883), vol. i, p. 152.

²⁷ "The Second Battle of Moytura," tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, xii (Paris, 1891), pp. 59, 95.

²⁸ A. Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran* (London, 1895), vol. i, p. 187.

²⁹ "The Sickbed," *op. cit.*, pp. 377-9.

³⁰ *Das Keltische Britannien, Abhandlungen der Philologisch-Historischen Klasse der Kgl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, vol. xxix (Leipzig, 1912), p. 132.

Hostel" "a spell of truth was chanted over (the sleeper) in his bed". The remark is added that he "would perish if he uttered a falsehood (literally): his lips would perish".³¹ (After a vision Finn consulted the poet Fergus "True-Lips"!)³² Classical passages illuminate the meaning of the phrase: the sleeper's lips would perish if he uttered a falsehood. Pausanias (VII, 25, 13) and Tibullus (II, V, 63) leave no doubt that prophets were subject to an ordeal by partaking of sacred food, which was believed either to inspire the truth-speaking prophet or to poison the deceitful one.³³ It is not surprising to find that the supernatural power believed to bestow inspiration was also expected to silence lying lips. From the foregoing statements it becomes evident that, although this is not expressed, the dreamer at Tara submitted to an ordeal by partaking of the meat and broth of the sacrificed bull. It is highly probable that the next two quotations allude to similar ordeals by means of sacred food.

When the juggler Tulchinne had recognised that disaster was approaching he asked the man of the wood Fer Caille to sacrifice his pig and to "find out who is in front of the house to injure the men of the Hostel". Fer Caille enumerates the names of five men. "They have announced a deed which is not feeble, the annihilation of Conaire."³⁴

Imbas Forosnai ("knowledge that enlightens"), "i.e. it discovers everything which the poet likes and which he desires to manifest. Thus it is done. The poet chews a piece of (the) flesh of a red pig, or of a dog or cat, and puts it afterwards on the flag behind the door, and pronounces an incantation on it, and offers it to idol-gods, and afterwards calls his idols to him and then finds them not on the morrow, and pronounces incantations on his two palms, and calls again unto him his idol-gods that his sleep may not be disturbed; and he lays his two palms on his two cheeks and (in this manner) he falls asleep; and he is watched in order that no one may interrupt(?) nor disturb him till everything about which he is engaged is revealed to him, (which may be) a minute or two or three, or as long as he was supposed to be at the offering. . . ."³⁵

Thurneysen regards the description of Imbas Forosnai as the fantastic

³¹ Tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, xxii (Paris, 1901), p. 23, note 2.

³² O'Grady, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 183.

³³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, tr. (Sir) J. G. Frazer (London, 1898), vol. iv, p. 175; see A. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

³⁴ "The Destruction," *op. cit.*, p. 287.

³⁵ Cormac's *Glossary*, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-5.

creation of a Christian etymologist's imagination.³⁶ As nearly all the details mentioned by Cormac reoccur in related ceremonies, I am inclined to see in the gloss traces of various actual divinatory rites, which have, however, been mistakenly pieced together. Not the palms but the right fist was used in the poet's incantation "Cétnad" for finding out a theft: he sings it "through the right fist, and goes to sleep upon it, and in (his) sleep the man (who has stolen the beast) is clearly shown and made known".³⁷ (Before Marvan put the eye of Seanchan back into its own place "he said his Pater in his right hand"!).³⁸

A cat-sacrifice is referred to in Martin's description of the Gaelic rite the Taghairm (which is said to signify an Echo):³⁹

"A party of men, who first retired to solitary places, remote from any house, and there they singled out one of their number, and wrap'd him in a big cow's hide, which they folded about him, his whole body was covered with it except his head, and so left in this posture all night until his invisible friends reliev'd him, by giving a proper answer to the question in hand, which he received, as he fancied, from several persons that he found about him all that time, his consorts return'd to him at break of day, and then he communicated his news to them. . . .

"The same company who put the man into the hide, took a live cat and put him on a spit; one of the number was employed to turn the spit, and one of his consorts enquired at him, what are you doing? He answered, I roast this cat, until his friends answer the question, which must be the same that was proposed by the man shut up in the hide, and afterwards a very big cat comes attended by a number of lesser cats, desiring to relieve the cat turned upon the spit, and then answers the question: If this answer prove the same that was given to the man in the hide, then it was taken as a confirmation of the other which in this case was believed infallible.

