

LIFE OF BRIGIT BETHU BRIGTE

(Author: [unknown])

...The miracles were published abroad. One day in that place Broicsech went to milk and she leaves nobody in her house except the holy girl who was asleep. They saw that the house had caught fire behind them. The people run to its aid, thinking that they would not one house-post against another. The house is found intact and the girl asleep and her face like ... And Brigit is revered [there] as long as it may exist (?).

On a certain day the druid was asleep and he saw three clerics wearing white hooded garments baptizing (the above-mentioned) Brigit, and one of the three said to him, 'Let Brigit be your name for the girl.'

The druid and the female slave and her child were at Loch Mescae, and the druid's mother's brother was there too; the latter was a Christian. When they were there at midnight the druid was watching the stars and he saw a fiery column rising out of the house, from the precise spot where the slave and her daughter were. He woke his mother's brother and he saw it also, and the latter said that she was a holy girl. 'That is true', said he, 'if I were to relate to you all her deeds.'

On another occasion when the druid and his mother's brother were in a house and the girl asleep, wherever her mother was, they heard the low voice of the girl in the side of the house, and she had not yet begun to speak. 'Look for us', said the druid to his maternal uncle, 'how our girl is, for I do not dare to do so since I am not a Christian.' He saw her lying in a crossvigil and she was praying. 'Go again', said the druid, 'and ask her something this time, for she will say something to you now.' He goes and addressed her. 'Say something to me, girl', said he. The girl then spoke two words to him: 'This will be mine, this will be mine.' The maternal uncle of the druid did not understand that. 'Reveal [it] to us', said he to the druid, 'for I do not understand [it].' 'You will be very displeased with it', said the druid. 'This is what she has said', said the druid, 'this place will be hers till the day of doom.' The maternal uncle of the druid shrank for the idea of (?) Brigit's holding the land. The druid said, 'Truly it shall be fulfilled. This place will be hers although she go with me to Munster'.

When it was time to wean her the druid was anxious about her; anything he gave her [to eat] she vomited at once, but her appearance was none the worse. 'I know', said the druid,

'what ails the girl, [it is] because I am impure.' Then a white red-eared cow was assigned to sustain her and she became well as a result.

Thereafter the druid went to Munster, to be precise into Úathne Tíre. There the saint is fostered. After a time she says to her fosterer: 'I do not desire to serve here, but send me to my father, where he may come to meet me.' This was done and her father Dubthach brought her away to his own patrimony in the two plains of Uí Fhailgi. She remained there among her relatives, and while still a girl performed miracles.

Then she was taken to a certain virgin to be fostered by her. It is Brigit who was cook for her afterwards. She used to find out the number of guests that would come to her fostermother, and whatever the number of guests might be the supply of bread did not fail them during the night.

Once her fostermother was seriously ill. She was sent with another girl to the house of a certain man named Báethchú to ask for a drink of ale for the sick woman. They got nothing from Báethchú ... They came to a certain well. She brought three vessels' full therefrom. The liquid was tasty and intoxicating, and her fostermother was healed immediately. God did that for her.

One day Dubthach made her herd pigs. Robbers stole two of the boars. Dubthach went in his chariot from Mag Lifi and he met them and recognized his two boars with them. He seizes the robbers and bound a good mulct for his pigs on them. He brought his two boars home and said to Brigit: 'Do you think you are herding the pigs well?' 'Count them', said she. He counts them and finds there numbers complete.

On a certain day a guest came to Dubthach's house. Her father entrusted her with a flitch of bacon to be boiled for the guest. A hungry dog came up to which she gave a fifth part of the bacon. When this had been consumed she gave another [fifth]. The guest, who was looking on, remained silent as though he was overcome by sleep. On returning home again the father finds his daughter. 'Have you boiled the food well?', said her father. 'Yes', said she. And he himself counted [them] and found [them intact]. Then the guest tells Dubthach what the girl had done. 'After this', said Dubthach, 'she has performed more miracles than can be recounted.' This is what was done then: that portion of food was distributed among the poor.

On another occasion after that an old pious nun who lived near Dubthach's house asked Brigit to go and address the twenty-seven Leinster saints in one assembly. It was just then that Ibor the bishop recounted in the assembly a vision which he had seen the night before. 'I thought', said he, 'that I saw this night the Virgin Mary in my sleep, and a certain venerable cleric said to me: 'This is Mary who will dwell among you'.' Just then the

nun and Brigit came to the assembly. 'This is the Mary who was seen by me in a dream.' The people of the assembly rose up before her and went to converse with her. They blessed her. The assembly was held where now is Kildare, and there Ibor the bishop says to the brethren: 'This site is open to heaven, and it will be the richest of all in the whole island; and today a girl, for whom it has been prepared by God, will come to us like Mary.' It happened thus.

Another time thereafter she wished to visit her mother who was in slavery in Munster, and her father and fostermother would scarcely allow her to go. She went however. Her mother was at that time in ... engaged in dairy work away from the druid, and she was suffering from a disease of the eye. Brigit was working in her stead, and the druid's charioteer was herding the cattle; and every churning she made, she used to divide the produce into twelve portions with its curds, and the thirteenth portion would be in the middle and that was greater than every other portion. 'Of what advantage to you deem that to be?', said the charioteer. 'Not hard', said Brigit. 'I have heard that there were twelve apostles with the Lord, and he himself the thirteenth. I shall have from God that thirteen poor people will come to me one day, the same number as Christ and his apostles.' 'And why do you not store up some of the butter?' said the charioteer, 'for that is what every dairy-worker does.' 'It is difficult for me', said Brigit, 'to deprive Christ of his own food.' Then baskets were brought to her to be filled from the wife of the druid. She had only the butter of one and a half churnings. The baskets were filled with that and the guests, namely the druid and his wife, were satisfied. The druid said to Brigit: 'The cows shall be yours and let you distribute the butter among the poor, and your mother shall not be in service from today and it shall not be necessary to buy her, and I shall be baptized and I shall never part from you.' 'Thanks be to God', said Brigit.

On one occasion Dubthach brought Brigit to the king of Leinster, namely Dúnlang, to sell her as a serving slave, because her stepmother had accused her of stealing everything in the house for clients of God. Dubthach left her in his chariot to mind it on the green of the fort and he leaves his sword with her. She gave it to a leper who came to her. Dubthach said to the king: 'Buy my daughter from me to serve you, for her manners have deserved it.' 'What cause of annoyance has she given?', said the king. 'Not hard', said Dubthach. 'She acts without asking permission; whatever she sees, her hand takes.' Dubthach on returning questions her about that precious sword. She replied: 'Christ has taken it.' Having learned that, he said: 'Why, daughter, did you give the value of ten cows to a leper? It was not my sword, but the king's.' The girl replied: 'Even if I had the power to give all to Leinster, I would give it to God.' For that reason the girl is left in slavery.

Dubthach returned to his home. Wonderful to relate, the virgin Brigit is raised by divine power and placed behind her father. 'Truly, Dubthach', said the king, 'this girl can neither be sold nor bought.' Then the king gives a sword to the virgin, and ...After the aforementioned miracles they return home.

Shortly afterwards a man came to Dubthach's house to woo Brigit. His name was Dubthach moccu Lugair. That pleased her father and her brothers. 'It is difficult for me', said Brigit, 'I have offered up my virginity to God. I will give you advice. There is a wood behind your house, and there is a beautiful maiden [therein]. She will be betrothed to you, and this is how you will recognize it: You will find an enclosure wide open and the maiden will be washing her father's head and they will give you a greater welcome, and I will bless your face and your speech so that whatever you say will please them.' It was done as Brigit said.

Her brothers were grieved at her depriving them of the bride-price. There were poor people living close to Dubthach's house. She went one day carrying a small load for them. Her brothers, her father's sons, who had come from Mag Lifi, met her. Some of them were laughing at her; others were not pleased with her, namely Bacéne, who said: 'The beautiful eye which is in your head will be betrothed to a man though you like it or not.' Thereupon she immediately thrusts her finger into her eye. 'Here is that beautiful eye for you', said Brigit. 'I deem it unlikely', said she, 'that anyone will ask you for a blind girl.' Her brothers rush about her at once save that there was no water near them to wash the wound. 'Put', said she, 'my staff about this sod in front of you.' That was done. A stream gushed forth from the earth. And she cursed Bacéne and his descendants, and said: 'Soon your two eyes will burst in your head.' And it happened thus.

