

# Finding Brighid in the Ancient Lore

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*An annotated collection of direct or indirect references to goddesses and women named Brighid, Brig, Brid or Bride from pre-Christian Irish and Scottish lore*

The Nine Elements of Clann Bhríde note that we revere Brighid in all Her forms and by all Her names. But what are those forms and names? To find them, most seekers turn first to the ancient lore that survives from Ireland and other Celtic areas. However, for such a popular goddess, Brighid appears in remarkably few of the old stories. In fact, a great deal of what we “know” about the Goddess Brighid actually comes from stories of Saint Brigit, who Clann Bhríde considers to be an avatar of the Goddess.

This essay compiles the references to Brighid’s various names found in ancient Irish and Scottish lore, some of which are quite obscure, and places them in the context of their relevance to the goddess Brighid.

## The Three Brigits of the Tuatha De Danann

### ➤ [Sanas Cormaic](#) (*Cormac’s Glossary*)

*Cormac’s Glossary* is a collection of words and phrases, likely compiled in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This passage about Brighid is the source of our modern interpretation of Her as a goddess of poetry or wisdom, healing, and smithcraft.

*Brigit i.e. a poetess, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigit the female sage, or woman of wisdom, i.e. Brigit the goddess whom poets adored, because very great and very famous was her protecting care. It is therefore they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigit the female physician [woman of leechcraft,] Brigit the female smith [woman of smithwork] ; from whose names with all Irishmen a goddess was called Brigit. Brigit, then, breo-aigit, breo-shaigit, ‘a fiery arrow’.<sup>1</sup>*

### ➤ [Cath Maige Tuired](#) (*The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*)

The *Cath Maige Tuired* is the story of the battle between the Brighid’s tribe, the Tuatha De Danann, and an invading force, the Fomorians. It is believed to be composed of materials written in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was later translated into English by Elizabeth A. Gray.

**Brighid’s Marriage to Bres:** Although She is not mentioned by name, Verse 14 is the source of the idea that Brighid was married to Bres to make peace with the Fomoir:

*There was contention regarding the sovereignty of the men of Ireland between the Tuatha De and their wives, since Nuadu was not eligible for kingship after his hand had been cut off. They said that it would be appropriate for them to give the kingship to Bres the son of Elatha, to their own adopted*

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1 Breo Saighead, “a fiery arrow.” Like the other etymologies in *Cormac’s Glossary*, this has no value as etymology, but does show that the goddess Brighid was associated with fire.

son, and that giving him the kingship would knit the Fomorians' alliance with them, since his father Elatha mac Delbaith was king of the Fomoiré...

**The Death of Brighid's Son:** Verses 122-125 describe the death of Brighid's son, Ruadan, and mentions parenthetically, that Brighid invented a whistle for signaling at night:

*One thing which became evident to the Fomoiré in the battle seemed remarkable to them. Their weapons, their spears and their swords, were blunted; and those of their men who were killed did not come back the next day. That was not the case with the Tuatha De Danann: although their weapons were blunted one day, they were restored the next because Goibniu the smith was in the smithy making swords and spears and javelins. He would make those weapons with three strokes. Then Luchta the carpenter would make the spearshafts in three chippings, and the third chipping was a finish and would set them in the socket of the spear. After the spearheads were in the side of the forge he would throw the sockets with the shafts, and it was not necessary to set them again. Then Credne the brazier would make the rivets with three strokes, and he would throw the sockets of the spears at them, and it was not necessary to drill holes for them; and they stayed together this way.*

*Now this is what used to kindle the warriors who were wounded there so that they were more fiery the next day: Dian Cecht, his two sons Octriuil and Miach, and his daughter Airmed were chanting spells over the well named Slaine. They would cast their mortally-wounded men into it as they were struck down; and they were alive when they came out. Their mortally-wounded were healed through the power of the incantation made by the four physicians who were around the well.*

*Now that was damaging to the Fomoiré, and they picked a man to reconnoitre the battle and the practices of the Tuatha De--Ruadan, the son of Bres and of Brig, the daughter of the Dagda--because he was a son and a grandson of the Tuatha De. Then he described to the Fomoiré the work of the smith and the carpenter and the brazier and the four physicians who were around the well. They sent him back to kill one of the aes dana, Goibniu. He requested a spearpoint from him, its rivets from the brazier, and its shaft from the carpenter; and everything was given to him as he asked. Now there was a woman there grinding weapons, Cron the mother of Fianlach; and she ground Ruadan's spear. So the spear was given to Ruadan by his maternal kin, and for that reason a weaver's beam is still called "the spear of the maternal kin" in Ireland.*

*But after the spear had been given to him, Ruadan turned and wounded Goibniu. He pulled out the spear and hurled it at Ruadan so that it went through him; and he died in his father's presence in the Fomorian assembly. Brig came and keened for her son. At first she shrieked, in the end she wept. Then for the first time weeping and shrieking were heard in Ireland. (Now she is the Brig who invented a whistle for signalling at night.)*

➤ **Lebor Gabála Éirenn (The Book of the Takings of Ireland, The Book of Invasions)**

The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* tells the story of the various groups who invaded Ireland, including Brighid's people, the Tuatha De Danann. There are several different "recensions" or versions of the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, the oldest of which dates to c. 1150.

**Brighid's Animals:** This passage, the only one that mentions Brighid directly, can be found in three of the recensions, with slightly different wording in each. Triath is also known as Orc Triath or Torc Triath, which identifies him with Twrc Trwyth, the monstrous boar from the *Mabinogion*.

*Brigid the poetess, daughter of The Dagda, she it is who had Fea and Femen, the two oxen of Dil, from whom are named Mag Fea and Mag Femen. With them was Triath, king of the swine, from whom is Tretherne. Among them were heard three demon voices in Ireland after plunder, to wit, whistling and outcry and groaning.*

*Cirb, king of the wethers, from whom is Mag Cirb. With them was Cermna Brecach.*

*Flidais, from whom is named the kine of Flidais, her four daughters were Ardan and Be Chuille and Danann and Be Tete.*

*Among the Tuatha De Danann there came shouting and outcry and barking. Shouting for fear of capture, barking against mischief and plunder, outcry for a fitting lamentation of their affliction.*

**The Three Gods:** The Three Gods are often called the Children of Tuireann. In this passage, they are identified as the sons of Bres, which could make them sons of Brighid as well. This is the source of claims that Brighid is identical to Danu or that She was the wife of Tuireann.

*These were the three gods of Danu from whom they were named, to wit the three sons of Bres son of Elatha, or the three sons of Tuirell Biccreeo, Brian, Iuchar, Iucharba.*

**Brigi Son of Brig:** This passage is from the section on the genealogy of the Milesians. Some of the figures named in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* as Milesian ancestors are also named elsewhere as Tuatha De Danann (for instance, Nuada). This passage mentions a Bres, and a Brigi who may have been the son of Brig and father of Bile.

