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**Tome XXXVIII**

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CHIEVREFOIL

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## CHIEVREFOIL

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### I

Marie's lay of *Chievrefoil* narrates an episode in which Tristan, returning secretly to Cornwall, contrives to secure a meeting with Isolt by carving his request on a piece of bark and putting it on the forest road which he knows she is to pass with her cavalcade. The queen, recognizing by the bark that Tristan is near, stops her train and withdraws into the wood where her lover awaits her. A similar incident occurs in the Tristan narratives after the marriage of Tristan with Isolt of the White Hands<sup>1</sup>. Earlier in the story also Tristan employs a device of the same kind when he places the bark on the stream that runs through or past Isolt's chamber<sup>2</sup>.

We recognize the conventional chivalric manner of securing a meeting in the device which we find in connection with this incident in Eilhart, where Tristan's messenger, Tinas,

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1. The various versions of this incident are discussed below; cf. Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas* (Paris, 1902, 1905), II, 269. The similarity of this episode to that in *Chievrefoil* has been frequently mentioned: cf. Warnke, *Die Lais der Marie de France* (Halle, 1900), cxliv, Golther, *Die Sage von Tristan* (München, 1887), p. 39-40, *Zts. f. f. Sp. u. Lit.*, XXII, p. 9; Sudre, *Romania*, XV, 551; Brugger, *Zts. f. fr. Sp. u. Lit.*, XX, p. 133; Rickert, *Marie de France* (New-York, 1901), p. 192. Its relation to *Chievrefoil* has been discussed, I believe on mistaken premises, by Foulet, *Zts. f. rom. Philol.*, XXXII, 280 ff.

2. The various versions of this incident are discussed below. Cf. Bédier, *op. cit.*, II, 244 ff.

attracts the attention of the queen to the ring on his finger as he moves his hand

zu vele  
und dicker denne he solde<sup>1</sup>

upon the chess board. Entirely in character with chivalric poetry is also the device in *Sir Tristrem*<sup>2</sup>, where Kaherdin, pretending to be seeking shelter, crosses the lady's path and displays her lover's ring as he caresses her dog. It will be worth while, perhaps, to compare the various presentations of the incidents in which the device of the carved bark is used, and see if we can trace the process of development. If we find indications that the French poets were transmitting a device with which they were not familiar and of whose significance they were not quite sure, we must look elsewhere than in twelfth century French poetry for the origin of the episode.

The episode recounted in *Chievrefoil*<sup>3</sup> is the following :

The exiled Tristan, longing for Isolt, returns secretly to Cornwall. He conceals himself for days in the wood, coming out only at night, in the hope of news of the queen. He learns that the king is to hold a feast at Tintagel and betakes himself to the forest road along which the train must pass. He peels a branch of hazel and cuts it square, writing on it his name and this

1. *Eilhart von Oberge*, ed. Franz Lichtenstein (Strassburg, 1877), *Quellen u. Forschungen*, XIX, 1, 6368-6370.

2. *Die Nordische und die Englische Version der Tristan sage*, ed. Eugen Kölbing (Heilbronn, 1878, 1882), II, stanza CCLXXXii ff.

3. Karl Warnke, *Die Lais der Marie de France*, n° 11. It is evident from the opening of the lay, that Marie is providing, or pretending to provide, a setting for a lyric lay called *Chievrefoil*. The same implication is found in other lays, e. g. *Strandarliod*, ed. Keyser and Unger, *Strengleikar* (Christiana, 1850). The contents of this lay are implied by the epilogue (l. 109 ff.) to be the message which Tristan wrote on the bark : Tristan made a new lay, called *The Honeysuckle*, for joy of the meeting secured by the bark, and, as the queen suggested to him, for remembering the words he had written on it. Similarly Foulet, *op. cit.*, 284, with the difference that M. Foulet believes the message to have been sent previously by letter, as is implied by the reading of ms. H. — Miss Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 98, by a mistranslation of the epilogue, creates the difficulty which she discusses at page 193 and dismisses as insoluble. It is interesting to observe that the Norse translator (*Strengleikar, op. cit.*, 66-67)

message : he has been there for a long time waiting and planning how he may see her, for he can live no longer without her. With them it is as when the honeysuckle has wound itself around the hazel : both can live as long as they are together, but both must die if they are apart. This he places on the path and retires into the forest. As the queen comes riding by, she perceives and recognizes the message. She commands her train to halt, withdraws alone with Brangien into the forest, and meets her lover.

In Eilhart von Oberg<sup>1</sup> the episode is given as follows :

Tristan has excused himself to Kaherdin for his neglect of his wife Isolt by declaring that she has shown less love for him than another fairer Isolt gladly shows, for his sake, to his dog. To prove this assertion the two set out for Cornwall. They are received secretly by Tinas, whom Tristan sends to Isolt to inform her of the situation and to ask her to save him in the following manner : she is to arrange the most magnificent train possible and set out for Blankenlande. On the road thither there is a thorn bush near a hunting booth. In this Tristan will be hidden and will shoot a twig into her horse's mane. She is to stop at this sign and caress the dog with so much fervor that his companion will be compelled to acknowledge his assertions justified. Tinas goes to Tintagel, and, during a game of chess, contrives to make Tristan's ring, which he wears on his finger, so conspicuous that Isolt recognizes the sign and contrives a private interview with him, in

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falls into the same mistake. *Si cum la reine l'ot dit* is best rendered, with Foulet, at the queen's request, and *pur les paroles remembrer*, with Foulet and Cohn, as taking up again the thought of *pur la joie qu'il ot eüe*, etc. cf. Cohn, *Arch. f. neuere Spr.*, 106, 439 ff.—The extant lyric lay called *Lai du Chievre-foil* (Bartsch, *Chrestomathie de l'ancien français*) has no connection with Tristan.

1. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, ll. 6255-6672. Lichtenstein's edition is of the thirteenth century redaction of Eilhart's poem. A comparison with the German Prose Romance, ed. Friedrich Pfaff, *Tristrant und Isalde*, Stuttgart, Lit. Ver. (Tübingen, 1881), p. 135 ff., does not offer any significant variation. The Bohemian version, translated into modern German by Kniescheck, *ZfdA.*, XXVIII, 261 ff., is of no value for comparison at this point.