Dubthach said to her: 'Take the veil then, my daughter, for this is what you desire. Distribute this holding to God and man.' 'Thanks be to God', said Brigit.

On a certain day she goes with seven virgins to take the veil to a foundation on the side of Cróchán of Bri Éile, where she thought that Mel the bishop dwelt. There she greets two virgins, Tol and Etol, who dwelt there. They said: 'The bishop is not here, but in the churches of Mag Taulach.' While saying this they behold a youth called Mac Caille, a pupil of Mel the bishop. They asked him to lead them to the bishop. He said: 'The way is trackless, with marshes, deserts, bogs and pools.' The saint said: 'Extricate us [from our difficulty].' As they proceeded on their way, he could see afterwards a straight bridge there.

The hour of consecration having arrived, the veil was raised by angels from the hand of Mac Caille, the minister, and is placed on the head of saint Brigit. Bent down moreover during the prayers she held the ash beam which supported the altar. It was afterwards

changed into acacia, which is neither consumed by fire nor does it grow old through centuries. Three times the church was burned down, but the beam remained intact under the ashes.

The bishop being intoxicated with the grace of God there did not recognise what he was reciting from his book, for he consecrated Brigit with the orders of a bishop. 'This virgin alone in Ireland', said Mel, 'will hold the Episcopal ordination.' While she was being consecrated a fiery column ascended from her head.

Afterwards the people granted her a place called Ached hÍ in Saltus Avis. Remaining there a little while, she persuaded three pilgrims to remain there and granted them the place. She performed three miracles in that place, namely: The spring flowed in dry land, the meat turned into bread, the hand of one of the three men was cured.

Once at Eastertide: 'What shall we do?', said Brigit to her maidens. 'We have one sack of malt. It were well for us to prepare it that we might not be without ale over Easter. There are moreover seventeen churches in Mag Tailach. Would that I might keep Easter for them in the matter of ale on account of the Lord whose feast it is, that they might have drink although they should not have food. It is unfortunate for us only that we have no vessels.' That was true. There was one vat in the house and two tubs. 'They are good; let it be prepared(?)'. This is what was done: the mashing in one of the tubs, in the other it was put to ferment; and that which was put to ferment in the second tub, the vat used to be filled from it and taken to each church in turn, so that the vat kept on coming back, but though it came back quickly that which was in the tub was ale. Eighteen vatfuls had come from the one sack, and what sufficed for herself over Easter. And there was no lack of feasting in every single church from Easter Sunday to Low Sunday as a result of that preparation by Brigit.

A woman from Fid Éoin who was a believer gave her a cow on that Easter Day. There were two of them driving the cow, namely the woman and her daughter. They were not able however to drive their cow ... They had lost their calf as they were coming through the wood. They besought Brigit then. That prayer availed them; their cow leads the way before them to the settlement where Brigit was. 'This is what we must do', said Brigit to her maidens, 'for this is the first offering made to us since occupying this hermitage, let it be taken to the bishop who blessed the veil on our head.' 'It is of little benefit to him', said the maidens, 'the cow without the calf.' 'That is of no account', said Brigit. 'The little calf will come to meet its mother so that it will be together they will reach the enclosure.' It was done thus as she said.

On the same Easter Sunday there came to her a certain leper from whom his limbs

were falling, to ask for a cow. 'For God's sake, Brigit, give me a cow.' 'Grant me a respite', said Brigit. 'I would not grant you', said he, 'even the respite of a single day.' 'My son, let us await the hand of God', said Brigit. 'I will go off', said the leper. 'I will get a cow in another stead although I obtain it not from you.' '...', said Brigit, 'and if we were to pray to God for the removal of your leprosy, would you like that?', 'No', said he, 'I obtain more this way than when I shall be clean.' 'It is better', said Brigit, '... and you shall take a blessing [and] shall be cleansed.' 'All right then', said he, 'for I am sorely afflicted.' 'How will this man be cleansed?', said Brigit to her maidens. 'Not hard, O nun. Let your blessing be put on a mug of water, and let the leper be washed with it afterwards.' It was done thus and he was completely cured. 'I shall not go', said the leper, 'from the cup which has healed me — I shall be your servant and woodman.' Thus it was done.

On the following day, Monday, Mel came to Brigit to preach and say Mass for her between the two Easters. A cow had been brought to her on that day also and it was given to Mel the bishop, the other cow having been taken. Ague assails one of Brigit's maidens and she was given Communion. 'Is there anything you might desire?', said Brigit. 'There is', said she. 'If I do not get some fresh milk, I shall die at once.' Brigit calls a maiden and said: 'Bring me my own mug, out of which I drink, full of water. Bring it without anyone seeing it.' It was brought to her then, and she blessed it so that it became warm new milk, and the maiden was immediately completely cured when she tasted of it. So that those are the two miracles simultaneously, i.e. the changing of water to milk and the cure of the maiden.

On the following day, Tuesday, there was a good man nearby who was related to Brigit. He had been a full year ailing. 'Take for me today', said he, 'the best cow in my byre to Brigit, and let her pray to God for me, to see if I shall be cured.' The cow was brought, and Brigit said to those who brought it: 'Take it immediately to Mel.' They brought it back to their house and exchanged it for another cow unknown to their sick man. That was related to Brigit, who was angry at the deceit practised on her. 'Between a short time from now and the morning', said Brigit, 'wolves shall eat the good cow which was given into my possession and which was not brought to you', said she to Mel, 'and they shall eat seven oxen in addition to it.' That was related then to the sick man. 'Go', said he, 'take to her seven oxen of choice of the byre.' It was done thus. 'Thanks be to God', said Brigit. 'Let them be taken to Mel to his church. He has been preaching and saying Mass for us these seven days between the two Easters; a cow each day to him for his labour, it is not greater than what he has given; and take a blessing with all eight, a blessing on him from whom they were brought', said Brigit. When she said that he was healed immediately.

During the time between the two Easters Brigit suffered greatly from a headache. 'That does not matter', said Mel. 'When we go to visit our first settlement in Tethbae, Brigit and her maidens will go with us. There is a wonderful physician in Mide, namely Áed mac Bricc. He will heal you.' It was then she healed two paralytic virgins of the Fothairt.

Then two blind Britons with a young leper of the sept of Eocchaid came and pray with importunity to be healed. Brigit said to them: 'Wait a while.' But they said, 'You have healed the infirm of your own people and you neglect the healing of foreigners. But at least heal our boy who is of your people.' And by this the blind are made to see and the leper is cleansed.

Low Sunday approached. 'I do not think it fortunate now', said Brigit to her maidens, 'not to have ale on Low Sunday for the bishop who will preach and say Mass.' As soon as she said that, two maidens went to the water to bring in water and they had a large churn for the purpose, and Brigit was not aware of this. When they came back again, Brigit saw them there. 'Thanks be to God', said Brigit. 'God has given us beer for our bishop.' The nuns became frightened then. 'May God help us. O maiden.' 'Whatever foolish thing I said, I have not said anything evil, O nuns.' 'The water which was brought inside, because you have blessed it, God did what you desired and immediately it was changed into ale with the smell of wine from it, and better ale was never set to brew in the [whole] world.' The one churn was sufficient [for them] with their guests and the bishop.

On the Monday after Low Sunday Brigit went in her chariot and her maidens along with her and the two bishops and Mel and Melchú into the plain of Mide to a physician, and that they might go afterwards into the plain of Tethbae to visit a foundation which Mel and Melchú had there. On Tuesday at nightfall they turn aside to the house of a certain Leinsterman of the Uí Brolaig. He received them and out of respect and kindness he entertained the holy Brigit and the bishops. That good man and his wife complained. The wife said: 'All the children I have given birth to have died, except two daughters and they are dumb since the day of their birth.' She goes to Áth Firgoirt. The holy Brigit falls in the middle of the ford, the horses being frightened for some unknown reason, and the saint's head was dashed against a stone and was injured on top, and it richly stained the waters with the blood which was shed. The holy Brigit said to one of the two dumb girls: 'Pour the water mixed with blood about your neck in the name of God.' And she did so and said: 'You have healed me. I give thanks to God'. 'Call you sister', said Brigit to the girl who had been healed. 'Come here, sister', said she. 'I shall come indeed', said her companion, 'and though I go I have already been healed. I bowed down in the track of the chariot and I was cured.' 'Go home', said Brigit to the girl, 'and ye shall again bring forth as many male

children as have died on you.' They were delighted at that. And that memorable stone often heals many. Any head with a disease of the head which is placed on it returns from it cured. It was then they met the learned leech, Áed mac Bricc. '...', said the bishop, 'the head of the holy maiden.' He touched it and with these words addresses the virgin: 'The vein of your head, O virgin, has been touched by a physician who is much better than I am.'

