

The Ancient Irish Epic Tale Táin Bó Cúalnge eBook

The Ancient Irish Epic Tale Táin Bó Cúalnge

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PREFACE

The Gaelic Literature of Ireland is vast in extent and rich in quality. The inedited manuscript materials, if published, would occupy several hundred large volumes. Of this mass only a small portion has as yet been explored by scholars. Nevertheless three saga-cycles stand out from the rest, distinguished for their compass, age and literary worth, those, namely, of the gods, of the demigod Cuchulain, and of Finn son of Cumhall. The Cuchulain cycle, also called the Ulster cycle—from the home of its hero in the North of Ireland—forms the core of this great mass of epic material. It is also known as the cycle of Conchobar, the king round whom the Ulster warriors mustered, and, finally, it has been called the Red Branch Cycle from the name of the banqueting hall at Emain Macha in Ulster.

Only a few of the hundred or more tales which once belonged to this cycle have survived. There are some dozen in particular, technically known as *Remscela* or “Foretales,” because they lead up to and explain the great Tain, the Tain Bo Cualnge, “The Cualnge Cattle-raid,” the Iliad of Ireland, as it has been called, the queen of Irish epic tales, and the wildest and most fascinating saga-tale, not only of the entire Celtic world, but even of all western Europe.

The mediaeval Irish scholars catalogued their native literature under several heads, probably as an aid to the memory of the professional poets or story-tellers whose stock-in-trade it was, and to one of these divisions they gave the name *Tainte*, plural of *Tain*. By this term, which is most often followed by the genitive plural *bo*, “cows,” they meant “a driving,” or “a reaving,” or even “a drove” or “herd” of cattle. It is only by extension of meaning that this title is applied to the Tain Bo Cualnge, the most famous representative of the class, for it is not, strictly speaking, with the driving of cattle that it deals but with that of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. But, since to carry off the bull implies the carrying off of the herd of which he was the head, and as the “Brown” is always represented as accompanied by his fifty heifers, there were sufficient grounds for putting the Brown Bull Quest in the class of Cow-spoils.

The prominence accorded to this class of stories in the early literature of Ireland is not to be wondered at when the economic situation of the country and the stage of civilization of which they are the faithful mirror is borne in mind.[1] Since all wars are waged for gain, and since among the Irish, who are still very much a nation of cattle raisers, cattle was the chief article of wealth and measure of value,[2] so marauding expeditions from one district into another for cattle must have been of frequent occurrence, just as among the North American Indians tribal wars used to be waged for the acquisition of horses. That this had been a common practice among their kinsmen

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on the Continent also we learn from Caesar's account of the Germans (and Celts?) who, he says, practised warfare not only for a means of subsistence but also for exercising their warriors. How long-lived the custom has been amongst the Gaelic Celts, as an occupation or as a pastime, is evident not only from the plundering incursions or "creaghs"[3] as they are called in the Highlands and described by Scott in *Waverley* and *The Fair Maid of Perth*, but also from the "cattle-drives" which have been resorted to in our own day in Ireland, though these latter had a different motive than plunder. As has been observed by Sir Henry Sumner Maine, Lord Macaulay was mistaken in ascribing this custom to "some native vice of Irish character," for, as every student of ancient Ireland may perceive, it is rather to be regarded as "a survival, an ancient and inveterate habit" of the race.

One of these many Cattle-preys was the Tain Bo Cualnge,[4] which, there can be little doubt, had behind it no mere myth but some kernel of actual fact. Its historical basis is that a Connacht chieftain and his lady went to war with Ulster about a drove of cattle. The importance of a racial struggle between the north-east province and the remaining four grand provinces of Ireland cannot be ascribed to it. There is, it is true, strong evidence to show that two chief centres, political, if not cultural and national, existed at the time of the Tain in Ireland, Cruachan Ai, near the present Rathcroghan in Connacht, and Emain Macha, the Navan Fort, two miles west of Armagh in Ulster, and it is with the friendly or hostile relations of these two that the Ultonian cycle of tales deals. Ulster, or, more precisely, the eastern portion of the Province, was the scene of all the Cattle-raids, and there is a degree of truth in the couplet,—

"Leinster for breeding, And Ulster for reaving;
Munster for reading, And Connacht for thieving."

But there are no indications of a racial clash or war of tribes. With the exception of the Oghamic writings inscribed on the pillar-stones by Cuchulain, which seem to require interpretation to the men of Connacht by Ulstermen, the description of the warriors mustered by the Connacht warrior queen and those gathered round King Conchobar of Ulster accord quite closely.

The Tain Bo Cualnge is the work not of any one man but of a corporation of artists known as *filid*. The author of the Tain in its present state, whoever he may have been, was a strong partisan of Ulster and never misses an opportunity of flattering the pride of her chieftains. Later a kind of reaction against the pre-eminence given to Ulster and the glorification of its hero sets in, and a group of stories arises in which the war takes a different end and Cuchulain is shown to disadvantage, finally to fall at the hands of a Munster champion. It is to this southern province that the saga-cycle which followed the Cuchulain at an interval of two hundred years belongs, namely, the Fenian saga,—the saga of Finn son of Cumhall, which still flourishes among the Gaelic speakers of Ireland

and Scotland, while the Cuchulain stories have almost died out among them. The mingling of the two sagas is the work of the eighteenth-century Scots Lowlander, James Macpherson.

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The Tain Bo Cualnge is one of the most precious monuments of the world's literature, both because of the poetic worth it evidences at an early stage of civilization, and for the light it throws on the life of the people among whom it originated and that of their ancestors centuries earlier. It is not less valuable and curious because it shows us the earlier stages of an epic—an epic in the making—which it does better perhaps than any other work in literature. Ireland had at hand all the materials for a great national epic, a wealth of saga-material replete with interesting episodes, picturesque and dramatic incidents and strongly defined personages, yet she never found her Homer, a gifted poet to embrace her entire literary wealth, to piece the disjointed fragments together, smooth the asperities and hand down to posterity the finished epic of the Celtic world, superior, perhaps, to the Iliad or the Odyssey. What has come down to us is “a sort of patchwork epic,” as Prescott called the Ballads of the Cid, a popular epopee in all its native roughness, wild phantasy and extravagance of deed and description as it developed during successive generations. It resembles the frame of some huge ship left unfinished by the builders on the beach and covered with shells and drift from the sea of Celtic tradition. From the historical standpoint, however, and as a picture of the old barbaric Celtic culture, and as a pure expression of elemental passion, it is of more importance to have the genuine tradition as it developed amongst the people, unvarnished by poetic art and uninfluenced by the example of older and alien societies.

According to the Chronicles of Ireland, as formulated in the Annals of Tigernach,[5] who died in 1088, King Conchobar of Ulster began to reign in the year 30 B.C., and he is said to have died of grief at the news that Christ had been crucified. His reign therefore lasted about sixty years. Cuchulain died in the year 39 A.D. in the twenty-seventh year of his age, as we learn from the following entry: “The death of Cuchulain, the bravest hero of the Irish, by Lugaid son of Three Hounds, king of Munster, and by Erc, king of Tara, son of Carbre Niafer, and by the three sons of Calatin of Connacht. Seven years was his age when he assumed arms, seventeen was his age when he followed the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge, but twenty-seven years was his age when he died.”[6]

A very different account is given in the manuscript known as H. 3. 17, Trinity College, Dublin, quoted by O'Curry in his *Manuscript Materials*, page 508. The passage concludes with the statement: “So that the year of the Tain was the fifty-ninth year of Cuchulain's age, from the night of his birth to the night of his death.” The record first quoted, however, is partly corroborated by the following passage which I translate from the Book of Ballymote, facsimile edition, page 13, col. a, lines 9-21: “In the fourteenth year of the reign

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of Conaire (killed in 40 B.C.) and of Conchobar, the Blessed Virgin was born. At that time Cuchulain had completed thirteen years; and in the fourth year after the birth of Mary, the expedition of the Kine of Cualnge took place ... that is, in the eighteenth year of the reign of Conaire. Cuchulain had completed his seventeenth year at that time. That is, it was in the thirty-second year of the reign of Octavius Augustus that the same expedition took place. Eight years after the Tain Bo Cualnge, Christ was born, and Mary had completed twelve years then, and that was in the fortieth year of the reign of Octavius Augustus; and in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Conaire and Conchobar, and in the second year after the birth of Christ, Cuchulain died. And twenty-seven years was Cuchulain's age at that time."

These apparent synchronisms, of course, may only rest upon the imagination of the Christian annalists of Ireland, who hoped to exalt their ancient rulers and heroes by bringing them into relation with and even making them participate in the events of the life of the Saviour. But in placing the date of the expedition of the Tain at about the beginning of the Christian era, Irish tradition is undoubtedly correct, as appears from the character of the civilization depicted in the Ulster tales, which corresponds in a remarkable degree with what authors of antiquity have recorded of the Celts and with the character of the age which archaeologists call "la Tene," or "Late Celtic," which terminates at the beginning of the first century of our era. Oral tradition was perhaps occupied for five hundred years working over and developing the story of the Tain, and by the close of the fifth century the saga to which it belonged was substantially the one we have now. The text of the tale must have been completed by the first half of the seventh century, and, as we shall see, its oldest extant version, the Book of the Dun, dates from about the year 1100.

But, whatever may be the precise dates of these events, which we are not in a position to determine more accurately, the composition of the Tain Bo Cualnge antedates by a considerable margin the epic tales of the Anglo-Saxons, the Scandinavians, the Franks and the Germans. It is the oldest epic tale of western Europe, and it and the cycle of tales to which it belongs form "the oldest existing literature of any of the peoples to the north of the Alps." [7] The deeds it recounts belong to the heroic age of Ireland three hundred years before the introduction of Christianity into the island, and its spirit never ceased to remain markedly pagan. The mythology that permeates it is one of the most primitive manifestations of the personification of the natural forces which the Celts worshipped. Its historical background, social organization, chivalry, mood and thought and its heroic ideal are to a large extent, and with perhaps some pre-Aryan survivals, not only those of the insular Celts of two thousand years ago, but also of the important and wide-spread Celtic race with whom Caesar fought and who in an earlier period had sacked Rome and made themselves feared even in Greece and Asia Minor.

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The following is the Argument of the Tain Bo Cualnge, which, for the sake of convenience, is here divided into sections:

I. The Prologue

One night at the palace of Cruachan in Connacht, a dispute arose between Queen Medb, the sometime wife of Conchobar, king of Ulster, and her consort Ailill, as to the amount of their respective possessions. It may be remarked in passing that in those days in Ireland, married women retained their private fortune independent of their husbands, as well as the dowry secured to them in marriage. To procure the evidence of their wealth, the royal pair sent messengers to assemble all their chattels which, on comparison, were found to be equal, excepting only that among Ailill's kine was a lordly bull called Finnbennach, "the Whitehorned," whose match was not to be found in the herds of the queen.

II. The Embassy to Dare and the Occasion of the Tain

As we might expect, Medb was chagrined at the discovery. Now her herald macRoth had told her that Dare macFiachna, a landowner of Cualnge, a district in the territory of her former husband, possessed an even more wonderful bull than Ailill's, called Donn Cualnge, "the Brown Bull of Cualnge." So she despatched macRoth to Dare to pray for the loan of the bull.

Dare received the queen's messengers hospitably and readily granted her request, but in the course of the entertainment, one of the messengers, deep in his cups, spoke against Dare, and he, hearing this, withdrew his promise and swore that he would never hand over the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

III. The Gathering of Medb's Forces

The impetuous queen, enraged at the failure of her mission, immediately mustered a formidable army, composed not only of her Connachtmen but also of allies from all parts of Ireland, wherewith to undertake the invasion of Ulster. On her side were the Ulster chieftains who had gone into exile into Connacht after the treacherous slaughter of the sons of Usnech by King Conchobar of Ulster. Chief among them was Fergus, who, moreover, had a personal grievance against Conchobar. For, while Fergus was king of Ulster, he had courted the widow Ness and, in order to win her, promised to abdicate for the term of one year in favour of her son Conchobar. But when the term had elapsed, the youth refused to relinquish the throne, and Fergus in anger entered the service of Medb of Connacht. There he was loaded with favours, became the counsellor of the

realm and, as appears from more than one allusion in the tale, the more than friend of the wife of King Ailill.

The four leagued provinces of Ireland being gathered at Cruachan, the guidance of the host was entrusted to Fergus, because he was acquainted with the province of Ulster through which they were to march, and at the beginning of winter—a point emphasized by the exponents of the sun-theory—the mighty host, including in its ranks the king and queen and some of the greatest warriors of Ireland, with the princess Finnbair as a lure, set forth on the raid into Ulster.

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They crossed the Shannon near Athlone and, marching through the province of Meath, arrived at the borders of Cualnge. Fortunately for the invaders, the expedition took place while the Ulstermen lay prostrate in their cessa, or "Pains," a mysterious state of debility or torpor which was inflicted on them periodically in consequence of an ancient curse laid upon Conchobar and the warriors of Ulster as a punishment for a wrong done to the goddess Macha. This strange malady, resembling the *couvade* among certain savage nations, ordinarily lasted five days and four nights, but on this occasion the Ulstermen were prostrate from the beginning of November till the beginning of February. During all that time the burden of defending the province fell on the shoulders of the youthful champion Cuchulain, who had in his particular charge the plain of Murthemne, the nearest district to Cualnge, the goal of the expedition. For Cuchulain and his father Sualtaim were alone exempt from the curse and the "Pains" which had befallen the remainder of the champions of Ulster.

IV. The Youthful Exploits of Cuchulain

The Connacht host had not proceeded far when they came upon evidence of some mighty force that opposed them. In answer to the inquiries of Ailill and Medb, Fergus explains that it is Cuchulain who disputes their further advance, and, as evidence of the superhuman strength and prowess of the Ulster youth, then in the seventeenth year of his age, the Ulster exiles recount the mighty deeds he had performed in his boyhood, chief among which is the tale according to which, as eric for the killing of the hound of Culann the Smith, the boy-hero Setanta assumed the station and the name which ever after clung to him of Cuchulain, "the Hound of Culann."

V. The Single Combats of Cuchulain

Cuchulain agrees to allow the Connacht host to continue their march on condition that every day they send one of their champions to meet him in single combat. When he shall have killed his opponent, the host shall halt and pitch camp until the following morning. Medb agrees to abide by these terms. In each of the contests which ensue, the heroic youth is victorious and slays many of the most celebrated warriors on the side of Connacht. The severest of all these single combats was the one in which he had as opponent his former friend and foster-brother Ferdiad. At the end of a four days' battle, in which both adversaries exhibited astounding deeds of valour, Ferdiad fell by the hands of Cuchulain.

Impatient at these delays, Medb broke the sacred laws of ancient Irish chivalry and led her army into Ulster, overrunning the province, pillaging and burning as she went, even up to the walls of Emain Macha, the residence of Conchobar, and finally took possession of the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

VI. The Gathering of the Ulstermen and the Final Battle of the Tain

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By this time King Conchobar and his warriors have come out of their debility and summoned their forces to an eminence in Slane of Meath. The great gathering of the Ulstermen is reported to Medb by her trusty herald macRoth, and from his description of the leaders and their troops, their exiled countryman Fergus designates them to the nobles of Connacht. In the final battle Medb's army is repulsed and retreats in flight into Connacht. Thus each host has had its share of the fortunes of war: Medb has laid waste the lands of her divorced husband and carried off the Brown Bull of Cualnge, the prize of war, while on the other hand, Conchobar has won the victory in the great battle of Garech and Ilgarech.

VII. The End of the two Bulls

On the way back to Connacht, the Brown Bull of Cualnge emitted such terrible bellowings that they reached the ears of the Whitehorned remaining at home in his stall in Cruachan, whence he rushed at full speed to attack the other. A furious battle took place between the bulls, but the Brown was the stronger, and raising his rival on his horns he shook the Whitehorned into fragments over all Ireland. He then returned in fury to Ulster, and in his wild rage dashed his head against a rock and was killed.

The Tain Bo Cualnge has been preserved, more or less complete, in a score of manuscripts ranging in date from the beginning of the twelfth to the middle of the nineteenth century. There probably existed other manuscripts containing not only the Tain as we have it but even episodes now wanting in it. All of the extant manuscripts go back to versions which date from the seventh century or earlier. No manuscript of the Tain is wholly in the language of the time when it was copied, but, under the cloak of the contemporaneous orthography, contains forms and words so obsolete that they were not understood by the copyist, so that glossaries had to be compiled to explain them.

It is by a singular good fortune that this, the greatest of all the epic tales of the Irish, has been handed down to our day in the two most ancient and, for that reason, most precious of the great Middle Irish collections of miscellaneous contents known as the *Leabhar na hUidhre*, "the Book of The Dun (Cow)," and the Book of Leinster. The former and older of these vellum manuscripts (abbreviated LU.) is kept in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy at Dublin. It must have been written about the beginning of the twelfth century, for its compiler and writer, Moelmuire macCeilechair (Kelleher), is known to have been slain at Clonmacnois in the year 1106; some of its linguistic forms, however, are as old as the eighth century glosses. Unfortunately, LU.'s account of the Tain is incomplete at the beginning and the end, but the latter portion is made good by the closely related, though independent, version contained in the manuscript known as the Yellow Book of Lecan (abbreviated YBL.). This manuscript was written about the year 1391 and it is also kept in Dublin in the Library of Trinity College. To the same group as LU. and YBL., which for the sake of convenience we may call version A,

belong also the British Museum MSS., Egerton 1782, a large fragment, and Egerton 114, both dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

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Version B comprises the closely related accounts of the Tain as contained in the Book of Leinster (abbreviated LL.) and the following MSS.: Stowe 984 (Royal Irish Academy), written in the year 1633 and giving, except for the loss of a leaf, a complete story of the Tain; H. 1. 13 (Trinity College, Dublin), written in the year 1745 and giving the Tain entire; Additional 18748 (abbreviated Add.), British Museum, copied in the year 1800 from a 1730 original; Egerton 209 and Egerton 106 (British Museum), both fragments and dating from the eighteenth century. Fragments of a modern version are also found in MS. LIX, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

To version C belong only fragments: H. 2. 17 (Trinity College, Dublin), dating from the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century; the almost identical Egerton 93 (British Museum), consisting of only ten leaves and dating from nearly a century later, and H. 2. 12 (Trinity College, Dublin), consisting of only two pages.[8]

The manuscripts belonging to each of these versions, A, B, and C, have sufficient traits in common to place them in a group by themselves. The question of the relationship of these manuscripts to one another and of the character of the suppositional archetype from which they are all descended is a most intricate one and one which has given rise to considerable discussion. The question still awaits a definite answer, which may never be forthcoming, because of the disappearance not only of the first draft of the Tain, but also of that of some of its later redactions. We must not overlook the possibility, either, of an otherwise faithful copyist having inserted in the text before him a passage, or even an entire episode, of his own fabrication. This, no doubt, happened not infrequently, especially in the earlier period of the copying of Irish manuscripts, and a single insertion of this kind, or the omission, intentionally or by oversight, of a part of the original from the copy might, it will easily be seen, lead one to conclude that there once existed a form of the story which as a matter of fact never existed.