Tristan's next meeting with Isolt is arranged in Eilhart in almost exactly the same manner, ll. 7445-7705. Again we have Tristan coming to Tinas' house, the messenger sent with the ring to the queen, the arrangement of the hunting party, the halt by the thornbush, the meeting appointed for the night. This seems to me clearly an imitation of the former episode. It does not appear except in Eilhart. A faint reminiscence of the signal by the bark appears in *Die Meierin mit der Greiss*, von der Hagen, *Gesammtabenteuer*, II, xi., p. 287 ff., l. 70 ff.

which he communicates Tristan's message. The queen immediately arranges a hunting party. Tristan's plan is carried out. The queen, after caressing the dog, approaches the bush, and, pretending to address the birds, bids them bear her company that night at Blankenlande. Galiag is sent to the king to say that the queen is ill and to beg that they spend the night near by. The lover is received in the queen's tent.

In Heinrich von Freiburg's *Tristan*<sup>1</sup> the episode is the same as in Eilhart, except that here the final touch to Tristan's plan is given by the queen and that it is prearranged for the king to precede Isolt. She sends word to Tristan to throw a twig on her path from his place in the thornbush. She will send his nephew Tantrisel ahead to pick it up. It is Andret who is sent to notify the king that she must stop where she is for the night. The queen directs him to remain with the king if night overtakes him on the way. The precautions for Tristan's admission to Isolt's tent are elaborated.

In the English *Sir Tristrem*<sup>2</sup> the episode appears in a very confused form :

Tristan brings Kaherdin to Cornwall in order that he may see in person Brangien and the Isolt he has boasted fairer than his wife. He has already shown him their statues in the hall of images. Isolt has received no word of his coming, but, having just heard of his marriage, she angrily saddles her horse and goes for a ride, attended by several of her maids. Tristan and Kaherdin, under a fig-tree along her path, see her and Brangien approaching with their two dogs. Isolt stops. Tristan sends Kaherdin forward to show her the ring. The queen recognizes it, pretends sudden illness, and stays two nights there. Governal acts as guard to protect the privacy of the lovers. There is no mention of Mark.

In the *Tristramssaga*<sup>3</sup> the motive of Tristan's return to Cornwall is the same as in *Sir Tristrem*. Here also both the bit of bark and the previous message have disappeared.

1. Edited by Reinhold Bechstein, *Heinrich's von Freiburg Tristan* (Leipzig, 1877), p. 170, ch. VIII.

2. Edited by Kölbing, *Die Nordische und die Englische Version der Tristan sage* (Heilbronn, 1878, 1882). II, stanza CCLXXX ff.

3. Kölbing, *op. cit.*, I, cap. LXXXVII, p. 100; cf. Kölbing's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 194, l. 1 ff.

They learn that the queen's train is to spend the night in a certain place, and conceal themselves, apparently in disguise, along the route. Both step forward and greet the queen and Brangien. But, fearing recognition by the others, the lovers confine themselves to a few words. « Ride off now, stranger knight », says the queen, « detain us no longer ». The train proceeds to the place that has been appointed for the night. There is no pretense of illness, but the queen passes the night alone with her maids until her lover appears.

The version of Ulrich von Tûrheim<sup>1</sup> is similar to that of Heinrich von Freiberg and Eilhart von Oberg, except that no provision is made for a signal.

When the party reaches the thornbush, the queen, after dismounting and caressing the dog, makes a sign for Tristan to approach. Tristan retires again at a warning from Brangien, after receiving from the queen careful directions as to where to find her tent. Andret appears with a message from the king, saying he has taken another route. Isolt complains bitterly and declares she is too ill to proceed farther. Andret, returning to the king, adds the insinuation that her illness is only an excuse. The king's suspicions are however lulled by Brangien and Paranis, and the lovers pass the night together undisturbed.

The French Prose Romance<sup>2</sup> preserves only the point of departure for this adventure.

A comparison of the texts in which the episode appears, leads us to classify them as follows :

*A.* Those in which the request for the meeting is carved on a piece of bark, the bark placed on Isolt's path, and her finding it left to chance : *Chievrefoil*.

*B.* Those which provide a previous communication which puts Isolt in possession of all the facts entrusted in *A* to the bit of bark and to the situation, and notify her that she is to expect a piece of bark at a certain place and at a certain time as a signal that her lover is awaiting her : Eilhart von Oberg; Heinrich von Freiberg.

1. Ulrich von Tûrheim's continuation, p. 497 ff. of *Tristan und Isolt von Gottfried von Strassburg*, ed. H. F. Massmann (Leipzig, 1843), l. 1022 ff.

2. Löseth, *Le roman en prose de Tristan* (Paris, 1891), p. 56 n. 3; Bédier, *op. cit.*, II, 269, 371.

C. Those in which, in the same situation, the bit of bark is lacking or replaced by a conventional signal : *Sir Tristrem*; the *Saga*; Ulrich von Türheim.

It has already been shown<sup>1</sup> that the form *C* is posterior to the form *B*. It is impossible that the form *B* is earlier than *A*, because in that case we could not account for the disappearance, in group *A*, of the communication by messenger and ring, on which the whole episode depends in *B*, and which a twelfth century French poet would have no motive in abandoning. But on the supposition that *A* is the original form of the episode, it is easy to account for the introduction, in *B*, of the previous communication, as the addition of a twelfth century French writer to whom the device employed in *A* was unfamiliar and seemed precarious. Moreover a previous communication notifying Isolt to be on the lookout for a piece of bark at a specified spot at a specified time makes the piece of bark and its carving entirely superfluous, whereas the scene and circumstances of the action as well as the prologue and epilogue of *Chievrefoil*, point unmistakably to the fact that it constitutes the main factor of the episode.

Let us therefore consider further the possibility that *A* offers the original form of the episode :

The manuscript *S* of *Chievrefoil* gives the following reading at line 61 :

Ceo fu la sume de l'escrit  
 Qui fu el baston que je (= j'ai) dit  
 Que lunges ot ilec esté  
 .....

At line 109 :

Pur la joie qu'il ot eüe  
 De s'amie qu'il ot veüe  
 Par le bastun qu'il ot escrit  
 Si cum la reine l'ot dit  
 Pur les paroles remembrer  
 Tristram ki bien saveit harper  
 En aveit fet un nuvel lai.