"Mr. Alexander Cooper present minister of North-Uist, told me that one John Erach, in the isle of Lewis, assured him it was his fate to have been led by his curiosity with some who consulted this oracle, and that he was a night within the hide as above mentioned, during which time he felt and heard such terrible things that he could not express them, the impression it made on him was such as could never go off, and he

³⁶ "Imbas For. Osndai," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, xix (Halle, 1933), pp. 163-4.

³⁷ D. Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland* (London, 1899), pp. 241-2.

³⁸ "The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution," tr. Prof. Connellan, *Trans. Ossianic Society*, v (Dublin, 1860), p. 101.

³⁹ J. G. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 495.

said that for a thousand worlds he would never again be concern'd in the like performance, for this had disordered him to a high degree ; he confessed it ingenuously and with an air of great remorse, and seem'd to be very penitent under a just sense of so great a crime, he declared this about five years since, and is still living in the Lewis, for anything I know.'⁴⁰

We are neither informed about a sacrifice nor whether the consulter was awake or asleep. MacCulloch conjectured that in earlier times the animal, which provided the hide, was sacrificed and that the person clothed in the skin of a sacrificial animal "is brought into contact with it and hence with the divinity to which it is offered . . . (and that) in this Celtic usage, contact with divinity through the hide would be expected to produce enlightenment".⁴¹

It seems possible, by examining the places of revelation, to determine more fully the nature of the power to which the sacrifice was made, and from which spiritual enlightenment was sought. Dalyell has recorded that in the rite "the Taghairm" the querent was "carried by assistants to a solitary spot, or left under the arch formed by the projected waters of a cataract".⁴² Retirement to a solitary place for meditation and visionary impressions is a world-wide practice. The reference to the cataract reminds us of Pythagoras who "after being cleansed by the Idaean Dactyls, slept by a river on the skin of a black lamb".⁴³ In the "Táin" there is a well-hidden allusion to such a form of incubation.

Before his fatal fight with Cuchulain, Ferdiad asked at the ford of combat his gilla to "unharness the horses and spread for me the cushions and skins of my chariot under me here, so that I sleep off my heavy fit of sleep and slumber here" . . . "The gilla . . . spread beneath him the chariot-cloths. (Ferdiad) slept off the heavy fit of sleep that was on him. The gilla remained on watch and guard for him."⁴⁴

Since river-worship is obviously reflected in incubation on river-banks, the inference may be drawn that those animals, which provided the hide for the Celtic dreamer to lie upon, were offered to the river-spirit (like the bulls in the *Iliad*, XI, 727; XXI, 131 f) from whom supreme knowledge was craved. The dreams and visions of other

⁴⁰ *A Description of the Western Islands* (London, 1703), pp. 111-3.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, p. 495.

⁴³ Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 132, quoted from Porphyry, *Vit. Pythag.* 17.

⁴⁴ *The Ancient Irish Epic Tale Táin Bó Cúalnge*, tr. J. Dunn (London, 1914) pp. 233-4.

doomed heroes, cited above, make us wonder if it was not self-understood that the genius loci foretold also Ferdiad's death.

In less remote parts of the British Isles than the Western Islands incubation on hides had faded from memory much earlier. Therefore we find the compiler of "Rhonabwy's Dream" trying to explain somewhat circumstantially why Rhonabwy went to sleep on the yellow heifer-skin; but, nevertheless, his dream still retains the authority of a revelation.⁴⁵ It would be interesting to know why, in spite of Geoffrey's imitation of Virgil, his Bryttys "laid himself down on the pelt of a white hind" and did not rest on the strewed fleeces of "a hundred sheep" as Virgil's *Latinus* (A., VII, 93).⁴⁶

It should be observed that a glen is the scene of Finn's most unpleasant adventures with the Phantoms.⁴⁷ This fact as well as other stories about dreamers who were similarly flagellated suggest that Finn's adventures were happenings in a dream-world. The reason given for Finn's scourging is vengeance. While voluntary flagellation as a means to lustration and to bring on ecstasy is of great antiquity, the idea of flagellation as a punishment may, perhaps, be traced back to clerical influence.⁴⁸