They go to Tethbae, to the first settlements of the bishops, namely Ardagh. The king of Tethbae was feasting nearby. A churl in the king's house had done a terrible thing. He let fall a valuable goblet belonging to the king, so that it smashed to pieces against the table in front of the king. The vessel was a wonderful one, it was one of the rare treasures of the king. He seized the wretch then, and there was nothing for him but death. One of the two bishops comes to beseech the king. 'Neither shall I give him to anybody', said the king, 'nor shall I give him in exchange for any compensation, but he shall be put to death.' 'Let me have from you', said the bishop, 'the broken vessel.' 'You shall have that', said the king. The bishop then brought it in his arms to Brigit, relating everything to her. 'Pray to the Lord for us that the vessel may be made whole.' She did so and restored it and gave it to the bishop. The bishop comes on the following day with his goblet to the king and [says]: 'If your goblet should come back to you make whole', said the bishop, 'would the captive be released?.' 'Not only that, but whatever gifts he should desire, I would give him.' The bishop shows him the vessel and speaks these words to the king: 'It is not I who performed this miracle, but holy Brigit'.

When Brigit's fame had resounded throughout Tethbae, there was a certain pious virgin in Tethbae from whom a message was sent in order that Brigit might go and speak to her, namely Bríg daughter of Coimloch. Brigit went and Bríg herself arose to wash her feet. There was a pious woman ailing at that time. While they were washing Brigit's feet, that sick person who was in the house sent a maiden to bring her out of the tub some of the water which was put over Brigit's feet. It was brought to her then and she put it about her face and she was completely cured at once; and after being ailing for a year, she was the only servant that night. When their dishes were put in front of them, Brigit began to watch her dishes intently. 'May it be fitting for us', said Bríg, 'O holy maiden, what do you perceive on your dish?', 'I see Satan sitting on the dish in front of me', said Brigit. 'If it is possible', said Bríg, 'I should like to see him.' 'It is possible indeed', said Brigit, 'provided that the sign of the cross goes over your eyes first; for anyone who sees the devil and does not bless himself first or ..., will go mad.' Bríg blesses herself then and sees that fellow. His appearance seemed ugly to her. 'Ask, O Brigit', said Bríg, 'why has he come.'

'Grant an answer to men', said Brigit. 'No, O Brigit', said Satan, 'you are not entitles to it, for it is not to harm you that I have come.' 'Answer me then', said Bríg, 'what in particular has brought on to this dish?.' The demon replied: 'I dwell here always with a certain virgin, with whom excessive sloth has given me a place.' And Bríg said, 'Let her be called.' When she who was called came: 'Sain her eyes', said Bríg, 'so that she may see him whom she has nourished in her own bosom.' Her eyes having been sained, she beholds the awful monster. Brigit says to the maiden, now terrified with fear and trembling: 'Behold you see him whom you have cherished for many years and seasons'. 'O holy maiden,' said Bríg, 'that he may never enter this house again.' 'He shall not enter this house', said Brigit, 'till the day of doom.' They partake of their food and return thanks to God.

Once she was hurrying on the bank of the Inny. There were many apples and sweet sloes in that church. A certain nun gave her a small gift in a basket of bark. When she brought [it] into the house, lepers came at once into the middle of the house to beg of her. 'Take', said she, 'yonder apples', Then she who had presented the apples [said]: 'I did not give the gift to lepers.' Brigit was displeased and said: 'You act wrongly in prohibiting gifts to the servants of God; therefore your trees shall never bear any fruit.' And the donor, on going out, sees that all at once her garden bore no fruit, while shortly before it had abundant fruits. And it remains barren for ever, except for foliage.

Another virgin brought her apples and sweet sloes in large quantities. She gave [them] immediately to some lepers who were begging. 'She who brought it will be sound', said Brigit. 'O nun, bless me and my garden.' 'May God indeed bless', said Brigit, 'that big tree yonder which I see in your garden; may there be sweet apples on it, and sweet sloes as to one third; and that twofold fruit shall not be lacking from it and its offshoots.' And thus it was done. As the nun went into her garden she saw the alder tree with its fruit, and sweet sloes on it as to one third.

In a certain place, namely Aicheth Fir Leth, two lepers followed Brigit. Great jealousy [of each other] took hold of them. They began to quarrel, but their hands and feet grew stiff. Seeing this, Brigit said: 'Do penance'. They did so. Not only did she release them, but she healed them of their leprosy.

It was then that two virgins came to Brigit that she might go with them to consecrate their foundation and house along with them. Induae and Indiu were their names. On the way they met a youth [who had come] to speak to the nuns with whom Brigit was going. 'I have come to you', said he, 'from this ill person, that a chariot might be brought to him, so that he might die in the same enclosure with you.' 'We have no chariot', said the nuns. 'Let my chariot be brought to him', said Brigit. That is what was done then. They were waiting

till matins, until the sick man came. Lepers come to them afterwards in the morning. 'O Brigit', said they, 'give us your chariot, for the sake of Christ.' 'Take [it]', said Brigit, '[but] grant us a respite, O ye clients of God, so that we may bring the sick man first of all to our house which is quite near us.' 'We will not grant', said they, 'even the respite of a single hour, unless our chariot is being taken from us anyway.' 'Take [it] anyway', said Brigit. 'What shall we do', said the nuns, 'with our sick man?.' 'Not hard', said Brigit. 'Let him come with us on foot.' That is what was done then; he was completely cured on the spot.

It was then that she washed the feet of the nuns of Cúl Fobair, and healed four of them while washing them, namely a paralytic one, a blind one, a leper and a possessed one.

It was then that she healed the dumb paralytic at the house of Mac Odráin. It happened that Brigit and the dumb boy were left alone. Some destitute people having come and desired a drink, the holy Brigit looked for the key of the kitchen and did not find it. Being ignorant of the boy's affliction, she addresses him thus: 'Where is the key?', And by this the dumb paralytic boy speaks and ministers.

Shortly afterwards at the beginning of summer: 'Verily', said Mel and Melchú to Brigit, 'it has been related to us that Patrick is coming from the south of Ireland into Mag mBreg. We will go to speak to him. Will you go?.' 'I will', said Brigit, 'so that I may see him and speak to him, and that he may bless me.' As they set out, a certain cleric with a great amount of chattels and a following pursues them on the way, to ask [them] to accompany him into Mag mBreg. 'It is a matter of urgency for us', said Mel, 'that our cleric may not escape us.' 'Let me find this out from you', said Brigit, 'the place in which we will meet in Mag mBreg, and I will wait for this pitiable gathering.' Brigit waited afterwards for the migratory band. 'There are twenty maidens with me [coming] along the road', said Brigit, 'give them some of the burdens.' The wretched ones say: 'Not so let it be done, for you have conferred a greater boon on us, since in your company the road is safe for us'. 'Are there not two carts [coming] along the road?', said Brigit. 'Why is it not they which carry the loads?.' For she had not looked to see what was in them. Since Brigit entered religion, she never looked aside but only straight ahead. 'There is a brother of mine', said the cleric, 'in one of the carts, who has been paralysed for fourteen years. There is a sister of mine in the other who is blind.' 'That is a pity', said Brigit. They came that night to a certain stream, called the Manae. They all ate that night save only Brigit. On the morrow she healed the two sick people who were along with her, and the loads were put into the carts; and they returned thanks to God.

It was then she healed the household of a plebeian on the edge of the sea. Thus it was done. A certain man was working in a cow-pasture, of whom the saint asked why he was

working alone. He said: 'All my family is ill.' Hearing this, she blessed some water and immediately healed twelve sick members of the man's family.