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1. Bédier, *op. cit.*, II, 274-275.

The *Tristramsaga*<sup>1</sup> is equally uncompromising in defining the role of the « bastun » :

Nu war ristid a stavenom at Tistram hafde thar lengi bedir, etc.

Manuscript *H*<sup>2</sup> seems to make a timid attempt to reduce the role of the writing on the « bastun ». At line 61 :

Ceo fu la sume de l'escrit  
 Qu'il li aveit mandé e dit  
 Que lunges ot ilec esté

At line 109 :

Pur la joie qu'il ot eüe  
 De s'amie qu'il ot veüe  
 E pur ceo kil aveit escrit  
 Si cum la reine l'ot dit  
 Pur les paroles remembrer  
 Tristan ki bien saveit harper  
 En aveit fet un nouvel lai.

1. Edited by Keyser und Unger, *Strengleikar eda Liðabok* (Christiana, 1850), p. 66-67.

2. Warnke edits ms. *H*, but adopts the reading of *S* in various cases, in *Chievrefoil*. Among them is line 109. He accounts for his departure from *H* here as « durch den Sinn erfordert ». M. Foulet points out (*Zts. f. rom. Philol.*, XXXII, 280) : « Il lui a échappé que le vers 109 est dans un étroit rapport avec le vers 62 et qu'il faut se tenir, dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas, à la leçon de *H* ou à la leçon de *S*. » Cohn (*Zts. f. f. Spr. u. Lit.*, XXIV<sup>2</sup>, p. 15) objects to *S* at line 109 on the insufficient ground that « bastun » appears here as the direct object of « écrire ». M. Foulet (*op. cit.*, p. 280, n. 1) cites the discussion of Cohn to support his rejection of *S*, but rejects Cohn's reading of *H*, which indeed, with its construction of « la reine » as dative, is undesirable syntactically, and gives the very unsatisfactory reading : « um das, was er geschrieben hatte, in der Weise, wie er es der Königin gesagt hatte, d. h. wortgetreu, um die Worte dem Gedächtnis zu überliefern ». Foulet's interpretation of *H* is more satisfactory : « Pour conserver le souvenir de la joie qu'il avait eue à revoir la reine et des paroles qu'il lui avait envoyées (par écrit), Tristan, sur la demande de la reine (si cum la reine l'ot dit), fit un lai nouvel. » It seems to me obvious that *H* alters at 62 and 109 from the rationalistic considerations that influence Foulet, cf. p. 20, n. 1 below. Syntactically there is no reason for rejecting either reading.



The reading of *S* is preferable, it seems to me, in both cases, because it is the only reading that brings the title, prologue, and epilogue into relation with the episode: I will tell you how, about whom, and of what, the lay of the honey-suckle was made: once Tristan, in order to secure a meeting with Isolt, carved on a hazel rod a pretty simile about their love and the hazel and the honey suckle, and put it on her path. She found it and recognized its purpose and they had a happy meeting. In order to remember the pretty verse that he had thus carved and that had been the means of their meeting, he made a lay, at her request, and this is the lay which is called by the French *Chievrefoil*<sup>1</sup>.

In the episode as it occurs in the voyage of Tristan and Kaherdin to Cornwall<sup>2</sup>, the narrative is complicated by the introduction of another *motif*. The cavalcade must serve the purpose of proving to Tristan's companion his twofold boast: first, that Isolt the queen is fairer than Isolt his wife, and second, that Isolt the queen shows more affection for his dog than Isolt his wife does for him. The previous incident however remains intact: Tristan, hidden in the forest along the path which he knows the queen is to pass, attracts her attention by shooting a twig into her horse's mane or throwing it on the ground before her. She recognizes that her lover is near, contrives to break the journey, and enjoys a night with him. But here she has already been notified as to exactly the spot where Tristan is stationed; the twig has become a mere signal; it is no longer *parlée* or *quarrée*, to say nothing of bearing a message. But though become superfluous, it still retains, in a situation exactly similar to that of *Chievrefoil*, a ghostlike semblance of its old function. It is completely suppressed in the versions given in Ulrich von Tûrheim, in the *Saga*, and in *Sir Tristrem*. In the last two, the lover attracts the attention of his lady as she passes among a troop of enemies, not by a message carved on

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1. This is also the way Ahlström and Warnke interpret the lay. Ahlström, *Studier i den Fornfranska Lais-Litteraturen* (Upsala, 1892), p. 147, Warnke, *op. cit.*, p. cxli.

2. This incident will be discussed in full in a study shortly to be published on the sources of the *Tristan* story.

a branch, nor by a branch without a message, but by sending his friend, or appearing himself, for a moment on her path.

It is impossible to escape the conviction that the episode in the form in which Marie related it, pretty as it was, was not quite in accordance with twelfth century habits. The difficulties however allowed themselves to be obviated by a little precaution in the form of a preface. And gradually the ingenious preface became so officious that it crowded out the original device or permitted it to remain only as an insignificant superfluity. It is interesting to observe that the whole development is determined by an increasing sensitiveness to considerations of caution. From the first suggestion of a previous message by letter, in manuscript *H* of *Chievrefoil*, to the elaborate precautions of Ulrich, each new touch can be traced to the anxiety of the poet lest the carved bark miscarry or fall into the hands of enemies, lest Tristan mistake the place of the queen's tent, lest Mark appear inopportunately etc. etc. To guard against these possibilities, precautions are multiplied and we have a whole host of go betweens — Kaherdin, Brangien, Tinas, Parinis, Tantrisel etc. — invented to insure the safety of the lovers' meeting. But this cautious temper of the redactors is in direct contradiction to the integral fact of the situation, namely that the lover seeks access to his lady in the midst of a hostile cavalcade on the open highroad. The integral fact is therefore little likely to have been their invention.

A similar development is evident in comparing the texts of another episode in which Tristan uses the same device to secure a meeting. He carves a bit of bark and sends it down the stream which flows through or past Isolt's chamber<sup>1</sup>. In several cases the passage is brief enough to bear quotation. The passage in *Sir Tristrem*<sup>2</sup> runs as follows :

Tristrem was in toun,  
In boure Ysonde was don.  
Bi water he sent adoun  
Light linden spon :

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1. This incident will be discussed in full in a study shortly to be published on the sources of the sources of the *Tristan* story.