When Laurentius, St. Augustine's successor as Archbishop of Canterbury, was about to leave England, St. Peter appeared to him in a dream, rebuked him sharply for abandoning his post, and scourged him "flagellis artioribus".⁴⁹

In "The Sickbed" Cuchulain "put his back to a rock, where sleep soon fell upon him", and two women beat him badly. The cause for the beating remains obscure; but it may be inferred from the legend "Tochmarc Emire" that it was meant as a punishment for Cuchulain's hitting two birds which were a transformation of the two women.⁵⁰

In the Mabinogion "Pwyll arose to go for a walk, and he went to the top of a mound that was above the court, called Gorsedd Arberth. 'Lord,' said one of the court, 'it is the peculiarity of the mound that whatever noble sits upon it cannot go thence, without one of two things,

⁴⁵ *The Mabinogion*, tr. T. P. Ellis and J. Lloyd (Oxford, 1929), vol. ii, pp. 6-7; Windisch, *Das Keltische Brittanien*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 239; C. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford, 1935), p. 44.

⁴⁷ "Find and the Phantoms," tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vii (Paris, 1886), pp. 297, 303.

⁴⁸ (Sir) E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 4th ed. (London, 1903), vol. ii, p. 419; "Flagellants," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

⁴⁹ Quoted from Bede's "Historia Ecclesiastica," ii, 6, by G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), p. 222.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 377; Thurneysen, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

either receiving wounds or blows or else seeing a wonder.' (The "gorsedd", mound or tumulus, has throughout Welsh story been always associated with magic. The belief persisted well into the nineteenth century and is, indeed, far from dead yet.)"⁵¹

According to legend, the full version of the "Táin" having been lost, Murgan the Filé sang an incantation over the grave of Fergus mac Roig. A cloud hid him for three days, and during that time the dead man appeared and recited the saga to him.⁵²

"A late Welsh predictive poem (Red Book of Hergest II) claims to be an utterance of Myrddin from his grave. At the conclusion of this poem the speaker says that he has received information from certain 'mountain spirits' (Wylyon mynyd)."⁵³

These episodes agree well with Tertullian (De Anima, 57) who handed down to us Nicander's assurance that the Celts pass the night at the tombs of their heroes in order to obtain special oracles. While no evidence in support of mantic dreams acquired by incubation on grave-mounds is forthcoming in Celtic literature, incubation for the purpose of healing may possibly be hinted at in the "Táin":

"When Lug came to help Cuchulain, the latter said: 'Yea, heavy are the bloody wounds upon me; let thy healing be speedy.' 'Sleep then awhile, O Cuchulain . . . thy heavy fit of sleep by Ferta in Lerga ("the Grave-mound on the Slopes") till the end of three days and three nights' . . . (Lug) examined each wound so that it became clean. Then he sang him the 'men's low strain' till Cuchulain fell asleep withal . . . and recovered during his sleep without ever perceiving it."⁵⁴

There is no information as to whether Lug came to Cuchulain's assistance as a benevolent god or as his deified ancestor, his father in a metaphorical sense. Men sought from the manes as well as from the gods "special help in special needs (and they) were too near and dear to the inmost heart of pre-Christian Europe to be done away with without substitutes".⁵⁵ And so we find miraculous cures during sleep ascribed to Christian saints and incubation at their tombs surviving until comparatively recent times.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 16-17 and note 47.

⁵² Thurneysen, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁵³ Chadwick, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 650.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 182-3.

⁵⁵ (Sir) E. B. Tylor, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 120.

⁵⁶ See Kittredge, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-2; *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, xii, 6th Série (London, 1912), p. 234; Dr. Richard Pococke, *The Travels through England*, ed. J. J. Cartwright (Camden Society, 1889), vol. ii, p. 175.

