

MANAWYDDAN THE SON OF LLYR

When the seven men of whom we spoke above, had buried the head of Bendigeidfran, in the White Mount in London, with its face towards France, Manawyddan gazed upon the town of London, and upon his companions, and heaved a great sigh, and much grief and heaviness came upon him. "Alas, Almighty Heaven, woe is me" he exclaimed "there is none save myself without a resting place this night."

"Lord" said Pryderi "be not so sorrowful. Thy cousin is king of the Island of the Mighty, and though he should do thee wrong, thou hast never been a claimant of land or possessions. Thou art the third disinherited prince."

"Yea" answered he "but although this man is my cousin, it grieveth me to see anyone in the place of my brother Bendigeidfran, neither can I be happy in the same dwelling with him."

"Wilt thou follow the counsel of another?" said Pryderi. "I stand in need of counsel" he answered "and what may that counsel be?"

"Seven Cantrefs remain unto me" said Pryderi "wherein Rhiannon my mother dwells, I will bestow her upon thee and the seven Cantrefs with her, and though thou hadst no possessions but those Cantrefs only, thou couldst not have seven Cantrefs fairer than they. Cigfa, the daughter of Gwynn Gloyw, is my wife, and since the inheritance of the Cantrefs belongs to me, do thou and Rhiannon enjoy them, and if thou ever desire any possessions thou wilt take these."

"I do not, chieftain" said he; "Heaven reward thee for thy friendship."

"I would show thee the best friendship in the world if thou wouldst let me."

"I will, my friend" said he "and Heaven reward thee. I will go with thee to seek Rhiannon and to look at thy possessions."

"Thou wilt do well" he answered. "And I believe that thou didst never hear a lady discourse better than she, and when she was in her prime none was ever fairer. Even now her aspect is not uncomely."

They set forth, and, however long the journey, they came at length to Dyfed, and a feast was prepared for them against their coming to Narberth, which Rhiannon and Cigfa had provided. Then began Manawyddan and Rhiannon to sit and to talk together, and from their discourse his mind and his thoughts became warmed towards her, and he thought in his heart he had never beheld any lady more fulfilled of grace and beauty than she. "Pryderi" said he "I will that it be as thou didst say."

"What saying was that?" asked Rhiannon.

“Lady” said Pryderi “I did offer thee as a wife to Manawyddan the son of Llyr.”

“By that will I gladly abide” said Rhiannon.

“Right glad am I also” said Manawyddan “May Heaven reward him who hath shewn unto me friendship so perfect as this.” And before the feast was over she became his bride.

Said Manawyddan “Tarry ye here the rest of the feast, and I will go into England to tender my homage unto Caswallawn the son of Beli.”

“Lord” said Rhiannon, “Caswallawn is in Kent, thou mayest therefore tarry at the feast, and wait until he shall be nearer.”

“We will wait” he answered. So they finished the feast. And they began to make the circuit of Dyfed and to hunt, and to take their pleasure. And as they went through the country, they had never seen lands more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting grounds, nor greater plenty of honey and fish. And such was the friendship between those four, that they would not be parted from each other by night nor by day.

And in the midst of all this he went to Caswallawn at Oxford, and tendered his homage; and honourable was his reception there, and highly was he praised for offering his homage.

And after his return, Pryderi and Manawyddan feasted and took their ease and pleasure. And they began a feast at Narberth, for it was the chief palace; and there originated all honour. And when they had ended the first meal that night, while those who served them eat, they arose and went forth, and proceeded all four to the Gorsedd of Narberth, and their retinue with them. And as they sat thus, behold a peal of thunder, and with the violence of the thunderstorm, lo there came a fall of mist so thick that not one of them could see the other. And after the mist it became light all around. And when they looked towards the place where they were wont to see cattle, and herds, and dwellings, they saw nothing now, neither house, nor beast, nor smoke, nor fire, nor man, nor dwelling; but the houses of the court empty, and desert, and uninhabited, without either man, or beast within them. And truly all their companions were lost to them, without their knowing aught of what had befallen them, save those four only.