*Those are the names of the ten champions; Bres, Búas, Buaigne, the three sons of Tigernbard s. Brigi s. Breogan.*

*Or perhaps Brigi s. Brig had a son Bile.*

**The Wives of Bres:** This is a passage from the “Song of Amergin”. It can be read as an indication that Bres was married to all three Brighids, not just Brighid the poetess. Amergin’s reference to the “wives of Bres” may be connected to his role as a lawgiver. Amergin is said to have made the first legal judgment ever given in Ireland. Poets continued to act as judges until they were deprived of this privilege in later times, so it is only natural for Brighid’s name to be associated with legal judgments as well as poetry. The *Senchus Mor* lists the judgments of Brig Ambue as being among the traditional laws retained when the poets were deprived of their role as judges (see below).

*An incantation very cunning,  
The great cunning of the wives of Bres,  
Of Bres, of the wives of Buaigne...*

### ➤ **Imcallam in da Thurad** (*Colloquy of the Two Sages*)

**The Three Gods:** The *Colloquy of the Two Sages*, found in the *Book of Leinster* from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, is the story of the confrontation between an elder druid and a student who are competing for a position of honor. This passage, Section X, Verses 129 – 139, is another reference to the Three Gods, connecting them to poetry and thus to Brighid.

*I am son of Poetry,  
Poetry son of Scrutiny,*

*Scrutiny son of Meditation,  
Meditation son of Lore,  
Lore son of Enquiry,  
Enquiry son of Investigation,  
Investigation son of Great-Knowledge,  
Great-Knowledge son of Great-Sense,  
Great-Sense son of Understanding,  
Understanding son of Wisdom,  
Wisdom, son of the three gods of Poetry.*

**The Three Gods (Gloss on the *Colloquy of the Two Sages*):** Many ancient and medieval texts include additional comments or “glosses” by later copyists. Glosses often contain information preserved in the oral tradition and included by the glossator for the benefit of readers who may not otherwise fully understand the passage. Translations often include the original text but leave out the glosses, which unfortunately removes a lot of the context for interpreting the text. This is a gloss explaining the phrase “three gods of poetry” and confirming that it refers to three sons of Brighid and Bres, also known as the Children of Tuireann. It can be found on the [Celtic Literature Collective website](#).

*The three sons of Brigit the woman-poet, that is Brian and Iuchar and Úar, the sons of Bress son of Eladan and Brigit the woman-poet, daughter of the Great Dagda, king of Ireland (was) their mother. And the name Ruad Rofessa (Red One of Great Knowledge), is given to him [the Dagda] here, or Cermait, and Díarmuit, and Áed (fire). Brigit, daughter of Ruad Rofessa, that is, a name of the Dagda. Ruad Rofessa the son of all arts, that is a son who has all art.*

## The Three Brigits of Ulster

Several ancient Irish legal texts refer to three women named Brig (a version of Brigit): Brig Briugu, Brig Brethach and Brig Ambue. Unlike the three daughters of the Dagda these Brigits are described as being human women, minor characters in the Ulster Cycle of heroic legends. However, there are details in the stories of these women that hint at a connection to the goddess. For instance, the three Ulster Brigits are all legendary judges, a function associated with poetry in Irish lore. They are the mother, wife and daughter of a famous judge named Sencha, whose name literally means Lore or Tradition. The idea behind this pattern may be that Lore is the son, husband, and father of Poetry.

In these stories about the three Ulster Brigits, the name Brig Brethach or “Brigit of the Judgments” is used loosely for all three women. Sencha’s mother is also called Brig Briugu (under several alternate spellings), and is also described as a “Brewy”:

The briugu or hospitaller in early Irish society was defined by his - or in this case her - possession of great herds of cattle and other livestock. As the richest non-noble land-owner in the local kingdom or tuath the hospitaller was bound by custom to offer hospitality to travellers, both visiting dignitaries and wandering scholars, unemployed soldiers or beggars.<sup>2</sup>

Sencha’s daughter is sometimes called Brig Ambue or Bri Ambui or Brighi. His wife is never known by any name except Brig Brethach. To determine which of the three Brigits is intended you would need to note whether the text refers to Sencha’s mother, wife, or daughter.

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2 Katharine Simms, *Brig Brethach: ‘Brig of the Judgements’*, undated presentation.

## ➤ *Senchus Mor* (*The Great Tradition*)

The *Senchus Mor*, found in the Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland, is a collection of legal judgements from Ireland, dating from before the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There are three women named Brig mentioned in the *Senchus Mor*, all of whom are judges, or law-givers. As noted above, because of the similarity of their names and their relationship to Sencha or “Lore,” these women can be interpreted as facets of the goddess Brighid.

**Brig Briugu:** This passage describes a judgement regarding a legal procedure for claiming property, called a “distress”. The law-giver in this case was Brig Briugu.<sup>3</sup>

*Distress of two days for the price of the produce of the hand, for wages, for weaving, for the blessing of one woman on the work of another, for every material which is on the spindles, for the flax spinning stick, for the wool spinning stick, for the wool-bag, for the weaver’s reed, for all the implements of weaving, for the flax scotching stick, for the distaff, for the spool-stick, for the flyers of the spinningwheel, for the yarn, for the reel of the spinner, for the border, for the pattern of her handiwork, for the wallet with its contents, for the basket, for the leather scoop, for the rods, for the hoops, for the needle, for the ornamented thread, for the looking-glass which one woman borrows from another, for the black and white cat, for the lap-dog of a queen, for attending in the field, for supplying a weapon – for it is about the true right of women that the field of battle was first entered. Thus far we have mentioned the distresses of two days, as decided by Brigh Briughaidh, who dwelt at Feisin, and by Sencha, son of Ailell, son of Culclain, to whom the Ulstermen submitted. It was by these one day was added to the two days, for the truth of the Feini would have perished, if the three days had not been allowed; for no one could distinguish his own right, or his neighbor’s right, or his wisdom, or his property, though he might have it under his protection, in consequence of the suddenness of one day..*

*The latter do not become lawful by judgment; it is upon judgment their law is; all animals which bear twins are estimated by their equivalents as decided by Brigh Briughaidh who dwelt at Fesen; every distress of two days shall have its right upon four days ; its delay in pound upon eight days.*

*As decided by Brigh Bruighaidh, i.e. a female Brewy, and the female author of the true mode of taking lawful possession. Who dwelt at Fesen, i.e. she was at Magh Deisitín in Uladh, i.e. it was the name of the fort.*

### **Brig Brethach**

*Thus far we have mentioned the distresses of two days, i.e. Hitherto has been ordained or established a stay of two days upon the distress which was adjudged by Brigh, the female Brewy, the mother of Sencha, and Brigh Brethach, his wife. As decided by Brigh Briugaidh, i.e. the female author of the men of Erin, i.e. full judging... And by Sencha, son of Ailell, i.e. her husband, i.e. the son of the man who turned men from blemished or false covenants, or who had a peculiar merit, i.e. a merit which changed every one through his knowledge.*

### **The Judgments of Brig Ambue**

*The poets were then deprived of the judicature, except their proper share of it, and each of the men of Erin took his own part of the judicature, as did the authors of the following judgments: The*

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3 “Brig Briugu” is an alternate spelling of “Brigh Bruighaidh”, and is the spelling used most by academic authors.