Taking the evidence of expected dreams as a whole, two characteristics emerge: (1) pre-meditation had so much facilitated the dream-interpretation that expert dream-readers were no more required;⁵⁷ (2) the enquirer's frame of mind was in a normal condition. Before proceeding with induced dreams, when a marked contrast will be noticeable, I should like to quote Professor Plummer who dealt with the primitive belief that

"the souls of men go forth from their bodies in sleep and visit distant scenes; . . . hence comes the idea that it is dangerous to wake a sleeping man suddenly, not only lest the soul's travels and acquisition of knowledge should be interrupted, but also lest the absent soul should be unable to find its way back to the body." . . . "Restlessness in sleep showed that the soul was undergoing special experiences."⁵⁸

A remarkable description of the soul's departure in sleep has been preserved in a Christian legend:

Laisrénn fasted thrice three days while purifying the church Cluin Chain which is in the territory of Connaught. "At the end of the third three days' fast, sleep overpowered him in the oratory, and in his sleep he heard a voice saying to him: 'Arise!' The first time he did not move. When for the second time he heard the voice he raised his head and made the sign of the cross over his face. Then he saw the church in which he was, all alright, and yet there was still a part of the night. And between the chancel and the altar he saw a shining figure. Said the figure to him, 'Come towards me!' At that voice the cleric's whole body from crown to sole shook. Then all at once he beheld his soul (hovering) over the crown of his head, and knew not which way she had come out of the body. And he saw the church open above towards heaven, and two angels taking the soul between them and rising into the air." . . .⁵⁹

When the Ultonians wanted to awake Cuchulain, who moved in his sleep, Fergus restrained them with these words: "do not disturb him, he is seeing a vision."⁶⁰ Noteworthy in this connection is the story of St. Brendan:

il "alla retirer de l'enfer l'âme de sa mère. Son âme (de Brendan) eut à se battre continuellement avec les démons, jusqu'à ce qu'il retira

⁵⁷ A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la Divination* (Paris, 1879), vol. i, p. 289.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. clxxii and note 3.

⁵⁹ "The Vision of Laisrénn," tr. K. Meyer, *Otia Merseiana*, i (Liverpool, 1899), p. 116.

⁶⁰ Quoted by Plummer, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. clxxii, note 3, from *Irische Texte*, vol. i, p. 208.

sa mère des mains des démons. Pendant ce temps, l'évêque Mainenn gardait son corps. L'esprit de Brendan revint dans son corps tout affligé; et il poussa un soupir. L'évêque Mainenn l'interrogea alors "...."⁶¹

These two instances disclose that the following passage from Cormac's gloss to *Imbas Forosnai* is no more fantastic than those referred to above: the dreamer is watched "in order that no one may interrupt nor distract him till everything about which he is engaged is revealed to him". Possibly, we should also take Lug's promise to keep watch while Cuchulain recovered from his wounds, not in the sense of Lug's fighting against Cuchulain's enemies,⁶² but as guarding his body during his sleep. A similar idea may be contained in the stories of *Ferdiad* and *Mes-gegra* and their charioteers.

More grounds for the necessity of keeping a dreamer under observation can be deduced from Giraldus' description of the Welsh *Awenydhon* because the latter uttered the desired prophecy while rapt in ecstasy or being fast asleep and forgot the revelation when being roused or on awaking.

"There are certain persons in Cambria, whom you will find nowhere else, called *Awenydhon*, or people inspired; when consulted upon any doubtful event, they roar out violently, are rendered beside themselves, and become, as it were, possessed by a spirit. They do not deliver the answer to what is required in a connected manner; but the person who skilfully observes them, will find, after many preambles, and many nugatory and incoherent, though ornamented speeches, the desired explanation conveyed in some turn of a word: they are then roused from their ecstasy, as from a deep sleep, and, as it were, by violence compelled to return to their proper senses. After having answered the questions, they do not recover till violently shaken by other people; nor can they remember the replies they have given. If consulted a second or third time upon the same point, they will make use of expressions totally different; perhaps they speak by the means of fanatic and ignorant spirits. These gifts are usually conferred upon them in dreams."⁶³

Apart from some means by which the "skilful" observer reconstructed the *Awenydhon*'s revelation there is no further indication either about the observer or about his relation to the prophet. Giraldus' assertion,

⁶¹ "Trois Historiettes Irlandaises," J. Vendryes, *Revue Celtique*, xxxi (Paris, 1910), p. 310.

⁶² "Táin," *op. cit.*, p. 182; R. Thurneysen, *Zu Irischen Handschriften* (Berlin, 1912), pp. 54-5.

