

A 635:1



English translation of a tale "Mac Rí Chruacháin"  
(The Son of the King of Cruachán), printed in  
Béaloidéas II, pp. 35-46. The tale was recorded  
by Professor Edmund Curtis from the recital of  
Seán Ruadh Mac an Bháird of Classey, Glenties, Co.  
Donegal, in 1917. The storyteller was about 56 at  
that time.



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A. 635:2

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## Mac Rí Chruacháin.

In olden times there was a King living in Cruic Chruacháin, and he had only one son. The King's wife died, and shortly after that the King himself died. Whilst the King lived he had much more than enough of worldly goods. But his son was very prodigal, and it was not long after his father's death, until he had gone through all his wealth. When he had the last of it spent he did not know what he had <sup>should</sup> better do. He remembered, one day, that he ~~had~~ <sup>used</sup> often seen his father going up to the top of the hill, carrying a book with him. He thought that he would carry the book with him, and go up to the top of the hill, to see if there were any geasa, or magic in the book. He went, one day, to the top of the hill, carrying the book with him. He was not long reading, when a little hairy foxy man came up to him. "Son of the King of Cruacháin" said he "would you play a game of cards?" "I was never <sup>loath to do that</sup> ~~when I would not~~" said Mac Rí Chruacháin. "Well, we will make a condition," said the little hairy foxy man, "whoever will win two consecutive games, one after the other, he shall name his forfeit."

(in spells)



"All night" said Mac Ri b hruacháin  
 "They began playing, and Mac Ri  
 b hruacháin won the two games from  
 the little man.

"I see that you defeated me"

"I see that I did," said Mac Ri b hruacháin

"Well, name your forfeit now"

(alternatively: - I put you under  
 the strictest penalty of having  
 your livelihood taken away  
 from you by magic power  
 if, etc.)

"I put you under geasa deuim na  
draoidheachta to take your livelihood  
 away from you, if you do not leave  
 me as rich in cattle and sheep as  
 my father was."

"That is hard enough" said the little man

"but you must give me the space of  
 a month"

At the end of a month it was the lowing  
 of the cattle, the neighing of the horses, and  
 the bleating of the sheep, that awakened  
 Mac Ri b hruacháin.

One morning: - "I see" said Mac Ri  
 b hruacháin "that my journey was successful,  
 and I shall go up again to the hill  
 to-day" He had not gone far, when the  
 little hairy foxy man came up to him.

"How did you like your stock, Son of the  
 King of b hruacháin?"

"I liked it well"

"Will you have a game of cards to-day?"

"I was never <sup>loath to do that.</sup> ~~wouldn't~~"

They began playing, and it was not  
 long until the King's Son won two games  
 again.

"I see" said the little man "that you  
 defeated me again to-day"



(or: I put you under the strictest penalty of having your livelihood taken away from you by magic power if, etc.)

"I see that I did."

"Well, name your forfeit!"

"I put you under geasa druin na draoidheadh to take your livelihood away from you, if you do not get the most beautiful girl in the world for me."

"That's hard enough" said the little man

"but, if you give me the space of a month, I shall see to its being done."

At the end of a month when the King's son awoke, he saw the most beautiful girl that he had ever laid eyes on, sitting on a chair, in the room in which he slept. He arose, and he gave the most profuse welcome to the young woman.

One morning:—"Are you going to the hill to-day?" said the young woman.

"I am," said the King's son.

"Each of you will only win, every second game until nightfall," said she.

The King's son went up the hill, and he was not long there, when the little hairy fory man came.

"How did you like the young woman?"

"Well."

"Will you have a game to-day?"

"I was never <sup>loath to do that</sup> when I wouldn't play."

"Each of them only won every second game, <sup>until night</sup> throughout the day. They had to stop, the same as they began. The King's son came home.

"How did you get on to-day?" said the young woman.



"We only to won every second game, during the day"

"I was thinking that," said she, "you'll be going up to-morrow morning?"

"I will"

"Be sure and awaken me," said she, "if I am not awake before you go."

The next morning, as soon as the day broke, and before that, she was up, and had his breakfast ready.

"Each of you will only win every second game, again," said she.

He went up to the hill, and the little man and himself only won every second game, on that day.

When he came home: - "How did you get on to-day?"

"We only won every second game during the day."

"I knew that. Will you be going up to-morrow morning?"

"I will."