They come then to Tailtiu. Patrick was there. They were debating an obscure question there, namely a certain woman came to return a son to a cleric of Patrick's household. Brón was the cleric's name. 'How has this been made out?', said everyone. 'Not hard', said the woman. 'I had come to Brón to have the veil blessed on my head and to offer my virginity to God. This is what my cleric did, he debauched me, so that I have borne him a son.' As they were debating, Brigit came towards the assembly. Then Mel said to Patrick: 'The holy maiden Brigit is approaching the assembly, and she will find out for you by the greatness of her grace and the proximity of her miracles whether this is true or false; for there is nothing in heaven or earth which she might request of Christ, which would be refused her. This then is what should be done in this case', said Mel. 'She should be called apart out of the assembly about this question, for she will not perform miracles in the presence of holy Patrick.' Brigit came then. The host rises up before her. She is summoned apart out of the assembly immediately to address the woman, and the clerics excepting Patrick accompany her. 'Whose yonder child?', said Brigit to the woman. 'Brón's', said the woman. 'That is not true', said Brigit. Brigit made the sign of the cross over her face, so that her head and tongue swelled up. Patrick comes to them then in that great assembly-place. Brigit addresses the child in the presence of the people of the assembly, though it had not yet begun to speak. 'Who is your father', said Brigit. The infant replied: 'Brón the bishop is not my father but a certain low and ill-shaped man who is sitting in the outermost part of the assembly; my mother is a liar.' They all return thanks to God, and cry out that the guilty one be burned. But Brigit refuses, saying: 'Let this woman do penance.' This was done, and the head and tongue lost their swelling. The people rejoiced, the bishop was liberated, and Brigit was glorified.

At the end of the day everybody went apart out of the assembly for hospitality. There was a good man living on the bank of the river called Seir. He sent his slave to the assembly to call Brigit, saying to his household: 'The holy maiden who performed the wonderful miracle in the assembly-place today, I want her to consecrate my house tonight.' He welcomed her. 'Let water be put on our hands', said her maidens to Brigit, 'here is our food.' 'It is of no use now', said Brigit. 'For the Lord has shown me that this is a heathen home, with the one exception only of the slave who summoned us. On that account I shall not eat now.' The good man finds this out, namely that Brigit was fasting until he should be baptized. 'I have said indeed', said he, 'that Patrick and his household would not baptize me. For your sake, however, I will believe', [said he] to Brigit. 'I do not mind provided that

you be baptized', said Brigit. 'There is not a man in orders with me. Let someone go from us to Patrick, so that a bishop or priest may come to baptize this man.' Brón came and baptized the man with all his household at sunrise. They eat at midday. They return thanks. They come to holy Patrick. Patrick said: 'You should not go about without a priest. Your charioteer should always be a priest.' And that was observed by Brigit's abbesses up to recent times.

After that she healed the old peasant woman who was placed in the shadow of her chariot at Cell Shuid in the south of Brega.

She healed the possessed man ... who had gone round the borders. He was brought to Brigit afterwards. Having seen her, he was cured.

Brigit went afterwards to Cell Lasre. Lassar welcomed her. There was a single milch ewe there which had been milked, and it was killed for Brigit. As they were [there] at the end of the ay, they saw Patrick coming towards the stead. 'May God help us, O Brigit', said Lassar. 'Give us your advice.' Brigit replied: 'How much have you?', She said: 'There is no food except twelve loaves, a little milk which you have blessed and a single lamb which has been prepared for you'. This is what [they do]: They all go into her refectory, both Patrick and Brigit, and they were all satisfied. And Lassar gave her her church, and Brigit is venerated there.

She remained the next day in Cell Lasre. A certain man of Kells by origin (?), whom his wife hated, came to Brigit for help. Brigit blessed some water. He took it with him and, his wife having been sprinkled [therewith], she straightaway loved him passionately. A certain pious virgin sent to Brigit, in order that Brigit might go to visit her. Fine was her name. From her Cell Fhine was named. She went and remained there. One day wind and rain, thunder and lightning set in. 'Which of you, O maidens, will go today with our sheep into this terrible storm?', All the maidens were equally reluctant. Brigit answered: 'I love very much to pasture sheep.' 'I do not want you to go', said Fine. 'Let my will be done', said Brigit. She went then and chanted a verse while going:

Grant me a clear day
for Thou art a dear friend, a kingly youth;
for the sake of Thy mother, loving Mary,
ward off rain, ward off wind.

My king will do [it] for me,
Rain will not fall till the night,
On account of Brigit today,
Who is going here to the herding.

She stilled the rain and the wind.

On the Life of St. Brigit (Leabhar Breac) (Author: Translated by Whitley Stokes)

Hi sunt, etc.. These are the folk that follow the unpolluted Lamb, whatsoever way He may wend.

John, Son of Zebedee, Jesus' bosom-fosterling, heir of the Virgin, he it is that wrote these words, and that left them in the Church Christian in memory of the reward and guerdon which God hath given to the third grade of the Church, namely, to the Virgins, that is, the following of the unpolluted Lamb.

Inde Johannes, etc.. Now this is the parallel part of the declaration by John, as far as where he previously said in his Gospel (sic) Nemo potest, etc.. There cometh not to any one on earth to make unto the Lord meet praise or fitting quire-song, save only of a surety one of the all-fullness of either Church, who hath been brought up in chastity and in virginity, and hath been redeemed with the price of Christ's blood.

Virgines enim sunt. For those are the virgins assuredly. So on the track of these words John saith Hi sunt, etc. Nihil enim prodest, etc. It profiteth not any one to have the flesh a virgin if he be corrupt in mind. Virginitas enim, etc.. Hoc est enim in Evangelio, etc. For this is in the Gospel, that these are the virgins that have not oil in their vessels, namely, the virgins that do not keep (to themselves) the approbation of the Lord, but (make) boasting before every one.

Haec est falsa castitas, etc. Now Patriarchs fulfilled the testament of virginity in prefiguration of Christ. And apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ son of the living God, fulfilled it also, the martyrs and anchorites of the Lord, the saints and holy virgins of the world besides, even as the holy, venerable virgin fulfilled it, she that hath a festival and commemoration on the occasion of this season and this time, to wit sancta virgo dei Brigida, for then it is that the Christians celebrate the feast and festal day of this holy Brigit, to wit, the Kalends of February as to the day of the solar month.

Here then is related in the churches of the Christians somewhat of her miracles and marvels, and of her birth according to flesh.

Brigit (was the) daughter of Dubthach, son of Demre (or Dreimne), son of Bresal, son of Den, son of Conla, son of Artair(?), son of Art Corb, son of Cairpe the Champion, son of Cormac, son of Oengus the Dumb, son of Eochaid Find Fuathnart, son of Fedlimid the Lawgiver, etc.

Now, that Dubthach son of Demre bought a bondmaid, named Broicsech, daughter of Dallbrónach of D[acute]l Conchobair in the south of Bregia. Dubthach united himself in wedlock to her, and she became pregnant by him. Thereafter Dubthach's consort grew jealous of the bondmaid (Brechnat Blaithech was the name of Dubthach's wife) and the queen said 'unless thou sellest this bondmaid in far-off lands, I will demand my dowry of thee, and I will go from thee.'

Dubthach did not at all desire to sell the bondmaid.

Dubthach went, and his bondmaid along with him, in a chariot, past the house of a certain wizard. When the wizard heard the noise of the chariot, this he said: 'See, O gillie, who is in the chariot, for this is the noise of a chariot under a king.' Said the gille, 'Dubthach is therein.' Then the wizard went to meet the chariot, and he asked whose (was) the woman who was biding in the chariot. Said Dubthach, 'That is a bondmaid of mine,' quoth he. Maithgen was the wizard's name, and from him Ross Maithgen is named. The wizard asked by whom the bondmaid was pregnant. 'By Dubthach,' says the bondmaid. Said the wizard, 'Marvellous will be the offspring, the like of her will not be in (all) the lands.'

Said Dubthach, 'My consort did not allow me not to sell this bondmaid.'

Said the wizard through his gift of prophecy, 'Thy wife's seed shall serve this bondmaid's seed, for the bondmaid will bring forth a daughter, noble, revered, before the men of the earth. As sun shineth among stars, (so) will shine the maiden's deeds and merits.'

Dubthach and the bondmaid rejoiced thereat, (and) Dubthach said, 'Since I have (already) sons, I should like to have a daughter.'

Then Dubthach went (back) to his house and his bondmaid with him. The wife however was still jealous of the bondmaid.

Great was the honour in which God held this girl. For two bishops of the Britons came to her from Alba to prophesy of her and to sanctify her, to wit, Bishop Mél and Melchu nomina eorum. So Dubthach gave them a welcome and the bondmaid served them and tended them. Now Dubthach's consort was mournful thereat, and Bishop Mél asked her the cause of her sadness. Said the wife, 'Because Dubthach *distinguisheth* his bondmaid from me.' Said Bishop Mél, 'Thus shall it be as thou sayest, for thy seed shall serve the seed of the bondmaid, but with her seed shall be profitable unto thy seed.' She was angry with him. So the bishop asked her, 'How many sons hast thou?' Said the wife, 'Six sons.' Dixit Bishop Mél, 'Thou shalt bear the seventh son, and he will be the worst of them, and the other sons will be bad unless the bondmaid's seed ennobles them, and thou thyself

shalt be accursed because of the *wrong which thou doest* to the bondmaid.'