2. Kölbing, *op. cit.*, II, stanza CLXXXVII.

He wrot hem al with roun ;  
 Ysonde hem knewe wel sone.  
 Bi that Trîstrem was boun,  
 Ysonde wist his bone,  
 To abide.  
 Er a morwe none  
 Her aither was other biside

### The passage in the *Saga* <sup>1</sup>.

When Tristan heard of the king's departure, his mind was entirely reassured, and he pretended to be sick and stayed at home to see if perhaps there might be an opportunity when he might meet the queen. And then he took a branch and whittled fair shavings so skilfully that no one had ever seen their like ; for when they were cast into the water they were not damaged and floated like foam on the water and no current could destroy them. Whenever Tristan wanted to talk with Isolt, he cast the chips into the stream which ran beside the tower and in front of the sleeping room of the queen, and she knew at once and perceived by these ruses his intention of coming.

### In Eilhart <sup>2</sup> :

The king has dismissed Tristan from the court. Separated, the lovers languish. Isolt sends Brangien to tell Tristan he must find means of seeing her. He promises that he will meet her that very night in her orchard. Moreover, whenever, night or day, she sees a branch in the stream that flows through her chamber, she is to wait and see if a bit of bark follows it, on which is carved a five pointed cross. Whenever she finds this in the stream, she may know Tristan is under the linden near its bank. The device is repeatedly successful.

In Gottfried <sup>3</sup> also, Brangien is sent to tell Tristan that Isolt desires to see him. Here it is she who invents the device and instructs him in its use :

Sô nemet ein oleboumes ris  
 Und snidet spaene in lange wis  
 Und zeichent die mit nihte mē  
 Wan machet einhalp ein T

1. Translated from Kölbing, *op. cit.*, I, cap. LIV, p. 68, l. 25 ; cf. translation of Kölbing, *op. cit.*, p. 167, l. 19 ff.

2. Resume from Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, l. 3278-3355, cf. 3490-3494.

3. Edited by Karl Marold, *Gottfried's von Strassburg Tristan, erster Teil, Text* (Leipzig, 1906), l. 14427 ff.

Und machet anderhalb ein Î  
 Daz niwan der êrste buochstap si  
 Von iuwer beider namen dâr an,  
 Und leget dâ weder zuo noch van  
 Und gât zem boumgarten iu ;  
 Ir wezzet|wol daz bechelin,  
 Daz von dem brunnen dâ gât  
 Hin dâ diu kemenâte stât,  
 Dar in sô werfet einen spân  
 Und lât in fliezen unde gân  
 Hin vür der kemenaten tür ;  
 Dâ gân wir zallen ziten vür  
 Ich und diu fröudelöse Isôt,  
 Und weinen unser herzenôt.  
 Als wir in danne ersehen dâ,  
 Dâ bi bekennen wir iesâ,  
 Daz ir dâ bi dem brunnen sit,  
 Dâ der oleboum schate gît.

In the French Prose Romance<sup>1</sup> the device by which the corresponding meeting is arranged is not mentioned.

Here again the Tristan texts fall into the same three classes : *A*, the group in which the piece of carved bark is the means by which the lover contrives to make known to Isolt his presence along the stream and his desire for a meeting; *B*, the group in which the meeting is arranged by messenger and the role of the bark reduced to a signal indicating that the lover is already at the place appointed; *C*, the group in which the meeting takes place without the aid of the device. *A* is represented by *Sir Tristrem* and the *Saga*, *B*, by Eilhart and Gottfried, *C* by the French Prose Romance. In group *A*, the bit of carved bark indicates the presence of a certain person at a certain place, not as a preconcerted signal, but by the peculiarity of its workmanship and the place where it is found. The straits of the persons concerned are too desperate for them to hesitate because there is a chance of the piece of bark missing its destination or failing to accomplish its purpose. It is important to observe that in this incident as in *Chievrefoil* and in the voyage of Tristan and Kaherdin to Cornwall, the meeting takes place

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1. Löseth, *op. cit.*, p. 186, § 282.

in all the groups under exactly the conditions which are inevitable from the nature of the device in group *A*. It is therefore probable that here as in the former instances, the version of group *A* represents the original form of the episode.

The device appears to have been so unfamiliar to the French poets who transmitted it, and so little understood by them that it suffered in their hands a gradual modification and replacement by more familiar devices until it disappeared entirely from the situation. It is necessary therefore to seek elsewhere for its origin.

## II

We find some interesting parallels in Irish romance. With the episode of the chips sent down the stream the following Irish instance has already been compared<sup>1</sup>:

...Slechtaire discovered an underground cave wherein they (he and the other kinsmen and allies of Sengarman, with whom Finn is at feud) dwelt for a long time. Every night they used to go forth from it a raiding, and one day they found, on Luachair Aine, Find's son Ossian alone. They make a prize of him and carry him off to their dwelling. There Ossian cut a chip from a spear shaft (which Crimthann had given him to trim), and cast it into the stream from the well<sup>2</sup>, so that it got to Ath na Féile, « the Ford of the Feale »,

1. Ed. and transl. by Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, XV, p. 446 ff. Cited by Kuno Meyer, *Zts. f. rom. Phil.*, XXVIII, p. 353, in connection with Tristan. The Rennes Dindsenchas, in which the passage is found, is a collection of stories that belongs in part to the ninth century.

2. Houses built over a stream are referred to elsewhere in Celtic and in Scandinavian literature. In the *Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, ed. Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, XXII, p. 316, § 146, we read: « The cupbearers found no drink for him in the Dodder (a river) and the Dodder had flowed through the house. » O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish* (London, 1873), I, CCCXVIII, cites passages from ancient laws of Ireland by which physicians and other persons were obliged or permitted to build their houses over a spring. He adds: This custom of having a spring of water in the living room, or in the dairy of a farm-house, covered over with a moveable flag has come down to the present time in some remote districts of the country. cf. also Kuno Meyer, *Zts. f. rom. Philol.*, XXVI, 716; XXVIII, 353. In Scandinavian literature, the *Christne Saga*, *Biskopa Sogor*, i, p. 33 ff., contains a tale of Thorwald the Far-Farer in which is described a gathering of Christian

where Finn was dwelling. Then Finn took the chip in his hand and said « Ossian made this ». And Find's men ascended the stream to its source and saw the earth-cave in which were Criblach and the rest, and dug into it. Then Criblach fled, but Find overtook her in Airer Criblaige (and there he killed her <sup>1</sup>).