"Well, be sure and awaken me"

The next day, he got up, and she was asleep. He thought it was a pity to awaken her, and he went up to the hill. He was not long there, when the little man arrived. They commenced the cards, and they were not long playing, <sup>when</sup> then the little man won two games, after each other, from the King's son.

"I see" said the little hairy foxy man "that I defeated you at last."

"I see that you did" said Mac Ri' bhrnacháin



(or: - I put you under the strictest penalty of having your livelihood taken away from you by magic power, if.)

"but name your forfeit now"

"<sup>Too soon, I shall do that.</sup> ~~You will need to be agile.~~ I put you under 'geasa druim na draoidheachta' to take your livelihood away from you, if you do not get, for me, the Sword of Light, that is in the Eastern World, and if you do not find out, who killed Anti-Christ." ~~It~~

"That's hard enough" said the King's son, but you must give me the space of three months."

"You shall have that," said the little hairy foy man.

The King's Son came home, and when he sat on the chair, the chair broke

"I see," said she, "that you are a King's son under 'geasa'. Well! what 'gease' is on you?"

He told her how it was.

"Well! you have enough work, before you now, and, if you had awakened me, in the morning, each of you would only win every second game to-day, again, and, he could only carry on playing with you, three days, and you would be finished with him."

"Now," said she, "gather to-gether all the masons of the world, and have a <sup>(rampart)</sup> bawn eighteen feet high, built around this castle. Order iron spikes to be made, and put them on top of the wall, each one a foot apart from the next."

He did thus. He sent out a

(or a spell)



proclamation; the masons came together; it was not long until the wall was finished, and the iron spikes on top of it.

"Now" said she "go down to the tailor's, and get a vest made of the very finest material, you can get, and bring it here to me." He did that.

She began to embroider it, with a silken thread, that was of every colour. She worked on one side of it, the image of every fish, that is in the sea, from the whale to the shrimp, and on the other the image of all the birds of the air, from the eagle to the wren.

"Now" said she, "put that vest on you, and do not take it off until you return here again. "If you are a good ~~walk~~ rider, you will be able to do the deed. There is a shaggy pony in the stable. Her bridle and whip are hanging over her. Take the pony, and face her to the wall, and if you stay on her back, until she carries you out and in again, you will be able to do the deed."

The King's Son brought the shaggy pony out of the stable, he rode her, and faced her to the ~~fence~~ <sup>rampart</sup> ~~ag~~. She jumped <sup>over</sup> it out. He turned her in to the ~~fence~~ <sup>rampart</sup> again. She jumped it in, and he kept on her back. "I see," said the young woman, "that you ~~will do~~ <sup>have succeeded</sup>."



~~the deed.~~ "

"Now" said she, "when you are going, do not pull the reins, & give her her head, and take this whip with you. The shaggy horse will bring you to the Eastern World, and the <sup>rampart</sup> bawn, that you will have to pass, is the same height as this one. If the golden gate will not let you in, the shaggy horse will jump the <sup>rampart</sup> bawn, and if you succeed in getting in, there is a vicious hound chained inside the <sup>rampart</sup> fence, and, when you are passing ~~it~~, <sup>it</sup> will attack you. Give <sup>it</sup> a blow of the whip, and <sup>it</sup> will give a howl. My father will hear the howl, and come out, and he will ask you: 'Who is the lusratic, that was bold enough to beat this hound?' Say that, it was you beat <sup>it</sup>, and that you <sup>will</sup> beat himself also, if he is not polite. He will be afraid of you then, and you will be taken into the house, and he will tell you the rest. Mac Ri Chruacháin did as she asked him. The shaggy pony brought him to the Eastern World. When he came to the <sup>rampart</sup> bawn of the palace, the golden gate would not <sup>let him</sup> in; he faced the shaggy pony to the <sup>rampart</sup> bawn, and she jumped over it. He was proceeding on his way, on the inside, and when he was passing the hound ~~it~~ attacked him, and he gave <sup>it</sup> a blow of the whip. <sup>It</sup> howled, and the king came out, and asked who was bold enough to beat his hound. Mac Ri





Ó hruacháin answered that it was he  
 beat her, and that he would beat  
 himself, if he had not good manners.  
 He (the King) ordered the groom to  
 put the shaggy horse in the stable, and  
 he invited Mac Ri Ó hruacháin to go into  
 the house with him. When he went  
 in, the dinner was being prepared.  
 "Come out with me" said the King "until  
 you see some of my kingdom."

