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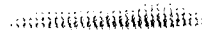
A CELTIC  
MISCELLANY

*Translations from the Celtic Literatures*

KENNETH HURLSTONE  
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PENGUIN BOOKS

## 'CELTIC MAGIC'

### 127. *The Adventure of Conle*

Conle the Redhaired, a son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, was with his father one day on the heights of Uisnech, when he saw a woman<sup>1</sup> in a strange dress. Conle said, 'Where have you come from, woman?' The woman replied, 'I have come from the Lands of the Living, where there is neither death nor sin nor transgression. We enjoy everlasting feasts without their needing to be served. We have goodwill without strife. We live in a great fairy hill, whence we are called the People of the Fairy Hills.' 'Who are you speaking to?' said Conn to his son, for no one saw the woman except Conle alone. The woman replied, 'He speaks to a young beautiful woman of noble race, who expects neither death nor old age. I have fallen in love with Conle the Redhaired, and I summon him to the Plain of Delights, where Boadhagh is king everlasting, a king without weeping and without woe in his land since he became ruler. Come with me, Conle the Redhaired, with your bejewelled neck and eyes like a candle flame! A golden crown upon you over your ruddy face shall be the patent of your royalty. If you come with me your form shall not wither from its youth or beauty till apocalyptic Doomsday.' Conn said to his druid, Corann by name, when they had heard all that the woman whom they could not see had said:

'I beseech you, Corann, great in song, great in skill; I am overpowered by a force which is greater than my counsel, which is greater than my strength, a struggle such as has not come to me since I took kingship, a deceitful combat with invisible shapes which overwhelm me to steal away my handsome son by magic spells; he is carried off from my royal side through the spells of women.'

1. See Notes.

Then the druid sang a charm against the woman's voice, so that no one heard the voice of the woman and Conle did not see the woman at that time. As the woman went away before the overpowering song of the druid, she threw an apple to Conle. For a month after that Conle was without food or drink, and did not care to eat any victuals but his apple. However much he ate, the apple grew no less, but was still whole.

Then longing seized Conle for the woman he had seen. On the day when the month was up, Conle was beside his father in the plain of Archommin. He saw the same woman coming, and she said to him:

'On a high throne sits Conle among the ephemeral Dead, waiting for fearful death. The immortal Living invite you; they will summon you to Tethra's<sup>1</sup> folk, who see you every day in the gatherings of your native land among your dear familiars.'

When Conn heard the woman's voice he said to his followers, 'Call the druid to me! I see that her tongue has been loosened for her today.' Then the woman said:

'Conn of the Hundred Battles, do not love druidry, for in a short while there will come a righteous man<sup>2</sup> with many companies, many and wonderful, to give judgement on our wide shores; soon his Law will reach you. He will scatter the spells of druids, with their wicked learning, in the sight of the Devil, the Black Magician.'

Conn marvelled then that Conle spoke to no one when the woman came. 'Does it pierce your heart, what the woman says, Conle?' said Conn. Conle said, 'It is not easy for me, for I love my people; yet longing for the woman has seized me.' The woman said:

'You are struggling (most difficult of desires) against the wave of your longing which tears you from them; in my crystal boat we might come to the fairy hill of Boadhagh, if we could reach it.'

1. See Notes.

2. St Patrick.

There is another land which it would be no worse to seek; the sun sets, I see it – though it is far we shall reach it before night.

That is a land which rejoices the heart of everyone who explores it; there is no other sort there but women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

Then Conle sprang away from them into the crystal boat. They saw them in the distance; scarcely could their eyes follow how they rowed away over the sea. They were not seen from then till now.

Irish; author unknown; eighth century.

128. *The Story of Lludd and Llefelys*

Beli the Great, son of Manogan, had three sons – Lludd<sup>1</sup> and Caswallawn and Nynniaw; and according to the story a fourth son of his was Llefelys. And after Beli died, the kingdom of the island of Britain fell into the hands of Lludd, his eldest son, and it was ruled by Lludd prosperously. He restored the walls of London, and surrounded it with countless towers. And then he ordered the citizens to build houses in it, so that there should be no houses in the kingdoms so grand as those that were there. And besides that, he was a good fighter, and gave food and drink generously and freely to all that asked for them. And though he had many cities and forts, he loved this one more than any; and he lived in it the greater part of the year; and for that reason it was called *Caer Ludd*,<sup>2</sup> and in the end *Caer Lundein*. And when a foreign people came there, it was called *Lunden*, or *Londres*.

Lludd loved Llefelys most of all his brothers, since he was a wise and careful man. And when he heard that the king of France had died without leaving any heir to himself except one daughter, and had left the kingdom in her hands, he came to his brother Lludd to ask advice and help of him; and not so much to further himself, as rather to

1. See Notes.

2. 'The City of Lludd'; see Notes.