The version of the Tain which I have chosen as the basis for my translation is the one found in the Book of Leinster (*Leabhar Laighneach*), a voluminous vellum manuscript sometime called the Book of Glendalough and now kept in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, catalogue number H. 2. 18. Only a part of the original book remains. It dates from about the year 1150. This date is established by two entries in the manuscript itself: "Aed son of Crimthann (Hugh macGriffin) hath written this book and out of many books hath he compiled it" (facsimile, at the bottom of page 313). Who this Aed was will be clear from the other entry. It appears that he had lent the manuscript while still unfinished to Finn macGorman, who was Bishop of Kildare from 1148 and died in the year 1160, and who on returning the book wrote in it the following laudatory note in Irish

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to Aed: "(Life) and health from Finn, the Bishop of Kildare, to Aed son of Crimthann, tutor of the chief king (i.e. of King Dermot macMurrough, the infamous prince who half a century later invited Strongbow and the Normans to come over from Wales to Ireland) of Mug Nuadat's Half (i.e. of Leinster and Munster), and successor of Colum son of Crimthann (this Colum was abbot of Tir da ghlass the modern Terryglas on the shore of Lough Derg, in the County Tipperary—and died in the year 548), and chief historian of Leinster in respect of wisdom and intelligence, and cultivation of books, science and learning. And let the conclusion of this little tale (i.e. the story of Ailill Aulom son of Mug Nuadat, the beginning of which was contained in the book which Finn returns) be written for me accurately by thee, O cunning Aed, thou man of the sparkling intellect. May it be long before we are without thee. My desire is that thou shouldst always be with us. And let macLonan's Songbook be given to me, that I may understand the sense of the poems that are in it. *Et vale in Christo.*"[9]

It would seem from another note in the manuscript[10] that the Book of Leinster afterwards belonged to some admirer of King Dermot, for he wrote: "O Mary! Great was the deed that was done in Ireland this day, the kalends of August (1166)—Dermot, son of Donnoch macMurrough, King of Leinster and of the (Dublin) Danes to be banished by the men of Ireland over the sea eastwards. Woe, woe is me, O Lord, what shall I do!"[11]

My reason for founding the translation on the LL. version, in spite of the fact that its composition is posterior by half a century to that of LU., was not merely out of respect for the injunction of the scribe of the *ne varietur* and to merit his blessing (page 369), but also because LL.'s is the oldest *complete* version of the Tain extant. Though as a rule (and as is easily discernible from a comparison of LU. and LL.), the shorter, terser and cruder the form of a tale is, the more primitive it is, yet it is not always the oldest preserved form of a work that represents the most ancient form of the story. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that LL. contains elements which represent a tradition antedating the composition of LU. At all events, LL. has these strong points in its favour, that, of all the versions, it is the most uniform and consistent, the most artistically arranged, the one with most colour and imagination, and the one which lends itself most readily to translation, both in itself and because of the convenient Irish text provided by Professor Windisch's edition. In order to present the Tain in its completest form, however, I have adopted the novel plan of incorporating in the LL. account the translations of what are known as conflate readings. These, as a rule, I have taken from no manuscript that does not demonstrably go back to a twelfth or earlier century redaction. Some of these additions consist of but a single word: others extend over

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several pages. This dovetailing could not always be accomplished with perfect accuracy, but no variants have been added that do not cohere with the context or destroy the continuity of the story. Whatever slight inconsistencies there may be in the accounts of single episodes, they are outweighed, in my opinion, by the value and interest of the additions. In all cases, however, the reader can control the translation by means of the foot-notes which indicate the sources and distinguish the accretions from the basic text. The numerous passages in which *Eg.* 1782 agrees with LU. and YBL. have not all been marked. The asterisk shows the beginning of each fresh page in the lithographic facsimile of LL., and the numbers following "W" in the upper left hand margin show the corresponding lines in the edition of the Irish text by Windisch.

* * * * *

In general, I believe it should be the aim of a translator to give a faithful rather than a literal version of his original. But, owing to the fact that so little of Celtic scholarship has filtered down even to the upper strata of the educated public and to the additional fact that the subject matter is so incongruous to English thought, the first object of the translator from the Old Irish must continue to be, for some time to come, rather exactness in rendering than elegance, even at the risk of the translation appearing laboured and puerile. This should not, however, be carried to the extent of distorting his own idiom in order to imitate the idiomatic turns and expressions of the original. In this translation, I have endeavoured to keep as close to the sense and the literary form of the original as possible, but when there is conflict between the two desiderata, I have not hesitated to give the first the preference. I have also made use of a deliberately archaic English as, in my opinion, harmonizing better with the subject. It means much to the reader of the translation of an Old Irish text to have the atmosphere of the original transferred as perfectly as may be, and this end is attained by preserving its archaisms and quaintness of phrase, its repetitions and inherent crudities and even, without suppression or attenuation, the grossness of speech of our less prudish ancestors, which is also a mark of certain primitive habits of life but which an over-fastidious translator through delicacy of feeling might wish to omit. These side-lights on the semi-barbaric setting of the Old Irish sagas are of scarcely less interest and value than the literature itself.

The *Tain Bo Cualnge*, like most of the Irish saga-tales as they have come down to us in their Middle Irish dress, is chiefly in prose, but interspersed with verse. The verse-structure is very intricate and is mostly in strophic form composed of verses of fixed syllabic length, rhymed and richly furnished with alliteration. There is a third form of speech which is neither prose nor verse, but partakes of the

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character of both, a sort of irregular, rhymeless verse, without strophic division and exceedingly rich in alliteration, internal rhyme and assonance. This kind of speech, resembling in a way the dithyrambic passages in the Old Testament, was known to the native Irish scholars as *rosc* and it is usually marked in the manuscripts by the abbreviation *R*. It was used in short, impetuous outbursts on occasions of triumph or mourning.

While, on the whole, I believe the student will feel himself safer with a prose translation of a poem than with one in verse, it has seemed to me that a uniform translation of the *Tain Bo Cualnge* in prose would destroy one of its special characteristics, which is that in it both prose and verse are mingled. It was not in my power, however, to reproduce at once closely and clearly the metrical schemes and the rich musical quality of the Irish and at the same time compress within the compass of the Irish measure such an analytic language as English, which has to express by means of auxiliaries what is accomplished in Early Irish by inflection. But I hope to have accomplished the main object of distinguishing the verse from the prose without sacrifice of the thought by the simple device of turning the verse-passages into lines of the same syllabic length as those of the original—which is most often the normal seven-syllable line—but without any attempt at imitating the rhyme-system or alliteration.

In order not to swell the volume of the book, the notes have been reduced to the indispensable minimum, reserving the commentary and the apparatus of illustrative material for another volume, which we hope some day to be able to issue, wherein more definitely critical questions can be discussed. There are a few Irish words which have been retained in the translation and which require a word of explanation: The Old Irish *geis* (later, also *geas*[12]; plural *geasa*) has as much right to a place in the English vocabulary as the Polynesian word *tabu*, by which it is often translated. It is sometimes Englished “injunction,” “condition,” “prohibition,” “bond,” “ban,” “charm,” “magical decree,” or translated by the Scots-Gaelic “spells,” none of which, however, expresses the idea which the word had according to the ancient laws of Ireland. It was an adjuration by the honour of a man, and was either positive or negative. The person adjured was either compelled or made in duty bound to do a certain thing, or, more commonly, was prohibited from doing it. The Old Irish *gilla* is often translated “vassal,” “youth,” “boy,” “fellow,” “messenger,” “servant,” “page,” “squire” and “guide,” but these words bear false connotations for the society of the time, as does the Anglicised form of the word, “gillie,” which smacks of modern sport. It meant originally a youth in the third of the six ages of man. Compare the sense of the word *varlet* or *valet* in English, which was once “a more honourable

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title; for all young gentlemen, untill they come to be eighteen years of age, were termed so" (Cotgrave), and of the same word in Old French, which was "un jeune homme de condition honorable" (J. Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, I, page 40, note). A *liss* or *rath* is a fortified place enclosed by a circular mound or trench, or both. A *dun* is a fortified residence surrounded by an earthen rampart. In the case of names of places and persons, I have thought it best to adhere as closely as possible to the spellings used in the LL. manuscript itself. It is of the utmost importance to get the names of Irish places and of Irish heroes correctly determined and to discard their English corrupted spellings. There are certain barbarisms, however, such as Slane (Slemain), Boyne (Boann), and perhaps even Cooley (Cualnge), which have been stereotyped in their English dress and nothing is to be gained by reforming them. The forms *Erin* (dative of *Eriu*, the genuine and poetic name of the island) and *Alba* have been retained throughout instead of the hybrids "Ireland" and "Scotland." Final e is occasionally marked with a grave (e.g. Mane, Dare) to show that it is not silent as it often is in English.

I quite perceive that I have not always succeeded in reproducing the precise shade of meaning of words certain of which had become antiquated and even unintelligible to the native scholars of the later Middle Irish period themselves. This is especially true of the passages in *rosc*, which are fortunately not numerous and which were probably intentionally made as obscure and allusive as possible, the object being, perhaps, as much the music of the words as the sense. Indeed, in some cases, I have considered myself fortunate if I have succeeded in getting their mere drift. No one takes to heart more than the present writer the truth of Zimmer's remark, that "it needs no great courage to affirm that *not one* of the living Celtic scholars, *with* all the aids at their disposal, possesses such a ready understanding of the contents of, for example, the most important Old Irish saga-text, "The Cualnge Cattle-raid," as was required thirty or more years ago in Germany of a good Gymnasium graduate in the matter of the Homeric poems and *without* aids of any kind." [13] However, in spite of its defects, I trust I have not incurred the censure of Don Quijote [14] by doing what he accuses bad translators of and shown the wrong side of the tapestry, thereby obscuring the beauty and exactness of the work, and I venture to hope that my translation may prove of service in leading students to take an interest in the language and literature of Ireland.

WORKS ON THE TAIN BO CUALNGE

(Our Bibliography has no Pretension at being Complete)

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The Tain has been analysed by J.T. Gilbert, in the facsimile edition of LU., pages xvi-xviii, based on O'Curry's unpublished account written about 1853; by Eugene O'Curry in his "Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History," pages 28-40, Dublin, 1861; by John Rhys in his "Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic Heathendom," page 136, the Hibbert Lectures, London, 1898; by J.A. MacCulloch in "The Religion of the Ancient Celts," pages 127 and 141, London, 1911; in the Celtic Magazine, vol. xiii, pages 427-430, Inverness, 1888; by Don. Mackinnon in the Celtic Review, vol. iv, page 92, Edinburgh, 1907-8; by H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, in Bibliotheque de l'ecole des chartes, tome xl, pages 148-150, Paris, 1879; by Bryan O'Looney, in the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Second Series, vol. I, pages 242-248, Dublin, 1879; by H. Lichtenberger, "Le Poeme et la Legende des Nibelungen," pages 432-434, Paris, 1891; by Eleanor Hull, in "A Text Book of Irish Literature," Pt. I, p. 24, Dublin and London, 1906; by Victor Tourneur, "La Formation du Tain Bo Cualnge," in Melanges Godefroid Kurth, II, 413-424, Liege, 1908; by E.C. Quiggin, in the Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, page 626.

The text of the Tain is found in whole or in part in the facsimile reprints published by the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1870 and following; viz.: the Book of Leinster, folios 53b-104b; the Book of the Dun Cow, folios 55a-82b, and the Yellow Book of Lecan, folios 17a.-53a; in "Die Altirische Heldensage, Tain Bo Cualnge, herausgegeben von Ernst Windisch, Irische Texte, Extraband, Leipzig, 1905"; from LU. and YBL., by John Strachan and J.G. O'Keeffe, as a supplement to Eriu, vol. i, Dublin, 1904 and fol.; our references to LU. and YBL. are from this edition as far as it appeared; from that point, the references to YBL. are to the pages of the facsimile edition; the LU. text of several passages also is given by John Strachan in his "Stories from the Tain," which first appeared in Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge ("The Gaelic Journal"), Dublin; reprinted, London and Dublin, 1908; Max Nettlau, "The Fer Diad Episode of the Tain Bo Cuailnge," Revue Celtique, tome x, pages 330-346, tome xi, pages 23-32, 318-343; "The Fragment of the Tain Bo Cuailnge in MS. Egerton 93," Revue Celtique, tome xiv, pages 254-266, tome xv, pages 62-78, 198-208; R. Thurneysen, "Tain Bo Cuailghni nach H. 2. 17," Zeitschrift fuer Celtische Philologie, Bd. viii, S. 525-554; E. Windisch, "Tain Bo Cuailnge nach der Handschrift Egerton 1782," Zeitschrift fuer Celtische Philologie, Bd. ix, S. 121-158. The text of "The Fight at the Ford," from the Murphy MS. 103 (written about 1760), is printed in Irisleabhar Muighe Nuadhad, Dublin, 1911, pp. 84-90.

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The Tain has been translated by Bryan O’Looney in a manuscript entitled “Tain Bo Cualnge. Translated from the original vellum manuscript known as the Book of Leinster, in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. To which are added the ancient Prologues, Prefaces, and the Pretales or Stories, Adventures which preceded the principal Expedition or Tain, from various vellum MSS. in the Libraries of Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1872.” (A good translation, for its time. For O’Looney’s works on the Tain, see the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Second Series, Vol. i, No. 11, Polite Literature and Antiquities, Dublin, 1875; for W.J. Hennessy’s, see The Academy, No. 873, Lee, “Dictionary of National Biography,” xxv, 1891, pages 424-425, and V. Tourneur, “Esquisse d’une histoire des etudes celtiques,” page 90, note 5.) The Royal Irish Academy contains another manuscript translation of the Tain (24, M, 39), by John O’Daly, 1857. It is a wretched translation. In one place, O’Daly speaks of William Rily as the translator. L. Winifred Faraday’s “The Cattle-Raid of Cualnge,” London, 1904, is based on LU. and YBL. Two copies of a complete translation of the LL. text dating from about 1850 is in the possession of John Quinn, Esq., of New York City. H. d’Arbois de Jubainville translated the Tain from the LL. text, but with many omissions: “Enlevement [du Taureau Divin et] des Vaches de Cooley,” *Revue Celtique*, tomes xxviii-xxxii, Paris, 1907 and fl. Eleanor Hull’s “The Cuchullin Saga,” London, 1898, contains (pages 111-227) an analysis of the Tain and a translation by Standish H. O’Grady of portions of the Add. 18748 text. “The Tain, An Irish Epic told in English Verse,” by Mary A. Hutton, Dublin, 1907, and Lady Augusta Gregory’s, “Cuchulain of Muirthemne,” London, 1903, are paraphrases. The episode “The Boyish Feats of Cuchulinn” was translated by Eugene O’Curry, “On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish,” Vol. i, Introduction, pages 359-366, and the episode “The Fight of Ferdiad and Cuchulaind,” was translated by W.K. Sullivan, *ibid.*, Vol. ii, Lectures, Vol. i, Appendix, pages 413-463.

Important studies on the Tain have come from the pen of Heinrich Zimmer: “Ueber den compilatorischen Charakter der irischen Sagentexte im sogenannten Lebor na hUidre,” Kuhn’s *Zeitschrift fuer vergleichende Sprachforschung*, Bd. xxviii, 1887, pages 417-689, and especially pages 426-554; “Keltische Beitræge,” *Zeitschrift fuer deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Litteratur*, Vol. xxxii, 1888, pages 196-334; “Beitræge zur Erklaerung irischer Sagentexte,” *Zeitschrift fuer Celtische Philologie*, Bd. i, pages 74-101, and Bd. iii, pages 285-303. See also, William Ridgeway, “The Date of the first Shaping of the Cuchulainn Saga,” Oxford, 1907; H. d’Arbois de Jubainville, “Etude sur le Tain Bo Cualnge,” *Revue Celtique*, tome xxviii, 1907, pages 17-40; Alfred Nutt, “Cuchulainn, the Irish Achilles,” in *Popular Studies in Mythology*,

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Romance and Folklore, No. 8, London, 1900. The Celtic Magazine, Vol. xiii, pages 319-326, 351-359, Inverness, 1888, contains an English translation of a degenerated Scottish Gaelic version taken down by A.A. Carmichael, in Benbecula; the Gaelic text was printed in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Vol. ii. In the same volume of the Celtic Magazine, pages 514-516, is a translation of a version of the Tain, taken down in the island of Eigg. Eleanor Hull's "Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster," London, 1911, is a retelling of the story for younger readers. The following, bearing more or less closely upon the Tain, are also to be mentioned: Harry G. Tempest, "Dun Dealgan, Cuchulain's Home Fort," Dundalk, 1910; A.M. Skelly, "Cuchulain of Muirtheimhne," Dublin, 1908; Standish O'Grady, "The Coming of Cuculain," London, 1894, "In the Gates of the North," Kilkenny, 1901, "Cuculain, A Prose Epic," London, 1882 and the same author's "History of Ireland: the Heroic Period," London, 1878-80; "The High Deeds of Finn, and other Bardic Romances of Ancient Ireland," by T.W. Rolleston, London, 1910; Stephen Gwynn, "Celtic Sagas Re-told," in his "To-day and Tomorrow in Ireland," pages 38-58, Dublin, 1903; Edward Thomas, "Celtic Stories," Oxford, 1911; "Children of Kings," by W. Lorcan O'Byrne, London, 1904, and "The Boy Hero of Erin," by Charles Squire, London, 1907.

Among the many poems which have taken their theme from the Tain and the deeds of Cuchulain may be mentioned: "The Foray of Queen Meave," by Aubrey de Vere, Poetic Works, London, 1882, vol. ii, pages 255-343; "The Old Age of Queen Maeve," by William Butler Yeats, Collected Works, vol. I, page 41, London, 1908; "The Defenders of the Ford," by Alice Milligan, in her "Hero Lays," page 50, Dublin, 1908; George Sigerson, "Bards of the Gael and the Gall," London, 1897; "The Tain-Quest," by Sir Samuel Ferguson, in his "Lays of the Western Gael and other Poems," Dublin, 1897; "The Red Branch Crests, A Trilogy," by Charles Leonard Moore, London, 1906; "The Laughter of Scathach," by Fiona Macleod, in "The Washer of the Ford and Barbaric Tales"; Hector Maclean, "Ultonian Hero-Ballads collected in the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland," Glasgow, 1892; ballad versions from Scotland are found in Leabhar na Feinne, pages 1 and fol., in J.G. Campbell's "The Fians," pages 6 and fol., and in the Book of the Dean of Lismore.

Finally, scenes from the Tain have been dramatized by Canon Peter O'Leary, in the Cork "Weekly Examiner," April 14, 1900 and fol., by Sir Samuel Ferguson, "The Naming of Cuchulain: A Dramatic Scene," first played in Belfast, March 9, 1910; in "The Triumph of Maeve," A Romance in dramatic form, 1906; "Cuchulain," etc., (A Cycle of Plays, by S. and J. Varian, Dublin), and in "The Boy-Deeds of Cuchulain," A Pageant in three Acts, performed in Dublin in 1909.

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[1] "L'histoire entiere de l'Irlande est une enigme si on n'a pas sans cesse a l'esprit ce fait primordial que le climat humide de l'île est tout a fait contraire a la culture des cereales, mais en revanche eminemment favorable a l'elevage du betail, surtout de la race bovine, car le climat est encore trop humide pour l'espece ovine." F. Lot, in *La Grande Encyclopedie*, xx, 956.

[2] As it is to this day in some parts of Ireland, and as for example a female slave was sometimes appraised at three head of cattle among the ancient Gaels.

[3] In fact the Clan Mackay was known as the Clan of the creaghs, and their perpetuation was enjoined on the rising generation from the cradle; See *The Old Highlands*, vol. III., p. 338, Glasgow.

[4] Pronounced approximately *Thawin' bow Hooln'ya*.

[5] *Revue Celtique*, 1895, tome xvi. pp. 405-406; *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, ii. 14.

[6] *Mors Conchulaind fortissimi herois Scottorum la Lugaid mac tri con, i. ri Muman, agus la Ercc, i. ri Temrach, mac Coirpri Niad fir, agus la tri maccu Calattin de Chonnachtaib; vii. mbliadna a aes intan rogab gaisced. xvii. mbliadna dano a aes intan mboi indegaid Tana Bo Cualnge. xxvii. bliadna immorro a aes intan atbath. Revue Celtique*, tome xvi. page 407.

[7] Ridgeway.

[8] See H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Essai d'un catalogue de la litterature epique de l'Irlande*, Paris, 1883, pages 214-216, and the Supplement to the same by G. Dottin, *Revue Celtique*, t. xxxiii, pages 34-35; Donald Mackinnon, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, Edinburgh, 1912, pp. 174, 220; E. Windisch, *Tain Bo Cualnge, Einleitung und Vorrede*, S. lx. ff.

[9] Facsimile, page 288, foot margin.

[10] Facsimile, page 275, top margin.

[11] Vd. Robert Atkinson, *The Book of Leinster*, Introduction, pages 7-8; J.H. Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 1867, Introduction, pages ix and ff. Eugene O'Curry, *On the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History*, page 186; Ernst Windisch, *Tain Bo Cualnge*, pages 910-911.

[12] Pronounced *gesh* or *gas*.

[13] “Es gehoert keine grosse Kuehnheit dazu zu behaupten, dass keiner der lebenden Keltologen beispielsweise von dem wichtigsten altirischen Sagentext ‘Der Rinderraub von Cualnge’ ... mit allen vorhandenen Hilfsmitteln ein solches fortlaufendes Verstaendnis des Inhalts hat, wie von einem guten Gymnasialabiturienten hinsichtlich der homerischen Gedichte ohne jegliches Hilfsmittel vor gut 30 Jahren in Deutschland verlangt wurde.”—*Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, herausgegeben von Paul Hinneberg, Berlin, 1909. Teil I, Abt. xi, I. S. 75.