They went down to the sea-shore and  
 the King said: "I don't know," said he,  
 "what ships are those coming in".  
 Mac Ri Ó hruacháin looked out to sea,  
 and he could not see any ship, at all.  
 When he looked beside him again, the  
 king was nowhere to be seen, and,  
 unless the ground had swallowed him,  
 he did not know where he had gone.

He walked another bit forward,  
 as far as the verge of a great cliff,  
 and he saw the King sauntering  
 along down below, at the bottom of the  
 cliff.

"It's a shame for me" said he "if I'm  
 not able to jump down this cliff,  
 as well as that old man."

He jumped clean over the cliff,  
 and the old man never felt anything,  
 until he was standing beside him.

"You are the best athlete, that I ever saw  
 coming to this country. Many athletes  
 have come here, but none of them had  
 the courage to leap down the cliff."



"I thought nothing of it," said Mac Ri bhrnacháin.

They walked on a bit, and Mac Ri bhrnacháin saw a woman <sup>emerged to her waist</sup> inside in a vessel of molten lead. She was down to the waist in it. The king had a stick, and he put his two hands on the stick, and he struck the woman a blow with it, and she gave a scream.

Said Mac Ri bhrnacháin "you are the most hard-hearted man, I ever saw"

"Ha!", said the king, "if you knew what that woman did to me, you would not blame me for that blow."

"She must have done something big to you"

"I'll tell you what she did. She was my wedded wife once, and we had a good livelihood. There were twelve maidens waiting on her, and twelve boys waiting on me. I, and my twelve boys were in the habit of going out to the woods often. We were one day, hunting in the woods, and we found (a little hairy man) a lochramán. We brought him home with us. We shaved him, and put clothes on him. When he began getting good food in the house, he became strong, and he was very useful waiting on the girls. One day, we were going hunting, and, when I was a little way from the house, I saw that I had forgotten my powder-horn. I did not like to send any of the boys for it, because it was in the room, where my wife and myself used to sleep. I went back



myself, and, when, I went into the room,  
<sup>what did I see</sup>  
 about the lochramane in the bed with my  
 wife. I took the powder-horn with me,  
 and I didn't let on that, I saw them. We  
 had a good day's hunting, and, when we  
 came home in the evening, I appeared  
 as cheerful as any other day. But my  
 wife was gloomy and <sup>sulky</sup> (groway). She said,  
 in the end, that I and my servants  
 were not ~~so~~ as merry in our inmost  
 hearts, as we appeared to be. She brought  
 out an apple, and she made thirteen  
 parts of the apple, and she gave it to  
 us to eat. I, myself was the first  
 person to eat my piece of the apple,  
 and the boys eat their pieces. So  
 sooner had we eaten them, than  
 we turned into thirteen dogs. She  
 drove us forth from the house, and  
 we went through the park, killing the  
 sheep, and eating them. Then, she  
 sent a message to her father, asking  
 him and his champions to come,  
 saying, that, I had died, and that  
 a pack of dogs had gathered together  
 in the place, and that they were killing  
 her sheep. The father came, and he  
 chased us away. Do you see that  
 island out there in the sea?  
 "Yes! I do" said Mac Ri Chruachain  
 "Well! there was nothing for us to  
 do, only to take to the sea and to swim  
 out to the island. We could get  
 no food there only barnacles and

(or limpets)



muscles. We eat these as long as they lasted us. In the end it became so hard for us, that we drew lots to see, who should be killed, that the rest might eat him. The lot fell to one of the four boys, and we eat him, and we were going on like that, until all were killed, except me, and the two most faithful comrades, I had. We cast lots one day, and the lot fell on <sup>my</sup> the most faithful comrade. I was the first to take a bite of his thigh. It will never leave my heart — the pitiful look he cast on me. I resolved that, I would not take the second bite out of him; and we decided to go to the shore; and my comrade began to get weak, because he was bleeding. One of us went on either side of him, until we, ourselves, began to get weak. We had to leave him out, and he was drowned. But we swam to the beach. We were so weak and exhausted, that we had to lie on a stone, until the heat of the sun warmed us. At night-fall, we went up near the house, and we went into a hole in the earth. A flock of hens went past. I made a grab at one of them, and I got a hold on her. We eat her, and that put a little courage into us. It was not long until we killed another one, and that ~~put a little courage into us.~~ we were

(no left)



getting strong. My wife noticed that she was losing her hens, and we had to make for the park again. We began killing the sheep again, and she sent for her father. He came, with his followers, and his hounds, and my two comrades were killed. I ran, before they got a hold on me, until I came to the father, and I lay down, at his feet.