*judgments of Eochaidh MacLuchta, and the judgments of Fachtna Mac-Senchath, and the false judgments of Carat-Nia Teiscthi, and the judgments of Morann son of Main, and the judgments of Eoghan MacDurthacht, and the judgments of Doet of Neimhthinn, and the judgments of Brigh Ambue,<sup>4</sup> and the judgments of Diancecht, the physician, which, indeed, were first of all.*

## **The Words of Brig**

*Brig Ambue<sup>5</sup> was a female author of wisdom and prudence among the men of Erin. From her is named Briathra Brighi, etc.<sup>6</sup> After her came Connla Cainbhrethach, chief doctor of Connaught; he excelled the men of Erin in wisdom, for he was filled with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he used to contend with the Druids, who said that it was they that made heaven and earth, and the sea, &c., and the sun and moon...*

**The Candle of Knowledge:** This passage doesn't refer directly to one of the Brigs. The purpose of the passage is to explain the name of the famous judge Sencha MacAilella, son of Brig Briugu, husband of Brig Brethach and father of Brig Ambue. As such, the references to a "candle of bright knowledge" seem very relevant. The name actually means "lore" or "tradition." A later Brigit, Great Brid of the Horses, was also married to someone with a similar name – Senchan Torpeist. The Sencha figures may represent the Dagda in some way.

*Tradition from ear to ear, i.e. the transmission of bright knowledge to preserve it. i.e. the lighted candle of bright knowledge, i.e. each preserving it, i.e. the conveyance of bright knowledge from one of them to the other from Kossa, and from Dubhthach, and from Fergus; or, it was they who had the other bright knowledge, i.e. the written law ; nr, the bright knowledge of one master to another, i.e. to the disciple; or, the repository in which is arranged to be stored up and preserved what is called Senchus, i.e. the storehouse in which this famous knowledge was arranged and treasured up for preservation ; for hearing is conveying.*

**Cuicthi:** This passage is also about Brig Ambue, as she is described as Sencha's daughter. Thus, Brig Ambue married Cuchullain at some point – probably after the death of her husband Celtchar (see below).

*Why is the distress of five days always more usual than any other distress ? On account of the combat fought between two in Magh-inis. When they had all things ready for plying their arms, except a witness alone, they met a woman at the place of combat, and she requested of them to delay, saying, "If it were my husband that was there, I would compel you to delay." " I would delay," said one of them, " but it would be prejudicial to the man who sues me ; it is his cause that*

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4 According to Katharine Simms:

Professor Liam Breatnach, in his *Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, reports that he has searched in vain for a specific text or fragments of a text called *Bretha Bríge Ambue* 'the judgements of Bríg the Propertiless' and considers that it may never have existed formally but instead refers generally to a series of 'judgements attributed to this mythical personage rather than to any particular text'. The judgements themselves are concerned with adapting the general provisions of customary law to the particular needs of women.

5 According to Katharine Simms:

Another mythical Bríg mentioned in the law tracts is 'Bríg *Ambue*, Bríg the cowless, or the propertiless, 'the female expert of the men of Ireland in wisdom and prudence' as she is called in a version of the 'pseudo-historical' prologue to the *Senchus Már*, which cites as one of its sources '*Bretha Bríge Ambue*' 'the judgements of Bríg the propertiless' from which she derived a further nickname Bríg *Brethach*, Bríg of the judgements. Her epithet of 'cowless' or 'propertiless' serves to distinguish her from Bríg the hospitaller, who was associated with riches, livestock and hospitality, and to make her instead the patron of the wandering scholars or the warrior class.

6 This phrase means "The Words of Brig." It refers to a body of legal judgments.

would be delayed.” “ I will delay,” said the other. The combat was then put-off, but they did not know to what time it was put off, until Conchubhur and Sencha passed judgment respecting it; and Sencha asked “ What is the name of this woman?” “Cuicthi,” said she, “is my name.” “ Let the combat be delayed,” said Sencha, “ in the name of the woman, for five days.” From which is derived - “ The truth of the men of the Feini would have perished, had it not been for Cuicthi.” It is Brigh that is here called Cuicthi.

*Why is the distress, i.e. why is a stay of five days attached to the distress? i.e. for stay for warning; for warning it was done... On account of the combat, i.e. on account of the combat which was fought or agreed upon, between the two at Magh-inis, the name of the place; or these two were Conall Caernach and Laeghaire Buadhach. When they had all things ready for plying their arms, i.e. when they came to the field to strike each other with their weapons. Except a witness alone, i.e. There was nothing to delay them from engaging in the combat except that they had not a witness. They met a woman at the place of combat, i.e. a woman met them near the field of battle ; it was the wife of Cuchullainn that was there, i.e. Brighi, daughter of Sencha, i.e. Cuicthi, daughter of Sencha; or it was Niamh, daughter of Cealtair. She requested, i.e. she entreated of them to delay. Saying, “If it were my husband who was there,” i.e. she exclaimed, “If it were my husband that was there,” said she, “ I would force you to delay, if ye would not do so of your own accord.” “I would delay,” i.e. “ I at least would delay,” said one of the men, i.e. said the defendant, Conall. “But it would be prejudicial,” i.e. “but it is difficult for the man who is suing me to delay; it is his cause that will be delayed, if delay be made.” “I will delay,” i.e. “I will delay, too,” said he, i.e. Said Laeghaire. The combat was then put off, i.e. they therefore deferred the combat in the field. But they did not know to what time, i.e. but they did not know how long it was enjoined on them to delay it. Passed judgment, i.e. they submitted to the adjudication of Sencha and Conchubhur, and they told them of their having been prevented respecting it (the combat). Sencha asked, “What is the name of this woman?” i.e. and Sencha asked “What is the name of the woman,” said he, “ who came up with you to stop the combat which was fixed on there?” (for she was his own daughter, and there was a veil between him and her). “Cuicthi,” said she, “is my name.” “Let the combat be put off,” i.e. “let there be a stop put to the combat,” said Sencha, i.e. if there were not established law this is what would happen there ; but if there were, it is the same as three days upon meeting a king or a bishop, as stated below, and it would not be for the period expressed by the name of this woman. What is the reason that there are five days on account of meeting the woman here, and that there are only three days on account of meeting a king or a bishop below ? The reason is, the combat was entered into below, and it was not here ; or, the five days here are equal to the three days which are mentioned in the Heptiads upon meeting a king or a bishop, i.e. one natural day and four artificial days. From which is derived, i.e. it is from this circumstance is derived that their truth would die from the Feini, or their truth would die from the heroes, i.e. The thing to which they would be entitled, had not a stay of five days been allowed for the distress, as the combat was put off on account of the coming up of Cuicthi, i.e. this is the perfect true rule by which a stay of five days is given for the distress, or for prohibiting the combat in the name of Cuicthi. If there was not established law this is what would happen, but if there was established law, they should be regulated according to it; or, either of the two men would have perished in truth, i.e. Conall or Laeghaire.*