[14] Part II, chap, Ixii (Garnier Hermanos edition, page 711).

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[Page 1]

Here beginneth Tain Bo Cualnge

The Cualnge Cattle-raid

I

THE PILLOW-TALK

[W.1.] [LL.fo.53.] Once of a time, that Ailill and Medb had spread their royal bed in Cruachan, the stronghold of Connacht, such was the pillow-talk that befell betwixt them:

Quoth Ailill: "True is the saying, lady, 'She is a well-off woman that is a rich man's wife.'" "Aye, that she is," answered the wife; "but wherefore opin'st thou so?" "For this," Ailill replied, "that thou art this day better off than the day that first I took thee." Then answered Medb: "As well-off was I before I ever saw thee." "It was a wealth, forsooth, we never heard nor knew of," Ailill said; "but a woman's wealth was all thou hadst, and foes from lands next thine were used to carry off the spoil and booty that they took from thee." "Not so was I," quoth Medb; "the High King of Erin himself was my sire, Eocho Fedlech ('the Enduring') son of Finn, by name, who was son of Findoman, son of Finden, son of Findguin, son of Rogen Ruad ('the Red'), son of Rigen, son of Blathacht, son of Beothacht, son of Enna Agnech, son of Oengus Turbech. Of daughters, had he six: Derbriu, Ethne and Ele, Clothru, Mugain and Medb, myself, that was the noblest and seemliest of them. 'Twas I was the goodliest of them in bounty [W.17.] and gift-giving, [1]in riches and treasures.[1] 'Twas I was best of them in battle and strife and combat. 'Twas I that had fifteen hundred royal mercenaries of the sons of aliens exiled from their own land, and as many more of the sons of freemen of the land. And there were ten men with every one of these hirelings, [2]and nine men with every hireling,[2] and eight men with every hireling, and seven men with every hireling, and six men with every hireling, and five men with every hireling, [3]and four men with every hireling,[3] and three men with every hireling, and two men with every hireling, and one hireling with every hireling. These were as a standing household-guard," continued Medb; "hence hath my father bestowed one of the five provinces of Erin upon me, even the province of Cruachan; wherefore 'Medb of Cruachan' am I called. Men came from Finn son of Ross Ruad ('the Red'), king of Leinster, to seel me [4]for a wife, and I refused him;[4] and from Carbre Niafer ('the Champion') son of Ross Ruad ('the Red'), king of Temair,[a] [5]to woo me, and I refused him;[5] and they came from Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach ('the Mighty'), king of Ulster, [6]and I refused him in like wise.[6] They



came from Eocho Bec ('the Small'), and I went not; for 'tis I that exacted a singular bride-gift, such as no woman before me had ever required of a man of the men of Erin, namely, a husband without avarice, without jealousy, without fear. For should he be mean, the man with whom I should live,

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we were ill-matched together, inasmuch as I am great [LL.fo.54a.] in largess and gift-giving, and it would be a disgrace for my husband if I should be better [W.34.] at spending than he, [1]and for it to be said that I was superior in wealth and treasures to him[1], while no disgrace would it be were one as great as the other[a]. Were my husband a coward, 'twere as unfit for us to be mated, for I by myself and alone break battles and fights and combats, and 'twould be a reproach for my husband should his wife be more full of life than himself, and no reproach our being equally bold. Should he be jealous, the husband with whom I should live, that too would not suit me, for there never was a time that I had not my paramour[b]. Howbeit, such a husband have I found, namely in thee thyself, Ailill son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') of Leinster. Thou wast not churlish; thou wast not jealous; thou wast not a sluggard. It was I plighted thee, and gave purchase-price to thee, which of right belongs to the bride—of clothing, namely, the raiment of twelve men, a chariot worth thrice seven bondmaids, the breadth of thy face of red gold[c], the weight of thy left forearm of silvered bronze. Whoso brings shame and sorrow and madness upon thee, no claim for compensation nor satisfaction hast thou therefor that I myself have not, [2]but it is to me the compensation belongs,"[2] said Medb, "for a man dependent upon a woman's maintenance is what thou art."[d]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] Stowe and Add.

[a] That is, from the supreme king of Ireland.

[5-5] Stowe and Add.

[6-6] Stowe and Add.

[1-1] Stowe and, similarly Add.

[a] A short sentence in LL., which is probably corrupt, is omitted here.

[b] Literally, "A man behind (in) the shadow of another."

[c] Instead of a ring, which would be given to the bride.

[2-2] Add. and H. 1. 13.

[d] For a detailed explanation of this entire passage see H. Zimmer, in the *Sitzungsberichte der Koeniglich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 16 Februar, 1911. *philosophisch historischen Classe*, Seite 217.

“Nay, not such was my state,” said Ailill; “but two brothers had I; one of them over Temair, the other over Leinster; namely, Finn, over Leinster, and Carbre, over Temair. I left the kingship to them because they were [W.52.] older but not superior to me in largess and bounty. Nor heard I of province in Erin under woman’s keeping but this province alone. And for this I came and assumed the kingship here as my mother’s successor; for Mata of Muresc, daughter of Magach [1]of Connacht,[1] was my mother. And who could there be for me to have as my queen better than thyself, being, as thou wert, daughter of the High King of Erin?” “Yet so it is,” pursued Medb, “my fortune is greater than thine.” “I marvel at that,” Ailill made answer, “for there is none that hath greater treasures and riches and wealth than I: yea, to my knowledge there is not.”

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[1-1] Add. and H. 1. 13.

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II

[1]THE OCCASION OF THE TAIN[1]

[W.62.] Then were brought to them the least precious of their possessions, that they might know which of them had the more treasures, riches and wealth. Their pails and their cauldrons and their iron-wrought vessels, their jugs and their keeves and their eared pitchers were fetched to them.

[1-1] Add. and Stowe.

Likewise, their rings and their bracelets and their thumb-rings and their golden treasures were fetched to them, and their apparel, both purple and blue and black and green, yellow, vari-coloured and gray, dun, mottled and brindled.

Their numerous flocks of sheep were led in from fields and meeds and plains. These were counted and compared, and found to be equal, of like size, of like number; however, there was an uncommonly fine ram over Medb's sheep, and he was equal in worth to a bondmaid, but a corresponding ram was over the ewes of Ailill.

Their horses and steeds and studs were brought from pastures and paddocks. There was a noteworthy horse in Medb's herd and he was of the value of a bondmaid; a horse to match was found among Ailill's.

Then were their numerous droves of swine driven from woods and shelving glens and wolds. These were numbered and counted and claimed. There was a noteworthy boar With Medb, and yet another with Ailill.

Next they brought before them their droves of cattle [W.77.] and their herds and their roaming flocks from the brakes and wastes of the province.

These were counted and numbered and claimed, and were the same for both, equal in size, equal in number, except only there was an especial bull of the bawn of Ailill, and he was a calf of one of Medb's cows, and Finnbennach ('the Whitehorned') was his name. But he, deeming it no honour to be in a woman's possession, [LL.fo.54b.] had left and gone over to the kine of the king. And it was the same to Medb as if she owned not a pennyworth, forasmuch as she had not a bull of his size amongst her cattle.

Then it was that macRoth the messenger was summoned to Medb, and Medb strictly bade macRoth to learn where there might be found a bull of that likeness in any of the provinces of Erin. "Verily," said macRoth, "I know where the bull is that is best and better again, in the province of Ulster, in the hundred of Cualnge, in the house of Dare son of Fiachna; even Donn Cualnge ('the Brown Bull of Cualnge') he is called."

"Go thou to him, macRoth, and ask for me of Dare the loan for a year of the Brown Bull of Cualnge, and at the year's end he shall have the meed of the loan, to wit, fifty heifers and the Donn Cualnge himself. And bear thou a further boon with thee, macRoth. Should the border-folk and those of the country grudge the loan of that rare jewel that is the Brown Bull of Cualnge, let Dare himself come with his bull, and he shall get a measure equalling his own land of the smooth Plain of Ai and a chariot of the worth of thrice seven bondmaids and he shall enjoy my own close friendship."[a]

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[a] Literally, "Habebit amicitiam fermoris mei."

Thereupon the messengers fared forth to the house of Dare son of Fiachna. This was the number wherewith macRoth went, namely, nine couriers. Anon welcome was [W.99.] lavished on macRoth in Dare's house—fitting, welcome it was—chief messenger of all was macRoth. Dare asked of macRoth what had brought him upon the journey and why he was come. The messenger announced the cause for which he was come and related the contention between Medb and Ailill.

"And it is to beg the loan of the Brown Bull of Cualnge to match the Whitehorned that I am come," said he; "and thou shalt receive the hire of his loan, even fifty heifers and the Brown of Cualnge himself. And yet more I may add: Come thyself with thy bull and thou shalt have of the land of the smooth soil of Mag Ai as much as thou ownest here, and a chariot of the worth of thrice seven bondmaids and enjoy Medb's friendship to boot."

At these words Dare was well pleased, and he leaped for joy so that the seams of his flock-bed rent in twain beneath him.

"By the truth of our conscience," said he; "however the Ulstermen take it, [1]whether ill or well,[1] this time this jewel shall be delivered to Ailill and to Medb, the Brown of Cualnge to wit, into the land of Connacht." Well pleased was macRoth at the words of the son of Fiachna.

[1-1] Stowe and Add.

Thereupon they were served, and straw and fresh rushes were spread under them. The choicest of food was brought to them and a feast was served to them and soon they were noisy and drunken. And a discourse took place between two of the messengers. "'Tis true what I say," spoke the one; "good is the man in whose house we are." "Of a truth, he is good." "Nay, is there one among all the men of Ulster better than he?" persisted the first. "In sooth, there is," answered the second messenger. "Better is Conchobar whose man he is, [2]Conchobar who holds the kingship of the province.[2] And though all the Ulstermen [W.120.] gathered around him, it were no shame for them. Yet is it passing good of Dare, that what had been a task for the four mighty provinces of Erin to bear away from the land of Ulster, even the Brown Bull of Cualnge, is surrendered so freely to us nine footmen."

[2-2] Stowe and Add.

Hereupon a third runner had his say: "What is this ye dispute about?" he asked. "Yon runner says, 'A good man is the man in whose house we are.'" "Yea, he is good," saith the other. "Is there among all the Ulstermen any that is better than he?" demanded the first runner further. "Aye, there is," answered the second runner; "better is Conchobar



whose man he is; and though all the Ulstermen gathered around him, it were no shame for them. Yet, truly good it is of Dare, that what had been a task for four of the grand provinces of Erin to bear away out of the borders of Ulster is handed over even unto us nine footmen." "I would not grudge to see a retch of blood and gore in the mouth whereout that was said; for, were the bull not given [LL.fo.55a.] willingly, yet should he be taken by force!"

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At that moment it was that Dare macFiachna's chief steward came into the house and with him a man with drink and another with food, and he heard the foolish words of the runners; and anger came upon him, and he set down their food and drink for them and he neither said to them, "Eat," nor did he say, "Eat not."

Straightway he went into the house where was Dare macFiachna and said: "Was it thou that hast given that notable jewel to the messengers, the Brown Bull of Cualnge?" "Yea, it was I," Dare made answer. "Verily, it was not the part of a king to give him. For it is true what they say: Unless thou hadst bestowed him of thine own free will, so wouldst thou yield him in despite of thee by the host of Ailill and Medb and by the great cunning of Fergus macRoig." "I swear by the gods whom I worship," [W.143.] [1]spoke Dare,[1] "they shall in no wise take by foul means what they cannot take by fair!"

[1-1] Stowe and Add.

There they abide till morning. Betimes on the morrow the runners arise and proceed to the house where is Dare. "Acquaint us, lord, how we may reach the place where the Brown Bull of Cualnge is kept." "Nay then," saith Dare; "but were it my wont to deal foully with messengers or with travelling folk or with them that go by the road, not one of you would depart alive!" "How sayest thou?" quoth macRoth. "Great cause there is," replied Dare; "ye said, unless I yielded in good sort, I should yield to the might of Ailill's host and Medb's and the great cunning of Fergus."

"Even so," said macRoth, "whatever the runners drunken with thine ale and thy viands have said, 'tis not for thee to heed nor mind, nor yet to be charged on Ailill and on Medb." "For all that, macRoth, this time I will not give my bull, if ever I can help it!"

Back then the messengers go till they arrive at Cruachan, the stronghold of Connacht. Medb asks their tidings, and macRoth makes known the same: that they had not brought his bull from Dare. "And the reason?" demanded Medb. MacRoth recounts to her how the dispute arose. "There is no need to polish knots over such affairs as that, macRoth; for it was known," said Medb, "if the Brown Bull of Cualnge would not be given with their will, he would be taken in their despite, and taken he shall be!"

[2]To this point is recounted the Occasion of the Tain.[2]

[2-2] Stowe and Add.

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III

[1]THE RISING-OUT OF THE MEN OF CONNACHT AT CRUACHAN AI[1]

[W.161.] [2]A mighty host was now assembled by the men of Connacht, that is, by Ailill and Medb, and they sent word to the three other provinces, and[2] messengers were despatched from Medb to the Mane that they should gather in Cruachan, the seven Mane with their seven divisions; to wit: Mane "Motherlike," Mane "Fatherlike," and Mane "All-comprehending", [3]'twas he that possessed the form of his mother and of his father and the dignity of them both;[3] Mane "Mildly-submissive," and Mane "Greatly-submissive," Mane "Boastful" [4]and Mane "the Dumb." [4]

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[1-1] Add.

[2-2] LU. 1-2; with these words, the LU. version begins, fo. 55a.

[3-3] LU. 182.

[4-4] Stowe and Add.

Other messengers were despatched [5]by Ailill[5] to the sons of Maga; to wit: to Cet ('the First') son of Maga, Anluan ('the Brilliant Light') son of Maga, and Maccorb ('Chariot-child') son of Maga, and Bascell ('the Lunatic') son of Maga, and En ('the Bird') son of Maga, Doche son of Maga; and Scandal ('Insult') son of Maga.

[5-5] *Eg.* 1782.

These came, and this was their muster, thirty hundred armed men. Other messengers were despatched from them to Cormac Conlongas ('the Exile') son of Conchobar and to Fergus macRoig, and they also came, thirty hundred their number.

[W.173.] [1]Now Cormac had three companies which came to Cruachan.[1] Before all, the first company. A covering of close-shorn [2]black[2] hair upon them. Green mantles and [3]many-coloured cloaks[3] wound about them; therein, silvern brooches. Tunics of thread of gold next to their skin, [4]reaching down to their knees,[4] with interweaving of red gold. Bright-handled swords they bore, with guards of silver. [5]Long shields they bore, and there was a broad, grey spearhead on a slender shaft in the hand of each man.[5] "Is that Cormac, yonder?" all and every one asked. "Not he, indeed," Medb made answer.

[1-1] LU. 7.

[2-2] Add.

[3-3] LU. 8.

[4-4] LU. 9.

[5-5] LU. 9-10.

The second troop. Newly shorn hair they wore [6]and manes on the back of their heads,[6] [7]fair, comely indeed.[7] Dark-blue cloaks they all had about them. Next to their skin, gleaming-white tunics, [LL.fo.55b.] [8]with red ornamentation, reaching down to their calves.[8] Swords they had with round hilts of gold and silvern fist-guards, [9]and shining shields upon them and five-pronged spears in their hands.[9] "Is yonder man Cormac?" all the people asked. "Nay, verily, that is not he," Medb made answer.

[6-6] *Eg.* 1782.

[7-7] Add.

[8-8] LU. 11-12.

[9-9] LU. 12-13.

[10]Then came[10] the last troop. Hair cut broad they wore; fair-yellow, deep-golden, loose-flowing back hair [11]down to their shoulders[11] upon them. Purple cloaks, fairly bedizened, about them; golden, embellished brooches over their breasts; [12]and they had curved shields with sharp, chiselled edges around them and spears as long as the pillars of a king's house in the hand of each man.[12] Fine, long, silken tunics [13]with hoods[13] they wore to the very instep. Together they raised their feet, and together they set them down again. "Is that Cormac, yonder?" asked all. "Aye, it is he, [14]this time,[14]" Medb made answer.

[10-10] *Eg.* 1782.

[11-11] LU. 16.

[12-12] LU. 17-18.

[13-13] LU. 15.

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[14-14] *Eg.* 1782.

[W.186.] [1]Thus the four provinces of Erin gathered in Cruachan Ai.[1] They pitched their camp and quarters that night, so that a thick cloud of smoke and fire rose between the four fords of Ai, which are, Ath Moga, Ath Bercna, Ath Slissen and Ath Coltna. And they tarried for the full space of a fortnight in Cruachan, the hostel of Connacht, in wassail and drink and every disport, to the end that their march and muster might be easier. [2]And their poets and druids would not let them depart from thence till the end of a fortnight while awaiting good omen.[2] And then it was that Medb bade her charioteer to harness her horses for her, that she might go to address herself to her druid, to seek for light and for augury from him.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] LU. 20-21.

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IV

THE FORETELLING[a]

[W.194.] When Medb was come to the place where her druid was, she craved light and augury of him. "Many there be," saith Medb, "who do part with their kinsmen and friends here to-day, and from their homes and their lands, from father and from mother; and unless unscathed every one shall return, upon me will they cast their sighs and their ban, [1]for it is I that have assembled this levy.[1] Yet there goeth not forth nor stayeth there at home any dearer to me than are we to ourselves. And do thou discover for us whether we ourselves shall return, or whether we shall never return."

[a] This heading is taken from the colophon at the end of the chapter.

[1-1] LU. 23-24.

And the druid made answer, "Whoever comes not, thou thyself shalt come." [2]"Wait, then," spake the charioteer," let me wheel the chariot by the right,[b] that thus the power of a good omen may arise that we return again." [2] Then the charioteer wheeled his chariot round and Medb went back [3]again,[3] when she espied a thing that surprised her: A lone virgin [4]of marriageable age[4] standing on the hindpole of a chariot a little way off drawing nigh her. And thus the maiden appeared: Weaving lace was she, and in her right hand was a bordering rod of silvered [W.204.] bronze with its seven strips of red gold at the sides. A many-spotted green mantle around her; a bulging, strong-



headed pin [1]of gold[1] in the mantle over her bosom; [2]a hooded tunic, with red interweaving, about her.[2] A ruddy, fair-faced countenance she had, [3]narrow below and broad above.[3] She had a blue-grey and laughing eye; [4]each eye had three pupils.[4] [5]Dark and black were her eyebrows; the soft, black lashes threw a shadow to the middle of her cheeks.[5] Red and thin were her lips. Shiny and pearly were her teeth; thou wouldst believe they were showers of white pearls that had rained into her head. Like to fresh Parthian crimson were her lips. As sweet as the strings of lutes [6]when long sustained they are played by master players' hands[6] was the melodious sound of her voice and her fair speech.

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[2-2] LU. 24-25.

[b] Right-hand wise, as a sign of a good omen.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

[3-3] LU. 29.

[4-4] LU. 35-36.

[5-5] LU. 31.

[6-6] Adopting Windisch's emendation of the text.

As white as snow in one night fallen was the sheen of her skin and her body that shone outside of her dress. Slender and very white were her feet; rosy, even, sharp-round nails she had; [7]two sandals with golden buckles about them.[7] Fair-yellow, long, golden hair she wore; three braids of hair [8]she wore; two tresses were wound[8] around her head; the other tress [9]from behind[9] threw a shadow down on her calves. [10]The maiden carried arms, and two black horses were under her chariot.[10]

[7-7] LU. 29.

[8-8] *Eg.* 1782.

[9-9] Add.

[10-10] LU. 36.

Medb gazed at her. "And what doest thou here now, O maiden?" asked Medb. "I impart [LL.fo.56a.] to thee thine advantage and good fortune in thy gathering and muster of the four mighty provinces of Erin against the land of Ulster on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge." "Wherefore doest thou this for me?" asked Medb. "Much cause have I. A bondmaid 'mid thy people am I." "Who of [W.220.] my people art thou [1]and what is thy name[1]?" asked Medb. "Not hard, in sooth, to say. The prophetess Fedelm, from the Sid ('the Fairy Mound') of Cruachan, [2]a poetess of Connacht[2] am I." [3]"Whence comest thou?" asked Medb. "From Alba, after learning prophetic skill," the maiden made answer. "Hast thou the form of divination?"[b] "Verily, have I," the maiden said.[3]

[4]"Look, then, for me, how will my undertaking be." The maiden looked. Then spake Medb:—[4]

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

[3-3] LU. 39-41.