⁶³ *Description of Wales*, tr. Th. Wright (London, 1863), pp. 501-2.

that the latter did not remember his impressions, is in "The Battle of Crinna" apparently expressed by the phrase "he passed his hand over his face":

Just before the Battle of Crinna "a great obnubilation was conjured up for (Teigue), so that he slept a heavy sleep and that things magic-begotten were shewn to him to enunciate, and power was lent him to declare that which was in store for him. But Cormac, free of sleep, listened to him, et dixit Teigue—' Much valour, much incitement ' After the singing of that lay Teigue awoke; he passed his hand over his face, and said: ' it is time for us to go up to fight the battle.' ' Time it is indeed,' Cormac replied, and chanted a lay: ' The revelations, oh the revelations, that Teigue makes before Crinna's battle '" ⁶⁴

How was the great obnubilation conjured up for Teigue? Through "illumination by rhymes", as MacCulloch supposes? By hypnotical influence of which the druids were certainly aware? Or by intoxicating drinks? ⁶⁵ Two jars full of wine and food brought from the lands of Gaul caused the prophetic inspiration by which Dil, the Druid of the Ossory, betrayed his own tribe thus leading to its defeat at Inneoin. ⁶⁶ These features are not necessarily incredible, as the actual wine-trade between West-Gaul and Ireland has been extensively documented by H. Zimmer. ⁶⁷ Manx customs as well as practices of the modern Greeks suggest that "the food of Gaul" consisted of some thirst-giving salty ingredient. Besides its leading to the consumption of an undue quantity of wine, salt retained its ancient purifying character and continued to play a part in preliminaries to divination. ⁶⁸ Beer was brought to druids engaged upon divination:

When St. Berach's miracles were reported, "Aedan said to his druids: ' Find out who has done these mighty deeds and miracles.' And the druids went on to their hurdles of rowan, and new beer was brought to them. Four was the number of the druids(!) . . . Keating . . . says that

⁶⁴ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 362.

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 249, 324; R. A. St. Macalister, *The Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran* (London, 1921), pp. 149-50; *Irische Texte*, *op. cit.*, vol. iv, Heft 1, p. 333; (Sir) John Rhŷs, *Celtic Heathendom* (London, 1888), pp. 359-60.

⁶⁶ "The Expulsion of the Dessa," tr. K. Meyer, *Y Cymmrodor*, xiv (London, 1901), pp. 119-21.

⁶⁷ *Ueber direkte Handelsverbindungen Westgalliens mit Irland im Altertum und frühen Mittelalter*, *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, xv (Berlin, 1909).

⁶⁸ A. W. Moore, *The Folklore of the Isle of Man* (London, 1891), p. 125; J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 303; Pauly Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, 2. Reihe, vol. i (Stuttgart, 1920), "Salz," pp. 2093-4.

this was the most potent form of druidic divination, and was only resorted to when everything else had failed. . . . This is what they would do, namely, make round hurdles of rowan, and spread over them the hides of sacrificed bulls with the fleshy (or inner) side uppermost, and so proceed to summon the demons to extract information from them. And hence, adds Keating, it became a proverb to say of any one who has done his utmost to obtain information . . . that he has gone on to his hurdles of knowledge." . . .⁶⁹

As the round hurdles combine the evil-averting virtue residing in the rowan-tree with that of the fortress-like magic circle, they were certainly meant as a powerful protection for the druids, who were believed to be exposed to great danger while "conjuring" spirits.

Whatever may be the explanation for the cause of Teigue's revelation, "adventitious aids were introduced to distract the mind from its preoccupation and to allow it to escape into that state of receptiveness in which revelation . . . can come with the flash of illumination" . . . because "prophecy in its lower forms is not always at a man's command".⁷⁰

Of great interest for our immediate purpose is Teigue's relation to Cormac. Since communication through the senses was established between them, as well as between the Welsh Awenydyhon and his observer, we are not entitled to speak of telepathy. Nevertheless, it seems that no words would better characterise their different rôles than the terms used by modern science in relation to telepathy, namely "sender" or "agent" and "receiver" or "recipient".⁷¹ There is only one indication which could help us to form a conviction as to what may have qualified Teigue for a "sender" of prophecy: Teigue is the son of Cormac's sister and his heir. Sir John Rhŷs concluded from the frequently mentioned social arrangement, that the sister's son becomes the successor:

the "community appears to have recognised no paternity; but to have reckoned descent by birth alone; it is possible, however, that at a previous stage in its history the family was constituted on strictly matriarchal lines".⁷²

⁶⁹ Plummer, *Lives of Irish Saints* (Oxford, 1922), vol. ii, p. 33 ("Life of Berach"); Plummer, V. S. H., *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. cliv, note 5, quoted from Keating, ii, pp. 348-50.