➤ [Aided Cheltchair meic Uthechair](#) (The Tragic Death of Celtchar mac Uthechair, from *Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, translated by Kuno Meyer)<sup>7</sup>

**Brig Ambue:** All three of the Ulster Brighs are referred to loosely in these stories as Brig Brethach. We know the Brig in this passage was actually Brig Ambue because other sources name

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<sup>7</sup> For a modern re-telling of this tale, see <https://headofdonnbo.wordpress.com/2015/08/28/the-tragic-death-of-celtchar-mac-uthechair/>.

Brig Ambue as Celtchar's wife. In this tale, she plays the role of a femme fatale who sets off the tragic chain of events for some unknown reason. The death tale of Celtchar is from the 12th-century *Book of Leinster*. Meyer notes that the existing copy is "fragmentary and illegible," so the original version may have provided an explanation for Brig Ambue's actions that has since been lost.

*Whence is the tragical death of Celtchar mac Uthechair? Not hard to tell. There was a famous man of the men of Ulster, even Blái the Hospitaller. He owned seven herds of cattle, seven score kine in each herd, and a plough-team with each herd. He also kept a guest-house. Now it was a geis for him that a woman should come in a company to his house without his sleeping with her, unless her husband were in her company. Then Brig Brethach, wife of Celtchar, went to his house. 'Not good is what thou hast done, woman,' said Blái the Hospitaller. 'Thy coming to me as thou hast come is a geis to me.' 'it is a wretched man,' said the woman, 'that violates his own gessa.' 'Tis true. I am an old man, and moreover thou art inciting me,' said he. That night he sleeps with her.*

*Celtchar came to know that; and he went to seek his wife. Blái the Hospitaller went until he was by the side of Conchobar in the royal house. Celtchar also went until he was on the floor of the royal house. There were Conchobar and Cáchulinn playing a game of fidchell; and Blái the Hospitaller's chest was over the play-board between them. And Celtchar plants a spear through him so that it stuck in the wattle of the wall behind him, so that a drop (of blood) from the point of the spear fell upon the board.*

*'Forsooth, Cúchulinn!' said Conchobar. 'Indeed, then, Conchobar!' said Cúchulinn. The board is measured from the drop hither and thither to know to which of them it was nearer. Now the drop was nearer to Conchobar, and it was the longer till revenge. Blái the Hospitaller, however, died. Celtchar escaped until he was in the land of the Déisi of Munster in the south.*

*'This is bad, O Conchobar!' said the men of Ulster. 'This means the ruin of the Déisi. It was enough that we should lose the man who has died, and let Celtchar come (back) to his land,' said the men of Ulster. 'Let him come, then,' said Conchobar; 'and let his son go for him, and let him be his safeguard.' At that time with the men of Ulster a father's crime was not laid upon his son, nor a son's crime upon the father. So he went to summon him until he was in the south.*

*'Wherefore hast thou come, my son?' said Celtchar. 'That thou mayst come to thy land,' said the lad. 'What is my safeguard?' 'I,' said the lad. 'True,' said he. 'Subtle is the treachery which the men of Ulster practise upon me, that I should go on my son's guarantee.' 'Subtle shall be his name and the name of his offspring,' said the druid. 'Wait, lad,' said Celtchar, 'and I will go (with thee).'*

*This is done, and hence is Semuinea in the land of the Déisi.*

*However, this is the fine which was demanded for Blái the Hospitaller, to free them from the three worst pests that would come into Ulster in his time.*

*Then Conganchnes mac Dedad went to avenge his brother, even Curoi son of Daire mac Dedad, upon the men of Ulster. He devastated Ulster greatly. Spears or swords hurt him not, but sprang from him as from horn.*

*'Free us from this pest, O Celtchar!' said Conchobar. 'Surely I will,' said Celtchar. And on a certain day he went to converse with the Horny-skin so that he beguiled him, promising to him his daughter, even Niam daughter of Celtchar, as well as a dinner for a hundred every afternoon to be supplied to him. Then the woman beguiled him, saying to him: 'Tell me,' she said, 'how you may be killed.' 'Red-hot iron spits have to be thrust into my soles and through my shins.' Then she told her father that he should have two large spits made, and a sleeping spell put upon them, and that he should*

*gather a large host to himself. And so it was done. And they went on their bellies, and the spears were thrust into his soles with sledge-hammers and right through his marrow, so that he fell by him. And Celtchar cut off his head, over which a cairn was raised, viz, a stone was placed by every man that came there.*

*And this is the second pest, even the Dun Mouse, viz, a whelp which the son of the widow had found in the hollow of an oak, and which the widow had reared till it was big. At last then it turned upon the sheep of the widow; and it killed her kine, and her son, and killed herself, and then went to the Glen of the Great Sow. Every night it would devastate a liss in Ulster, and every day it lay asleep. 'Free us from it, O Celtchar!' said Conchobar. And Celtchar went into a wood and brought out a log of alder; and a hole was dug in it as long as his arms, and he boiled it in fragrant herbs and in honey and in grease until it was soft and tough. Celtchar went towards the cave in which the Dun Mouse used to sleep, and he enters the cave early before the Dun Mouse came after the slaughter. It came, and its snout raised high in the air at the smell of the wood. And Celtchar pushes the wood out through the cave towards it. The hound takes it in his jaws, and puts his teeth into it, and the teeth gave in the tough wood. Celtchar pulls the wood towards him; and the hound pulls at the other side; and Celtchar puts his arm along the log (inside) and took its heart out through its jaws so that he had it in his hand. And he took its head with him.*

*And that day, at the end of a year afterwards, cow-herds were by the side of the cairn of Horny-skin, and heard the squealing of whelps in the cairn. And they dug up the cairn and found three whelps in it, viz, a dun hound, and a hound with small spots, and a black hound. The hound with the small spots was given as a present to Mac Datho of Leinster; and for its sake multitudes of the men of Ireland fell in the house of Mac Datho, and Ailbe was the name of that hound. And it would be to Culand the smith that the dun hound was given, and the black hound was Celtchar's own Dóelchú. It let no man take hold of it save Celtchar. Once upon a time Celtchar was not at home, and the hound was let out, and the people of his household could not catch it; and it turned among the cattle and the flocks, and at last it would destroy a living creature every night in Ulster.*