After *those* words there came to Dubthach's house, out of the border of Hui-Maiccuais, another wizard who had been gathering treasures. Now when the wizard knew that the bondmaid was the cause of the anger of Dubthach's wife, he said, 'Wilt thou sell the bondmaid?' 'I will sell,' saith Dubthach. Quoth the bishops, 'Sell the bondmaid, but sell not the child that is in her womb.' Thus did Dubthach.

The wizard went forth and the bondmaid with him. The wizard with his bondmaid arrived at his house.

A certain poet came out of the province of Conaille to the house of the wizard aforesaid in order to buy a slave or a bondmaid.

The wizard sold him the bondmaid, but sold him not the offspring. Then it came to pass that the wizard made a great feast, and bade the king of Conaille to the feast, and it was then the time for the king's wife to bear a child. There was a prophet along with the king, and a friend of the king's asked him what hour would be lucky for the queen to bring forth the royal offspring. Dixit propheta, '*That the child that would be brought forth on the morrow at sunrise would overtop every birth in Ireland.*' Now the queen's travail came on before that hour, and she brought forth a dead son. Then the poet asked the prophet 'What hour would be lucky for the the bondmaid to bring forth?' *The prophet said that the child that would be brought forth on the morrow at sunrise, and neither within the house nor without, shall surpass every child in Ireland.*

Now on the morrow, at sunrise, when the bondmaid was going with a vessel of milk in her hand, and when she put one foot over the threshold of the house inside and the other foot outside, then did she bring forth the girl, to wit, *Saint Brigit*.

The maid-servants washed the girl with the milk that was in her mother's hand. Now that was in accord with the merits of *Saint Brigit*, to wit, with the brightness and sheen of her chastity.

On a Wednesday and *on the eighth of the lunar month* was Brigit born in Fothart Murthemni. Still, to the south-east of the church is the flagstone where Brigit was born, and the girl was taken straightway after her birth to the queen's dead son, and when Brigit's breath came to him he swiftly arose out of death.

Then the wizard and the bondmaid with her daughter went into the province of Connaught: her mother (was) of Connaught, her father out of Munster, her abode with the Connaughtmen.

On a certain day the bondmaid went to her island, and covered up her daughter in her house. Certain neighbours saw the house wherein the girl was all ablaze, so that a flame

of fire was made of it from earth to heaven. But when they went to rescue the house, the fire appeared not, and this they said, that the girl was full of *the grace of the Holy Spirit*.

One day the wizard went with his bondmaid to visit the cattle. The cow-dung(?) that lay before the girl was seen ablaze. But when the wizard and the bondmaid stretched down their hands to it, the fire appeared not.

Once upon a time when the wizard was sleeping, he saw three clerics in white garments, to wit, three angels of heaven, and they poured oil on St. Brigit's head, and they completed the order of baptism. And the third cleric said to the wizard 'This shall be the name of this holy maiden Sancta Brigita.' The wizard arose, and told what he had beheld.

Now this holy virgin, namely Brigit, was nourished with food and like to her *those of her age* besides, and she rejected the guidance of the wizard and used to give it *back*. The wizard meditated on the girl, and it seemed to him that it was because of the impurity and the corruption of his food. Then he *entrusted* a white red-eared cow to give milk to Brigit, and he enjoined a faithful woman to milk the cow. The virgin took her fill of that.

That holy virgin was reared till she was a handmaiden, and everything to which her hand was set used to increase and reverence God. Every store of food which she saw and served used to grow. She bettered the sheep: she tended the blind: she fed the poor.

Brigit was minded to go and watch over the fatherland. And the wizard sent messengers to Dubthach, that he might come for his daughter. The messengers declared unto Dubthach the maiden's miracles and many wonders. Then Dubthach came, and the wizard *makes* him welcome, and gave him his daughter free.

Then they went to their country, Dubthach and his daughter Brigit, in the province of Offaly; and there did Brigit work a wonderous miracle, to wit, her fostermother was in weakness of disease, and the fostermother sent the holy Brigit and another maiden with her to the house of a certain man named Boethchú, to ask him for a draught of ale. He refused Brigit. Then Brigit filled a vessel out of a certain well, and blessed it, and (the water) was turned into the taste of ale, and she gave it to her fostermother, who straightway became whole thereby. Now when they went to drink the banquet not a drop thereof was found.

This (was another) of Brigit's miracles: while she herding Dubthach's swine, there came two robbers and carried off two boars of the *herd*. They fared over the plain, and Dubthach met them and bound on them the eric (mulct) of his swine. Said Dubthach to Brigit, 'Is herding of the swine good, my girl?' saith he. Dixit Brigit to Dubthach, 'Count thou the swine.' Dubthach counted the swine, and not one of them was wanting.

Guests, then came to Dubthach. Dubthach sundered a gammon of bacon into five

pieces, and left them with Brigit to be boiled. And a miserable, greedy hound came into the house to Brigit. Brigit out of pity gave him the fifth piece. When the hound had eaten the piece Brigit gave him another piece to him. Then Dubthach came and said to Brigit: 'Hast thou boiled the bacon, and do all the portions remain?' 'Count them,' saith Brigit. Dubthach counted them, and none of them was wanting. The guests declared unto Dubthach what Brigit had done. 'Abundant,' saith Dubthach, 'are the miracles of that maiden.' Now the guests ate not the food, for they were unworth (thereof), but it was dealt out to the poor and to the needy of the Lord.

Once upon a time a certain faithful woman asked Dubthach that Brigit might go with her into the plain of the Liffey, for a congregation of the synod of Leinster was held there. And it was revealed in a vision to a certain holy man who was in the assembly, that Mary the Virgin was coming thereto, and it was told him that she would not be (accompanied) by a man in the assembly. On the morrow came the woman to the assembly, and Brigit along with her. And he that had seen the vision said 'This is the Mary that I beheld!' saith he to Brigit. The holy Brigit blessed all the hosts under the name and honour of Mary. Wherefore Brigit was (called) the Mary of the Gael thenceforward.

On a time it came into Brigit's mind, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, to go and see her mother who was in bondage. So she asked her father's leave, and he gave it not. Nevertheless, she went without permission from Dubthach. Glad was her mother when she arrived. Toil-worn and sickly was the mother and she (Brigit) for her mother, and took to bettering the dairy. The first churning that Brigit had she divided the fruit thereof into twelve shares in honour of the twelve apostles of the Creator, and she set the thirteenth portion so that it was greater than every (other) portion in honour of Jesus Christ, and she gave them all then to the poor of the Lord. Now the wizard's herdsman marvelled at the ordering that Brigit gave the butter. Then said Brigit: 'Christ with his twelve apostles preached to the men of the world. In His name it is that I feed *full* the poor, for Christ is in the person of every faithful poor man.'

The charioteer (that is the herdsman) went to the wizard's house, and the wizard and his wife asked him 'hath the virgin well cared for the dairy?' And the charioteer (i.e., the herdsman) said 'I am thankful anyhow, and the calves are fat' - for he durst not carp at Brigit in her absence. The charioteer took with him a *hamper*, eight fists in height. Said the charioteer to Brigit: 'The wizard will come with his wife to fill this *hamper* with the butter of the dairy.' 'They are welcome,' saith Brigit. The wizard and his consort came to the dairy, and beheld the calves fat. And Brigit made them welcome and brought food. Then said the wizard's wife to Brigit: 'We have come to know whether that which hath been entrusted to

thee hath profited. Of butter what hast thou?' She had none in readiness, except the making of one churning and a half making, and she first brought the half. The wizard's wife *laughed* thereat and said: 'This quantity of butter,' says she, 'is good to fill the big *hamper* that I have!' 'Fill your *hamper*' saith Brigit, 'and God will put butter into it.' So she kept going still into her kitchen and carrying out of it a half making at every journey, for God did not wish to deprive her of honour, so in that wise the *hamper* was filled. And this is what she repeated on going into her kitchen -

O God, O my Prince

Who canst do all these things,

Bless, O God (a cry unforbidden)

With thy right hand this kitchen!

May Mary's Son, my Friend, come

To bless my kitchen!

The Prince of the world to the border,

May we have abundance with Him!