[b] *Imbass forosna*, 'illumination between the hands.'

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

"Good now,

"Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?"

[5]Fedelm answered and spoke:[5]

"Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!"

[5-5] *Eg.* 1782.

[6]"That is no true augury,"[6] said Medb. "Verily, Conchobar [7]with the Ulstermen[7] is in his 'Pains' in Emain; thither fared my messengers [8]and brought me true tidings[8]; naught is there that we need dread from Ulster's men. But speak truth, O Fedelm:—

"Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?"

"Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!"

[6-6] LU. 44.

[7-7] *Eg.* 1782.

[8-8] *Eg.* 1782.

[9]"That is no true augury.[9] Cuscraid Mend ('the Stammerer') of Macha, Conchobar's son, is in Inis Cuscraid ('Cuscraid's Isle') in his 'Pains.' Thither fared my messengers; naught need we fear from Ulster's men. But speak truth, O Fedelm:—

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[W.233.] “Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?”

“Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!”

[9-9] LU. 48.

“Eogan, Durthacht’s son, is in Rath Airthir (‘the Eastern Rath’) in his ‘Pains.’ Thither went my messengers. Naught need we dread from Ulster’s men. But speak truth, O Fedelm:—

“Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?”

“Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!”

“Celtchar, Uthechar’s son, is in his fort [1]at Lethglas[1] in his ‘Pains,’ [2]and a third of the Ulstermen with him.[2] Thither fared my messengers. Naught have we to fear from Ulster’s men. [3]And Fergus son of Roig son of Eochaid is with us here in exile, and thirty hundred with him.[3] But speak truth, O Fedelm:—

“Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?”

“Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!”

[1-1] LU. 50.

[2-2] LU. 49.

[3-3] LU. 50-51.

“Meseemeth this not as it seemeth to thee,” quoth Medb, “for when Erin’s men shall assemble in one place, there quarrels will arise and broils, contentions and disputes amongst them about the ordering of themselves in the van or rear, at ford or river, over who shall be first at killing a boar or a stag or a deer or a hare. But, [4]look now again for us and[4] speak truth, O Fedelm:—

“Tell, O Fedelm, prophet-maid,
How beholdest thou our host?”



"Crimson-red from blood they are;
I behold them bathed in red!"

[4-4] LU. 55.

Therewith she began to prophesy and to foretell the coming of Cuchulain to the men of Erin, and she chanted a lay:—

[W.255.] "[a]Fair, of deeds, the man I see; Wounded sore is his fair skin; On his brow shines hero's light; Victory's seat is in his face!

"Seven gems of champions brave
Deck the centre of his orbs;
Naked are the spears he bears,
And he hooks a red cloak round!

"Noblest face is his, I see;
He respects all womankind.
Young the lad and fresh his hue,
With a dragon's form in fight!

"I know not who is the Hound,
Culann's hight,[b] [1]of fairest fame[1];
But I know full well this host
Will be smitten red by him!

"Four small swords—a brilliant feat—
He supports in either hand;
These he'll ply upon the host,
Each to do its special deed!

"His Gae Bulga,[c] too, he wields,
With his sword and javelin.
Lo, the man in red cloak girt
Sets his foot on every hill!

"Two spears [2]from the chariot's left[2]
He casts forth in orgy wild.
And his form I saw till now
Well I know will change its guise!

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“On to battle now he comes;
If ye watch not, ye are doomed.
This is he seeks ye in fight
Brave Cuchulain, Sualtaim’s son!

“All your host he’ll smite in twain, Till he works your utter ruin. [W.291.] All your heads ye’ll leave with him. Fedelm, prophet-maid, hides not!“Gore shall flow from warriors’ wounds; Long ’twill live in memory. [LL.fo.56b.] Bodies hacked and wives in tears, Through the Smith’s Hound[a] whom I see!”

[a] The *Eg.* 1782 version of this poem differs in several details from LL.

[b] That is, Cu Chulain, ‘the Hound of Culann.’

[1-1] Translating from LU. 65, Stowe and Add.

[c] The *Gae Bulga*, ‘barbed spear,’ which only Cuchulain could wield.

[2-2] Translating from LU. 72, Add. and Stowe; ‘from the left,’ as a sign of enmity.

[a] That is, Cuchulain. See page 17.

Thus far the Augury and the Prophecy and the Preface of the Tale, and the Occasion of its invention and conception, and the Pillow-talk which Ailill and Medb had in Cruachan. [1]Next follows the Body of the Tale itself.[1]

[1-1] Stowe and Add.

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V

THIS IS THE ROUTE OF THE TAIN

[W.301.] and the Beginning of the Expedition and the Names of the Roads which the hosts of the four of the five grand provinces of Erin took into the land of Ulster. [1]On Monday after Summer’s end[1] [2]they set forth and proceeded:[2]

[1-1] LU. 81.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

[3]South-east from Cruachan Ai,[3] by Mag Cruimm, over Tuaim Mona ('the Hill of Turf'), by Turloch Teora Crich ('the Creek of three Lands'), by Cul ('the Nook') of Silinne, by Dubloch ('Black Lough'), [4]by Fid Dubh ('Black Woods'),[4] by Badbgna, by Coltain, by the Shannon, by Glune Gabur, by Mag Trega, by Tethba in the north, by Tethba in the south, by Cul ('the Nook'), by Ochain, northwards by Uatu, eastwards by Tiarthechta, by Ord ('the Hammer'), by Slaiss ('the Strokes'), [5]southwards,[5] by Indeoín ('the Anvil'), by Carn, by Meath, by Ortrach, by Findglassa Assail, ('White Stream of Assail'), by Drong, by Delt, by Duelt, by Delinn, by Selaig, by Slabra, by Slechta, where swords hewed out roads before Medb and Ailill, by Cul ('the Nook') of Siblinne, by Dub ('the Blackwater'), by Ochonn [6]southwards,[6] by Catha, by Cromma [7]southwards,[7] by Tromma, [8]eastwards[8] by Fodromma, by Slane, by Gort Slane, [9]to the south of[9] Druim Licce, by Ath Gabla, by Ardachad ('Highfield'), [W.356.] [1]northwards[1] by Feorainn, by Finnabair ('White Plain'), by Assa [2]southwards,[2] by Airne, by Aurthuile, by Druim Salfind ('Salfind Ridge'), by Druim Cain, by Druim Caimthechta, by Druim macDega, by the little Eo Dond ('Brown

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Tree'), by the great Eo Dond, by Meide in Togmaill ('Ferret's Neck'), by Meide in Eoin, ('Bird's Neck'), by Baille ('the Town'), by Aile, by Dall Scena, by Ball Scena, by Ross Mor ('Great Point'), by Scuap ('the Broom'), by Imscuap, by Cenn Ferna, by Anmag, by Fid Mor ('Great Wood') in Crannach of Cualnge, [3]by Colbtha, by Crond in Cualnge,[3] by Druim Cain on the road to Midluachar, [4]from Finnabair of Cualnge. It is at that point that the hosts of Erin divided over the province in pursuit of the bull. For it was by way of those places they went until they reached Finnabair. Here endeth the Title. The Story begineth in order.[4]

[3-3] Stowe and Add.

[4-4] LU. 87, Stowe and Add.

[5-5] LU. 96. and Stowe.

[6-6] *Eg.* 1782.

[7-7] *Eg.* 1782.

[8-8] LU. 113.

[9-9] LU. 116.

[1-1] LU. 119.

[2-2] LU. 121.

[3-3] LU. 146-148.

[4-4] LU. 149-161.

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VI

THE MARCH OF THE HOST

[W.389.] On the first stage the hosts went [1]from Cruachan,[1] they slept the night at Cul Silinne, [2]where to-day is Cargin's Lough.[2] And [3]in that place[3] was fixed the tent of Ailill son of Ross, [4]and the trappings were arranged, both bedding and bed-clothes.[4] The tent of Fergus macRoig was on his right hand; Cormac Conlongas,

Conchobar's son, was beside him; Ith macEtgaith next to that; Fiachu macFiraba, [5]the son of Conchobar's daughter,[5] at its side; [6]Conall Cernach at its side,[6] Gobnenn macLurnig at the side of that. The place of Ailill's tent was on the right on the march, and thirty hundred men of Ulster beside him. And the thirty hundred men of Ulster on his right hand had he to the end that the whispered talk and conversation and the choice supplies of food and of drink might be the nearer to them.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Translating from Stowe.

[4-4] LU. 156-157.

[5-5] LU. 160.

[6-6] *Eg.* 1782.

Medb of Cruachan, [7]daughter of Eocho Fedlech,[7] moreover, was at Ailill's left. Finnabair ('Fairbrow'), [8]daughter of Ailill and Medb,[8] at her side, [9]besides servants and henchmen.[9] Next, Flidais Foltchain ('of the Lovely Hair'), wife first of Ailill Finn ('the Fair'). She took part in the Cow-spoil of Cualnge after she had slept with Fergus; and she it was that every seventh night brought sustenance [W.404.] in milk to the men of Erin on the march, for king and queen and prince and poet and pupil.

[7-7] LU. 160.

[8-8] LU. 161.

[9-9] *Eg.* 1782.

Medb remained in the rear of the host that day in quest of tidings and augury [LL.fo.57a.] and knowledge. [1]She called to her charioteer to get ready her nine chariots for her,[1] [2]to make a circuit of the camp[2] that she might learn who was loath and who eager to take part in the hosting. [3]With nine chariots[a] she was wont to travel, that the dust of the great host might not soil her.[3] Medb suffered not her chariot to be let down nor her horses unyoked until she had made a circuit of the camp.

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[1-1] LU. 153.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

[3-3] Gloss in LU. fo. 56b, 3.

[a] Following the emendation suggested by L. Chr. Stern, *Zeitschrift fuer Celtische Philologie*, Band II, S. 417, LU. has 'nine charioteers.'

Then, [4]when she had reviewed the host,[4] were Medb's horses unyoked and her chariots let down, and she took her place beside Ailill macMata. And Ailill asked tidings of Medb: who was eager and who was loath for the warfare. "Futile for all is the emprise but for one troop only, [5]namely the division of the Galian ('of Leinster'),"[5] quoth Medb. [6]"Why blamest thou these men?" queried Ailill. "It is not that we blame them," Medb made answer.[6] "What good service then have these done that they are praised above all?" asked Ailill. "There is reason to praise them," said Medb. [7]"Splendid are the warriors.[7] When the others begin making their pens and pitching their camp, these have finished building their bothies and huts. When the rest are building their bothies and huts, these have finished preparing their food and drink. When the rest are preparing their food and drink, these have finished eating and feasting, [8]and their harps are playing for them.[8] When all the others have finished eating and feasting, these are by that [W.422.] time asleep. And even as their servants and thralls are distinguished above the servants and thralls of the men of Erin, so shall their heroes and champions be distinguished beyond the heroes and champions of the men of Erin this time on this hosting. [1]It is folly then for these to go, since it is those others will enjoy the victory of the host.[1]" "So much the better, I trow," replied Ailill; "for it is with us they go and it is for us they fight." "They shall not go with us nor shall they fight for us." [2]cried Medb.[2] "Let them stay at home then," said Ailill. "Stay they shall not," answered Medb. "[3]They will fall on us in the rear and will seize our land against us.[3]" "What shall they do then," Finnabair[a] asked, "if they go not out nor yet remain at home?" "Death and destruction and slaughter is what I desire for them," answered Medb. "For shame then on thy speech," spake Ailill; "[4]'tis a woman's advice,[4] for that they pitch their tents and make their pens so promptly and unwearily." "By the truth of my conscience," cried Fergus, [5]"not thus shall it happen, for they are allies of us men of Ulster.[5] No one shall do them to death but he that does death to myself [6]along with them!"[6]

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

[5-5] LU. 164 and Stowe.

[6-6] LU. 165.

[7-7] LU. 165.

[8-8] LU. 168.

[1-1] LU. 169.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. 171-172.

[a] 'Ailill,' in *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

[5-5] LU. 175-176.

[6-6] Stowe

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“Not to me oughtest thou thus to speak, O Fergus,” then cried Medb, “for I have hosts enough to slay and slaughter thee with the division of Leinstermen round thee. For there are the seven Mane, [7]that is, my seven sons[7] with their seven divisions, and the sons of Maga with their [8]seven[8] divisions, and Ailill with his division, and I myself with my own body-guard besides. We are strong enough here to kill and slaughter thee with thy cantred of the Leinstermen round thee!”

[7-7] LU. 179.

[8-8] Add.

“It befits thee not thus to speak to me,” said Fergus, [W.439.] “for I have with me here [1]in alliance with us Ulstermen,[1] the seven Under-kings of Munster, with their seven cantreds. [2]Here we have what is best of the youths of Ulster, even the division of the Black Banishment.[2] Here we have what is best of the noble youths of Ulster, even the division of the Galian (‘of Leinster’). Furthermore, I myself am bond and surety and guarantee for them, since ever they left their own native land. [3]I will give thee battle in the midst of the camp,[3] and to me will they hold steadfast on the day of battle. More than all that,” added Fergus, “these men shall be no subject of dispute. By that I mean I will never forsake them. [4]For the rest, we will care for these warriors, to the end that they get not the upper hand of the host.

[1-1] LU. 184.

[2-2] Reading with Stowe; LL. appears to be corrupt. This was the name given to Fergus, Cormac and the other exiles from Ulster.

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

“The number of our force is seventeen cantreds, besides our rabble and our women-folk—for with each king was his queen in Medb’s company—and our striplings; the eighteenth division is namely the cantred of the Galian.[4] This division of Leinstermen I will distribute among [5]all the host of[5] the men of Erin in such wise that no five men of them shall be in any one place.” “That pleaseth me well,” said Medb: “let them be as they may, if only they be not in the battle-order of the ranks where they now are in such great force.”

[4-4] LU. 187-192.

[5-5] *Eg.* 1782.

Forthwith Fergus distributed the cantred [6]of the Galian[6] among the men of Erin in such wise that there were not five men of them in any one place.

[6-6] Stowe and Add.



[LL.fo.57b.] Thereupon, the troops set out on their way and march. It was no easy thing [7]for their kings and their leaders[7] to attend to that mighty host. They took part in the expedition [W.453.] according to the several tribes and according to the several stems and the several districts wherewith they had come, to the end that they might see one other and know one other, that each man might be with his comrades and with his friends and with his kinsfolk on the march. They declared that in such wise they should go. They also took counsel in what

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manner they should proceed on their hosting. Thus they declared they should proceed: Each host with its king, each troop with its lord, and each band with its captain; each king and each prince of the men of Erin [1]by a separate route[1] on his halting height apart. They took counsel who was most proper to seek tidings in advance of the host between the two provinces. And they said it was Fergus, inasmuch as the expedition was an obligatory one with him, for it was he that had been seven years in the kingship of Ulster. And [2]after Conchobar had usurped the kingship and[2] after the murder of the sons of Usnech who were under his protection and surety, Fergus left the Ultonians, and for seventeen years he was away from Ulster in exile and in enmity. For that reason it was fitting that he above all should go after tidings.

[7-7] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe and Add.

[2-2] Stowe and Add.

So [3]the lead of the way was entrusted to Fergus.[3] Fergus before all fared forth to seek tidings, and a feeling of [4]love and[4] affection for his kindred of the men of Ulster came over him, and he led the troops astray in a great circuit to the north and the south. And he despatched messengers with warnings to the Ulstermen, [5]who were at that time in their 'Pains' except Cuchulain and his father Sualtaim.[5] And he began to detain and delay the host [6]until such time as the men of Ulster should have gathered together an army.[6] [7]Because of affection he did so.[7]

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 217.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 227.

[7-7] *Eg.* 1782.

[W.472.] Medb perceived this and she upbraided him for it, and chanted the lay:—

Medb: "Fergus, speak, what shall we say?
What may mean this devious way?
For we wander north and south;
Over other lands we stray!"



Fergus: "Medb, why art thou so perturbed?
There's no treacherous purpose here.
Ulster's land it is, O queen,
Over which I've led thy host!"

Medb: "Ailill, splendid with his hosts,
[1]Fears thee lest thou should'st betray.[1]
Thou hast not bent all thy mind
To direct us on our way!"

Fergus: "Not to bring the host to harm
Make these changing circuits I.
Haply could I now avoid
Sualtach's son, the Blacksmith's Hound!"[a]

Medb: "Ill of thee to wrong our host,
Fergus, son of Ross the Red;
Much good hast thou found with us,
Fergus, in thy banishment!"

"[2]If thou showest our foemen love, No more shalt thou lead our troops; Haply
someone else we'll find To direct us on our way!"[2]"

[1-1] Reading with LU. and YBL. 252.

[a] That is, Cuchulain.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

"I will be in the van of the troops no longer," cried Fergus; "but do thou find another to go
before them." For all that, Fergus kept his place in the van of the troops.

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The four mighty provinces of Erin passed that night on Cul Silinne. The sharp, keen-edged anxiety for Cuchulain came upon Fergus and he warned the men of Erin to be on their guard, because there would come upon them the rapacious lion, and the doom of foes, the vanquisher of multitudes, and the chief of retainers, the mangler of great hosts, the hand that dispenseth [3]treasures,[3] and the flaming [W.502.] torch, even Cuchulain son of Sualtaim.[a] And thus he foreshowed him and chanted a lay, and Medb responded:—

Fergus: “Well for ye to heed and watch,
With array of arms and men.
He will come, the one we fear,
Murthemne’s great, deedful youth!”

Medb: “How so dear, this battle-rede,
Comes from thee, [LL.fo.58a.] Roig’s son most bold.
Men and arms have I enough
To attend Cuchulain here!”

Fergus: “Thou shalt need them, Medb of Ai,
Men and arms for battle hard,
With the grey steed’s[b] horseman brave.
All the night and all the day!”

Medb: “I have kept here in reserve
Heroes fit for fight and spoil;
Thirty hundred hostage-chiefs,
Leinster’s bravest champions they.

Fighting men from Cruachan fair,
Braves from clear-streamed Luachair,
Four full realms of goodly Gaels
Will defend me from this man!”

Fergus: “Rich in troops from Mourne and Bann,
Blood he’ll draw o’er shafts of spears;
He will cast to mire and sand
These three thousand Leinstermen.

With the swallow’s swiftest speed,
With the rush of biting wind,
So bounds on my dear brave Hound,
Breathing slaughter on his foes!”

Medb: "Fergus, should he come 'tween us,
To Cuchulain bear this word:
He were prudent to stay still;
Cruachan holds a check in store."

Fergus: "Valiant will the slaughter be
Badb's wild daughter[c] gloats upon.
For the Blacksmith's Hound will spill
Showers of blood on hosts of men!"

[3-3] Stowe and Add.

[a] MS.: *Sualtach*.

[b] *Liath Mache* ('the Roan of Macha'), the name of one of Cuchulain's two horses.

[c] That is, the goddess or fury of battle.

[W.540.] After this lay the men of the four grand provinces of Erin marched [1]on the morrow[1] over Moin Coltna ('the Marsh of Coltain') eastwards that day; and there met them eight score deer [2]in a single herd.[2] The troops spread out and surrounded and killed them so that none of them escaped.

[1-1] LU. 195.

[2-2] Stowe and Add.

But there is one event to add: Although the division of the Galian had been dispersed [3]among the men of Erin,[3] [4]wherever there was a man of the Galian, it was he that got them, except[4] five deer only which was the men of Erin's share thereof, so that one division took all the eight score deer.

[3-3] Stowe and Add.

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[4-4] LU. 196.

[5]Then they proceed to Mag Trega and they unyoke there and prepare their food. It is said that it is there that Dubthach recited this stave:—

“Grant ye have not heard till now,
Giving ear to Dubthach’s fray:
Dire-black war upon ye waits,
’Gainst the Whitehorned of Queen Medb![a]

“There will come the chief of hosts,[b]
War for Murthemne to wage.
Ravens shall drink garden’s milk,[c]
This the fruit of swineherds’ strife (?)[d]

“Turfy Cron will hold them back, Keep them back from Murthemne,[5] [9]Till the warriors’ work is done On Ochaine’s northern mount!