*'Free us from that pest, O Celtchar!' said Conchobar. Celtchar went towards the glen in which the hound was, and a hundred warriors with him, and three times he calls the hound until they saw it coming towards them, making straight for Celtchar until it was licking his feet. 'It is sad, indeed, what the hound does,' said all. 'I will no longer be incriminated for thy sake!' said Celtchar, giving it a blow with the lúin of Celtchar, so that he brought out its heart, whereupon it died. 'Woe!' cried everybody. "'Tis true,' said he, as he raised the spear, when a drop of the hound's blood ran along the spear and went through him to the ground, so that he died of it. And his lament was set up and his stone and tomb were raised there. So this is the Tragical Death of Blái the Hospitaller, and of Horny-skin, and of Celtchar the son of Uthechar. Finit.*

➤ **Din Techtugad (The Law of Taking Possession, from Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland, Volume IV, Din Techtugad and Certain Other Selected Brehon Law Tracts)**

**Brig Ambue's Ruling on Female Succession Rights:** These judgments established the circumstances under which women could inherit land. According to Katharine Simms, Brig is also mentioned briefly in another tract called the *Tosach Bésgnai*, which also establishes the right of women to inherit land, but this text doesn't seem to be available online.

*Brigh made the decision, which fixed the rule of succession to lands in respect of which contracts had been entered into upon the occasion of a woman's marriage...*

*Brigh pronounced judgment on female covenants...*

*Brigh pronounced on female covenants, i.e. there was an entry in the case, i.e. judgment was passed by Brigh touching the land about which the other women made their true contracts. Lands are estimated, i.e. the land about which contract was made by her mother... the mother is here referred to, and the mother had died and left no sons, and there are no sons, but daughters only. And the daughters shall obtain all the land with obligation to perform service of attack and defence, or the half of it without obligation to perform service of attack and defence; and there is power over them to compel them to restore the land after their time...*

### **Brig Ambue's Rulings on Taking Lawful Possession<sup>8</sup>**

*Sencha adjudged in his first decision woman possession-taking as man possession-taking, so that there were blotches raised on his cheek after having passed biased judgments. Brigh in her truth by her true judgments cured him; it is she that established the woman possession-taking, so that the blotches on his cheeks were concealed after the true judgments were passed. Sencha adjudged, i.e. Sencha adjudged in his first judgment that the female possession-taking should be the same as the male possession-taking. So that there were blotches, i.e. so that the blotches were raised on his cheeks after having passed the biased judgment, i.e. after partial judgments. Brigh cured, i.e. Brigh, daughter of Sencha, cured him according to the truth of her true judgment. It is she that established, i.e. it is she that concerted the female possession-taking. So that the blotches, i.e. that they sunk down, i.e. that the swelling of the blotches disappeared after the passing of the false judgment; and hence is derived the rule, that though a person may compose a satire, or do other injury to another; if any relative of his should compose a eulogium after that, the latter will nullify the satire; or if he should make good the injury that is the same as if he had done so himself. Concealed, i.e. hidden. That is, the judgment which Sencha passed was that the female possession-taking should be like the male possession-taking, and blotches did rise on his cheeks; and the truth of Brigh cured him. And the judgment she passed was that the women should have a possession-taking of their own. And from this it is evident that whatever damage a person attempts to do, if a friend or a relative should undo it, it is the same as if he himself should repair it.*

### **Alternate Version of Brig Ambue's Ruling**

*So that the blotches disappeared from his cheeks after the passing of the true judgment by her; and from this is derived the custom that if a man should pass a false sentence, whenever a friend or a relative of his should pass the true judgment after it, it is the same to him as if he himself had passed it, and it frees him from the fines of false judgment after it, i.e. as he is bound to pay fines for him to another creditor, so is he to have the benefit of the judgment delivered in this case.*

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8 According to Katharine Simms:

The women's rite for claiming possession of a disputed land inheritance followed the pattern of the men's rite but was shorter, and simpler... The modification of the ritual is fairer to women, in that they would have a greater problem getting their hands on eight horses and handling them... The shorter delays between the various stages of the claim reflect the fact that women stood to gain a shorter tenure... a woman could only inherit a life-interest in her family's estates, after which they would revert to her nearest male kinsmen to prevent them from going out of the possession of her clan and into that of her husband's.

## Great Brid of the Horses

### ➤ *Imtheacht na Tromdhaimhe* (*Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution*)

#### Brigit of the Great Appetite

According to Gaelic scholar John Shaw, the phrase “ Brigit Mhor-shaithech” (Brigit of the Great Appetite) can be read as a pun, as the pronunciation is almost identical to “Brid Mhor Each” (Great Brid of the Horses). Both of these names refer to the wife of Senchan Torpeist, the famous fili or poet who went on a quest to recover the Tain. Senchan is the villain of the story *Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution* or *Grand Bardic Assembly*, a satire on the bardic troupes that would go from place to place demanding hospitality from kings and chiefs. These bardic troupes were often made up of people with disabilities who used the threat of bardic satire to compel the ruling class to provide for them. Thus, “Brigit of the Great Appetite” is a figure who compels social justice through bardic magic.

*But, notwithstanding their being called the Great Bardic Institution, and though greatly they were abhorred, yet small was their consumption of food; for Brigit, daughter of Onitcerne, the wife of Shanchan, was the person among them who did eat most, and she did usually eat only a hen egg at a meal, and therefore she was called Brigit of the great appetite.<sup>9</sup>*

#### Senchan Torpeist and the King of the Cats

“Senchan Torpeist and the King of the Cats” is a retelling of the section of the *Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution* in which Senchan’s wife Brigit appears. This summary is included here because the original is not available in digital form and it is a faithful and accurate retelling. Although this Brigit is described as a human woman, the connection to the goddess can be seen in the fact that Ireland’s most famous fili or poet is married to a woman named after the goddess of poetry.

Gilbride’s Summary of “Senchan Torpeist and the King of the Cats”: *Senchan’s wife Brigit sends him a hen egg as a present while he is visiting King Guaire looking for an excuse to satirize him. Mice eat the egg, so Senchan satirizes all the cats of the world for not killing the mice. Hirusan, King of the Cats, carries Senchan away but Senchan is saved by a passing saint. Later, King Guaire demands that Senchan recite the Tain but he doesn’t know the whole thing. This is how Guaire gets rid of the bards. Senchan goes on a quest and recovers the Tain.*

#### Great Brid of the Horses

The later folktale “Great Brid of the Horses” repeats the central motif of bards imposing on the hospitality of chieftains, and even refers to the bards as “Senchan’s Band” – yet leaves Senchan out of the story entirely. Instead, his wife Brigit takes his place as the leader of the poets. In *Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution*, the king can only get rid of the bards by giving them the seemingly impossible task of finding the lost epic of the Tain, which Senchan succeeds in doing. In “Great Brid of the Horses,” the king is only able to get rid of the bards by fulfilling Brigit’s seemingly impossible requests – blackberries in winter, a ride on a white horse with red ears and to eat her fill of the flesh of a pig that has never been born. The horse is an otherworldly symbol (like

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<sup>9</sup> See “Why is Brigit So Hungry?” on Gods and Radicals (<http://godsandrads.org/2015/05/27/why-is-brigit-so-hungry/>) for a full explanation of the context.