The wizard and his consort venerated the Lord because of the miracle which they beheld; wherefore then said the wizard to Brigit: 'The butter and the kine that thou hast milked, I offer them to thee. Thou shalt not abide in bondage to me, but serve thou the Lord.' Brigit answered him and said: 'Take thou the kine and give me my mother's freedom.' Said the wizard: 'Not only shall thy mother be freed, (but) the kine shall be given to thee, and whatsoever thou shalt say (that) will I do.' Then Brigit dealt out the kine unto the poor and the needy of God. The wizard was baptized and was faithful, and accompanied Brigit from that time forth.

Then came Brigit, and her mother with her, to her father's house. Thereafter Dubthach and his consort were minded to sell the holy Brigit into bondage; for Dubthach liked not his cattle and his wealth to be dealt out to the poor, and that is what Brigit used to do. So Dubthach fared in his chariot, and Brigit along with him. Said Dubthach to Brigit: 'Not for honour or reverence to thee art thou carried in a chariot, but to take thee to sell thee and to grind the quern for Dunlang MacEnda, King of Leinster.' When they came to the King's fortress, Dubthach went in to the King and Brigit remained in her chariot at the fortress door. Dubthach had left his sword in his chariot near Brigit. A leper came to Brigit to ask an alms. She gave him Dubthach's sword. Dixit Dubthach to the King: 'Wilt thou buy a bondmaid, namely, my daughter?' says he. Dixit Dulang: 'Why sellest thou thine own daughter?' Dixit Dubthach: 'She stayeth not from selling my wealth and giving it to the poor.' Dixit the King: 'Let the maiden come into the fortress.' Dubthach went for Brigit and

was enraged against her, because she had given his sword to the poor man. When Brigit came into the King's presence, the King said to her: 'Since it is thy father's wealth that thou takest, much more, if I buy thee, wilt thou take my wealth and my cattle and give them to the poor?' Dixit Brigit: 'The Son of the virgin knoweth if I had thy might with (all) Leinster, and with all thy wealth I would give (them) to the Lord of the Elements.' Said the King to Dubthach: 'Thou art not fit on either hand to bargain about this maiden, for her merit is higher before God than before men.' And the King gave Dubthach for her an ivory-hilted sword, et sic liberata est sancta virgo Brigita captivitate.

Shortly after that came a certain *man of good kin* unto Dubthach to ask for his daughter (in marriage). Dubthach and his sons were willing, but Brigit refused. Said a brother of her brethren named Beccán unto her: 'Idle is the fair eye that is in thy head not be on a pillow near a husband.' 'The Son of the Virgin knoweth,' says Brigit, 'it is not lively for us if it brings harm upon us.' Then Brigit put her finger under her eye, and drew it out of her head until it was on her cheek, and she said: 'Lo, here for thee is thy delightful eye, O Beccán!' Then his eye burst forthwith. When Dubthach and her brethren beheld that, they promised that she should never be told to go unto a husband. Then she put her palm to her eye and it was quite whole at once. But Beccán's eye was not whole till his death.

Said Dubthach to Brigit: 'O daughter,' says he, 'put a veil on thy head. If thou hast dedicated thy virginity to God, I will not snatch *thee* from Him.' 'Deo gratias,' says Brigit.

Brigit, and certain virgins with her, went to Bishop Mél, in Telcha Mide, to take the veil. Glad was he thereat. For humbleness Brigit staid, so that she might be the last to whom the veil should be given. A fiery pillar arose from her head to the ridgepole of the church. Bishop Mél asked: 'What virgin is there?' Answered MacCaille: 'That is Brigit,' saith he. 'Come thou, O holy Brigit,' saith Bishop Mél, 'that the veil may be sained on thy head before other virgins.'

It came to pass then, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, that the form of ordaining a bishop was read over Brigit. MacCaille said that 'The order of a bishop should not be (conferred) on a woman.' Dixit Bishop Mél: 'No power have I in this matter, inasmuch as by God hath been given unto her this honour beyond every woman.' Hence, it is that the men of Ireland give the honour of bishop to Brigit's successor.

In the eighth (day) of the lunar month(?) was she born. On the eighteenth did she take the veil on her head. On the twenty-eighth did she go to heaven. Together with eight virgins was Brigit consecrated. According to the number of the eight beatitudes of the gospel did she fulfill (her course). *Still remaineth the altar's leg that lay in Brigit's hand though the three other legs were burnt.*

This was one of Brigit's miracles. When the solemnity of Easter drew nigh, Brigit set up, shortly before Maunday-Thursday, in a certain place near unto Bishop Mél. Brigit desired, through (her) charity, to brew ale for the many churches that were around her, and it was not usual to brew ale at that time. Brigit possessed only one measure of malt, and Brigit's family had no vessels save two troughs. They made a tub of one of the two vessels, and they filled the other vessel with ale, and the virgins kept taking the ale from Brigit to the churches, and still the vessel before Brigit remained full. And thus the produce of one measure of malt, through Brigit's blessing, supplied (?) seven churches of Fir Telach for Maundy-Thursday and for the eight days of Easter.

When the solemnity of Easter was fulfilled, Brigit asked her maidens whether they had the leavings of the Easter ale. Replied the virgins: 'God will give food,' say they. Then two maidens came in with a tub full of water. 'The Virgin's Son knoweth,' says Brigit, 'that there is good (ale) there.' She thought that it was ale. Quicker than speech, as she said that, the water was turned into choice ale forthwith.

Brigit went to a certain church in the land of Teffia to celebrate Easter, when *on Maunday-Thursday* Brigit took to washing the feet of the old men and the feeble folk who were in the church. Four of the sick people there, were a *consumptive* man, a madman, a blind man, and a leper. Brigit washed the feet of the four, and they were straightway healed from every disease that was on them.

Once Brigit was in a house as a guest, and all went out save a stripling of fourteen years. He had never spoken, nor moved foot or hand, and Brigit knew not that he was thus. So then came guests into the house to Brigit. Said Brigit to the stripling: 'Attend on the guests.' 'I will do so,' saith the stripling. He got up at once and did the service to the guests, and he was quite whole thenceforward.

Then there came to pass a meeting of the men of Ireland in Tailtin, in the place where Patrick abode, with a synod of Ireland's clerics around him. Now Brigit and Bishop Mél went to the meeting, and a certain woman (also) went thither with a babe on her arm, and she said that the babe was by Bishop Brón. The Bishop, however, denied that. Brigit asked the woman by whom *had she conceived the child*, and told her not to utter a lie. And the woman answered: 'It is by Bishop Brón.' Then a swelling straightway filled her tongue, so that she was unable to speak. Brigit made the sign of the cross over the infant's mouth and asked it: 'Who is thy father?' The infant answered and said 'A wretched man who is in the outskirts of the assembly, that is my father,' saith he. So in that wise Bishop Brón was saved through the grace of Brigit.

Brigit went to converse with Patrick in Mag Lemne while he was preaching the gospel.

And Brigit fell asleep at the preaching. Dixit Patrick: 'Wherefore hast thou slept?' Brigit bent her knees thrice and said: 'I saw a vision,' quoth she. Dixit Patrick: 'Tell us the vision.' 'I saw,' quoth she, 'four ploughs in the south-east, and they ploughed the whole island, and before the sowing was finished the harvest grew up, and clear well-springs and shining streams came out of the furrows, and white garments were round the sowers and ploughmen. I beheld four other ploughs in the north, and they ploughed the island athwart, and before the harvest came again, the oats which they had sown grew up at once and ripened, and black streams came out of the furrows and black garments were on the sowers and on the ploughmen. And I was sorrowful thereat,' quoth Brigit.

Dixit Patrick: 'Be not in sadness, for good is that which thou beheldest. The first four ploughs which thou beheldest, those are I and thou. We sow the four books of the gospel with seed of faith and confession. The harvest which appeared to thee, that is the perfect faith of those men-folk. The four other ploughs, those are the false teachers and the liars, and they will overturn the teachings that we sow, and those we shall not uplift. But we, I and thou, shall then be in the presence of the Creator.'

Then Brigit went to Dunlaing to ask him to forfeit to her father the sword which he had given to him while he was in the door-way of the fortress. Then a slave of the slaves of the King came to speak with Brigit and said to her: 'If thou wouldst save me from servitude wherein I am, I would become a christian and I would serve thee thyself.' Brigit said: 'I will ask that of the King.' So Brigit went into the fortress and asked her two boons of the King - the forfeiture of the sword to Dubthach, and his freedom for the slave. Said Brigit to the King: 'If thou desirest excellent children and a kingdom for thy sons and Heaven for thyself, give me the two boons that I ask.' Said the King to Brigit: 'The kingdom of Heaven, as I see it not, and as no one knows what thing it is, I seek not, and a kingdom for my sons I seek not, for I *should* not myself be extant, and let each *resp="WS">work in* his time. But give me length of life in my kingdom and victory always over the Huí Néill, for there is often warfare between us. And give me victory in the first battle, so that I may be trustful in the other fights.' And this was fulfilled in the battle of Lochar, (which he fought) against the Huí Néill.