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and heathen Norsemen : « There was a great hall, as was then much the custom, and there ran a little brook across the hall, well-cared for. But neither side, Christian or heathen, would eat with each other, and therefore the counsel was taken, to hang a curtain across the hall in the midst where the brook ran ». *Origines Icelandicae*, ed. Vigfusson and Powell (Oxford, 1905), I, 410. In the *Grettir saga*, Thorsteinn meets Spes in a chamber under which the sea flows. Being discovered, Thorsteinn escapes through a trap-door in the floor and swims to safety. Reaching land, he takes a burning log and holds it up, as a signal to Spes that he is safe, *Grettir-Saga Asmundarson*, ed. R. C. Boer (Halle, 1900), p. 303-5. M. Bédier, *op. cit.*, II, 157, has called attention to the fact that *Robert le Diable* contains a description of a stream conducted by a canal through the chamber of the heroine from a spring in the garden. The circumstance is however not utilized in the narrative; cf. *Robert le Diable*, ed. E. Löseth (Paris, 1903), x, n. 2, and ll. 1231 ff., 3500 ff. The present town of Chaudesaigues in France has a system of canals by which the warm streams characteristic of the place are conducted along the ground floors of the houses, cf. Joanne, *Dictionnaire géographique et administratif de la France* (Paris, 1892).

1. F. Lot, *Rom.*, XXIV, 322, and George Henderson, *Bricriu's Feast* (London, 1899), p. 143, have called attention to the utilizing of the stream as a signal bearer in the story of Blathnat and Curoi. Here Blathnat pours milk into the water to notify her lover, who is farther down the stream, that the moment has arrived for carrying out their plan; cf. *The Tragic Death of Curoi Mac Daire*, ed. and transl. by R. I. Best, *Eriu, Journal of the School of Irish Learning* (Dublin), II, Pt. I, p. 20 ff.; Kuno Meyer, *Rev. Celt.*, VI, 187-8 for another version; also *Dindsenchas of Findglais*, ed. and transl. by S. H. O'Grady in *Silva Gadelica*, II, 482, 530 ff.; *Rennes Dindsenchas*, ed. and transl. by Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, XV, 448; the poem of *Brinna Ferchertne*, ed. and transl. by Kuno Meyer, *Zts. f. celt. Philol.*, III, 40 ff. The date of the first and last is the tenth century. The reader will note however that the parallel is not close, the milk being only a preconcerted signal, as in groups B and C of the Tristan texts, and the stream not passing through the house. For the reference to Henderson's note I am indebted to Mr. F. N. Robinson, of Harvard University; Henderson adds : « And there is something parallel in *Saxo Grammaticus* ». I have been unable to find the passage. Hertz, *Tristan und Isolde von Gottfried von Strassburg*, p. 539, cites an incident from a ninth century Chinese story where a man and woman correspond by means of a floating red leaf.

In the versified form of the story contained in the *Book of Leinster*<sup>1</sup>, a manuscript written before 1150, it is said that what Ossian cast into the stream was a ball which he had made of the chips from the spearshaft.

A similar incident in which the characteristic chips floating down the stream serve to betray the hero to his enemy, is found in the story of Diarmaid<sup>2</sup>.

Diarmaid was making dishes, and the shavings which he was making were going down with the burn to the strand. The Fiantan were hunting along the foot of the strand..... Finn took notice of the shavings at the foot of the burn. « These », said he, « are the shavings of Diarmaid. — They are not; he is not alive, » said they. — « Indeed, » said Finn, « they are. »

In another version<sup>3</sup> we read :

Fingal saw a speal that Diarmaid cut off a stick in the water, and immediately knew that Diarmaid was in the woods thereabout, for the speal curled round nine times, and it was s... quarters long; there was none in Ireland that could do the like.

The points of similarity between the Irish and the Tristan episodes are :

1. The hero fashions chips in a manner so individual that they are sure to be recognized by those who know him (ODT)<sup>4</sup>.
2. He sends some of them down a stream (ODT).
3. This stream flows through a house (OT).

1. Cf. Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, XV, 448.

2. The *Elopement of Diarmaid and Grainne* is mentioned in the list of tales in the *Book of Leinster*, fac-simile, p. 190, col. 1, l. 9, and is alluded to in a gloss in an eleventh century manuscript, cf. *Rev. Celt.*, XI, 126. Several incidents of the story are contained in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts (edited by Kuno Meyer, *Rev. Celt.*, XI, p. 125, and *Zts. f. Celt. Philol.*, I, 458). The complete story is extant only in late manuscripts and in folk tales collected within the last two centuries. The incident cited is from the collection of J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1862), III, 43.

3. *Leabhar na Feinne*, vol. I, Gaelic Texts, Heroic Gaelic Ballads collected in Scotland, chiefly from 1512-1871, arranged by J. F. Campbell (London, 1872), p. 128, H. 26.

4. O refers to the episode about Ossian; D to the episode about Diarmaid; T to the *Tristan* episode.

The hero sends the chips from this house (O).

The hero sends the chips to a person dwelling in this house (T).

4. They are found (D) by the person for whom they are intended and fulfil the hero's purpose of notifying him (her) of his presence along the stream (OT).

The device is of the same sort as that used in *Chievrefoil*: the hero fashions his bit of bark and confides it to the path of the person to be notified. But there are more striking parallels to the *Chievrefoil* episode.

1. An episode in the Old Irish saga *Táin bó Cúalnge*<sup>1</sup> (the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version<sup>2</sup>):

« I am forced to go to a tryst with Fedelm Noichride<sup>3</sup>, from my own pledge that went out to her [said Cuchulainn] ».