St. Brigid's white cow with red ears) and the unborn pig is a cthonic symbol, which can be read as indicating that "Great Brid of the Horses" is no mere mortal.

➤ [Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin](#) [PDF] (*The Stories of Cano Mac Gartnain*)

The story of *Scela Cano* is a tenth-century story from the Cycle of Kings, with an additional anecdote about Senchan's wife. In this story, she is referred to as Brigid Bratbrú. Bratbrú is a pun, and can mean either "Cloak-Belly" or "Destructive Belly." A *brat* is a cloak or mantle, as in the Brat Bride or Mantle of Brighid. The idea here is that Brigid Bratbrú's stomach is huge and has many folds in it like a cloak. *Brath* means doom or destruction and may refer to the idea that Brigid is magically pregnant with a bardic satire.<sup>10</sup> This sinister version of Brigid is specifically described as a "cailleach" in the original Irish.

*Cano son of Gartnán was after this a period of three months in the company of Gúaire, namely one third of the court [was] of Gúaire, and another third of the court [was] of Cano, and another third [was] of Senchán Torpéist the poet of Gúaire and of all the men of Ireland. A small emaciated man, he would always be in a covering of wool enveloping him for his emaciation. He used to eat a quarter of a loaf in a period of three days. Brigid bratbrú his aged wife, consumed three quarters of the loaf. Her belly seemed enormous to him, so that he named her Brigid bratbrú afterwards. Great was her [care?]. On one occasion Brigid went on a journey. She left her handmaid to [care for him?]. That was a lovely young woman. She went midday on the following day to serve him with food. As she came out of the kitchen – 'Do not come, do not come, woman!' said he. 'I am older than you are. I have seen your grandmother; she had a fiery (i.e. inflamed) nail on her left thumb. I shall vomit if you should come further.'*

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10 See "The Satire of the Poet is a Pregnancy" by Amy Mulligan, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 2009.

## The Scottish Bride

➤ **The Coming of Angus and Bride** (*Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*, by Donald Alexander Mackenzie, 1917)

The prayers to Bride in the *Carmina Gadelica* technically all refer to the saint, so they are not included here. MacKenzie's tale is very late, and includes elements borrowed from Russian folktales (such as the Father Winter motif). It may be rewritten from an earlier Gaelic version in which the spring maiden is not specifically named as Bride, or MacKenzie may have recorded an authentic story about Bride not found elsewhere. No one knows for sure. Bride's Day is definitely considered the beginning of spring in Gaelic lore, and Bride is said to bring the spring by melting the river ice, so the association is logical.

*All the long winter Beira kept captive a beautiful young princess named Bride. She was jealous of Bride's beauty, and gave her ragged clothing to wear, and put her to work among the servants in the kitchen of her mountain castle, where the girl had to perform the meanest tasks. Beira scolded her continually, finding fault with everything she did, and Bride's life was made very wretched.*

*One day Beira gave the princess a brown fleece and said: "You must wash this fleece in the running stream until it is pure white."*

*Bride took the fleece and went outside the castle, and began to wash it in a pool below a waterfall. All day long she laboured at the work, but to no purpose. She found it impossible to wash the brown colour out of the wool.*

*When evening came on, Beira scolded the girl, and said: "You are a useless hussy. The fleece is as brown as when I gave it to you."*

*Said Bride: "All day long have I washed it in the pool below the waterfall of the Red Rock."*

*"To-morrow you shall wash it again," Beira said; "and if you do not wash it white, you will go on washing on the next day, and on every day after that. Now, begone! and do as I bid you."*

*It was a sorrowful time for Bride. Day after day she washed the fleece, and it seemed to her that if she went on washing until the world came to an end, the brown wool would never become white.*

*One morning as she went on with her washing a grey-bearded old man came near. He took pity on the princess, who wept bitter tears over her work, and spoke to her, saying: "Who are you, and why do you sorrow?"*

*Said the princess: "My name is Bride. I am the captive of Queen Beira, and she has ordered me to wash this brown fleece until it is white. Alas! it cannot be done."*

*"I am sorry for you," the old man said.*

*"Who are you, and whence come you?" asked Bride.*

*"My name is Father Winter," the old man told her. "Give me the fleece, and I shall make it white for you."*

*Bride gave Father Winter the brown fleece, and when he had shaken it three times it turned white as snow.*

*The heart of Bride was immediately filled with joy, and she exclaimed: "Dear Father Winter, you are very kind. You have saved me much labour and taken away my sorrow."*

*Father Winter handed back the fleece to Princess Bride with one hand, and she took it. Then he said: "Take also what I hold in my other hand." As he spoke he gave her a bunch of pure white snowdrops. The eyes of Bride sparkled with joy to behold them.*

*Said Father Winter: "If Beira scolds you, give her these flowers, and if she asks where you found them, tell her that they came from the green rustling fir-woods. Tell her also that the cress is springing up on the banks of streams, and that the new grass has begun to shoot up in the fields."*

*Having spoken thus, Father Winter bade the princess farewell and turned away.*

*Bride returned to the mountain castle and laid the white fleece at Beira's feet. But the old queen scarcely looked at it. Her craze was fixed on the snowdrops that Bride carried.*

*"Where did you find these flowers?" Beira asked with sudden anger.*

*Said Bride: "The snowdrops are now growing in the green rustling fir-woods, the cress is springing up on the banks of streams, and the new grass is beginning to shoot up in the fields."*

*"Evil are the tidings you bring me!" Beira cried. "Begone from my sight!"*

*Bride turned away, but not in sorrow. A new joy had entered her heart, for she knew that the wild winter season was going past, and that the reign of Queen Beira would soon come to an end.*

*Meanwhile Beira summoned her eight hag servants, and spoke to them, saying: "Ride to the north and ride to the south, ride to the east and ride to the west, and I will ride forth also. Smite the world with frost and tempest, so that no flower may bloom and no grass blade survive. I am waging war against all growth."*

*When she had spoken thus, the eight hags mounted on the backs of shaggy goats and rode forth to do her bidding. Beira went forth also, grasping in her right hand her black magic hammer. On the night of that very day a great tempest lashed the ocean to fury and brought terror to every corner of the land.*