Once upon a time the King of Leinster came unto Brigit to listen to preaching and celebration at Easter-day. After the ending of the form of celebration, the King fared forth on his way and Brigit went to refection. Lommán, Brigit's leper, said he would eat nothing until the *armour* of the King of Leinster were given to him - both spears and sword and shield *that he might move to and fro thereunder*. A messenger went from Brigit after the King. From mid-day to evening *was the King astray and he attained not even a thousand*

paces, so the armour was given by him, and bestowed on the leper.

Once upon a time Bishop Ercc and Brigit were in the land of Leinster. She said to Bishop Ercc: 'There is at present a battle between thy tribe and its neighbours.' Dixit a student of Bishop Ercc's family: 'We think not,' saith he, 'that that is true.' Brigit sained the student's eyes. Said the student: 'I see my brothers a-slaughtering now.' Then the student repented greatly.

Once upon a time a certain leper came to Brigit to ask for a cow. Dixit Brigit to him: 'Which wouldst thou prefer, to carry off a cow or to be healed of the leprosy?' The leper said, that he would rather be healed of his leprosy than have the kingdom of all the world, for 'every sound man is a king,' saith he. Then Brigit made prayer to God and the leper was healed and served Brigit afterwards.

Now, when Brigit's fame in miracles and marvels had travelled throughout all Ireland, there came unto Brigit for their healing two blind men from Britain, and a little leper boy with them, and they put trust in Bishop Mél to get them healed. Said Brigit: 'Let them stay outside just now till mass is over.' Said the Britons (for those people are *hasty*), 'Thou healedst folk of thy own race yesterday, though thou healest not us to-day.' Brigit made prayer and the three were healed at once.

Brigit went afterwards with her virgins to Ardachad of Bishop Mél. The king of Teffia was at a feast near them. There was a vessel covered with many gems in the king's hand. And a certain careless man took it out of his hand, and it fell and broke into pieces. That man was seized by the king. Bishop Mél went to ask for him, but nothing could be got from the king save his death. However, Bishop Mél asked that the broken vessel might be given to him by the king, and then he had it and took it with him to the house wherein was Brigit. And Brigit made prayer to the Lord, and the vessel was restored in a form that was better than before, and then it was taken to the king, and the captive was loosed. And Bishop Mél said: 'Not for me hath God wrought this miracle, but for Brigit.'

Once upon a time Brigit went to watch over a certain virgin, namely, Brigit, the daughter of Congaile, who used to work many miracles. And when Brigit and her virgins were at dinner, Brigit paused in the middle of the meal, and she said to a certain virgin: 'Make thou Christ's cross over thy face and over thine eyes that thou mayest see what I see.' So then the virgin beheld Satan beside the table with his head down and his feet up, his smoke and his flame out of his gullet and out of his nostrils. Said Brigit to the demon that he should answer her:

'I cannot, O nun, be without conversing with thee, for thou keepest God's commandments and thou art *compassionate* to God's poor and to His family.'

'Tell us,' saith Brigit, 'why thou art hurtful in thy deeds to the human race?'

Said the demon: 'That the race may not attain unto Paradise.'

Said Brigit to the demon: 'Wherefore hast thou come to us among our nuns?'

'A certain pious virgin is here,' saith the demon, 'and in her company am I.'

Said Brigit to the virgin: 'Put Christ's cross over thine eyes.' And the virgin beheld at once the hideous monster there, and great fear seized the virgin when she beheld the demon.

'Wherefore shunnest thou,' said Brigit, 'the fosterling whom thou hast been cherishing (?) for long seasons?'

Then the virgin repented, and she was healed of the devil of gluttony and lust that had dwelt in her company.

Once upon a time Brigit went over to Teffia, and there were great hosts along with her. There were two lepers behind them, who quarrelled on the road. The hand of him that first raised his hand withers, and then the hand of the other leper withered. Thereafter they repented and Brigit cured them of their leprosy.

Once upon a time Brigit with her virgins, was at Armagh, and two went by her bearing a tub of water. They came to Brigit to be blessed, and the tub fell behind them and went back over back from the door of the Rath as far as Loch Lapan. And it brake not, and not a drop fell thereout. It was well known to every one that Brigit's blessing had caused this, and Patrick said: 'Deal ye the water throughout Armagh and Airthir.' So it was dealt, and it cured every disease and every *ailment* that was in the land.

Brigit went into the province of Fir Ross to loosen a captive who was in manuwith the King of Ross. Said Brigit: 'Wilt thou set that captive free for me?' The King replied: 'Though thou shouldst give me the realm of the men of Breg, I would not give him to thee. But go not with a refusal,' saith the King. 'For one night thou shalt have the right to guard his life for him.' Then Brigit appeared at the close of day to the captive and said to him: 'When the chain shall be opened for thee repeat this hymn, Nunc populus, and turn to thy right hand and flee.' Thus it is done, and the captive flees at the word of Brigit.

Brigit one day came over Sliab Breg. There was a madman on the mountain who used to be *harrying* the companies. Great fear seized the virgins who were near Brigit, when they saw the madman. Said Brigit to the demoniac: 'Since thou hast gone there, preach the word of God to us.' 'I cannot,' he saith, 'be ungentle to thee, for thou are merciful to the Lord's family, to wit, to the poor and to the wretched.' So then said the madman: 'Reverence the Lord, O nun, and every one will reverence thee, love the Lord, and every one will love thee, fear the Lord and every one will fear thee!' Then the madman went from

them and did no hurt to them.

Brigit was one journeying in Mag Laigen, and she saw running past her a student, namely Ninnid the scholar.

'What art thou doing, O Sage!' saith Brigit, 'and whither art thou wending (so) quickly?'

'To heaven,' saith the scholar.

'The son of the Virgin knoweth,' said Brigit, 'that I would fain fare with thee!'

Dixit the scholar: 'O nun,' saith he, 'hinder me not from my road, or, if thou hinderest, beseech the Lord with me that the journey to heaven may be happy, and I will beseech God with thee that it may be easy for thee and that thou mayst bring many thousands with thee to heaven.'

Brigit repeated a Paternoster with him, and he was pious thenceforward; and Brigit said that neither gallows nor punishment would be for him, and he it is that afterwards administered communion and sacrifice to Brigit.

Brigit went to Bishop Ibaire that he may mark out her city for her. So they came thereafter to the place where Kildare is to-day. That was the season and the time that Ailill son of Dunlaing, with a hundred horse-loads of peeled rods, chanced to be going through the ground of Kildare. Two girls came from Brigit to ask for some of the rods, and they got a refusal. Forthwith all the horses were struck down under their loads against the ground. Stakes and wattles were taken from them, and they arose not until Ailill son of Dunlaing had offered unto Brigit those hundred horse-loads; and thereout was built *Saint Brigit's* house in Kildare.

Then said Brigit— ... my house . Let the kingship of Leinster for ever be From Ailill son of Dunlaing.

On a time came two lepers unto Brigit to ask for an alms. Nought else was in the kitchen save a single cow. So Brigit gave the single cow to the lepers. One of the two lepers gave thanks unto God for the cow. But the other leper was *unthankful*, for he was haughty.

'I alone,' saith he, 'have been sat at nought with a cow! Till to-day,' saith he, 'O ye nuns, I have never been counted among Culdees and amongst the poor and feeble, and I *should not be (treated) like them* with a single cow.'

Said Brigit to the lowly leper: 'Stay thou here to see whether God will put anything into the kitchen, and let that haughty leper fare forth with his cow.' Then came a certain heathen having a cow for Brigit. So Brigit gave that cow to the lowly leper. And when the haughty leper went on his way he was unable to drive his cow alone, so came back again to Brigit and to his comrade, and was reviling and blaming Brigit. 'Not for God's sake,' saith he, 'bestowedst thou thine offering, but for mischief and oppressiveness thou gavest to

me.'