He made a spancel withe<sup>4</sup> then before he went, and wrote an ogam<sup>5</sup>

1. It is generally agreed that the *Táin* was compiled and written down in the seventh century; see Ernest Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage, Táin bó Cúalnge* (Leipzig, 1905), p. LXVIII, LXXXV. The oldest manuscript is contained in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* (*Book of the Dun Cow*), written before 1106, which has been published in fac-simile by the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin, 1870). It has been translated by Winifred Faraday, *The Cattle Raid of Cualnge* (London, 1904). Another version is contained in the *Book of Leinster*, a manuscript of the middle of the twelfth century, which has been published in fac-simile by the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin, 1880). This version has been edited and translated into German by Windisch, *op. cit.* A French translation by M. d'Arbois de Jubainville is in progress, *L'enlèvement du Taureau divin et des vaches de Cooley* (Paris, 1907), Pt. I. An edition by J. Strachan and S. G. O'Keefe, based on the *Yellow Book of Leean*, a fourteenth century manuscript, with variants from the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version, with which it is substantially identical, is appearing in *Ériu*, vol. I, Part. II ff. (Supplement).

2. I have quoted from the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version because it is less diffuse than that of the *Book of Leinster*. The translation is Faraday's, *op. cit.*, p. 10-13; cf. Windisch, *op. cit.*, p. 66-74; d'Arbois de Jubainville, *op. cit.*, 51-54.

3. « Gloss incorporated in the text: that is with her servant. » Faraday's note.

4. « This was a twig twisted in the form of two rings; joined by a straight piece, as used for hobbling horses and cattle. » Faraday's note. *The Book of Leinster* version adds: « und that den Reifen um den dünnen Teil des Pfeilersteins bei Ard Cuillenn. Er rückte den Reifen bis er auf das Dicke des Pfeilersteins kam. » Windisch, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

5. For studies on ogam writing see R. A. Stewart Macalister, *Studies in Irish Epigraphy* (London, 1897, 1902, 1907); d'Arbois de Jubainville,



on its peg] <sup>1</sup>, and threw it on the top of the pillar.....

They [the four who went ahead of Medb's army] found the withe that Cuchulainn threw, and perceived the grazing that the horses had grazed. For Sualtaim's [Cuchulainn's] two horses had eaten the grass with its roots from the earth; Cuchulainn's two horses had licked the earth as far as the stones beneath the grass. They sit down then, until the host came, and the musicians play to them. They give the withe into the hands of Fergus Mac Roich; he read the ogam that was on it.

When Medb came, she asked, « Why are you waiting here?

— We wait, » said Fergus, « because of the withe yonder. There is an ogam on its [peg], and this is what is on it : « Let no one go past till a man is found to throw a like withe with his one hand, and let it be one twig of which it is made; and I except my friend Fergus <sup>2</sup>. — Truly, » said Fergus, « Cuchulainn has thrown it, and they are his horses that grazed the plain. »

And he put it in the hands of the druids; and Fergus sang this song :

« Here is a withe, what does the withe declare to us?  
 What is its mystery?  
 What number threw it?  
 Few or many?

*Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, comptes rendus des séances de l'année 1881*, p. 20-27. For references to ogam writing in the romances see O'Curry, *op. cit.*, I, CCCXLI-CCCXLIV, also Index, vol. III, 689; Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland* (London, 1899), p. 105-122. Ogam inscriptions, like runes, were carved on wood or stone. In the passages here cited it appears that Cuchulainn's writing was in one of the ordinary more or less complicated ogam alphabets; that it was not in cipher, intelligible only to Fergus, as O'Curry and Hyde seem to suppose, is shown by the fact that in the second passage it is « one of them » and not Fergus, who reads it.

1. i.e. the piece of wood that holds the withe together. I am indebted to Mr. Kuno Meyer for this translation. Faraday leaves a blank.

2. This prohibition of Cuchulainn's constitutes what is known in Irish literature as a *geis*; cf. Windisch, *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 590. Such prohibitions or interdicts are a peculiar feature of the Irish saga. Each hero has his particular *gesa*. For instance, one of the *gesa* of Cuchulainn was going to a cooking hearth and consuming the food; another was eating his namesake's (hound's) flesh, cf. *Cuchulainn's Death*, ed. Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, III, 176. It was a prohibition of Fergus to leave a feast before it ended, cf. Windisch and Stokes, *Irische Texte*, II, 159. The violation of a *geis* was practically never ventured by an Irish hero, no matter by whom imposed, or how unreasonably. Thus Deirdre succeeds in prevailing upon Naois to take her from Conchobar : « A ces deux oreilles », s'écrie-t-elle, « s'attacheront la

« Will it cause injury to the host,  
If they go a journey from it?  
Find out, ye druids, something therefore  
For what the withe has been left.

« — of heroes the hero who has thrown it  
Full misfortune on warriors; .  
A delay of princes, wrathful is the matter,  
One man has thrown it with one hand.

« Is not the king's host at the will of him,  
Unless it breaks fair play?  
Until one man only of you  
Throw it, as one man has thrown it.  
I do not know anything save that  
For which the withe should have been put.  
Here is a withe. »

Then Fergus said to them : « If you outrage this withe, » said he, « or if you go past it, though he be in the custody of a man, or in a house under a lock, the — of the man who wrote the ogam on it will reach him, and will slay a goodly slaughter of you before morning, unless one of you throw a like withe. » « It does not please us, indeed, that one of us should be slain at once », said Ailill. « We will go by the neck of the great wood yonder, south of us, and we will not go over it at all. »

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honte et le ridicule, si tu ne m'emmènes avec toi ». Ed. Windisch, *Irische Texte*, I, p. 72, § 9, transl. by d'Arbois de Jubainville, *L'Épopée celtique en Irlande* (Paris, 1892), p. 226. The sacredness of the *geis* reminds us of similar articles in the chivalric code. cf. Eilhart, 6840 ff., where the hero must risk his life sooner than disregard an unreasonable request made « dorch siner vrowin willen ». Cuchulainn here puts the army under a *geis* not to proceed until one of them complies with his demand of a *fir-fer*, ie. that the withe shall be removed under the same disadvantages under which it was placed on the pillar stone. The *fir-fer*, literally *the truth of men*, is the demand that the person challenged shall submit to the same conditions as the person challenging; cf. *Cuchulainn's Death*, ed. Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, III, 184 : « I wish, » says Lugaid, « to have the truth of men from thee. — What is that? » says Conall the Victorious. — « That thou should use only one hand against me, for one hand only have I. — Thou shalt have it », says Conall the Victorious. So then Conall's hand was bound to his side with ropes, cf. Windisch, *Táin*, p. 72, n.6; *Irische Texte*, I, *Wörterbuch*, under *fir*, p. 550.