*Now the reason why Beira kept Bride a prisoner was because her fairest and dearest son, whose name was Angus-the-Ever-Young, had fallen in love with her. He was called "the Ever Young" because age never came near him, and all winter long he lived on the Green Isle of the West, which is also called the "Land of Youth."*

*Angus first beheld Bride in a dream, and when he awoke he spoke to the King of the Green Isle, saying: "Last night I dreamed a dream and saw a beautiful princess whom I love. Tears fell from her eyes, and I spoke to an old man who stood near her, and said: 'Why does the maiden weep?' Said the old man: 'She weeps because she is kept captive by Beira, who treats her with great cruelty.' I looked again at the princess and said: 'Fain would I set her free.' Then I awoke. Tell me, O king, who is this princess, and where shall I find her?"*

*The King of the Green Isle answered Angus, saying: "The fair princess whom you saw is Bride, and in the days when you will be King of Summer she will be your queen. Of this your mother, Queen Beira, has full knowledge, and it is her wish to keep you away from Bride, so that her own reign may be prolonged. Tarry here, O Angus, until the flowers been to bloom and the grass begins to grow, and then you shall set free the beautiful Princess Bride."*

*Said Angus: "Fain would I go forth at once to search for her."*

*"The wolf-month (February) has now come," the king said. "Uncertain is the temper of the wolf."*

*Said Angus: "I shall cast a spell on the sea and a spell on the land, and borrow for February three days from August."*

*He did as he said he would do. He borrowed three days from August, and the ocean slumbered peacefully while the sun shone brightly over mountain and glen. Then Angus mounted his white steed and rode eastward to Scotland over the isles and over the Minch, and he reached the Grampians when dawn was breaking. He was clad in raiment of shining gold, and from his shoulders hung his royal robe of crimson which the wind uplifted and spread out in gleaming splendour athwart the sky.*

*An aged bard looked eastward, and when he beheld the fair Angus he lifted up his harp and sang a song of welcome, and the birds of the forest sang with him. And this is how he sang:--*

*Angus hath come--the young, the fair,  
The blue-eyed god with golden hair--  
The god who to the world doth bring  
This morn the promise of the spring;  
Who moves the birds to song ere yet  
He bath awaked the violet,  
Or the soft primrose on the steep,  
While buds are laid in lidded sleep,  
And white snows wrap the hills serene,  
Ere glows the larch's vivid green  
Through the brown woods and bare. All hail!  
Angus, and may thy will prevail. . . .  
He comes . . . he goes. . . . And far and wide  
He searches for the Princess Bride.*

*Up and down the land went Angus, but he could not find Bride anywhere. The fair princess beheld him in a dream, however, and knew that he longed to set her free. When she awoke she shed tears of joy, and on the place where her tears fell there sprang up violets, and they were blue as her beautiful eyes.*

*Beira was angry when she came to know that Angus was searching for Bride, and on the third evening of his visit she raised a great tempest which drove him back to Green Isle. But he returned again and again, and at length he discovered the castle in which the princess was kept a prisoner.*

*Then came a day when Angus met Bride in a forest near the castle. The violets were blooming and soft yellow primroses opened their eyes of wonder to gaze on the prince and the princess. When they spoke one to another the birds raised their sweet voices in song and the sun shone fair and bright.*

*Said Angus: "Beautiful princess, I beheld you in a dream weeping tears of sorrow."*

*Bride said: "Mighty prince, I beheld you in a dream riding over bens and through glens in beauty and power."*

*Said Angus: "I have come to rescue you from Queen Beira, who has kept you all winter long in captivity."*

*Bride said: "To me this is a day of great joy."*

*Said Angus: "It will be a day of great joy to all mankind ever after this."*

*That is why the first day of spring--the day on which Angus found the princess--is called "Bride's Day".*

*Through the forest came a fair company of fairy ladies, who hailed Bride as queen and bade welcome to Angus. Then the Fairy Queen waved her wand, and Bride was transformed. As swiftly as the bright sun springs out from behind a dark cloud, shedding beauty all round, so swiftly did Bride appear in new splendour. Instead of ragged clothing, she then wore a white robe adorned with spangles of shining silver. Over her heart gleamed a star-like crystal, pure as her thoughts and bright as the joy that Angus brought her. This gem is called "the guiding star of Bride". Her golden-brown hair, which hung down to her waist in gleaming curls, was decked with fair spring flowers--snowdrops and daisies and primroses and violets. Blue were her eyes, and her face had the redness and whiteness of the wild rose of peerless beauty and tender grace. In her right hand she carried a white wand entwined with golden corn-stalks, and in her left a golden horn which is called the "Horn of Plenty".*

*The linnet was the first forest bird that hailed Bride in her beauty, and the Fairy Queen said: "Ever after this you shall be called the 'Bird of Bride'." On the seashore the first bird that chirped with joy was the oyster-catcher, and the Fairy Queen said: "Ever after this you shall be called the 'Page of Bride'."*

*Then the Fairy Queen led Angus and Bride to her green-roofed underground palace in the midst of the forest. As they went forward they came to a river which was covered with ice. Bride put her fingers on the ice, and the Ice Hag shrieked and fled.*

*A great feast was held in the palace of the Fairy Queen, and it was the marriage feast of Bride, for Angus and she were wed. The fairies danced and sang with joy, and all the world was moved to dance and sing with them. This was how the first "Festival of Bride" came to be.*

*"Spring has come!" the shepherds cried; and they drove their flocks on to the moors, where they were counted and blessed.*

*"Spring has come!" chattered the raven, and flew off to find moss for her nest. The rook heard and followed after, and the wild duck rose from amidst the reeds, crying: "Spring has come!"*

*Bride came forth from the fairy palace with Angus and waved her hand, while Angus repeated magic spells. Then greater growth was given to the grass, and all the world hailed Angus and Bride as king and queen. Although they were not beheld by mankind, yet their presence was everywhere felt throughout Scotland.*

*Beira was wroth when she came to know that Angus had found Bride. She seized her magic hammer and smote the ground unceasingly until it was frozen hard as iron again--so hard that no herb or blade of grass could continue to live upon its surface. Terrible was her wrath when she beheld the grass growing. She knew well that when the grass flourished and Angus and Bride were married, her authority would pass away. It was her desire to keep her throne as long as possible.*

*"Bride is married, hail to Bride!" sang the birds.*

*"Angus is married, hail to Angus!" they sang also.*

*Beira heard the songs of the birds, and called to her hag servants: "Ride north and ride south, ride east and ride west, and wage war against Angus. I shall ride forth also."*

*Her servants mounted their shaggy goats and rode forth to do her bidding. Beira mounted a black steed and set out in pursuit of Angus. She rode fast and she rode hard. Black clouds swept over the sky as she rode on, until at length she came to the forest in which the Fairy Queen had her dwelling. All the fairies fled in terror into their green mound and the doors were shut.*