'Ooble dog', said he 'no tears will be shed by you, on account of having asked help from me.' They were

They went into the house, and I with them, and 'twas well herself <sup>(my wife)</sup> recognised me.

'Why do you not kill that dog' said she, 'for he was the worst of them.'

'I shall not kill him, and I shall carry him home, because he has the appearance of being a good clever dog.'

The next day, the father went home, and I with him. He had no children only two sons, and the night they were born, they were carried away by a big giant. I was a long time with the king, and whatever he would ask me to do, I would do it. He would not part with me for all the gold in <sup>the</sup> world. That was all right, until it happened that his wife was going to have another child, and she sent for her daughter — that was my wife. When she came into the



house, she saw me. She says to her father "Is that dirty dog still alive with you?"

"He is the best dog, I ever saw."

"Well! perhaps, he'll make you sorry yet."

In the night a young son was born to the King's wife. When the King was going to bed, he said — "The care of my child on you, O Noble dog."

At midnight a flute was played outside, and all the attendant women fell asleep. As the geasa were on me already, they could not put them on me again. I saw a big black hand coming down over the fire, and it caught the child, that was in the cradle, and was taking it away with it.

I gave a spring, and I jumped up, and got a grip on the hand. I was chewing the hand, and cutting until I cut the hand off from the shoulder. At this time, he put down another hand, and he took the child with him. I hid the hand under the bit of hay, I was lying on.

My wife was the first person to awake, and she shouted to her father that the dog had the child eaten. I was covered with blood. When the father got up: — "Noble dog," said he, "I thought that, you would not let my child go." I took a hold of the hand, and I threw it, at his feet. "I see," said he, "if you had got help the

(spell)



child would not be gone.'

\* I went out then, and I began following the sent of the giant. The king was watching me, and he followed me. I followed the sent as far as the shore of the lake. There was an island in the lake, and the giant was inside in the island. I saw a cable fastened to a rock, under the water. I took up the cable, with my two paws. I began hauling it with my mouth, and I saw a small boat coming to me, from the island. When the king saw this, he began helping to pull the cable, until we brought the skiff up to us, and there was another cable inside in it, going out to the island. I jumped into the skiff, and I began hauling the cable, until I brought the skiff out to the island. When I landed, I saw two boys out playing hurley. I thought that they were the king's two sons, that the giant had taken away. I went to where the giant was. He was asleep, and he had his shoulder in a vessel of cold water, and the child was behind him. I saw a nice stick in the cave. I knew it was a magic wand. I jumped over it, and I took the child with me in my mouth, and I left it inside in the skiff. I returned, and I brought the magic wand with me. I went to



where the boys were hurling, and I began  
 frisking around with them. I coaxed  
 them, like that, little by little, until I  
 brought them to the skiff. I was a  
 strong dog. I caught a hold of one  
 of the boys, and I put him into the  
 boat. Then I brought in the other.  
 I began hauling the cable again.  
 When the King saw what I was  
 doing, he began hauling the cable,  
 that was on the shore, until he  
 brought the skiff in. He caught  
 the child, and he took out the two  
 boys, and he recognised them. He  
 was praising me highly. I brought  
 the magic wand, with me in my  
 mouth. I thought that, if the King  
 beat me with the stick, that I would  
 return to my own form.

I threw the stick <sup>down before him's</sup> ~~at~~ the King took the  
 stick, and I began running to and fro,  
 before him. Whatever I did, he would not  
 beat me. In the end, I raised my  
 two paws to his face, and I scratched  
 him with my nails. Then, he gave me  
 a small ~~top~~ <sup>piece</sup> of the stick, and said "O  
 Hound, what are you thinking of doing?"  
 Then, I arose in my own form, and  
 the King fell in a <sup>faint</sup> weakness at the sight.  
 When he came out of the faint, I spoke  
 to him. I asked him not to be afraid,  
 and I told him all about it, and about  
 the 'geass' his daughter had put on  
 me.





(or spell.)

"She shall pay for that 'said he' and he hit her a blow of the wand that put her under a geasa, and he put her into a vessel of molten lead."

"Now, said the King, "to Mac Ri Chruacháin, "do you blame me for that blow? We shall go home now. I think the dinner is ready."

They went into the King's house, and when they sat down to table, the King's wife looked at Mac Ri Chruacháin, and she began to cry.

"What is the cause of your weeping O noble woman," said he "indeed, I did nothing to you?"