“‘Quick,’ to Cormac, Ailill cries;
‘Go and seek ye out your son,
Loose no cattle from the fields,
Lest the din of the host reach them!’

“Battle they’ll have here eftsoon,
Medb and one third of the host.
Corpses will be scattered wide
If the Wildman[a] come to you!”

[a] Literally, ‘of Ailill’s spouse.’

[b] That is, Cuchulain.

[c] A kenning for ‘blood.’

[d] Referring to the two bulls, the Brown and the Whitehorned, which were the re-incarnations through seven intermediate stages of two divine swineherds of the gods of the under-world. The story is told in *Irische Texte*, iii, i, pp. 230-275.

[5-5] LU. 198-205.

[a] Literally, ‘the Contorted one’; that is, Cuchulain.

Then Nemain, [1]the Badb to wit,[1] attacked them, and that was not the quietest of nights they had, with the noise of the churl, namely Dubthach, in their[b] sleep. Such fears he scattered amongst the host straightway, and he hurled a great stone at the

throng till Medb came to check him. They continued their march then till they slept a night in Granard Tethba in the north,[9] [2]after the host had made a circuitous way across sloughs and streams.[2]

[1-1] Gloss in YBL. 211.

[b] 'his' *Eg.* 1782.

[9-9] YBL. and LU. 206-215. With this passage YBL. begins, fo. 17a.

[2-2] LU. 215.

[W.547.] It was on that same day, [3]after the coming of the warning from Fergus[3] [4]to the Ulstermen,[4] that Cuchulain son of Sualtaim, [5]and Sualtaim[5] Sidech ('of the Fairy Mound'), his father, [6]when they had received the warning from Fergus,[6] came so near [7]on their watch for the host[7] that their horses grazed in pasture round the pillar-stone on Ard Cuillenn ('the Height of Cuillenn'). Sualtaim's horses cropped the grass north of the pillar-stone close to the ground; Cuchulain's cropped the grass south of the pillar-stone even to the ground and the bare stones. "Well, O master Sualtaim," said Cuchulain; "the thought of the host is fixed sharp upon me [8]to-night,[8] so do thou depart for us with warnings to the men of Ulster, that they remain not in the smooth plains

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but that they betake themselves to the woods and wastes and steep glens of the province, if so they may keep out of the way of the men of Erin.” “And thou, lad, what wilt thou do?” “I must go southwards to Temair to keep tryst with the [W.556.] maid[a] of Fedlimid Nocruthach (‘of the Nine Forms’) [1]Conchobar’s daughter,[1] according to my own agreement, till morning.” “Alas, that one should go [2]on such a journey,”[2] said Sualtaim, “and leave the Ulstermen under the feet of their foes and their enemies for the sake of a tryst with a woman!” “For all that, I needs must go. For, an I go not, the troth of men will be held for false and the promises of women held for true.”

[3-3] LU. 218

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

[5-5] *Sualtach*, in LL.

[6-6] *Eg.* 1782.

[7-7] *Eg.* 1782.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 220.

[a] “Who was secretly as a concubine with Cuchulain”; gloss in LU. and YBL. 222 and *Eg.* 1782.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] Stowe and Add.

Sualtaim departed with warnings to the men of Ulster. Cuchulain strode into the wood, and there, with a single blow, he lopped the prime sapling of an oak, root and top, and with only one foot and one hand and one eye he exerted himself; and he made a twig-ring thereof and set an ogam[b] script on the plug of the ring, and set the ring round the narrow part of the pillar-stone on Ard (‘the Height’) of Cuillenn. He forced the ring till it reached the thick of the pillar-stone. Thereafter Cuchulain went his way to his tryst with the woman.

[b] The old kind of writing of the Irish.

Touching the men of Erin, the account follows here: They came up to the pillar-stone at Ard Cuillenn, [3]which is called Crossa Coil to-day,[3] and they began looking out upon the province that was unknown to them, the province of Ulster. And two of Medb’s people went always before them in the van of the host, at every camp and on every march, at every ford and every river [LL.fo.58b.] and every gap. They were wont to do

so [4]that they might save the brooches and cushions and cloaks of the host, so that the dust of the multitude might not soil them[4] and that no stain might come on the princes' raiment in the crowd or the crush of the hosts or the throng;—these were the two sons of Nera, who was the son of Nuathar, [W.575.] son of Tacan, two sons of the house-stewards of Cruachan, Err and Innell, to wit. Fraech and Fochnam were the names of their charioteers.

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 245-246.

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The nobles of Erin arrived at the pillar-stone and they there beheld the signs of the browsing of the horses, cropping around the pillar, and they looked close at the rude hoop which the royal hero had left behind about the pillar-stone. [1]Then sat they down to wait till the army should come, the while their musicians played to them.[1] And Ailill took the withy in his hand and placed it in Fergus' hand, and Fergus read the ogam script graven on the plug of the withy, and made known to the men of Erin what was the meaning of the ogam writing that was on it. [2]When Medb came, she asked, "Why wait ye here?" "Because of yonder withy we wait," Fergus made answer; "there is an ogam writing on its binding and this is what it saith: 'Let no one go past here till a man be found to throw a withy like unto this, using only one hand and made of a single branch, and I except my master Fergus.' Truly," Fergus added, "it was Cuchulain threw it, and it was his steeds that grazed this plain." And he placed the hoop in the hands of the druids,[2] and it is thus he began to recite and he pronounced a lay:—

"What bespeaks this withe to us,
What purports its secret rede?
And what number cast it here,
Was it one man or a host?

"If ye go past here this night,
And bide not [3]one night[3] in camp.
On ye'll come the tear-flesh Hound;
Yours the blame, if ye it scorn!

"[4]Evil on the host he'll bring,[4] If ye go your way past this. [W.596.] Find, ye druids, find out here, For what cause this withe was made!"

[1]A druid speaks[1]:

"Cut by hero, cast by chief,
As a perfect trap for foes.
Stayer of lords—with hosts of men—
One man cast it with one hand!

"With fierce rage the battle 'gins
Of the Smith's Hound of Red Branch.[a]
Bound to meet this madman's rage;
This the name that's on the withe!

[2]"Would the king's host have its will— Else they break the law of war— Let some one man of ye cast, As one man this withe did cast![2]

"Woes to bring with hundred fights
On four realms of Erin's land;

Naught I know 'less it be this
For what cause the withe was made!"

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 250.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 252-258.

[3-3] Reading with Stowe, Add. and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] Reading with LU. and YBL. 261.

[1-1] LU., marginal note.

[a] The name of the festal hall of the kings of Ulster.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

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After that lay: "I pledge you my word," said Fergus, "if so ye set at naught yon withy and the royal hero that made it, [3]and if ye go beyond[3] without passing a night's camp and quarterage here, or until a man of you make a withy of like kind, using but one foot and one eye and one hand, even as he made it, [4]certain it is, whether ye be[4] under the ground or in a tight-shut house, [5]the man that wrote the ogam hereon[5] will bring slaughter and bloodshed upon ye before the hour of rising on the morrow, if ye make light of him!" "That, surely, would not be pleasing to us," quoth Medb, "that any one should [6]straightway[6] spill our blood or besmirch us red, now that we are come to this unknown province, even to the province of Ulster. More pleasing would it be to us, to spill another's blood and redden him." "Far be it from us to set this [W.618.] withy at naught," said Ailill, "nor shall we make little of the royal hero that wrought it, rather will we resort to the shelter of this great wood, [1]that is, Fidduin, ('the Wood of the Dun')[1] southwards till morning. There will we pitch our camp and quarters."

[3-3] LU. 270.

[4-4] Reading with Stowe.

[5-5] LU. 271.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 273.

[1-1] A gloss in YBL. 274; found also in *Eg.* 1782.

Thereupon the hosts advanced, and as they went they felled the wood with their swords before their chariots, so that Slechta ('the Hewn Road') is still the by-name of that place where is Partraige Beca ('the Lesser Partry') south-west of Cenannas na Rig ('Kells of the Kings') near Cul Sibrille.

[2]According to other books, it is told as follows: After they had come to [3]Fidduin[3] they saw a chariot and therein a beautiful maiden. It is there that the conversation between Medb and Fedelm the seeress took place that we spoke of before, and it is after the answer she made to Medb that the wood was cut down: "Look for me," said Medb, "how my journey will be." "It is hard for me," the maiden made answer, "for no glance of eye can I cast upon them in the wood." "Then it is plough-land this shall be," quoth Medb; "we will cut down the wood." Now, this was done, so that this is the name of the place, Slechta, to wit.[2]

[2-2] YBL. 276-283.

[3-3] '*Fedaduín*,' MS.

[4]They slept in Cul Sibrille, which is Cenannas.[4] A heavy snow fell on them that night, and so great it was that it reached to the shoulders[a] of the men and to the flanks of the horses and to the poles[b] of the chariots, so that all the provinces of Erin were one

level plane from the snow. But no huts nor bothies nor tents did they set up that night, nor did they [LL.fo.59.] prepare food nor drink, nor made they a meal nor repast. None of the men of Erin [W.630.] wot whether friend or foe was next him until the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

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[a] 'Girdles,' LU. and YBL. 284; 'shields,' *Eg.* 1782.

[b] 'Wheels,' LU. and YBL. 285 and *Eg.* 1782.

Certain it is that the men of Erin experienced not a night of encampment or of station that held more discomfort or hardship for them than that night [1]with the snow[1] at Cul Sibrille. The four grand provinces of Erin moved out early on the morrow [2]with the rising of the bright-shining sun glistening on the snow[2] and marched on from that part into another.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 287.

[2-2] Reading with Stowe.

Now, as regards Cuchulain: It was far from being early when he arose [3]from his tryst. [3] And then he ate a meal and took a repast, and [4]he remained until he had[4] washed himself and bathed on that day.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 288.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 289.

He called to his charioteer to lead out the horses and yoke the chariot. The charioteer led out the horses and yoked the chariot, and Cuchulain mounted his chariot. And they came on the track of the army. They found the trail of the men of Erin leading past them from that part into another. "Alas, O master Laeg," cried Cuchulain, "by no good luck went we to our tryst with the woman last night. [5]Would that we had not gone thither nor betrayed the Ultonians.[5] This is the least that might be looked for from him that keeps guard on the marches, a cry, or a shout, or an alarm, or to call, 'Who goes the road?' This it fell not unto us to say. The men of Erin have gone past us, [6]without warning, without complaint,[6] into the land of Ulster." "I foretold thee that, O Cuchulain," said Laeg. "Even though thou wentest to thy woman-tryst [7]last night,[7] such a disgrace would come upon thee." "Good now, O Laeg, go thou for us on the trail of the host and make an estimate of them, and discover [W.649.] for us in what number the men of Erin went by us."

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 290.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe.

Laeg came on the track of the host, and he went to the front of the trail and he came on its sides and he went to the back of it. "Thou art confused in thy counting, O Laeg, my master," quoth Cuchulain. "Confused I must be," Laeg replied. [1]"It is not confusedly



that I should see, if I should go," said Cuchulain.[1] "Come into the chariot then, and I will make a reckoning of them." The charioteer mounted the chariot and Cuchulain went on the trail of the hosts and [2]after a long while[2] he made a reckoning of them. [3]"Even thou, it is not easy for thee.[3] Thou art perplexed in thy counting, my little Cuchulain," quoth Laeg. "Not perplexed," answered Cuchulain; [4]"it is easier for me than for thee.[4] [5]For I have three magical virtues: Gift of sight, gift of understanding, and gift of reckoning.[5] For I know the number wherewith the hosts went past us, namely, eighteen cantreds. Nay more: the eighteenth cantred has been distributed

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among [6]the entire host of[6] the men of Erin, [7]so that their number is not clear, namely, that of the cantred of Leinstermen." [7] [8]This here is the third cunningest [9]and most difficult[9] reckoning that ever was made in Erin. These were: The reckoning by Cuchulain of the men of Erin on the Tain, the reckoning by Lug Lamfota ('Long-hand') of the host of the Fomorians [10]in the Battle of Moytura,[10] and the reckoning by Incel of the host in the Hostel of Da Derga.[8]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 294-295.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 297.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 297.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 297-298.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 298-299.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 302.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 302.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] LU. fo. 58a, in the margin.

[10-10] LU. fo. 58a, in the margin.

Now, many and divers were the magic virtues that were in Cuchulain [11]that were in no one else in his day.[11] Excellence of form, excellence of shape, excellence of build, excellence [W.661.] in swimming, excellence in horsemanship, excellence in chess and in draughts, excellence in battle, excellence in contest, excellence in single combat, excellence in reckoning, excellence in speech, excellence in counsel, excellence in bearing, excellence in laying waste and in plundering from the neighbouring border.

[11-11] Stowe, and LU. fo. 58a, 24, marginal note.

"Good, my friend Laeg. Brace the horses for us to the chariot; lay on the goad for us on the horses; drive on the chariot for us and give thy left[a] board to the hosts, to see can we overtake the van or the rear or the midst of the hosts, for I will cease to live unless there fall by my hand this night a friend or foe of the men of Erin."

[a] A sign of enmity.

Then it was that the charioteer gave the prick to the steeds. He turned his left board to the hosts till he arrived at Turloch[b] Caille More ('the Creek of the Great Wood') northwards of Cnogba na Rig ('Knowth of the Kings') which is called Ath Gabla ('the Ford of the Fork'). [1]Thereupon Cuchulain went round the host till he came to Ath Grenca.[1] He went into the wood at that place and sprang out of his chariot, and he lopped off a four-pronged fork, root and top, with a single stroke [2]of his sword.[2] He pointed and charred it and put a writing in ogam on its side, and he gave it a long throw from the hinder part of his chariot with the tip of a single hand, in such wise that two-thirds of it sank into the ground and only one-third was above it [3]in the mid part of the stream, so that no chariot could go thereby on this side or that.[3]

[b] *Belach* ('the Pass'), *Eg.* 1782.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] *LU.* and *YBL.* 304.

[3-3] *LU.* and *YBL.* 305.

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Then it was that the same two striplings surprised him, namely, the two sons of Nera son of Nuathar son of Tacan, while engaged in that feat. And they vied which of the twain [4]would be the first to fight and contend with Cuchuain, which of them[4] would inflict the first wound upon [W.680.] him and be the first to behead him. Cuchulain turned on them, and straightway he struck off their four heads [1]from themselves [2]Eirr and Indell[2] and [3]from Foich and Fochlam,[3] their drivers,[1] and he fixed a head of each man of them on each of the prongs of the pole. And Cuchulain let the horses of the party go back in the direction of the men of Erin, to return by the same road, their reins loose [4]around their ears[4] and their bellies red and the bodies of the warriors dripping their blood down outside on the ribs of the chariots. [5]Thus he did,[5] for he deemed it no honour nor deemed he it fair to take horses or garments or arms from corpses or from the dead. And then the troops saw the horses of the party that had gone out in advance before them, and the headless bodies of the warriors oozing their blood down on the ribs of the chariots ([6]and their crimsoned trappings upon them[6]). The van of the army waited for the rear to come up, and all were thrown into confusion of striking, that is as much as to say, into a tumult of arms.

[4-4] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 306.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 306.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 310.

Medb and Fergus and the Mane and the sons of Maga drew near. For in this wise was Medb wont to travel, and nine chariots with her alone; two of these chariots before her, and two chariots behind, and two chariots at either side, and her own chariot in the middle between them. This is why Medb did so, that the turves from the horses' hoofs, or the flakes of foam from the bridle-bits, or the dust of the mighty host or of the numerous throng might not reach the queen's diadem of gold [7]which she wore round her head.[7] "What have we here?" queried Medb. "Not hard to say," each and all made answer; [LL.fo.60.] "the horses of the band that went out before us are here and their bodies lacking their heads in their chariots." They held [W.702.] a council and they felt certain it was the sign of a multitude and of the approach of a mighty host, and that it was the Ulstermen that had come [1]and that it was a battle that had taken place before them on the ford.[1] And this was the counsel they took: to despatch Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, from them to learn what was at the ford; because, even

though the Ulstermen might be there, they would not kill the son of their own king. Thereupon Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, set forth and this was the complement with which he went, ten hundred in addition to twenty hundred armed men, to ascertain what was at the ford.

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And when he was come, he saw naught save the fork in the middle of the ford, with four heads upon it dripping their blood down along the stem of the fork into the stream of the river, [2]and a writing in ogam on the side,[2] and the signs of the two horses and the track of a single chariot-driver and the marks of a single warrior leading out of the ford going therefrom to the eastward. [3]By that time,[3] the nobles of Erin had drawn nigh to the ford and they all began to look closely at the fork. They marvelled and wondered who had set up the trophy. [4]"Are yonder heads those of our people?" Medb asked. "They are our people's, and our chosen ones'," answered Ailill. One of their men deciphered the ogam-writing that was on the side of the fork, to wit: 'A single man cast this fork with but a single hand; and go ye not past it till one man of you throw it with one hand, excepting Fergus.' [4] "What name have ye men of Ulster for this ford till now, Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Ath Grenca," [a] answered Fergus; "and Ath Gabla ('Ford of the Fork') shall now be its name forever from this fork," said Fergus. And he recited the lay:

[7-7] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 313.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 314.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 314-318.

[a] So Stowe; LL. has '*Grena*.'

[W.719.] "Grenca's ford shall change its name, From the strong and fierce Hound's deed. Here we see a four-pronged fork, Set to prove all Erin's men!

"On two points—as sign of war—
Are Fraech's head and Fochnam's head;
On its other points are thrust
Err's head and Innell's withal!

"And yon ogam on its side,
Find, ye druids, in due form,
Who has set it upright there?
What host drove it in the ground?"

(A druid answers:)



“Yon forked pole—with fearful strength—
Which thou seest, Fergus, there,
One man cut, to welcome us,
With one perfect stroke of sword!

“Pointed it and shouldered it—
Though this was no light exploit—
After that he flung it down,
To uproot for one of you!

“Grenca was its name till now—
All will keep its memory—
Fork-ford[a] be its name for aye,
From the fork that’s in the ford!”

[a] That is, *Ath Gabla*.

After the lay, spake Ailill: “I marvel and wonder, O Fergus, who could have sharpened the fork and slain with such speed the four that had gone out before us.” “Fitter it were to marvel and wonder at him who with a single stroke lopped the fork which thou seest, root and top, pointed and charred it and flung it the length of a throw from the hinder part of his chariot, from the tip of a single hand, so that it sank over two-thirds into the ground and that naught save one-third is above; nor was a hole first dug with his sword, but through a grey stone’s flag it was thrust, and thus it is geis for the men of Erin to proceed to the bed of this ford till one of ye pull out the fork with the tip of one hand, even as he erewhile drove it down.”

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“Thou art of our hosts, O Fergus,” said Medb; [W.753.] [1]avert this necessity from us,[1] and do thou draw the fork for us from the bed of the ford.” “Let a chariot be brought me,” cried Fergus, [2]“till I draw it out, that it may be seen that its butt is of one hewing.”[2] And a chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus laid hold [3]with a truly mighty grip[3] on the fork, and he made splinters and [LL.fo.61a.] scraps of the chariot. “Let another chariot be brought me,” cried Fergus. [4]Another[4] chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus made a tug at the fork and again made fragments and splinters of the chariot, [5]both its box and its yoke and its wheels.[5] “Again let a chariot be brought me,” cried Fergus. And Fergus exerted his strength on the fork, and made pieces and bits of the chariot. There where the seventeen[a] chariots of the Connachtmen’s chariots were, Fergus made pieces and bits of them all, and yet he failed to draw the fork from the bed of the ford. “Come now, let it be, O Fergus,” cried Medb; “break our people’s chariots no more. For hadst thou not been now engaged on this hosting, [6]by this time[6] should we have come to Ulster, driving divers spoils and cattle-herds with us. We wot wherefore thou workest all this, to delay and detain the host till the Ulstermen rise from their ‘Pains’ and offer us battle, the battle of the Tain.”

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 322.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 324.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[a] “Fourteen,” LU. and YBL. 325 and *Eg.* 1782.

[6-6] Stowe.