“In the name of Heaven” cried Manawyddan “where are they of the court, and all my host beside these? Let us go and see.” So they came into the hall, and there was no man; and they went on to the castle, and to the sleeping place, and they saw none; and in the mead cellar and in the kitchen there was nought but desolation. So they four feasted, and hunted, and took their pleasure. Then they began to go through the land and all the possessions that they had, and they visited the houses and dwellings, and found nothing but wild beasts. And when they had consumed their feast and all their provisions, they fed upon the prey they killed in hunting, and the honey of the wild swarms. And thus they

passed the first year pleasantly, and the second; but at the last they began to be weary.

“Verily” said Manawyddan “we must not bide thus. Let us go into England, and seek some craft whereby we may gain our support.” So they went into England, and came as far as Hereford. And they betook themselves to making saddles. And Manawyddan began to make housings, and he gilded and coloured them with blue enamel, in the manner that he had seen it done by Llassar Llaesgywydd. And he made the blue enamel as it was made by the other man. And therefore is it still called Calch Llassar, because Llassar Llaesgywydd had wrought it.

And as long as that workmanship could be had of Manawyddan, neither saddle nor housing was bought of a saddler throughout all Hereford; till at length every one of the saddlers perceived that they were losing much of their gain, and that no man bought of them, but he who could not get what he sought from Manawyddan. Then they assembled together, and agreed to slay him and his companions.

Now they received warning of this, and took counsel whether they should leave the city. “By Heaven” said Pryderi “it is not my counsel that we should quit the town, but that we should slay these boors.”

“Not so” said Manawyddan “for if we fight with them, we shall have evil fame, and shall be put in prison. It were better for us to go to another town to maintain ourselves.” So they four went to another city.

“What craft shall we take?” said Pryderi.

“We will make shields” said Manawyddan.

“Do we know anything about that craft?” said Pryderi.

“We will try” answered he. There they began to make shields, and fashioned them after the shape of the good shields they had seen; and they enamelled them, as they had done the saddles. And they prospered in that place, so that not a shield was asked for in the whole town, but such as was had of them. Rapid therefore was their work, and numberless were the shields they made. But at last they were marked by the craftsmen, who came together in haste, and their fellow townsmen with them, and agreed that they should seek to slay them. But they received warning, and heard how the men had resolved on their destruction. “Pryderi” said Manawyddan “these men desire to slay us.”

“Let us not endure this from these boors, but let us rather fall upon them and slay them.”

“Not so” he answered “Caswallawn and his men will hear of it, and we shall be undone. Let us go to another town.” So to another town they went.

“What craft shall we take?” said Manawyddan.

“Whatsoever thou wilt that we know” said Pryderi.

“Not so” he replied “but let us take to making shoes, for there is not courage among cordwainers either to fight with us or to molest us.”

“I know nothing thereof” said Pryderi.

“But I know” answered Manawyddan; “and I will teach thee to stitch. We will not attempt to dress the leather, but we will buy it ready dressed and will make the shoes from it.”

So he began by buying the best cordwal that could be had in the town, and none other would he buy except the leather for the soles; and he associated himself with the best goldsmith in the town, and caused him to make clasps for the shoes, and to gild the clasps, and he marked how it was done until he learned the method. And therefore was he called one of the three makers of Gold Shoes; and, when they could be had from him, not a shoe nor hose was bought of any of the cordwainers in the town. But when the cordwainers perceived that their gains were failing, (for as Manawyddan shaped the work, so Pryderi stitched it) they came together and took counsel, and agreed that they would slay them.

“Pryderi” said Manawyddan “these men are minded to slay us.”

“Wherefore should we bear this from the boorish thieves?” said Pryderi. “Rather let us slay them all.”