*Angus looked up and beheld Beira drawing nigh. He leapt on the back of his white steed, and lifted his young bride into the saddle in front of him and fled away with her.*

*Angus rode westward over the hills and over the valleys and over the sea, and Beira pursued him.*

*There is a rocky ravine on the island of Tiree, and Beira's black steed jumped across it while pursuing the white steed of Angus. The hoofs of the black steed made a gash on the rocks. To this day the ravine is called "The Horse's Leap".*

*Angus escaped to the Green Isle of the West, and there he passed happy days with Bride. But he longed to return to Scotland and reign as King of Summer. Again and again he crossed the sea; and each time he reached the land of glens and bens, the sun broke forth in brightness and the birds sang merrily to welcome him.*

*Beira raised storm after storm to drive him away. First she called on the wind named "The Whistle", which blew high and shrill, and brought down rapid showers of cold hailstones. It lasted for three days, and there was much sorrow and bitterness throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. Sheep and lambs were killed on the moors, and horses and cows perished also.*

*Angus fled, but he returned soon again. The next wind that Beira raised to prolong her winter reign was the "Sharp Billed Wind" which is called "Gobag". lasted for nine days, and all the land was pierced by it, for it pecked and bit in every nook and cranny like a sharp-billed bird.*

*Angus returned, and the Beira raised the eddy wind which is called "The Sweeper". Its whirling gusts tore branches from the budding trees and bright flowers from their stalks. All the time it blew, Beira kept beating the ground with her magic hammer so as to keep the grass from growing. But her efforts were in vain. Spring smiled in beauty all around, and each time she turned away, wearied by her efforts, the sun sprang forth in splendour. The small modest primroses opened their petals in the sunshine, looking forth from cosy nooks that the wind, called "Sweeper", was unable to reach. Angus fled, but he soon returned again.*

*Beira was not yet, however, entirely without hope. Her efforts had brought disaster to mankind, and the "Weeks of Leanness" came on. Food became scarce. The fishermen were unable to venture to sea on account of Beira's tempests, and could get no fish. In the night-time Beira and her hags*

*entered the dwellings of mankind, and stole away their stores of food. It was, indeed, a sorrowful time.*

*Angus was moved with pity for mankind, and tried to fight the hags of Beira. But the fierce queen raised the "Gales of Complaint" to keep him away, and they raged in fury until the first week of March. Horses and cattle died for want of food, because the fierce winds blew down stacks of fodder and scattered them over the lochs and the ocean.*

*Angus, however, waged a fierce struggle against the hag servants, and at length he drove them away to the north, where they fumed and fretted furiously.*

*Beira was greatly alarmed, and she made her last great effort to subdue the Powers of Spring. She waved her magic hammer, and smote the clouds with it. Northward she rode on her black steed, and gathered her servants together, and called to them, saying: "Ride southward with me, all of you, and scatter our enemies before us."*

*Out of the bleak dark north they rode in a single pack. With them came the Big Black Tempest. It seemed then as if winter had returned in full strength and would abide for ever. But even Beira and her hags had to take rest. On a dusky evening they crouched down together on the side of a bare mountain, and, when they did so, a sudden calm fell upon the land and the sea.*

*"Ha! ha!" laughed the wild duck who hated the hag. "Ha! ha! I am still alive, and so are my six ducklings."*

*"Have patience! idle chatterer," answered the Hag. "I am not yet done."*

*That night she borrowed three days from Winter which had not been used, for Angus had previously borrowed for Winter three days from August. The three spirits of the borrowed days were tempest spirits, and came towards Beira mounted on black hogs. She spoke to them, saying: "Long have you been bound! Now I set you at liberty."*

*One after another, on each of the three days that followed, the spirits went forth riding the black hogs. They brought snow and hail and fierce blasts of wind. Snow whitened the moors and filled the furrows of ploughed land, rivers rose in flood, and great trees were shattered and uprooted. The duck was killed, and so were her six ducklings; sheep and cattle perished, and many human beings were killed on land and drowned at sea. The days on which these things happened are called the "Three Hog Days".*

*Beira's reign was now drawing to a close. She found herself unable to combat any longer against the power of the new life that was rising in every vein of the land. The weakness of extreme old age crept upon her, and she longed once again to drink of the waters of the Well of Youth. When, on a bright March morning, she beheld Angus riding over the hills on his white steed, scattering her fierce hag servants before him, she fled away in despair. Ere she went she threw her magic hammer beneath a holly tree, and that is the reason why no grass grows under the holly trees.*

*Beira's black steed went northward with her in flight. As it leapt over Loch Etive it left the marks of its hoofs on the side of a rocky mountain, and the spot is named to this day "Horse-shoes". She did not rein up her steed until she reached the island of Skye, where she found rest on the summit of the "Old Wife's Ben" (Ben-e-Caillich) at Broadford. There she sat, gazing steadfastly across the sea, waiting until the day and night would be of equal length. All that equal day she wept tears of sorrow for her lost power, and when night came on she went westward over the sea to Green Island. At the dawn of the day that followed she drank the magic waters of the Well of Youth.*

*On that day which is of equal length with the night, Angus came to Scotland with Bride, and they were hailed as king and queen of the unseen beings. They rode from south to north in the morning and forenoon, and from north to south in the afternoon and evening. A gentle wind went with them, blowing towards the north from dawn till midday, and towards the south from midday till sunset.*

*It was on that day that Bride dipped her fair white hands in the high rivers and lochs which still retained ice. When she did so, the Ice Hag fell into a deep sleep from which she could not awake until summer and autumn were over and past.*

*The grass grew quickly after Angus began to reign as king. Seeds were sown, and the people called on Bride to grant them a good harvest. Ere long the whole land was made beautiful with spring flowers of every hue.*

*Angus had a harp of gold with silver strings, and when he played on it youths and maidens followed the sound of the music through the woods. Bards sang his praises and told that he kissed lovers, and that when they parted one from another to return to their homes, the kisses became invisible birds that hovered round their heads and sang sweet songs of love, and whispered memories dear. It was thus that one bard sang of him:--*

*When softly blew the south wind o'er the sea,  
Lispings of springtime hope and summer pride,  
And the rough reign of Beira ceased to be,  
    Angus the Ever-Young,  
The beauteous god of love, the golden-haired,  
    The blue mysterious-eyed,  
Shone like the star of morning high among  
    The stars that shrank afraid  
When dawn proclaimed the triumph that he shared p.  
    With Bride the peerless maid.  
Then winds of violet sweetness rose and sighed,  
    No conquest is compared  
To Love's transcendent joys that never fade.*

*In the old days, when there was no Calendar in Scotland, the people named the various periods of winter and spring, storm and calm, as they are given above. The story of the struggle between Angus and Beira is the story of the struggle between spring and winter, growth and decay, light and and darkness, and warmth and cold.*