“Bring me a swift chariot,” cried Fergus. And his own chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus gave a tug at the fork, and nor wheel nor floor nor one of the chariot-poles creaked nor cracked. Even though it was with his strength and prowess that the one had driven it down, with his might and doughtiness the other drew it out,—the battle-champion, the gap-breaker of hundreds, the crushing sledge, the stone-of-battle for enemies, the [W.777.] head of retainers, the foe of hosts, the hacking of masses, the flaming torch and the leader of mighty combat. He drew it up with the tip of one hand till it reached the slope of his shoulder, and he placed the fork in Ailill’s hand. Ailill scanned it; he regarded it near. “The fork, meseems, is all the more perfect,” quoth Ailill; “for a single stroke I see on it from butt to top.” “Aye, all the more perfect,” Fergus replied. And Fergus began to sing praise [1]of Cuchulain,[1] and he made a lay thereon:—



“Here behold the famous fork,
By which cruel Cuchulain stood.
Here he left, for hurt to all,
Four heads of his border-foes!

“Surely he’d not flee therefrom,
’Fore aught man, how brave or bold.
Though the scatheless[a] Hound this left,
On its hard rind there is gore!

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"To its hurt the host goes east, Seeking Cualnge's wild Brown bull. [2]Warriors' cleaving there shall be,[2] 'Neath Cuchulain's baneful sword!

"No gain will their[b] stout bull be,
For which sharp-armed war will rage;
At the fall of each head's skull
Erin's every tribe shall weep!

"I have nothing to relate
As regards Dechtire's son.[c]
Men and women hear the tale
Of this fork, how it came here!"

[1-1] Stowe.

[a] Literally, 'painless,' referring to Cuchulain's exemption from the cess or 'debility' of the Ulstermen.

[2-2] Reading with Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[b] Translating from Stowe; LL. has 'his' or 'its.'

[c] That is, Cuchulain.

After this lay: "Let us pitch our booths and tents," said Ailill, "and let us make ready food and drink, and let us sing songs and strike up harps, and let us eat and [W.807.] regale ourselves, for, of a truth, never before nor since knew the men of Erin a night of encampment or of entrenchment that held sorer discomfort or distress for them than yester-night. [1]Let us give heed to the manner of folk to whom we go and let us hear somewhat of their deeds and famous tales." [1]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 329-330.

They raised their booths and pitched their tents. They got ready [LL.fo.61b.] their food and drink, and songs were sung and harping intoned by them, and feasting and eating indulged in, [2]and they were told of the feats of Cuchulain.[2]

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 331.

And Ailill inquired of Fergus: "I marvel and wonder who could have come to us to our lands and slain so quickly the four that had gone out before us. Is it likely that Conchobar son of Fachtna Fatach ('the Mighty'), High King of Ulster, has come to us?" "It is never likely that he has," Fergus answered; "for a shame it would be to speak ill of him in his absence. There is nothing he would not stake for the sake of his honour. For if he had come hither [3]to the border of the land[3], there would have come armies and

troops and the pick of the men of Erin that are with him. And even though against him in one and the same place, and in one mass and one march and one camp, and on one and the same hill were the men of Erin and Alba, Britons and Saxons, he would give them battle, before him they would break and it is not he that would be routed."

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 333.

"A question, then: Who would be like to have come to us? Is it like that Cuscraid Mend ('the Stammerer') of Macha would have come, Conchobar's son, from Inis Cuscraid?" "Nay then, it is not; he, the son of the High King," Fergus answered. "There is nothing he would not hazard for the sake of his honour. For were it he that had come hither, there would have come the [W.827.] sons of kings and the royal leaders [1]of Ulster and Erin[1] that are serving as hirelings with him. And though there might be against him in one and the same place, in one mass and one march and one camp, and on one and the same hill the men of Erin and Alba, Britons and Saxons, he would give them battle, before him they would break and it is not he that would be routed."

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[1-1] Stowe.

"I ask, then, whether Eogan son of Durthacht, King of Fernmag, would have come?" "In sooth, it is not likely. For, had he come hither, the pick of the men of Fernmag would have come with him, battle he would give them, before him they would break, and it is not he that would be routed."

"I ask, then: Who would be likely to have come to us? Is it likely that he would have come, Celtchai son of Uthechar?" "No more is it likely that it was he. A shame it would be to make light of him in his absence, him the battle-stone for the foes of the province, the head of all the retainers and the gate-of-battle of Ulster. And even should there be against him in one place and one mass and one march and one camp, and on one and the same hill all the men of Erin from the west to the east, from the south to the north, battle he would give them, before him they would break and it is not he that would be routed."

"I ask, then: Who would be like to have come to us?" [2]asked Ailill.[2] [3]"I know not," Fergus replied,[3] "unless it be the little lad, my nursling and Conchobar's. Cuchulain ('the Wolf-dog of Culann the Smith') he is called. [4]He is the one who could have done the deed," answered Fergus. "He it is who could have lopped the tree with one blow from its root, could have killed the four with the quickness wherewith they were killed and could have come to the border with his charioteer."[4]

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 337-340.

[W.843.] "Of a truth," spake Ailill, "I heard from ye of this little boy once on a time in Cruachan. What might be the age of this little boy now?" "It is by no means his age that is most formidable in him," answered Fergus. "Because, manful were his deeds, those of that lad, at a time when he was younger than he [1]now[1] is. [2]In his fifth year he went in quest of warlike deeds among the lads of Emain Macha. In his sixth[a] year he went to learn skill in arms and feats with Scathach,[2] [3]and he went to woo Emer;[3] [4]in his seventh[b] year he took arms; in his seventeenth year he is at this time."[4] "How so!" exclaimed Medb. "Is there even now amongst the Ulstermen one his equal in age that is more redoubtable than he?" "We have not found there [5]a man-at-arms that is harder,[5] [6]nor a point that is keener, more terrible nor quicker,[6] nor a more bloodthirsty wolf, [7]nor a raven more flesh-loving,[7] nor a wilder warrior, nor a match of his age that would reach to a third or a fourth [LL.fo.62a.] the likes of Cuchulain. Thou findest not there," Fergus went on, "a hero his peer, [8]nor a lion that is fiercer, nor a plank of battle,[8] nor a sledge of destruction, [9]nor a gate of combat,[9] nor a doom of hosts, nor a contest of valour that would be of more worth than Cuchulain. Thou findest



not there one that could equal his age and his growth, [10]his dress[10] [11]and his terror,[11] his size and his splendour, [12]his fame and his voice, his shape and his power,[12] his form and his speech, his strength and his feats and his valour, [13]his smiting, his heat and his anger,[13] his dash, his assault and attack, his dealing of [W.857.] doom and affliction, his roar, his speed, his fury, his rage, and his quick triumph with the feat of nine men on each sword's point[a] above him, like unto Cuchulain."

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[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 342-345.

[a] 'Seventh,' YBL. 344.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 345.

[4-4] LU. 346-347, and, similarly, YBL.

[b] "Eight," YBL.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 349.

[6-6] LU. 349-350.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 350.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 351-352.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 352.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 354.

[11-11] YBL. 354.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 355-356.

[13-13] LU. and YBL. 356-357.

[a] Reading with Stowe, LU. and YBL. 359, which is more intelligible than 'on each hair,' which is the translation of LL.

"We make not much import of him," quoth Medb. "It is but a single body he has; he shuns being wounded; he avoids being taken. They do say his age is but that of a girl to be wed. [1]His deeds of manhood have not yet come,[1] nor will he hold out against tried men, this young, beardless elf-man of whom thou spokest." [2]"We say not so,"[2] replied Fergus, "for manful were the deeds of the lad at a time when he was younger than he [3]now[3] is."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 363.

[2-2] 'That is not true,' Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

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VII

THE YOUTHFUL EXPLOITS OF CUCHULAIN

[W.865.] “Now this lad was reared in the house of his father and mother at Dairgthech^[1] (‘the Oak House’ (?)), namely, in the plain of Murthemne, and the tales of the youths of Emain were told to him. ^[2]For there are ^[3]always^[3] thrice fifty boys at play there,” said Fergus.^[2] “Forasmuch as in this wise Conchobar passed his reign ever since he, the king, assumed his sovereignty, to wit: As soon as he arose, forthwith in settling the cares and affairs of the province; thereafter, the day he divided in three: first, the first third he spent a-watching the youths play games of skill and of hurling; the next third of the day, a-playing draughts and chess, and the last third a-feasting on meat and ^[4]a-quaffing^[4] ale, till sleep possessed them all, the while minstrels and harpers lulled him to sleep. For all that I am a long time in banishment because of him, I give my word,” said Fergus, “there is not in Erin nor in Alba a warrior the like of Conchobar.”

[1] Reading with LU. and YBL. 367.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 368-369.

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 371.

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“And the lad was told the tales of the boys and the boy-troop in Emain; and the child said to his mother, he would go to have part in the games on the play-field of Emain. “It is too soon for thee, little son,” said his mother; “wait till there go with thee a champion of the champions of [W.880.] Ulster, or some of the attendants of Conchobar to enjoin thy protection and thy safety on the boy-troop.” “I think it too long for that, my mother,” the little lad answered, “I will not wait for it. But do thou show me what place lies Emain [1]Macha.”[1] [2]“Northwards, there;[2] it is far away from thee,” said his mother, “the place wherein it lies, [3]and the way is hard.[3] Sliab Fuait lies between thee and Emain.” “At all hazards, I will essay it,” he answered.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] *LU.* and *YBL.* 376-377.

[3-3] *LU.* and *YBL.* 377.

“The boy fared forth and took his playthings with him. [4]His little lath-shield[4] he took, and his hurley of bronze and his ball of silver; and he took his little javelin for throwing; and his toy-staff he took with its fire-hardened butt-end, and he began to shorten the length of his journey with them. He would give the ball a stroke [LL.fo.62b.] with the hurl-bat, so that he sent it a long distance from him. Then with a second throw he would cast his hurley so that it went a distance no shorter than the first throw. He would hurl his little darts, and let fly his toy-staff, and make a wild chase after them. Then he would catch up his hurl-bat and pick up the ball and snatch up the dart, and the stock of the toy-staff had not touched the ground when he caught its tip which was in the air.

[4-4] *LU.* and *YBL.* 380.

“He went his way to the mound-seat of Emain, where was the boy-troop. Thrice fifty youths were with Folloman, Conchobar’s son, at their games on the fair-green of Emain.

“The little lad went on to the play-field into the midst of the boys, and he whipped the ball between his two legs away from them, nor did he suffer it to travel higher up than the top of his knee, nor did he let it lower down than his ankle, and he drove it and held it between his two legs and not one of the boys was able to get a prod nor a stroke nor a blow nor a shot at it, so that he carried it over the [W.904.] brink of the goal away from them. [1]Then he goes to the youths without binding them to protect him. For no one used to approach them on their play-field without first securing from them a pledge of protection. He was weetless thereof.[1]

[1-1] *LU.* and *YBL.* 382-384.

“Then they all gazed upon him. They wondered and marvelled. “Come, boys!” cried Folloman, Conchobar’s son, [2]“the urchin insults us.[2] Throw yourselves all on yon

fellow, and his death shall come at my hands; for it is geis among you for any youth to come into your game, without first entrusting his safety to you. And do you all attack him together, for we know that yon wight is some one of the heroes of Ulster; and they shall not make it their wont to break into your sports without first entrusting their safety and protection to you.”

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[2-2] LU. and YBL. 384-385.

“Thereupon they all set upon him together. They cast their thrice fifty hurl-bats at the poll of the boy’s head. He raises his single toy-staff and wards off the thrice fifty hurlies, [3]so that they neither hurt him nor harm him,[3] [4]and he takes a load of them on his back.[4] Then they throw their thrice fifty balls at the lad. He raises his upper arm and his forearm and the palms of his hands [5]against them[5] and parries the thrice fifty balls, [6]and he catches them, each single ball in his bosom.[6] They throw at him the thrice fifty play-spears charred at the end. The boy raises his little lath-shield [7]against them[7] and fends off the thrice fifty play-staffs, [8]and they all remain stuck in his lath-shield.[8] [9]Thereupon contortions took hold of him. Thou wouldst have weened it was a hammering wherewith each hair was hammered into his head, with such an uprising it rose. Thou wouldst have weened it was a spark of fire that was on every single hair there. He closed one of his eyes so that it was no wider than the eye of a needle. He opened the other wide so that it was as big as the mouth of a mead-cup.[a] He stretched his mouth from his jaw-bones to his ears; he opened his mouth wide to his jaw so that his gullet was seen. The champion’s light rose up from his crown.[9]

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 391.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 389.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 387.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 391-397.

[a] Or, ‘a wooden beaker,’ YBL. 395.

[W.919.] “It was then he ran in among them. He scattered fifty king’s sons of them over the ground underneath him [1]before they got to the gate of Emain.[1] Five[b] of them,” Fergus continued, “dashed headlong between me and Conchobar, where we were playing chess, even on Cennchaem (‘Fair-head’) [2]the chessboard of Conchobar,[2] on the mound-seat of Emain. The little boy pursued them to cut them off. [3]Then he sprang over the chessboard after the nine.[3] Conchobar seized the little lad by the wrists. “Hold, little boy. I see ’tis not gently thou dealest with the boy-band.” “Good reason I have,” quoth the little lad. [4]“From home, from mother and father I came to play with them, and they have not been good to me.[4] I had not a guest’s honour at the hands of the boy-troop on my arrival, for all that I came from far-away lands.” “How is that? Who art thou, [5]and what is thy name?”[5] asked Conchobar. “Little Setanta am



I, son of Sualtaim. Son am I to Dechtire, thine own sister; and not through thee did I expect to be thus aggrieved." "How so, little one?" said Conchobar. "Knewest thou not that it is forbidden among the boy-troop, that it is geis for them for any boy to approach them in their land without first claiming his protection from them?" "I knew it not," said the lad. [W.932.] "Had I known it, I would have been on my guard against them." "Good, now, ye boys," Conchobar cried; "take ye upon you the protection of the little lad." "We grant it, indeed," they made answer.

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[1-1] LU. and YBL. 398.

[b] 'Nine,' LU. and YBL. 399 and *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 400.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 403-404.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 405.

"The little lad went [LL.fo.63a.] [1]into the game again[1] under the protection of the boy-troop. Thereupon they loosed hands from him, and once more he rushed amongst them [2]throughout the house.[2] He laid low fifty of their princes on the ground under him. Their fathers thought it was death he had given them. That was it not, but stunned they were with front-blows and mid-blows and long-blows. "Hold!" cried Conchobar. "Why art thou yet at them?" "I swear by my gods whom I worship" (said the boy) "they shall all come under my protection and shielding, as I have put myself under their protection and shielding. Otherwise I shall not lighten my hands off them until I have brought them all to earth." "Well, little lad, take thou upon thee the protection of the boy-troop." "I grant it, indeed," said the lad. Thereupon the boy-troop went under his protection and shielding.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 410.

"[3]Then they all went back to the play-field, and the boys whom he had overthrown there arose. Their nurses and tutors helped them.

"Now, once upon a time," continued Fergus, "when he was a gilla, he slept not in Emain Macha till morning." "Tell me," Conchobar said to him, "why sleepest thou not [4]in Emain Macha, Cuchulain?"[4] "I sleep not, unless it be equally high at my head and my feet." Then Conchobar had a pillar-stone set up at his head and another at his feet, and between them a bed apart was made for him.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 413-481.

[4-4] YBL. 418.

"Another time a certain man went to wake him, and the lad struck him with his fist in [1]the neck or in[1] the forehead, so that it drove in the front of his forehead on to his brain and he overthrew the pillar-stone with his forearm." "It is known," exclaimed Ailill,

“that that was the fist of a champion and the arm of a hero.” “And from that time,” continued Fergus, “no one durst wake him, so that he used to wake of himself.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

“Then, another time, he played ball on the play-field east of Emain, and he was alone on one side against the thrice fifty boys. He always worsted in every game in the east (?) in this way. Thereafter the lad began to use his fists on them, so that fifty boys of them died thereof. He took to flight then, till he took refuge under the cushion of Conchobar’s couch. The Ulstermen sprang up all around him. I, too, sprang up, and Conchobar, thereat. The lad himself rose up under the couch, so that he hove up the couch and the thirty warriors that were on it withal, so that he bore it into the middle of the house. Straightway the Ulstermen sat around him in the house. We settled it then,” continued Fergus, “and reconciled the boy-troop to him afterwards.

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"The broil of war arose between Ulster and Eogan son of Durthacht. The Ulstermen go forth to the war. The lad Setanta is left behind asleep. The men of Ulster are beaten. Conchobar and Cuscraid Menn ('the Stammerer') of Macha are left on the field and many besides them. Their groans awaken the lad. Thereat he stretches himself, so that the two stones are snapped that are near him. This took place in the presence of Bricriu yonder," Fergus added. "Then he gets up. I meet him at the door of the liss, I being severely wounded. "Hey, God keep thy life,[a] O Fergus my master," says he; "where is Conchobar?" "I know not," I answer. Thereupon he goes out. The night is dark. He makes for the battlefield, until he sees before him a man and half his head on him and half of another man on his back. "Help me, Cuchulain," he cries; "I have been stricken, and I bear on my back half of my brother. Carry it for me a while." "I will not carry it," says he. Thereupon the man throws the load at him. Cuchulain throws it back from him. They grapple with one another. Cuchulain is overthrown. Then I heard something. It was Badb[a] from the corpses: "Ill the stuff of a warrior that is there under the feet of a phantom." Thereat Cuchulain arises from underneath him, and he strikes off his head with his playing-stick and proceeds to drive the ball before him over the field of battle.

[a] A Christian salutation.

[a] The war-fury.

"Is my master Conchobar on this battle-field?" That one makes answer. He goes towards him, to where he espies him in a ditch and the earth piled around him on both sides to hide him. "Wherefore art thou come to the battle-field?" Conchobar asks; "is it that thou mightst see mortal terror there?" Then Cuchulain lifts him out of the ditch. The six strong men of Ulster that were with us could not have lifted him out more bravely. "Get thee before us to yonder house," says Conchobar, [1]"to make me a fire there." He kindles a great fire for him. "Good now," quoth Conchobar,[1] "if one would bring me a roast pig, I would live." "I will go fetch it," says Cuchulain. Thereupon he sallies out, when he sees a man at a cooking-pit in the heart of the wood. One of his hands holds his weapons therein, the other roasts the pork. Ill-favoured, indeed, is the man. For the which, Cuchulain attacks him and takes his head and his pig with him. Conchobar eats the pig then. "Let us go to our house," says Conchobar. They meet Cuscraid son of Conchobar and there were heavy wounds on him. Cuchulain carries him on his back. The three then proceed to Emain Macha.

[1-1] YBL. 461.

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“Another time the Ulstermen were in their ‘Pains.’ Now, there was no ‘Pains’ amongst us,” Fergus continued, “in women or boys, nor in any one outside the borders of Ulster, nor in Cuchulain and his father. [1]It was for this reason no one dared shed the blood of the men of Ulster, for that the ‘Pains’ fell on the one that wounded them.[1] There came thrice nine men from the Isles of Faiche. They pass over our rear fort, the whiles we are in our ‘Pains.’ The women scream in the fort. The youths are in the play-field. They come at the cry. When the boys catch sight of the swarthy men, they all take to flight save Cuchulain alone. He hurls the hand-stones and his playing-staff at them. He slays nine of them and they leave fifty wounds on him and proceed thence on their journey.[3]

[1-1] LU., edition of Strachan and O’Keeffe, page 19, note 23.

[3-3] LU., and YBL. 413-481; see page 50.

[W.947.] “A youngster did that deed,” Fergus continued, “at the close of five years after his birth, when he overthrew the sons of champions and warriors at the very door of their liss and dun. No need is there of wonder or surprise, [2]if he should do great deeds,[2] if he should come to the confines of the land, if he should cut off the four-pronged fork, if he should slay one man or two men or three men or four men, when there are seventeen full years of him now on the Cattle-lifting of Cualnge.” [4]“In sooth, then, we know that youth,” spoke out Conall Cernach (‘the Victorious’), “and it is all the better we should know him, for he is a fosterling of our own.”[4]

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 484-485.

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VIIa

THE SLAYING OF THE SMITH’S HOUND BY CUCHULAIN, AND THE REASON HE IS CALLED CUCHULAIN

[W.956.] Then it was that Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar spake: “Again that little lad performed a second deed in the following year.” “What deed was that?” asked Ailill.

[1]“A goodly smith there was in the land of Ulster, Culann the Smith, by name.[1] He made ready a feast for Conchobar and set out for Emain to invite him. He made known to him that only a few should come with him, that he should bring none but a true guest along, forasmuch as it was not a domain or lands of his own that he had, but [2]the fruit

of his two hands,[2] his sledges and anvils, his fists and his tongs. Conchobar replied that only a few would go to him.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU and YBL 489.