“Not so” said Manawyddan “we will not slay them neither will we remain in England any longer. Let us set forth to Dyfed and go to see it.”

So they journeyed along until they came to Dyfed, and they went forward to Narberth. And there they kindled a fire and supported themselves by hunting. And thus they spent a month. And they gathered their dogs around them, and tarried there one year.

And one morning Pryderi and Manawyddan rose up to hunt, and they ranged their dogs and went forth from the palace. And some of the dogs ran before them and came to a small bush which was near at hand; but as soon as they were come to the bush, they hastily drew back and returned to the men, their hair bristling up greatly. “Let us go near to the bush” said Pryderi “and see what is in it.” And as they came near, behold, a wild boar of a pure white colour rose up from the bush. Then the dogs being set on by the men, rushed towards him, but he left the bush and fell back a little way from the men, and made a stand against the dogs without retreating from them, until the men had come near. And when the men came up, he fell back a second time, and betook him to flight. Then they pursued the boar until they beheld a vast and lofty castle, all newly built, in a place where they had never before seen either stone or building.

And the boar ran swiftly into the castle and the dogs after him. Now when the boar and the dogs had gone into the castle, they began to wonder at finding a castle in a place where they had never before then seen any building whatsoever. And from the top of the Gorsedd they looked and listened for the dogs. But so long as they were there they heard not one of the dogs nor aught concerning them.

“Lord” said Pryderi “I will go into the castle to get tidings of the dogs.”

“Truly” he replied “thou wouldst be unwise to go into this castle, which thou hast never seen till now. If thou wouldst follow my counsel, thou wouldst not enter therein. Whosoever has cast a spell over this land, has caused this castle to be here.”

“Of a truth” answered Pryderi “I cannot thus give up my dogs.” And for all the counsel that Manawyddan gave him, yet to the castle he went.

When he came within the castle, neither man nor beast, nor boar nor dogs, nor house nor dwelling saw he within it. But in the centre of the castle floor he beheld a fountain with marble work around it, and on the margin of the fountain a golden bowl upon a marble slab, and chains hanging from the air, to which he saw no end.

And he was greatly pleased with the beauty of the gold, and with the rich workmanship of the bowl, and he went up to the bowl and laid hold of it. And when he had taken hold of it his hands stuck to the bowl, and his feet to the slab on which the bowl was placed, and all his joyousness forsook him, so that he could not utter a word. And thus he stood.

And Manawyddan waited for him till near the close of the day. And late in the evening, being certain that he should have no tidings of Pryderi or of the dogs, he went back to the palace. And as he entered, Rhiannon looked at him “Where” said she “are thy companion and thy dogs?”

“Behold” he answered “the adventure that has befallen me.” And he related it all unto her.

“An evil companion hast thou been” said Rhiannon “and a good companion hast thou lost.” And with that word she went out, and proceeded towards the castle according to the direction which he gave her. The gate of the castle she found open. She was nothing daunted, and she went in. And as she went in, she perceived Pryderi laying hold of the bowl, and she went towards him. “Oh my lord” said she “what dost thou here?” And she took hold of the bowl with him; and as she did so, her hands also became fast to the bowl, and her feet to the slab, and she was not able to utter a word. And with that, as it became night, lo there came thunder upon them, and a fall of mist, and thereupon the castle vanished, and they with it.

When Cigfa the daughter of Gwynn Gloew saw that there was no one in the palace but herself and Manawyddan, she sorrowed so that she cared not whether she lived or died. And Manawyddan saw this. "Thou art in the wrong" said he "if through fear of me thou grievest thus. I call Heaven to witness that thou hast never seen friendship more pure than that which I will bear thee, as long as Heaven will that thou shouldst be thus. I declare to thee that were I in the dawn of youth I would keep my faith unto Pryderi, and unto thee also will I keep it. Be there no fear upon thee, therefore" said he "for Heaven is my witness that thou shall meet with all the friendship thou canst wish, and that it is in my power to show thee, as long as it shall please Heaven to continue us in this grief and woe."