In the *Book of Leinster* version Ailill's decision is slightly different<sup>1</sup> :

« We will betake ourselves to the protection of this great forest until morning. There we will pitch our tents and take up our quarters. »

2. Another episode in the Old Irish saga *Táin bó Cúialnge* (the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version<sup>2</sup>) :

Then Cuchulainn went round the host till he was at Ath Gabla. He cuts a fork there with one blow of his sword, and put it on the middle of the stream, so that a chariot could not pass it on this side or that. Eirr and Indell, Foich and Fóchlam (their two charioters) came upon him thereat. He strikes their four heads off, and throws them on the four points of the fork. Hence is Ath Gabla.

Then the horses of the four went to meet the host, and their cushions very red under them. They supposed it was a battalion that was before them at the ford. A troop went from them to look at the ford; they saw nothing there but the track of one chariot and the fork with the four heads, and a name in ogam written on the side. All the host came then.

« Are the heads yonder from our people? » said Medb.

« They are from our people and from our choice warriors », said Ailill.

One of them read the ogam that was on the side of the fork; that is : « A man has thrown the fork with his one hand; and you shall not go past it till one of you, except Fergus, has thrown it with one hand. » . . .

« Avert this strait from us, o Fergus », said Medb.

« Bring me a chariot then », said Fergus, « that I may take it out, that you may see whether its end was hewn with one blow. » Fergus broke then fourteen chariots of his chariots, so that it was from his own chariot that he took it out of the ground, and he saw that the end was hewn with one blow.

In the *Book of Leinster*<sup>3</sup>, Fergus, having broken seventeen chariots, is commanded by Medb to desist :

« Stop, o Fergus, » she says, « if you were not with the army we should already have reached Ulster. We know why you do this, to delay and hinder the army until the Ulstermen recover from their weakness. »

The army encamp on the spot for the night.

1. Windisch, *op. cit.*, p. 74-75; d'Arbois de Jubainville, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

2. Faraday, *op. cit.*, 14 ff.; cf. the *Book of Leinster* version, Windisch, *op. cit.*, 82-99; d'Arbois de Jubainville, *op. cit.*, 56-60.

3. Windisch, *op. cit.*, 92-93; d'Arbois de Jubainville, *op. cit.*, 59.

3. Another episode in the Old Irish saga *Táin bó Cúalnge* (the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version<sup>1</sup>):

Then they reached Mag Mucceda. Cuchulainn cut an oak before them there, and wrote an ogham on its side. It is this that was therein: that no one should go past it till a warrior should leap it with one chariot. They pitch their tents there and come to leap over it in their chariots. There fall thereat thirty horses, and thirty chariots are broken. Belach n-Ane, that is the name of that place for ever.

They are there till next morning; then Fraech is summoned to them: « Help us, o Fraech », said Medb. « Remove from us the strait that is on us. Go before Cuchulainn for us, if perchance you shall fight with him. »

Fraech is killed in a struggle with Cuchulainn. Fergus springs over the oak in his chariot. They then proceed until they reach Ath Taiten.

4. A less striking parallel in a story of Finn<sup>2</sup>:

Finn once came into Tethba with his Fiann, and went on a hunting excursion. Lomna staid at home, and as he was walking without, he saw Coirpre, a champion of the Luigne, lying secretly with Finn's woman. Then the woman besought Lomna to conceal it. It was grievous to him to be concerned in betraying Finn. Then Finn came (back), and Lomna cut an ogham a four square rod and this was on it: « An alder stake in a pale of silver. Deadly night shade... A husband of a lewd woman (is) a fool among the well-taught Fiann. There is a heath on bare Ualann of Luigne ». Finn then understood the story, and he became disgusted with the woman.

The points of similarity to *Chievrefoil* in the Irish episodes from the *Táin* are:

1. Faraday, *op. cit.*, 35. cf. O'Curry, *op. cit.*, I, CCCXLIII, n. 595. This episode does not occur in the *Book of Leinster* version, cf. Windisch, *op. cit.*, p. 172, note; d'Arbois de Jubainville translates the text of the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* to supplement the *Book of Leinster* version at this point, *Rev. Celt.*, XXIX, 153-154.

2. Ed. Stokes, *Three Irish Glossaries* (London, 1862). Under the words *orc tréith*. p. 34. Translated in *Cormac's Glossary*, ed. O'Donovan and Stokes (Calcutta, 1868), p. 129. This passage belongs to the oldest codex and « was written », says Stokes (*Three Irish Glossaries*, XVIII), « if not in the time of Cormac (831-903), at least within a century after his death. » Similarly Zimmer, *Zfd A.*, XXXV, 38.

1. A person knows that a troop is to pass along a certain path.

2. He has reason for wishing to procure the delay of their march.

In Tristan to allow him a meeting with Isolt.

In (1) to allow him a meeting with Fedelm Noichride [or her maid].

In (2) to gain time

In (3) to gain time.

3. He carves a message<sup>1</sup> on a piece of bark and places it on their path<sup>2</sup>.

4. The troop pass; the message is found and read.

5. The halt is secured.

6. The purpose of the ruse is achieved.

Owing to the great dissimilarity in the underlying forces in the two situations and the complete difference of *milieu* which they represent, it would be absurd to hope to establish anything approaching a connection between the Tristan episode and the particular Irish fragments that have come down to us. But the device to bring about the halt and delay of a hostile troop is strikingly similar in both. The procedure of the hero, in the specifically Irish form in which it appears in the *Táin* episodes, was practically sure to be effective; in the simpler form in which

1. Teutonic as well as Celtic messages would naturally be carved on wood. Runes carved on wood are mentioned as messages by Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, in the sixth century. See Oscar Montelius, *Kulturgeschichte Schwedens* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 210. For celtic messages carved on wood see references in n. 5, p. 210-1.