"You did not" said she "but a year ago, my daughter was here with us. She was taken away, one morning, and we did not see her, dead nor alive, since then, and if she were alive in any part of the world, I'd swear a bible-oath, that that's the sign of her hand on your vest."

"Perhaps it is" said Mac Ri Chruacháin "and he told them from beginning to end, what was the cause of his journeying, and the geasa that the little spony man put on him.

(spell)

"You have enough to do, before you" said the King, "but I will inform you as best I can." The Sword of Light belongs to a son of mine; he fought hard for it, and he will not part with it. And that shaggy pony, that you have, it was from me the little hairy fony & man took her, and she got nothing but milk for six



years, and Donal Gorm has a mare that got milk for seven years, and she is more agile than the shaggy pony. He lives in a castle, a little bit west of this. To-morrow morning, take the shaggy pony with you, and jump over the gate, and then turn the shaggy pony, and face her back. It is not in the power of Donal Gorm to come inside my gate. Shout into him and ask him to give you the Sword of Light, and to tell you, who killed Anti-Christ. As soon as you say that, give the spur to the horse.

Mac Ri bhracháin did this. He shouted to Donal Gorm to give him the Sword of Light, and to tell him who killed Anti-Christ.

"Remain standing", said Donal Gorm, "and you will get it"

But Mac Ri bhracháin gave the spur to the shaggy pony. He was only just inside the King's gate, when Donal Gorm was up to him.

"Now" said the King "don't go over until after three days, <sup>or</sup> ~~when~~ <sup>he will be</sup> riding on his mare waiting for you."

After three days Mac Ri bhracháin went over again. He shouted at Donal Gorm to give him the Sword of Light, and to tell him who killed Anti-Christ: As soon as he said that, he gave the spur to the shaggy pony; Donal Gorm followed, and as he



was going over the King's gate, Donal Gorm cut off the pony's tail, with a blow of his sword.

"I see" said the King "that you only just escaped. Now, <sup>don't</sup> do not go over until after a week, <sup>or he will be</sup> ~~and wait he~~ waiting for you day and night, and don't take any pony with you, and, perhaps, he will be asleep. Go over to the door quietly, and if you hear him snoring, go in quietly. The sword of light will be stretched on the table beside the bed, seize it, and if you succeed in doing so, the sword will give a shout. Donal Gorm will awaken then, and he will make an attack on you. Draw the sword, and say that, you will cut the head off of him. He will be frightened by the sword, and, perhaps, he will give you more knowledge, than I can give, and will give you the information."

Mac Ri Bhrnacháin did as he was asked; he found Donal Gorm asleep; he took the sword; and it gave a shout, that he thought, the whole world would hear. Donal Gorm got up, and he attacked him, but Mac Ri Bhrnacháin drew the sword, and he told him to stand back, or that he would cut off his head. Donal Gorm was frightened and he said. — "Sit down and I will tell you. You have my sister, and I recognise the sign of her hand on your



(spells)

vest, and the little hairy fery man, he is the son of Anti-christ, and it was he put the geasa on you, and it was I killed his father. If you get his sword he will kill you, and he will kill me, because the sword has that power. But, if you take my advice, we will be saved."

"I'd take any advice at all, that you'd give me" said Mac Ri-chuachain. \*

(spells)

When you go home to Bruic Chruachain the little hairy fery man will be waiting for you. Give him the sword, and then, the geasa will be off you, and tell him, that it was I killed Anti-christ. He will ask you, if you ever saw a better sword. Say that you did not, except for the one fault, it had. He will ask you, what is that fault. Ask him for the sword again, so as to show him the fault, and when you have the sword in your hand, be deft, and strike him near his neck and near his head, and cut off his head, and stand between the head and the body, until the body dies. Then, if you succeed in doing that, turn your face to the Eastern World, as quickly as you can, fling the sword into as far as you can throw into the sky, and the sword will come back here to me again."

Mac Ri-chuachain did as he was



told, and when he cut off the head of the little hairy foxy man, he stood between the head and the body, and the tongue, that was in the head said - "If I was on my body again, neither you, nor the Men of Ireland, would take me off it."

"I did the best feat" said Mac Ri b hruacháin.

He came home to the young woman, and she smothered him with kisses, she drowned him with tears, and she dried him with a soft, soft, ~~silken~~ <sup>silken and</sup> mantle of ~~of~~ satin. They were married then, and they gave a wedding-feast, that lasted seven days and seven nights, and that was better the last day than the first day.