"Heaven reward thee" she said "and that is what I deemed of thee." And the damsel thereupon took courage and was glad.

"Truly, lady" said Manawyddan "it is not fitting for us to stay here, we have lost our dogs, and we cannot get food. Let us go into England; it is easiest for us to find support there."

"Gladly, lord" said she, "we will do so." And they set forth together to England.

"Lord" said she "What craft wilt thou follow? Take up one that is seemly."

"None other will I take" answered he "save that of making shoes, as I did formerly."

"Lord" said she "such a craft becomes not a man so nobly born as thou."

"By that however will I abide" said he.

So he began his craft, and he made all his work of the finest leather he could get in the town, and, as he had done at the other place, he caused gilded clasps to be made for the shoes. And except himself all the cordwainers in the town were idle, and without work. For as long as they could be had from him, neither shoes nor hose were bought elsewhere. And thus they tarried there a year, until the cordwainers became envious, and took counsel concerning him. And he had warning thereof, and it was told him how the cordwainers had agreed together to slay him.

"Lord" said Cigfa "Wherefore should this be borne from these boors?"

"Nay" said he "we will go back unto Dyfed." So towards Dyfed they set forth.

Now Manawyddan, when he set out to return to Dyfed, took with him a burden of wheat. And he proceeded towards Narberth, and there he dwelt. And never was he better pleased than when he saw Narberth again, and the lands where he had been wont to hunt with Pryderi and with Rhiannon. And he accustomed himself to fish, and to hunt the deer in their covert. And then he began to prepare some ground and he sowed a croft, and a second, and a third.

And no wheat in the world ever sprung up better. And the three crofts prospered with perfect growth, and no man ever saw fairer wheat than it.

And thus passed the seasons of the year until the harvest came. And he went to look at one of his crofts, and behold it was ripe. "I will reap this tomorrow" said he. And that night he went back to Narberth, and on the morrow in the grey dawn he went to reap the croft, and when he came there he found nothing but the bare straw. Every one of the ears of the wheat was cut from off the stalk, and all the ears carried entirely away, and nothing but the straw left. And at this he marvelled greatly.

Then he went to look at another croft, and behold that also was ripe. "Verily" said he "this will I reap tomorrow." And on the morrow he came with the intent to reap it, and when he came there he found nothing but the bare straw. "Oh gracious Heaven" he exclaimed "I know that whosoever has begun my ruin is completing it, and has also destroyed the country with me."

Then he went to look at the third croft, and when he came there, finer wheat had there never been seen, and this also was ripe. "Evil betide me" said he "if I watch not here tonight. Whoever carried off the other corn will come in like manner to take this. And I will know who it is." So he took his arms, and began to watch the croft. And he told Cigfa all that had befallen.

"Verily" said she "what thinkest thou to do?" "I will watch the croft tonight" said he.

And he went to watch the croft. And at midnight, lo! There arose the loudest tumult in the world. And he looked, and behold the mightiest host of mice in the world, which could neither be numbered nor measured. And he knew not what it was until the mice had made their way into the croft, and each of them climbing up the straw and bending it down with its weight, and had cut off one of the ears of wheat, and had carried it away, leaving there the stalk, and he saw not a single straw there that had not a mouse to it. And they all took their way, carrying the ears with them.

In wrath and anger did he rush upon the mice, but he could no more come up with them than if they had been gnats, or birds in the air, except one only, which though it was but sluggish, went so fast that a man on foot could scarce overtake it. And after this one he went, and he caught it and put it in his glove, and tied up the opening of the glove with a string, and kept it with him, and returned to the palace. Then he came to the hall where Cigfa was, and he lighted a fire, and hung the glove by the string upon a peg. "What hast thou there, lord?" said Cigfa.

"A thief" said he "that I found robbing me."