⁷⁰ Guillaume, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁷¹ J. B. Rhine, *New Frontiers of the Mind* (London, 1938), pp. 177-8.

⁷² Sir John Rhŷs and D. Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh People* (London, 1900), p. 54.

There are two instances for the understanding of which it is essential to bear in mind the almost mystic communion which existed between a king and his nephew :

In the "Táin" there is a short reference to the lad Cuchulain's being appointed to sit between the two feet of Conchobar (his mother's brother), after having performed certain initiation-rites.⁷³

Geoffrey recorded : "At the end of two years, Edwin asked permission of Kadwallon to make himself a crown, which he could wear when he did reverence on the festivals of the saints beyond the hymyr, according to the right of kings before them. And a conference was appointed for the wise men of the district to meet on the banks of the River named Dylas to consider the matter. And there Kadwallon put his head on the knee of Braint, son of Nefyn, his nephew. And Braint hir (the tall) wept until the tears fell on Kadwallon's face so that he awoke thinking that there was rain. And then the king asked Braint why he wept. Then said he : 'Cause of weeping will the bryttaniait have from this day on ; for thou hast given up that which was of highest dignity for thyself and thy nation . . . in giving permission to these ssaesson, deceivers, traitors, faith-breaking pagans, themselves to make a king ; and then they will combine together and by their deceit and craft will conquer the whole of ynys brydain. And for this reason it had been better to thee to oppress rather than favour them.' . . . And when Braint ended speaking, Kadwallon sent messengers to Edwin to tell him that the council would not permit that there should be any crown in ynys brydain except the crown of Llundai."⁷⁴

It is certainly not accidental that this scene took place on the banks of a river. Braint's psychic activity, occurring in ideas rather than in pictures, should, according to Schleiermacher, be regarded as a characteristic part of the waking state.⁷⁵ The complicated nature of the contact by which Kadwallon's will-power was so strengthened that he resisted Edwin's demands, points, perhaps, to Geoffrey's not rightly understanding the older texts from which he drew. Or did he remember St. Augustine who concluded a story about the spirit's departure in sleep with these words : "And thus, that was exhibited to one by phantastic image while waking, which the other saw in dream?"⁷⁶

According to the Irish legend, "The Destruction", king Conaire was

⁷³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 67, 78.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 513-5.

⁷⁵ *Psychologie*, ed. L. George (Berlin, 1862), p. 351, quoted by S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. A. A. Brill, 3rd ed. (London, 1913), p. 40.

⁷⁶ *De Civitate Dei*, xviii, 18, quoted by (Sir) E. B. Tylor, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 441.

capable of foreseeing the future after having slept in a most unusual position. At first sight it seems as if the king was so fortified by his rest that he could understand and interpret the ominous howl of his dog. But in the light of our studies it is more conceivable that the king describes pictures just seen in a dream.

Just before the attack by Ingéél and his band of pirates on Dá Derga's Hostel, Conaire was in the midst between his two fosterers, Dris and Sniithe, " both of them, fair, with their hair and eyelashes ; and they are as bright as snow. A very lovely blush on the cheek of each of the twain." . . . " The tender warrior was asleep, with his feet in the lap of one of the two men and his head in the lap of the other. Then he awoke out of his sleep, and arose, and chanted this lay :

" The howl of Ossar (Conaire's lapdog) . . . cry of warriors on the summit of Tol Géisse ; a cold wind over edges perilous : a night to destroy a king is this night."

He slept again, and awoke thereout, and sang this rhetoric :

" The howl of Ossar . . . a battle he announced : enslavement of a people : sack of the Hostel : mournful are the champions : men wounded : wind of terror : hurling of javelins : trouble of unfair fight : wreck of houses : Tara waste : a foreign heritage : like (is) lamenting Conaire : destruction of corn : feast of arms : cry of screams : destruction of Erin's king : chariots a-tottering : oppression of the king of Tara : lamentations will overcome laughter : Ossar's howl."