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“Culann went back to the stithy to prepare and make ready meat and drink [3]in readiness for the king.[3] Conchobar sat in Emain till it was time to set out [4]for the feast,[4] till came the close of the day. The king put his fine, light travelling apparel about him, [5]and went with fifty chariot-chiefs of those that were noblest and most illustrious of the heroes,[5] and betook him to the boys [6]before starting,[6] to bid them farewell. [7]It was always [W.968.] his custom to visit and revisit them when going and coming, to seek his blessing of the boys.[7] Conchobar came on to the fair-green, and he saw a thing that astounded him: Thrice fifty boys at one end of the green and a single boy at the other, and the single boy won the victory at the goal and at hurling from the thrice fifty boys. When it was at hole-play they were—a game of hole that used to be played on the fair-green of Emain—and it was their turn to drive and his to keep guard, he would catch the thrice fifty balls just outside of the hole, and not one went by him into the hole. When it was their turn to keep guard and his to drive, he would send the thrice fifty balls into the hole without fail, [1]and the boys were unable to ward them off.[1] When it was at tearing off each other’s garments they played, he would strip off them their thrice fifty suits [2]so that they were quite naked,[2] and they were not able all of them to take as much as the brooch from his mantle. When it was at wrestling they were, he would throw those same thrice fifty boys to the ground under him, and they did not succeed all of them around him in lifting him up. Conchobar looked with wonder at the little lad. “O, ye youths,” cried [LL.fo.63b.] Conchobar. “Hail to the land whence cometh the lad ye see, if the deeds of his manhood shall be such as are those of his boyhood!” “Tis not just to speak thus,” exclaimed Fergus; “e’en as the little lad grows, so will his deeds of manhood grow with him.” “The little lad shall be called to us, that he may come with us to enjoy the feast to which we go.” The little lad was summoned to Conchobar. “Good, my lad,” said Conchobar. “Come thou with us to enjoy the feast whereto we go, [3]for thou art a guest.”[3] “Nay, but I will not go,” the little boy answered. “How so?” asked Conchobar. [W.990.] “Forasmuch as the boys have not yet had their fill of games and of sport, and I will not leave them till they have had enough play.” “It is too long for us to await thee till then, little boy, and by no means shall we wait.” “Go then before us,” said the little boy, “and I will follow after ye.” “Thou knowest naught of the way, little boy,” said Conchobar. “I will follow the trail of the company and of the horses and chariots.”

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 489-491.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 492-494.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 497.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 502.

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[3-3] LU. and YBL. 507.

“Thereafter Conchobar came to the house of Culann the Smith. The king was waited upon and all were shown honour, as befitted their rank and calling and privileges, nobility and gentle accomplishment. Straw and fresh rushes were spread out under them. They commenced to carouse and make merry. Culann inquired of Conchobar: “Hast thou, O king, appointed any to come after thee this night to this dun?” “No, I appointed no one,” replied Conchobar, for he had forgotten the little lad whom he had charged to come after him. “Why so?” asked Conchobar. “An excellent bloodhound have I, [1]that was brought from Spain.[1] [2]There are three[a] chains upon him, and three men at each chain. Because of our goods and our cattle he is slipped and the liss is closed.[2] When his dog-chain is loosed from him, no one dares approach the same cantred with him to make a course or a circuit, and he knows no one but myself. The power of hundreds is in him for strength.” Then spake Conchobar, “Let the dun be opened for the ban-dog, that he may guard the cantred.” The dog-chain is taken off the ban-dog, and he makes a swift round of the cantred. And he comes to the mound whereon he was wont to keep guard of the stead, and there he was, his head couched on his paws, and wild, untameable, furious, savage, ferocious, ready for fight was the dog that was there.

[1-1] LU. 513.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 512-513.

[a] ‘four,’ *Eg.* 1782.

[W.1013.] “As for the boys: They were in Emain until the time came for them to disperse. Each of them went to the house of his father and mother, of his foster-mother and foster-father. Then the little lad went on the trail of the party, till he reached the house of Culann the Smith. He began to shorten the way as he went with his play-things. [1]He threw his ball and threw his club after it, so that it hit the ball. The one throw was no greater than the other. Then he threw his staff after them both, so that it reached the ball and the club before ever they fell.[1] [2]Soon the lad came up.[2] When he was nigh to the green of the fort wherein were Culann and Conchobar, he threw all his play-things before him except only the ball. The watch-dog descried the lad and bayed at him, so that in all the countryside was heard the howl of the watch-hound. And not a division of feasting was what he was inclined to make of him, but to swallow him down at one gulp past the cavity [LL.fo.64a.] of his chest and the width of his throat and the pipe of his breast. [3]And it interfered not with the lad’s play, although the hound made for him.[3] And the lad had not with him any means of defence, but he hurled an unerring cast of the ball, so that it passed through the gullet of the watch-dog’s neck and carried the guts within him out through his back door, and he laid hold of the hound by the two legs and dashed him against a pillar-stone [4]that was near him, so that every

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limb of him sprang apart,[4] so that he broke into bits all over the ground.[a] Conchobar heard the yelp of the ban-dog. [5]Conchobar and his people could not move; they weened they would not find the lad alive before them.[5] "Alas, O warriors," cried Conchobar; "in no good luck [W.1029.] have we come to enjoy this feast." "How so?" asked all. "The little lad who has come to meet me, my sister's son, Setanta son of Sualtair, is undone through the hound." As one man, arose all the renowned men of Ulster. Though a door of the hostel was thrown wide open, they all rushed in the other direction out over the palings of the fortress. But fast as they all got there, faster than all arrived Fergus, and he lifted the little lad from the ground on the slope of his shoulder and bore him into the presence of Conchobar. [1]They put him on Conchobar's knee. A great alarm arose amongst them that the king's sister's son should have been all but killed.[1] And Culann came out, and he saw his slaughter-hound in many pieces. He felt his heart beating against his breast. Whereupon he went into the dun. "Welcome thy coming, little lad," said Culann, "because of thy mother and father, but not welcome is thy coming for thine own sake. [2]Yet would that I had not made a feast." [2] "What hast thou against the lad?" queried Conchobar. "Not luckily for me hast thou come to quaff my ale and to eat my food; for my substance is now a wealth gone to waste, and my livelihood is a livelihood lost [3]now after my dog.[3] [4]He hath kept honour and life for me.[4] Good was the friend thou hast robbed me of, [5]even my dog,[5] in that he tended my herds and flocks and stock for me; [6]he was the protection of all our cattle, both afield and at home." [6] "Be not angered thereat, O Culann my master," said the little boy. [7]"It is no great matter,[7] for I will pass a just judgement upon it." "What judgement thereon wilt thou pass, lad?" Conchobar asked. "If there is a whelp of the breed of that dog in Erin, he shall be reared by me till he be fit to do [W.1049.] business as was his sire. [1]Till then[1] myself will be the hound to protect his flocks and his cattle and his land [2]and even himself[2] in the meanwhile. [3]And I will safeguard the whole plain of Murthemne, and no one will carry off flock nor herd without that I know it." [3]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 515-518.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 514.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 518-519.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 525.

[a] According to the LU.-YBL. version, Cuchulain seized the hound with one hand by the apple of the throat and with the other by the back.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 519-521.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 529-530.

[2-2] LU and YBL. 532.

[3-3] Stowe, YBL. and LU. 533-534.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 334.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 535.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 536.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 537.

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[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Literally, 'thyself,' LU. and YBL. 539.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 540-541.

"Well hast thou given judgement, little lad," said Conchobar. "In sooth, we [4]ourselves[4] could not give one that would be better," said Cathba.[a] "Why should it not be from this that thou shouldst take the name Cuchulain, ('Wolfhound of Culann')?" "Nay, then," answered the lad; "dearer to me mine own name, Setanta son of Sualtair." "Say not so, lad," Cathba continued; "for the men of Erin and Alba shall hear that name and the mouths of the men of Erin and Alba shall be full of that name!" "It pleaseth me so, whatever the name that is given me," quoth the little lad. Hence the famous name that stuck to him, namely Cuchulain, after he had killed the hound that was Culann's the Smith's.

[4-4] Stowe.

[a] The name of Conchobar's druid.

"A little lad did that deed," [LL.fo.64b.] added Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar, "when he had completed six years after his birth, when he slew the watch-dog that hosts nor companies dared not approach in the same cantred. No need would there be of wonder or of surprise if he should come to the edge of the marches, if he should cut off the four-pronged fork, if he should slay one man or two men or three men or four men, now when his seventeen years are completed on the Cattle-driving of Cualnge!"

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VIIb

[1]THE TAKING OF ARMS BY CUCHULAIN AND[1] [2]THE SLAYING OF THE THREE SONS OF NECHT SCENE IS NOW TOLD HERE[2]

[W.1068.] "The little lad performed a third deed in the following year," said Fiachu son of Firaba. "What deed performed he?" asked Ailill.

[1-1] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] LU. fo. 61a, in the margin.



“Cathba the druid was [3]with his son, namely Conchobar son of Ness,[3] imparting [4]learning[4] to his pupils in the north-east of Emain, and eight[a] [5]eager[5] pupils in the class of druidic cunning were with him. [6]That is the number that Cathba instructed. [6] [7]One of them[7] questioned his teacher, what fortune and presage might there be for the day they were in, whether it was good or whether it was ill. Then spake Cathba: “The little boy that takes arms [8]this day[8] shall be splendid and renowned [9]for deeds of arms[9] [10]above the youths of Erin [11]and the tales of his high deeds shall be told[11] forever,[10] but he shall be short-lived and fleeting.” Cuchulain overheard what he said, though far off at his play-feats south-west of Emain; and he threw away all his play-things and hastened to Conchobar’s sleep-room [12]to ask for arms.[12] “All [W.1077.] good attend thee, O king of the Fene!” cried the little lad. “This greeting is the speech of one soliciting something of some one. What wouldst thou, lad?” said Conchobar. “To

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take arms," the lad made answer. "Who hath advised thee, little boy?" asked Conchobar. "Cathba the druid," said the lad. "He would not deceive thee, little boy," said Conchobar. Conchobar gave him two spears and a sword and a shield. The little boy shook and brandished the arms [1]in the middle of the house[1] so that he made small pieces and fragments of them. Conchobar gave him other two spears and a shield and a sword. He shook and brandished, flourished and poised them, so that he shivered them into small pieces and fragments. There where were the fourteen[a] suits of arms which Conchobar had in Emain, [2]in reserve in case of breaking of weapons or[2] for equipping the youths and the boys—to the end that whatever boy assumed arms, it might be Conchobar that gave him the equipment of battle, and the victory of cunning would be his thenceforward—even so, this little boy made splinters and fragments of them all.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 547.

[4-4] Stowe.

[a] 'One hundred' is the number in LU. and YBL. 547.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 548.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 548.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 550.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 551.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 551-552.

[11-11] Stowe.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 553.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 557.

[a] 'Fifteen,' LU. and YBL. 556; 'seventeen,' Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 557.

"Truly these arms here are not good, O Conchobar my master," the stripling cried. "Herefrom cometh not what is worthy of me." Conchobar gave him his own two spears

and his shield and his sword. He shook and he brandished, he bent and he poised them so that tip touched butt, and he brake not the arms and they bore up against him, [3]and he saluted the king whose arms they were.[3] "Truly, these arms are good," said the little boy; "they are suited to me. Hail to the king whose arms and equipment these are. Hail to the land whereout he is come!"

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 559-560.

"Then Cathba the druid chanced to come into the tent, and what he said was, "Hath he yonder taken arms?" [W.1101.] Cathba asked. "Aye, then, it must be," Conchobar answered. "Not by [1]his[1] mother's son would I wish them to be taken this day," said Cathba. "How so? Was it not thyself advised him?" Conchobar asked. "Not I, in faith," replied Cathba. "What mean'st thou, bewitched elf-man?" cried Conchobar [2]to Cuchulain.[2] "Is it a lie thou hast told us?" [LL.fo.65a.] "But be not wroth [3]thereat,[3] O my master Conchobar," said the little boy. [4]"No lie have I told;[4] for yet is it he that advised me, [5]when he taught his other pupils this morning.[5] For his pupil asked him what luck might lie in the day, and he said: The youth that took arms on this day would be illustrious and famous, [6]that his name would be over the men of Erin for ever, and

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that no evil result would be on him thereafter,[6] except that he would be fleeting and short-lived. [7]To the south of Emain I heard him, and then I came to thee." [7] "That I avow to be true," spake Cathba. [8]"Good indeed is the day,[8] glorious and renowned shalt thou be, [9]the one that taketh arms,[9] yet passing and short lived!" "Noble the gift!" cried Cuchulain. [10]"Little it recks me,[10] though I should be but one day and one night in the world, if only the fame of me and of my deeds live after me!"

[1-1] Reading with Stowe, LU. and YBL. 563.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 566.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 567.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 567.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 568.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 569.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 570.

[10-10] Stowe.

"[11] Another day one of them asked of the druids for what that day would be propitious. "The one that mounts a chariot to-day," Cathba answered, "his name will be renowned over Erin for ever." Now Cuchulain heard that. He went to Conchobar and said to him, "O Conchobar my master, give me a chariot!" He gave him a chariot.[11] [W.1113.] "Come, lad, mount the chariot, for this is the next thing for thee."

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 573-577.

"He mounted the chariot. [1]He put his hands between the two poles of the chariot,[1] and the first chariot he mounted withal he shook and tossed about him till he reduced it to splinters and fragments. He mounted the second chariot, so that he made small pieces and fragments of it in like manner. Further he made pieces of the third chariot. There where were the seventeen[a] chariots which Conchobar kept for the boy-troop and youths in Emain, the lad made small pieces and fragments of them and they did not withstand him. "These chariots here are not good, O my master Conchobar," said the little boy; "my merit cometh not from them." "Where is Ibar[b] son of Rianganabair?" asked



Conchobar. "Here, in sooth, am I," Ibar answered. "Take with thee mine own two steeds for him yonder, and yoke my chariot." Thereupon the charioteer took the horses and yoked the chariot. Then the little boy mounted the chariot [2]and Conchobar's charioteer with him.[2] He shook the chariot about him, and it withstood him, and he broke it not. "Truly this chariot is good," cried the lad, "and this chariot is suited to me." [3]The charioteer turned the chariot under him.[3] "Prithee, little boy," said Ibar, [4]"come out[c] of the chariot now[4] and let the horses out on their pasture." "It is yet too soon, O Ibar," the lad answered. [5]"The horses are fair. I, too, am fair, their little lad.[5] [6]Only[6] let us go on a circuit of Emain to-day [7]and thou shalt have a reward therefor, [7] to-day being my first day of [W.1132.] taking arms, to the end that it be a victory of cunning for me."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 578.

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[a] 'Twelve,' LU. and YBL. 579.

[b] The name of Conchobar's charioteer.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 580-581 and *Eg.* 1782.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 581.

[c] Following the emendation suggested by Strachan and O'Keeffe, page 23, note 21.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 582.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 583.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 584.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 585.

"Thrice they made the circuit of Emain. "Leave the horses now to their grazing, O little boy," said Ibar. "It is yet too soon, O Ibar," the little lad answered; "let us keep on, that the boys may give me a blessing to-day the first day of my taking arms." They kept their course to the place where the boys were. "Is it arms he yonder has taken?" each one asked. "Of a truth, are they." "May it be for victory, for first wounding and triumph. But we deem it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou departest from us at the game-feats." "By no means will I leave ye, but for luck I took arms this day." "Now, little boy, leave the horses to their grazing," said Ibar. "It is still too soon for that, O Ibar," the lad answered. [1]"Ply the goad on the horses," said he. "What way, then?" the charioteer asked. "As far as the road shall lead," answered Cuchulain.[1] "And this great road winding by us, what way leads it?" the lad asked. "What is that to thee?" Ibar answered. "But thou art a pleasant wight, I trow, little lad," quoth Ibar. "I wish, fellow, to inquire about the high-road of the province, what stretch it goes?" "To Ath na Foraire ('the Ford of Watching') in Sliab Fuait it goes," Ibar answered. "Wherefore is it called 'the Ford of Watching,' knowest thou?" "Yea, I know it well," Ibar made answer. "A stout warrior of Ulster is on watch and on guard there [2]every day,[2] so that there come no strange youths into Ulster to challenge them to battle, and he is a champion to give battle in behalf of the whole province. Likewise if men of song leave the Ulstermen [LL.fo.65b.] and the province in dudgeon, he is there to soothe them by proffering treasures and valuables, and so to save the honour of the province. Again, if men of song [W.1155.] enter the land, he is the man that is their surety that they win the favour of Conchobar, so that songs and lays made for him will be the first to be sung after their arrival in Emain." "Knowest thou who is at the ford to-day?" "Yea, I know," Ibar answered; "Conall Cernach ('the Triumphant'), the heroic, warlike son of Amargin, royal champion of Erin," Ibar answered. "Thither guide us, fellow, that so we reach the ford."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 589-590.

[2-2] Stowe.

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"Onwards they drove into sight of the ford where was Conall. [1]Now it fell to Conall Cernach to guard the province that day. For each champion of Ulster spent his day on Sliab Fuait to protect him that came with a lay or to fight with a warrior, so that some one would be there to meet him, in order that none might come to Emain unperceived. [1] "Are those arms he yonder has taken?" asked Conall. "Of a truth, are they," Ibar made answer. "May it be for victory and for triumph and first wounding," said Conall; "but we think it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou art not yet capable of deeds. Were it surety he needed, he that should come hither," he continued, "so wouldst thou furnish a perfect warrant amongst the Ulstermen, and the nobles of the province would rise up to support thee in the contest." "What dost thou here, O Conall my master?" asked the lad. "Watch and ward of the province, lad, I keep here," Conall made answer. "Do thou go home now, O master Conall," said the lad, "and leave me the watch and guard of the province to keep here." "Say not so, little son," replied Conall; [2]"'twould be enough, were it to protect one that came with a song; were it to fight with a man, however, that is still too soon for thee[2]; thou art not yet able to cope with a goodly warrior." "Then, will I keep on to the south," [W.1172.] said the little boy, "to Fertas ('the Bank') of Loch Echtrann for a while; [1]champions are wont to take stand there;[1] perchance I may redden my hands on friend or on foe this day." "I will go, little boy," said Conall, "to save thee, that thou go not alone [2]into peril[2] on the border." "Not so," said the lad. "But I will go," said Conall; "for the men of Ulster will blame me for leaving thee to go alone on the border."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 592-596.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 599-601.

[1-1] LU.and YBL. 603.

[2-2] Stowe.

"Conall's horses were caught for him and his chariot was yoked and he set out to protect the little boy. When Conall came up abreast of him, Cuchulain felt certain that, even though a chance came to him, Conall would not permit him to use it. He picked up a hand-stone from the ground which was the full of his grasp. He hurled it from him [3]from his sling[3] the length of a stone-shot at the yoke of Conall's chariot, so that he broke the chariot-collar[a] in two and thereby Conall fell to the ground, so that the nape of his neck went out from his shoulder. "What have we here, boy?" asked Conall; [4]"why throwest thou the stone?"[4] "It is I threw it to see if my cast be straight, or how I cast at all, or if I have the stuff of a warrior in me." "A bane on thy cast and a bane on thyself as well. E'en though thou leavest thy head this time with thine enemies, I will go no further to protect thee." "'Twas what I craved of thee," answered he; "for it is geis amongst you men of Ulster to proceed, after a mishap has befallen your chariots. [5]Go back[5] [6]to Emain,[6] [7]O Conall, and leave me here to keep watch." "That pleaseth

me well,” replied Conall.[7] Conall turned back northwards again to the Ford of Watching. [8]Thereafter Conall Cernach went not past that place.[8]

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[3-3] LU. and YBL. 604.

[a] In LU. and YBL., 'the shaft of the chariot.'

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 605-606.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 608.

[6-6] LU. 608.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 609-610.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 610.