"What kind of thief may it be, lord that thou couldst put into thy glove?" said she.

“Behold I will tell thee” he answered. Then he showed her how his fields had been wasted and destroyed, and how the mice came to the last of the fields in his sight. “And one of them was less nimble than the rest, and is now in my glove; tomorrow I will hang it, and before Heaven, if I had them, I would hang them all.”

“My lord” said she “this is marvellous; but yet it would be unseemly for a man of dignity like thee to be hanging such a vermin as this. And if thou doest right, thou wilt not meddle with the creature, but wilt let it go.”

“Woe betide me” said he “if I would not hang them all could I catch them, and such as I have I will hang.”

“Verily, lord” said she “there is no reason that I should succour this vermin, except to prevent discredit unto thee. Do therefore, lord, as thou wilt.”

“If I knew of any cause in the world wherefore thou shouldst succour it, I would take thy counsel concerning it” said Manawyddan “but as I know of none, lady, I am minded to destroy it.”

“Do so willingly then” said she.

And then he went to the Gorsedd of Narberth, taking the mouse with him. And he set up two forks on the highest part of the Gorsedd. And while he was doing this, behold he saw a scholar coming towards him, in old and poor and tattered garments. And it was now seven years since he had seen in that place either man or beast, except those four persons who had remained together until two of them were lost.

“My lord” said the scholar “good day to thee.”

“Heaven prosper thee, and my greeting be unto thee. And whence dost thou come, scholar?” asked he.

“I come, lord, from singing in England; and wherefore dost thou enquire?”

“Because for the last seven years” answered he “I have seen no man here save four secluded persons, and thyself this moment.”

“Truly, lord” said he “I go through this land unto mine own. And what work art thou upon, lord?”

“I am hanging a thief that I caught robbing me” said he.

“What manner of thief is that?” asked the scholar.

“I see a creature in thy hand like unto a mouse, and ill does it become a man of rank equal to thine, to touch a vermin such as this. Let it go forth free.”

“I will not let it go free, by Heaven” said he; “I caught it robbing me, and the doom of a thief will I inflict upon it and I will hang it.”

“Lord” said he “rather than see a man of rank equal to thine at such a work as this, I would give thee a pound which I have received as alms, to let the vermin go forth free.”

“I will not let it go free” said he “by Heaven, neither will I sell it.”

“As thou wilt, lord” he answered “except that I would not see a man of rank equal to thine touching such a vermin, I care nought.” And the scholar went his way.

And as he was placing the cross-beam upon the two forks, behold a priest came towards him upon a horse covered with trappings. “Good day to thee, lord” said he.

“Heaven prosper thee” said Manawyddan “thy blessing.”

“The blessing of Heaven be upon thee. And what, lord, art thou doing?”

“I am hanging a thief that I caught robbing me” said he.

“What manner of thief, lord?” asked he.

“A creature” he answered “in form of a mouse. It has been robbing me, and I am inflicting upon it the doom of a thief.”

“Lord” said he “rather than see thee touch this vermin, I would purchase its freedom.”

“By my confession to Heaven, neither will I sell it nor set it free.”

“It is true, lord, that it is worth nothing to buy; but rather than see thee defile thyself by touching such a vermin as this, I will give thee three pounds to let it go.” “I will not, by Heaven” said he “take any price for it. As it ought, so shall it be hanged.”

“Willingly, lord, do thy good pleasure.” And the priest went his way.

Then he noosed the string around the mouse’s neck, and as he was about to draw it up, behold, he saw a bishop’s retinue, with his sumpter horses, and his attendants. And the bishop himself came towards him. And he stayed his work. “Lord Bishop” said he “thy blessing.”

“Heaven’s blessing be unto thee” said he “What work art thou upon?”

“Hanging a thief that I caught robbing me” said he.

The Mabinogion

“Is not that a mouse that I see in thy hand?”

“Yes” answered he. “And she has robbed me.”