He said the third time :

" Trouble hath been shewn to me : a multitude of elves : a host supine : foes' prostration : a conflict of men on the Dodder : oppression of Tara's king : in youth he was destroyed : lamentations will overcome laughter : Ossar's howl."⁷⁷

The position of the sleeping king should not be dismissed as poetical imagination, since in the *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales* a foot-holder is enumerated among the members of a king's attendants :

" He is to hold the King's feet in his lap, from the time he shall begin to sit at the banquet, until he goes to sleep . . . and during that space of time, he is to guard the King against every mischance."⁷⁸

A faded memory of this custom can be found in the Mabinogion :

Math, the son of Mathonwy, the lord over Gwynedd, " could not live save while his two feet were in the hollow of a maiden's abdomen, except only when the strife of war prevented him."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 202, 208.

⁷⁸ Tr. Aneurin Owen (London, 1841), p. 29.

⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 100.

Another version of "The Destruction" is noteworthy because Conaire's position is depicted in a different way :

"I beheld a couch there, and fairer was its covering (?) than (that of, the other couches of the house, that is, three beautiful quilts and three blankets over them : a bolster at its head, another at the wall. I beheld a wondrous warrior on the couch ; and many marvellous coverings, and with him on the couch a pair, the outer pair. White were the twain, with heads of hair and mantles, and bright as snow was the beautiful flush on the cheek of each of them. The wondrous warrior on the couch, never saw I human form that was like to him. . . . Pillows of gold were placed all around him."⁸⁰

The white mantles of Conaire's fosterers, similar to the white robes of the druids, were probably worn in order that the colour of purity might protect them when dealing with supernatural beings.⁸¹ The "many marvellous coverings" are rather striking but too vaguely described to allow inferences. A bed was also mentioned in one version of the bull-feast at Tara. Do both these references go back to Pausanias' remark about the couch which stood in the temple of Aesculapius at Tithorea and was used for incubation?⁸² And were they inserted in order to replace more primitive and crude customs?

But wherever the dreamer may have been resting, he was certainly isolated from the ground, just as the king sitting with his feet in the foot-holder's lap and as the men who were wrapped in a hide or lying upon one. (The neutralising power of a hide was used for isolating the evil forces of a "paricida" in the days of Cicero).⁸³ A similar endeavour may also underlie the custom of resting between two pillar-stones while touching them simultaneously with head and feet. The evidence for this usage is extremely scanty :

Condla Coel Corrbacc was on the island, leaning his head against a pillar-stone in the western part of the island and the feet against a pillar-stone in its eastern part.⁸⁴ . . .

"When (Cuchulain) was a gilla, he slept not in Emain Macha till morning. 'Tell me,' Conchobar said to him, 'why sleepest thou not in Emain Macha, Cuchulain?' 'I sleep not, unless it be equally high at

⁸⁰ Tr. Wh. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, xxii, p. 397.

⁸¹ Pliny, *H. N.*, xvi, 44; *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. Wh. Stokes (London, 1887), vol. ii, pp. 325-6; Mengis, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

⁸² (x, 32, 12), *op. cit.*, vol. v, p. 549; L. F. A. Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1864), p. 240.

⁸³ H. J. Rose, *Primitive Culture in Italy* (London, 1926), pp. 183-4.

⁸⁴ *Irische Texte*, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, Heft 1 (Leipzig, 1884), p. 200.

my head and my feet.' Then Conchobar had a pillar-stone set up at his head and another at his feet, and between them a bed apart was made for him. . . . The broil of war arose between Ulster and Eogan son of Durthacht. The Ulstermen go forth to the war. The lad (Cuchulain) is left behind asleep. The men of Ulster are beaten. . . . Their groans awaken the lad. Thereat he stretches himself, so that the two stones are snapped that are near him."⁸⁵ . . .

Can these incidents be linked up with the erecting of two pillar-stones on a grave? Conchobar's grave is on the brink of the ford of Daire Dá Báeth, " where he fell, and a pillar-stone at his head, and another at his feet."⁸⁶

Before concluding this investigation the notion deserves our attention that spiritual capacities can be miraculously enhanced by physical contact; either by bringing one's head into contact with another person's lap (as Conaire did), or through implanting one's feet upon the feet of a person credited with superior insight.