Thereafter the two lepers come to the Barrow. The river riseth against them. Through Brigit's blessing the lowly leper escapes with his cow. *But the haughty leper fell in the stream, and his cow after him, and was drowned.*

Once upon a time the Queen of Cremthan, son of Ennae Cennselach, *that is, the queen of Leinster*, came and brought a chain of silver to Brigit as an offering. The semblance of a human shape was at one of its ends, and an apple of silver on the other end. Brigit gave it to her virgins, they stored it up without her knowledge, for greatly used Brigit to take her wealth and give it to the poor. Nevertheless, a leper came to Brigit, and without her virgins' knowledge, she went to the chain and gave it to him. When the virgins knew this, they said, with much angry bitterness and wrath, 'Little good have we from thy compassion to every one,' say they, 'and we ourselves in need of food and raiment.' 'Ye are sinning,' saith Brigit: 'Go ye into the church : the place wherein I make prayer, there will ye find your chain.' They went at Brigit's word. But, though it had been given to the poor man, the virgins found their chain therein.

Once upon a time Brigit beheld a man with salt on his back. 'What is that on thy back?' saith Brigit: 'Stones,' saith the man. '*They shall* be stones then,' saith Brigit, and of the salt stones were made. The same man again cometh to (or past) Brigit. 'What is that on thy back?' saith Brigit: 'Salt,' saith the man. 'It shall be salt then,' saith Brigit. Salt was made again thereof through Brigit's word.

On a time came two lepers unto Brigit to be healed. Said Brigit to one of the lepers: 'Wash thou the other.' Thus was it done, and he was quite sound forthwith. Said Brigit to the sound leper: 'Bathe and wash thy comrade even as he did service unto thee.' 'Besides the time we have [already] come together,' says he, 'we will never come together, for it is not fair for thee, O nun, (to expect) me, a sound man with fresh limbs and fresh clean raiment, to wash that loathsome leper there, with his livid limbs falling out of him.' However, Brigit herself washed the poor, lowly leper. The haughty leper who had been washen first, then spake, 'Meseems,' saith he, 'that sparks of fire are breaking through my skin.' Swifter than speech he was straightway smitten with leprosy from the crown of his head to his soles, because of his disobedience to Brigit.

Another time as Brigit was going to *receive the sacrament from* the bishop there was shewn to her a he-goat's head in the mass-chalice. Brigit refused the chalice. 'Why,' saith the ecclesiastic, 'dost thou refuse it?' 'Not hard to say,' saith Brigit, 'this is why I refuse: the head of a he-goat is shewn unto me in the chalice.'. The bishop called the gillie who brought the *portable altar* 'Make thy confessions, O gillie,' saith the bishop. 'This very

morning,' saith the gillie, 'I went to the goat-house, and took thereout a fat he-goat, and his flesh I ate.' The gillie did penance and repented. Brigit thereafter went to *the sacrament*, and saw not the semblance.

Once upon a time came seven bishops to Brigit, and she had nought to give them after milking the cows thrice. So the cows were milked again the third time, and it was greater than any milking.

Once upon a time a certain nun of Brigit's family took a longing for salt. Brigit made prayer, and the stone before her she turned into salt, and then the nun was cured.

Once upon a time a *shepherd* of Brigit's family was cutting firewood. It came to pass that he killed a pet fox of the King of Leinster's. The *shepherd* was seized by the King. Brigit ordered a wild fox to come out of the wood. So he came and was playing and sporting for the hosts and the King at Brigit's order. But when the fox had finished his feats he went safe back through the wood, with the hosts of Leinster behind him, both foot and horse and hound.

(This) was (one) of Brigit's miracles. She had a great band of reapers a-reaping. A rain-storm poured on the plain of Liffey, but, through Brigit's prayer, not a drop fell on her field.

(This) was (one) of Brigit's miracles. She blessed the table-faced man, so that his two eyes were whole.

(This) was (one) of Brigit's miracles. Robbers stole her oxen. The river Liffey rose against them. The oxen came home on the morrow with the robbers' clothes on their horns.

(This) was (one) of Brigit's miracles. When she came to the widow Lassair on Mag Coel, and Lassair killed her cow's calf for Brigit and burnt the beam of her loom thereunder, God so wrought for Brigit that the beam was whole on the morrow and the calf was *biding* along with its mother.

Once upon a time Brenainn came from the west of Ireland to Brigit, to the plain of Liffey. For he wondered at the fame that Brigit had in miracles and marvels. Brigit came from her sheep to welcome Brenainn. As Brigit entered the house she put her wet cloak on the rays of the sun, and they supported it like pot-hooks. Brenainn told his gillie to put his cloak on the same rays, and the gillie put it on them, but it fell from them twice. Brenainn himself put it, the third time, with anger and wrath, and the cloak staid upon them.

Each of them confessed to the other. Said Brenainn: 'Not usual is it for me to go over seven ridges without (giving) my mind to God.' Said Brigit: 'Since I first gave my mind to God, I never took it from Him at all.'

While Brigit was herding sheep, there came a thief unto her and stole seven wethers

from her, after having first besought her (for them). Nevertheless, when the flock was counted the wethers were found again (therein) through Brigit's prayer.

A certain man of Brigit's family once made (some) mead for the King of Leinster. When the King came to consume it, not a drop thereof was found, for Brigit had given all the mead to the poor. Brigit at once rose up to protect the host, and blessed the vessels, and they were at once full of choice mead. For every thing which Brigit used to ask of the Lord used to given to her at once. For this was her desire: to feed the poor, to repel every hardship, to be gentle to every misery.

Many miracles and marvels in that wise the Lord wrought for Saint Brigit. Such is their number that no one could relate them unless her own spirit, or an angel of God, should come from heaven to relate them.

Now there never hath been any one more bashful or more modest than that holy virgin. She never washed her hands, or her feet, or her head, amongst men. She never looked into a male person's face. She never spoke without blushing. She was abstinent, innocent, liberal, patient. She was joyous in God's commandments, steadfast, lowly, forgiving, charitable. She was a consecrated vessel for keeping Christ's body. She was a temple of God. Her heart and her mind were a throne of rest for the Holy Ghost. Towards God she was simple : towards the wretched she was compassionate : in miracles she was splendid. Therefore her type among created things is the Dove among birds, the Vine among trees, the Sun above stars.

This is the father of this holy virgin - the Heavenly Father. This is her son - Jesus Christ. This is her fosterer - the Holy Ghost : and thence it is that this holy virgin wrought these great innumerable marvels.

She is that helpeth every one who is in straits and in danger. She it is that abateth the pestilences. She it is that quelleth the wave-voice and the wrath of the great sea. This is the prophesied woman of Christ. She is the Queen of the South. She is the Mary of the Gael.

Now when Brigit came to the ending-days, after founding churches and churchbuildings in plenty, after miracles and wondrous deeds in number (like) sand of sea or stars of heaven, after charity and mercy, she received communion and sacrifice from Ninnid the Pure-handed, when he had returned from Rome of Latium, and sent her spirit thereafter to heaven. But her remains and her relics are on earth with great honour and with primacy and pre-eminence with miracles and marvels. Her soul is like the sun in the heavenly City among quires of angels and archangels, in union with cherubim and seraphim, in union with Mary's Son, to wit, in the union with all the Holy Trinity, Father and Son and Holy

Ghost.

I beseech the Lord's mercy, through Saint Brigit's intercession. May we all attain that union in *sæcula sæculorum*. Amen.

SBG St Brigid. The identification of S. Brigid with the fire goddess showed itself in the maintenance of a perpetual fire at Kildare near her church. Giraldus Cambrensis thus describes it : ' As in the time of S. Brigid twenty nuns were here engaged in the Lord's warfare, she herself being the twentieth, after her glorious departure, nineteen have always formed the society, the number having never been increased. Each of them has the care of the fire for a single night, the last nun, having heaped wood upon the fire, says, Brigid, take charge of your own fire ; for this night belongs to you.' She then leaves the fire, and in the morning it is found that the fire has not gone out, and that the usual amount of fuel has been consumed. This fire is surrounded by a hedge, made of stakes and brushwood, and forming a circle, within which no male can enter ; and if any one should presume to do so, he will not escape divine vengeance. Moreover, it is only lawful for women to blow the fire, and they must use for the purpose bellows, and not their own breath. This was an Irish counterpart of the College of the Vestal Virgins at Rome keeping alive the sacred fire of Hestia ; and no reasonable doubt can exist that it was a pagan survival of the worship of Brigid the fire goddess. This would seem to have struck Henry of London, archbishop of Dublin, for in 1220 he ordered the fire to be extinguished.