“Aye” said he “since I have come at the doom of this vermin I will ransom it of thee. I will give thee seven pounds for it, and that rather than see a man of rank equal to thine destroying so vile a vermin as this. Let it loose and thou shall have the money.”

“I declare to Heaven that I will not set it loose.”

“If thou wilt not loose it for this, I will give thee four and twenty pounds of ready money to set it free.”

“I will not set it free, by Heaven, for as much again” said he.

“If thou wilt not set it free for this, I will give thee all the horses that thou seest in this plain, and the seven loads of baggage, and the seven horses that they are upon.”

“By Heaven, I will not” he replied.

“Since for this thou wilt not, do so at what price so ever thou wilt.”

“I will do so” said he. “I will that Rhiannon and Pryderi be free” said he.

“That thou shall have” he answered.

“Not yet will I loose the mouse, by Heaven.”

“What then wouldst thou?”

“That the charm and the illusion be removed from the seven Cantrefs of Dyfed.”

“This shall thou have also, set therefore the mouse free.”

“I will not set it free, by Heaven” said he.

“I will know who the mouse may be.”

“She is my wife.”

“Even though she be, I will not set her free. Wherefore came she to me?”

“To despoil thee” he answered. “I am Llwyd the son of Kilcoed, and I cast the charm over the seven Cantrefs of Dyfed. And it was to avenge Gwawl the son of Clud, from the friendship I had towards him, that I cast the charm. And upon Pryderi did I revenge Gwawl the son of Clud, for the game of Badger in the Bag,

that Pwyll Pen Annwn played upon him, which he did unadvisedly in the court of Heveydd Hen. And when it was known that thou wast come to dwell in the land, my household came and besought me to transform them into mice, that they might destroy thy corn. And it was my own household that went the first night. And the second night also they went, and they destroyed thy two crofts. And the third night came unto me my wife and the ladies of the court, and besought me to transform them. And I transformed them. Now she is pregnant. And had she not been pregnant thou wouldst not have been able to overtake her, but since this has taken place and she has been caught, I will restore thee Pryderi and Rhiannon; and I will take the charm and illusion from off Dyfed. I have now told thee who she is. Set her therefore free.”

“I will not set her free, by Heaven” said he. “What wilt thou more?” he asked. “I will that there be no more charm upon the seven Cantrefs of Dyfed, and that none shall be put upon it henceforth.”

“This thou shalt have” said he. “Now set her free.”

“I will not by my faith” he answered. “What wilt thou furthermore” asked he.

“Behold” said he “this will I have; that vengeance be never taken for this, either upon Pryderi or Rhiannon, or upon me.”

“All this shalt thou have. And truly thou hast done wisely in asking this. Upon thy head would have lit all this trouble.”

“Yea” said he “for fear thereof was it, that I required this.”

“Set now my wife at liberty.” “I will not, by Heaven” said he “until I see Pryderi and Rhiannon with me free.”

“Behold, here they come” he answered.

And thereupon behold Pryderi and Rhiannon. And he rose up to meet them, and greeted them, and sat down beside them.

“Ah chieftain, set now my wife at liberty” said the bishop. “Hast thou not received all thou didst ask?”

“I will release her gladly” said he. And thereupon he set her free.

Then he struck her with a magic wand, and she was changed back into a young woman, the fairest ever seen.

“Look around upon thy land” said he “and then thou wilt see it all tilled and peopled, as it was in its best state.” And he rose up and looked forth. And when he looked he saw all the lands tilled, and full of herds and dwellings.

## The Mabinogion

“What bondage” he enquired “has there been upon Pryderi and Rhiannon?”  
“Pryderi has had the knockers of the gate of my palace about his neck, and Rhiannon has had the collars of the asses, after they have been carrying hay, about her neck.”

And such had been their bondage.

And by reason of this bondage is this story called the Mabinogi of Mynnweir and Mynord.

And thus ends this portion of the Mabinogi.