Waldron has described the game "Cutting off the Fiddler's Head" as follows: "On Twelfth-day the Fiddler lays his head in some one of the wenches' laps, and a third person asks who such a maid or such a maid shall marry, naming the girls then present one after another, to which he answers according to his own whim, or agreeable to the intimacies he has taken notice of during this time of merriment. But whatever he says is as absolutely depended on as an oracle."⁸⁷

A charming anecdote reflects how a Celtic saint attempted with fine feeling to modify pagan conceptions:

When a little boy appealed to St. Aengus to help him to learn the Psalms by heart, the saint advised him: "put thy head on my knee, and go to sleep." "The boy did so, and afterwards rose up . . . and was not only word-perfect, but repeated more than the lesson set."⁸⁸

Are we not reminded of the well-known experiences of Caedmon, St. Dunstan, and Coleridge?⁸⁹ And, perhaps, also of our own school-days when the school-book under the pillow helped us to face the demands of the next morning with a much easier mind. Not very different is the "external objective sensory stimulus" in the girls' habit of placing on

⁸⁵ " *Táin*," *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1.

⁸⁶ K. Meyer, "The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes," *Todd Lecture Series*, xiv (Dublin, 1906), p. 7.

⁸⁷ Quoted by Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁸⁸ Quoted by G. Hartwell Jones, "Primitive Magic in the Lives of the Celtic Saints," *Trans. Soc. Cymrodotian*, Session 1936 (London, 1937), p. 86.

⁸⁹ Kittredge, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-2, quoted from *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, ed. Stubbs, pp. 40-2, cf. 48-9.

Hallowe'en a particular briar-thorn under the pillow, " and the dream to follow will be of the future husband."⁹⁰

Of great interest is the following record (the bulls were presumably originally sacrificed to the well-spirit which was succeeded, as so often, by a Christian saint) :

" According to the Presbytery Records of Applecross, dated Sept. 5, 1656, an inquiry was made into a bitter complaint by the parish minister, of certain superstitious practices prevalent on the island of St. Mhaolrubb. The worthy cleric reported that the people were accustomed to sacrifice bulls on the 25th day of August, the day dedicated to the Saint. After the sacrifice of the animal there were frequent approaches to the chapel ruins and circulating round them. . . . (Those) desirous of knowing their future or good fortune in travels, after depositing an offering in the (Holy) Well tried to force their head into a hole in a round stone. If successful all was well, but misfortune was sure to follow if the attempt failed."⁹¹

Some instances may be given of how visions were revealed to those who stood on the feet of some supernatural being or some person endowed with second sight. Two examples, though not Celtic in origin, are contained in " *Nova Legenda Anglie* ". Sir John Rhŷs told the story of a farmer from Deunant, who, by standing on a fairy's foot, could get a glimpse of the fairy world. Somewhat different is the legend how Aengus mac Nadfraich, by laying his face on Enda's feet, was enabled to see the isle of Aran, though many miles away.⁹²

From a Welsh MS of the earlier part of the sixteenth century we learn that second sight might be imparted from one to another :

in the Isle of Man " there oft by daye tyme, men of that islonde seen men that bey dede to forehonde, byheded or hole, and what dethe they deyde. Alyens settentheyr feet upon feet of the men of that londe, for to see such syghtes as the men of that londe doon ".⁹³

The implanting of the foot is a symbol of subjection ; the basic idea of this action lies in the wide-spread belief that the various faculties of the subjected person can be transferred to the dominating one.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Leland L. Duncan, " Notes from County Leitrim," *Folk-Lore*, v (London, 1894), p. 196.

⁹¹ Quoted by A. D. Lacaille, " The Bull in Scottish Folklore," *Folk-Lore*, xli (London, 1930), p. 228.

⁹² Ed. C. Horstman (Oxford, 1901), vol. i, p. 101 ; vol. ii, p. 413 ; *Celtic Folklore*, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 230 ; Plummer, V. S. H., *op. cit.*, p. clxxi, note 9, quoted from *Vita Sancti Endei*, § 13.

⁹³ Dalyell, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

⁹⁴ Goldmann, " *Fusstreten* ", *Handwörterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens*, vol. iii (Berlin, 1930-1931), p. 243.