2. A stanza of an Anglo-Norman political song directed against one of the ordinances of Edward I is interesting in this connection :

Cest rym fust fet al bois desouz un lorer,  
 La chaunte merle, russinole, et cyre l'esperver ;  
 Escrit estoit en parchemyn pur mout remenbrer,  
 E gittè en haut chemyn, qe um le dust trover.

Thomas Wright, *Political Songs of England* (London, 1839), p. 236. The purpose of the writer here however goes no further than to attract the attention of anyone who chances to pass. I am indebted to Mr. Schofield of Harvard University for calling my attention to this passage.

it appears in Tristan on the contrary, it presents all manner of difficulties. These difficulties were realized keenly, as we have seen, by the French redactors of the Tristan narrative, and have been emphasized again and again by the modern critics<sup>1</sup> who have discussed the episode. We are strongly tempted to explain them as due to the loss of the specifically Irish superstitions<sup>2</sup> which appear in the episodes from the *Táin*. With the process of the disintegration of the episode from manuscript *S* of *Chievrefoil* to Ulrich von Türheim before our eyes, it would be difficult not to suppose that similar tendencies of compromise had been at work before Marie de France as after her.

If we admit that our twelfth century French Tristan was ori-

1. M. Sudre (*Rom.*, XV, 551) does not attempt to interpret ms. *S*, but, following the reading of *H*, supposes that Tristan « l'avait avertie de ce signal qu'il lui donnerait, en lui écrivant... » Miss Rickert (*op. cit.*, 193) remarks: « We cannot suppose that Tristram wrote out in full the message of which the « import » fills seventeen lines. Even if it had been possible, Yseult could not have read it as she rode along, nor was there any need for her to do so, as the branch served merely to indicate Tristram's whereabouts ». M. Foulet (*loc. cit.*, 279) calls attention to « combien il est invraisemblable que Tristan ait pu faire tenir tant de choses sur une baguette de coudrier, ou que Marie ait voulu nous le laisser entendre! » And (p. 280): « Si attentive que fut Iseult, pouvait-elle se douter que son ami était soudainement revenu d'exil après une longue année d'attente? Ne risquait-elle pas de passer à côté de la branche sans la voir? » He therefore takes advantage of the ambiguities introduced by ms. *H* to form the following hypothesis: « Il y a parfaitement eu un message, où était exprimée tout au long la comparaison de leur amour à la coudre et au chèvrefeuille et où se trouvaient les deux beaux vers que nous venons de citer, mais c'était une lettre que Tristan avait expédiée quelques jours avant. » M. Bédier (I, 194 n.), influenced by the same considerations of caution, in reconstructing the Thomas *Tristan*, rejects *Sir Tristrem* and the *Saga*, in which Tristan throws the message into the stream on the bare possibility of Isolt's finding it. « Pour que la ruse ait chance de réussir, il faut qu'elle ait été concertée entre les deux amants; sans quoi le ruisseau pourrait charrier des branchages pendant des jours et des jours sans qu'Isolt, non avertie, les remarquât. » He accordingly accepts the testimony of Gottfried, where Isolt sends Brangien to Tristan, telling him exactly where and when to meet her and instructing her to send the chip down the stream as a signal.

2. The *geis* and the *sir-fer*, cf. p. 15, n. 7 above.

ginally a Pictish Drostan<sup>1</sup>, it is difficult to resist reconstructing, in our imagination, the episode we have just been studying as this Drostan might have lived it. Shorn of his twelfth century French trappings and restored to his Celtic *milieu*, we can imagine this Drostan as taking some such means as did Cuchulainn to bring about the delay of the troop and secure opportunity for his tryst. A challenge carved on a spancel-withe would run little risk of being overlooked on a highroad. It might safely fall into the hands of the first person who passed that way and be read to the whole army. He could depend upon a people to whom the *geis* was sacred and the *fir fer* not to be denied. The march of the troop once arrested, he could rely on his own cunning to effect a meeting with a person already made aware of his presence by some characteristic of his message.

a *geis* is simply  
the Irish taboo.

The prologue — the hero deftly peeling and shaping the piece of bark, carving his message and then with drawing into the forest — is preserved in Tristan. But it would be impossible for a twelfth century French poet to adopt completely the procedure of Cuchulainn. The impressiveness of ogam writing, the binding character of the *geis* and the demand of a *fir fer* were ideas specifically Irish. Even at the expense of leaving a slight gap in the narrative, in the shifting of the scene from Ireland to courtly France they would have to go. As far as bringing about the halt of the army was concerned, it was sufficient for the hero to indicate to his beloved his desire for a meeting. The poet was therefore free to fill out the content of the carving with any pretty assurance of love he chose; the lover could trust to her ingenuity in a society dominated by chivalric ideals, to allow him a night of happiness.

But, having thus simplified the character of the message, the French poet is forced to take it for granted that it will fall into the hands of exactly the person for whom it is intended. To a true listener of romance, the question would perhaps not occur as to how the bark could be counted upon to reach the one

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1. As do Zimmer, *Zts. f. f. Sp. u. Lit.*, XIII, 73; d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Rev. Celt.*, XV, 405-408; F. Lot, *Rom.*, XXV, 22; Bédier, II, 106; Golther, *Tristan und Isolde in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters und der neuen Zeit* (Leipzig, 1907), p. 15.

person for whom it was designed and be read by her in the midst of the hostile troop without incurring suspicion. But that the question *did* occur, persistently and with disastrous consequences to the original form of the episode, the preceding investigation of the texts that followed Marie's lay has shown.

The considerations which incline us to the belief that the Tristan episodes in question are based on Celtic traditions are : first, there are other traces in the story of Tristan, of his Celtic origin ; second, the episode in question has been shown to be a relic of a pre-French stage of the tradition ; third, the Irish parallels to the incident include not only both the carved bit of wood and the device of leaving it upon the path, but the employment of it, through the appeal to peculiarly Irish superstitions, to bring about the halt of a hostile army. Our reconstruction of a preëxtant form of the story however, although it falls in perfectly with the facts of the development as we have been able to trace it in the extant ones, with the evidence of the Irish parallels and with general probability, proves no more than that the *Chievrefoil* episode *may* be a survival of some such specifically Irish practise as we have seen in the *Táin* episodes.

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