[W.1192.] As for the little boy, he fared southwards to Fertas Locha Echtrann. He remained there till the end of the day [1]and they found no one there before them.[1] "If we dared tell thee, little boy," spoke Ibar, "it were time for us to return to Emain [LL.fo.66a.] now; for dealing and carving and dispensing of food is long since begun in Emain, and there is a place assigned for thee there. Every day it is appointed thee to sit between Conchobar's feet, while for me there is naught but to tarry among the hostlers and tumblers of Conchobar's household. [2]For that reason,[2] methinks it is time to have a scramble[a] among them." "Fetch then the horses for us." The charioteer fetched the horses and the lad mounted the chariot. "But, O Ibar, what hill is that there now, the hill to the north?" the lad asked. "Now, that is Sliab Moduirn," Ibar answered. [3]"Let us go and get there," said Cuchulain. Then they go on till they reach it.[3] [4]When they reached the mountain, Cuchulain asked,[4] "And what is that white cairn yonder on the height of the mountain?" "And that is Finncharn ('the White Cairn') of Sliab Moduirn," Ibar answered. "But yonder cairn is beautiful," exclaimed the lad. "It surely is beautiful," Ibar answered. "Lead on, fellow, till we reach yonder cairn." "Well, but thou art both a pleasant and tedious inquisitor, I see," exclaimed Ibar; "but this is my first [5]journey and my first[5] time with thee. It shall be my last time till the very day of doom, if once I get back to Emain."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 612.

[2-2] Stowe.

[a] Or, more literally, 'a clawing match.'

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 615-616.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 616.

[5-5] Stowe.



“Howbeit they went to the top of the hill. “It is pleasant here, O Ibar,” the little boy exclaimed. “Point out to me Ulster on every side, for I am no wise acquainted with the land of my master Conchobar.” The horseman [W.1211.] pointed him out Ulster all around him. He pointed him out the hills and the fields and the mounts of the province on every side. He pointed him out the plains and the duns and the strongholds of the province. “’Tis a goodly sight, O Ibar,” exclaimed the little lad. “What is that indented, angular, bordered and glenny plain to the south of us?” “Mag Breg,” replied Ibar. “Tell thou to me the buildings and forts of that plain.” The gilla taught him [1]the name of every chief dun between Temair and Cenannas,[1] Temair and Taltiu, Cletech and Cnogba and Brug (‘the Fort’) of Mac ind Oc. [2]He pointed out to him then[2] the dun of the [3]three[3] sons of Necht Scene (‘the Fierce’):

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[4]Foill and Fandall and Tuachall, their names;[4] [5]Fer Ulli son of Lugaid was their father, and Necht [6]from the mouth of the[6] Scene was their mother. Now the Ulstermen had slain their father; it was for that reason they were at war with Ulster.[5] "But are those not Necht's sons, that boast that not more of the Ulstermen are alive than have fallen at their hands?" "The same, in sooth," answered the gilla. "On with us to the dun of the macNechta," cried the little boy. "Alas, in truth, that thou sayest so," quoth Ibar; [7]"'tis a peril for us." [7] [8]"Truly, not to avoid it do we go," answered Cuchulain.[8] "We know it is an act of great folly for us to say so, but whoever may go," said Ibar, "it will not be myself." "Living or dead, go there thou shalt," the little boy cried. "'Tis alive I shall go to the south," answered Ibar, "and dead I shall be left at the dun, I know, even at the dun of the macNechta."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 620.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 623.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 623.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 624.

[5-5] LU. 623, marginal note.

[6-6] LU. 623, gloss.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 627.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 628.

"They push on to the dun [1]and they unharness their horses in the place where the bog and the river meet south [W.1227.] of the dun of the macNechta.[1] And the little boy sprang out of the chariot onto the green. Thus was the green of the dun, with a pillar-stone upon it and an iron band around that, and a band for prowess it was, and there was a writing in ogam at its joint, and this is the writing it bore: 'Whoever should come to the green, if he be a champion, it is geis for him to depart from the green without giving challenge to single combat.[1] The lad deciphered the writing and put his two arms around the pillar-stone. Just as the pillar-stone was with its ring, he flung it [2]with a cast of his hand[2] into the moat, so that a wave passed over it. "Methinks," spake Ibar, "it is no better now than to be where it was. And we know thou shalt now get on this green the thing thou desirest, even the token of death, yea, of doom and destruction!" [3]For it was the violation of a geis of the sons of Necht Scene to do that thing.[3] "Good, O Ibar, spread the chariot-coverings and its skins for me that I may [LL.fo.66b.] snatch a little sleep." "Woe is me, that thou sayest so," answered the gilla; "for a foeman's land is this and not a green for diversion." [4]And Cuchulain said to the

gilla, "Do not awaken me for a few but awaken me for many." [4] The gilla arranged the chariot-coverings and its skins [5] under Cuchulain, and the lad fell asleep on the green. [5]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 629.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 630.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 631.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 634-635.

[5-5] Stowe.

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"Then came one of the macNechta on to the fair-green, to wit, Foill son of Necht. [6]Then was the charioteer sore afraid, for he durst not waken him, for Cuchulain had told him at first not to waken him for a few.[6] "Unyoke not the horses, gilla," cried Foill. "I am not fain to, at all," answered Ibar; "the reins and the lines are still in my hand." "Whose horses are those, then?" Foill asked. [W.1246.] "Two of Conchobar's horses," answered the gilla; "the two of the dappled heads." "That is the knowledge I have of them. And what hath brought these steeds here to the borders?" "A tender youth that has assumed arms amongst us [1]to-day for luck and good omen,"[1] the horseboy answered, "is come to the edges of the marshes to display his comeliness." "May it not be for victory nor for triumph, [2]his first-taking of arms,"[2] exclaimed Foill. [3]"Let him not stop in our land and let the horses not graze here any longer.[3] If I knew he was fit for deeds, it is dead he should go back northwards to Emain and not alive!" "In good sooth, he is not fit for deeds," Ibar answered; "it is by no means right to say it of him; it is the seventh year since he was taken from the crib. [4]Think not to earn enmity,"[a] Ibar said further to the warrior; "and moreover the child sleepeth."[4]

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 635-638.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 641.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 642.

[a] That is, the enmity of the Ulstermen by slaying Cuchulain.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 644-645.

"The little lad raised his face from the ground and drew his hand over his face, and he became as one crimson wheelball from his crown to the ground. [5]"Not a child am I, at all, but it is to seek battle with a man that this child here is come.[5] Aye, but I am fit for deeds!" the lad cried. [6]"That pleaseth me well," said the champion;[6] "but more like than what thou sayest, meseemeth, thou art not fit for deeds." "Thou wilt know that better if we go to the ford. But, go fetch thy weapons, for I see it is in the guise of a churl thou art come, and I slay nor charioteers nor grooms nor folk without arms." The man went apace after his arms. [7]"Now[7] thou shouldst have a care for us against yonder man [8]that comes to meet thee,[8] little lad," said Ibar. "And why so?" [W.1262.] asked the lad. "Foill son of Necht is the man thou seest. Neither points nor edges of weapons can harm him." "Not before me shouldst thou say that, O Ibar," quoth the lad. "I will put my hand to the lath-trick for him, namely, to the apple of twice-melted iron, and it will light upon the disc of his shield and on the flat of his forehead, and it will carry away the size of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it will make a sieve-hole outside of his head, till the light of the sky will be visible through his head."

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 645-646.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 647.

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[7-7] LU. and YBL. 649.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 649.

“Foill son of Necht came forth. Cuchulain took the lath-trick in hand for him and threw it from him the length of his cast, so that it lighted on the flat of his shield and on the front of his forehead and carried away the bulk of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it made a sieve-hole thereof outside of his head, till the light of the sky might be seen through his head. [1]He went to him then[1] and struck off the head from the trunk. [2]Thereafter he bore away his spoils and his head with him.[2]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 665.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 655.

“Then came the second son out on the green, [3]his name[3] Tuachall (‘the Cunning’) son of Necht. “Aha, I see thou wouldst boast of this deed,” quoth Tuachall. “In the first place I deem it no cause to boast for slaying one champion,” said Cuchulain; “thou shalt not boast of it this time, for thou shalt fall by my hand.” “Off with thee for thine arms, then, for ’tis not as a warrior thou art come.” The man rushed after his arms. “Thou shouldst have a care for us against yon man, lad,” said Ibar. “How so?” the lad asked. “Tuachall son of Necht is the man thou beholdest. [4]And he is nowise miss-named, for he falls not by arms at all.[4] Unless thou worstest him with the first blow or with the first shot or with the first touch, [LL.fo.67a.] thou wilt not worst him [W.1283.] ever, because of his craftiness and the skill wherewith he plays round the points of the weapons.” “That should not be said before me, O Ibar,” cried the lad. [1]“I swear by the god by whom my people swear, he shall never again ply his skill on the men of Ulster.[1] I will put my hand on Conchobar’s well-tempered lance, on the Craisech Neme (‘the Venomous Lance’). [2]It will be an outlaw’s hand to him.[2] It will light on the shield over his belly, and it will crush through his ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart in his breast. That would be the smiting cast of an enemy and not the friendliness of a fellow countryman![a] From me he shall not get sick-nursing or care till the brink of doom.”

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 662-663.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 651-652.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 653; probably a proverbial expression.

[a] The force of Cuchulain’s boast lay in the fact that, according to the Brehon Laws, if the aggressor were not a native or of the same class as the injured party, he was exempt from the law of compensation.



“Tuachall son of Necht came forth on the green, and the lad laid his hand on Conchobar’s lance against him, and it struck the shield above his belly and broke through the ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart within his breast. He struck off his head or ever it reached the ground. [3]Thereafter Cuchulain carried off his head and his spoils with him to his own charioteer.[3]

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[3-3] LU. and YBL. 666.

"Then came the youngest of the sons forth on the green, namely, Fandall son of Necht. "Fools were the folk who fought with thee here," cried Fandall. "How, now!" cried the lad. "Come down to the pool, where thy foot findeth not bottom." Fandall rushed on to the pool. "Thou shouldst be wary for us of him, little boy," said Ibar. "Why should I then?" asked the lad. "Fandall son of Necht is the man whom thou seest. For this he bears the name Fandall ('the Swallow'): like a swallow or weasel[b] he courseth the sea; the swimmers of the world [W.1302.] cannot reach him." "Thou shouldst not speak thus before me, O Ibar," said the lad. [1]"I swear, never again will he ply that feat on the men of Ulster.[1] Thou knowest the river that is in our land, in Emain, the Callann. When the boys frequent it with their games of sport and when the water is not beneath them, [2]if the surface is not reached by them all,[2] I do carry a boy over it on either of my palms and a boy on either of my shoulders, and I myself do not even wet my ankles under the weight of them."

[b] LU. and YBL. have 'a swan.'

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 657-658.

[2-2] Stowe. That is, when the water is over their heads.

"They met upon the water [3]and they engaged in wrestling upon it,[3] and the little boy closed his arms over Fandall, so that the sea came up even with him, and he gave him a deft blow with Conchobar's sword and chopped off his head from the trunk, and left the body to go down with the stream, and he carried off the head [4]and the spoils[4] with him.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 661.

"Thereupon Cuchulain went into the dun and pillaged the place and burned it so that its buildings were no higher than its walls. And they turned on their way to Sliab Fuait and carried the three heads of Necht's sons with them. [5]Soon Cuchulain heard the cry of their mother after them, of Necht Scene, namely."[5] [6]"Now I will not give over my spoils," cried Cuchulain, "till I reach Emain Macha." Thereupon Cuchulain and Ibar set out for Emain Macha with their spoils. It was then Cuchulain spoke to his charioteer: "Thou didst promise us a good run," said Cuchulain, "and we need it now because of the storm and pursuit that is after us." Forthwith they hasten to Sliab Fuait. Such was the speed of the course they held over Breg, after the urging of the charioteer, that the horses of the chariot overtook the wind and the birds in [W.1317.] their flight and Cuchulain caught the throw he had cast from his sling or ever it reached the ground.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 667-668.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 669-679.

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"When they came to Sliab Fuait[6] they espied a herd of wild deer before them. "What are those many cattle, O Ibar, those nimble ones yonder?" asked the lad; "are they tame or are they other deer?" "They are real wild deer, indeed," Ibar answered; "herds of wild deer that haunt the wastes of Sliab Fuait." [1]"Which," asked Cuchulain, "would the men of Ulster deem best, to bring them dead or alive?" "More wonderful, alive," answered the charioteer; "not every one can do it so; but dead, there is none of them cannot do it. Thou canst not do this, carry off any of them alive." "Truly I can," said Cuchulain.[1] "Ply the goad for us on the horses [2]into the bog,[2] to see can we take some of them." The charioteer drove a goad into the horses. It was beyond the power of the king's overfat steeds to keep up with the deer. [3]Soon the horses stuck in the marsh.[3] The lad got down from the chariot and [4]as the fruit of his run and his race, in the morass which was around him,[4] he caught two of the swift, stout deer. He fastened them to the back poles and the bows and the thongs of the chariot.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 669-679.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 681-686.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 686.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 687.

[4-4] Stowe.

"They continued their way to the mound-seat of Emain, where they saw flocks of white swans flying by them. "What are those birds there, O Ibar?" the lad asked; "are yonder birds tame [LL.fo.67.] or are they other birds?" "Indeed, they are real wild birds," Ibar answered; "flocks of swans are they that come from the rocks and crags and islands of the great sea without, to feed on the plains and smooth spots of Erin." "Which would be stranger [5]to the Ulstermen,[5] O Ibar, for them to be fetched alive to Emain or dead?" asked the lad. "Stranger far, alive," [W.1333.] Ibar answered, "for not every one succeeds in taking the birds alive, [1]while they are many that take them dead." [1] Then did the lad perform one of his lesser feats upon them: [2]he put a small stone in his sling,[2] so that he brought down eight[a] of the birds; and then he performed a greater feat: [3]he threw a large stone at them[3] and he brought down sixteen[b] of their number. [4]With his return stroke all that was done.[4] He fastened them to the hind poles and the bows and the thongs and the ropes and the traces of the chariot.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 692.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[a] 'Seven,' LU. and YBL. 695.

[3-3] Stowe.

[b] 'Twelve,' LU. and YBL. 696.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 696-697.

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"Take the birds along with thee, O Ibar," cried the lad [5]to his charioteer. If I myself go to take them," he added, "the wild deer will spring upon thee." [5] "I am in sore straits," answered Ibar; "[6]I find it not easy to go." [6] "What may it be?" asked the lad. "Great cause have I. [7]The horses have become wild, so that I cannot go by them. [7] If I stir at all from where I am, the chariot's iron wheels will cut me down [8]because of their sharpness [8] and because of the strength and the power and the might of the career of the horses. If I make any move, the horns of the deer will pierce and gore me, [9]for the horns of the stag have filled the whole space between the two shafts of the chariot." [9] "Ah, no true champion art thou any longer, O Ibar," [10]said the lad; [10] [11]"step thus from his horn. [11] [12]I swear by the god by whom the Ulstermen swear, [12] because of the look I shall give at the horses they will not depart from the straight way; at the look I shall give at the deer they will bend their heads in fear and awe of me; [13]they will not dare move, [13] and [W.1346.] it will be safe for thee e'en though thou goest in front of their horns." [1]And so it was done. Cuchulain fastened the reins. [1] [2]Then [2] [3]the charioteer [3] [4]went and collected the birds, and he bound them to the hind poles and to the thongs and the traces of the chariot. [4] [5]Thus it was that he proceeded to Emain Macha: the wild deer behind his chariot, and the flock of swans flying over the same, and the three heads of the sons of Necht Scene [6]and the jewels, treasures and wealth of their enemies arranged [6] in his chariot. [5]

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 698-699.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 699.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 700.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 702.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 703.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 703.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 704.

[13-13] LU. and YBL. 706.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 707.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 708.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 709-711.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

“[7]Thereupon[7] they went on till [8]bravely, boldly, battle-victoriously, boastingly, blade-redded,[8] they reached [9]the fair plain of[9] Emain. It was then Lebarcham, [10]the watch in Emain Macha,[10] [11]came forth and[11] discerned them, she, the daughter of Aue (‘Ear’) and of Adarc (‘Horn’) [12]and she hastened to Conchobar’s house, her eye restless in her head and her tongue faltering in her jaw.[12] “A single chariot-fighter is here, [13]coming towards Emain Macha,”[13] cried Lebarcham, “and his coming is fearful. The heads of his foes all red in his chariot with him. Beautiful, all-white birds he has hovering around in the chariot. With him are wild, untamed deer, bound and fettered, shackled and pinioned. And [14]I give my word,[14]

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if he be not attended to this night, [15]blood will flow over Conchobar's province by him and[15] the youths of Ulster will fall by his hand." "We know him, that chariot-fighter," spake Conchobar; "[16]belike it is[16] the little gilla, my sister's son, who went to the edge of the marches [17]at the beginning of the day,[17] [W.1355.] who has reddened his hands and is still unsated of combat, and unless he be attended to, all the youths of Emain will fall by his hand." [1]Soon he turned the left[a] side of his chariot towards Emain, and this was geis for Emain. And Cuchulain cried, "I swear by the god by whom the Ulstermen swear, if a man be not found to engage with me, I will spill the blood of every one in the dun!"[1]

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 713.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] H. 2. 17.

[15-15] H. 2. 17.

[16-16] H. 2. 17.

[17-17] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 715-718.

[a] To turn the left side was an insult and sign of hostility.

"And this was the counsel they agreed to follow: to let out the womenfolk to meet the youth, namely, thrice fifty women, even ten and seven-score bold, stark-naked women, at one and the same time, and their chieftainess, Scannlach ('the Wanton') before them, to discover their persons and their shame[b] to him. [2]"Let the young women go," said Conchobar, "and bare their paps and their breasts and their swelling bosoms, and if he be a true warrior he will not withstand being bound, and he shall be placed in a vat of cold water until his anger go from him." [2] [3]Thereupon[3] the young women all

[4]arose and[4] marched out, [5]and these are the names of those queens: Sgamalus and Sgannlach and Sgiathan, Feidlim and Deigtini Finnchas, and Finngheal and Fidniam and Niam, daughter of Celtchar son of Uthechar[5]; and they discovered their nakedness and all their shame to him. [6]"These are the warriors that will meet thee to-day," quoth Mugain, wife of Conchobar son of Ness.[6] The lad hid his face from them and turned his gaze on the chariot, that he might not see the nakedness or the shame of the women.[c] Then the lad was lifted out of the chariot. He was placed in three vats of cold water to extinguish his wrath; and the first vat into which he was put burst its staves and its hoops like the cracking of nuts around him. [W.1367.] The next vat [1]into which he went[1] [2]boiled with bubbles as big as fists[2] therefrom. The third vat [3]into which he went,[3] some men might endure it and others might not. Then the boy's wrath went down.

[b] 'Breasts,' LU. and YBL. 720.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 720-721.

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[c] This exposure was a powerful magico-religious symbol and had a quasi-sacred or ritual character.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Translating from Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

“[4]Thereupon he came out,[4] and his [5]festive[5] garments were put on him [6]by Mugain the queen.[6] His comeliness appeared on him [LL.fo.68a.] and he made a crimson wheel-ball of himself from his crown to the ground. [7]A shout was raised at the bluish purple about him.[7] [8]Beautiful then was the lad[8] [9]that was raised up in view. [9] Seven toes he had to each of his two feet, and seven fingers to each of his two hands, and seven pupils to each of his two kingly eyes, and seven gems of the brilliance of the eye was each separate pupil. Four spots of down on either of his two cheeks: a blue spot, a purple spot, a green spot, a yellow spot. Fifty strands of bright-yellow hair from one ear to the other, like to a comb of birch twigs or like to a brooch of pale gold in the face of the sun. A clear, white, shorn spot was upon him, as if a cow had licked it. A [10]fair, laced[10] green[a] mantle about him; a silver pin therein [11]over his white breast, so that the eyes of men could not look at it for its gleam and its brightness.[11] A [12]hooded[12] tunic of thread of gold about him. [13]A magnificent, fair-coloured, dark purple shield he bore. Two hard, five-pointed spears in his hand. A diadem of gold round his head.[13] And the lad was seated between the two feet of Conchobar, [14]and that was his couch ever after,[14] and the king began to stroke his close-shorn hair.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 726.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] LU. 726.

[7-7] H. 2. 17. Thurneysen, *Zeitschrift fuer Celtische Philologie*, Bd. VIII, S. 538, note 13, understands this to mean, 'a bluish purple cloak was thrown around him.'

[8-8] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[a] 'Blue,' LU. and YBL. 727 and *Eg.* 1782.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 727.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] LU. and YBL. 728.

[W.1381.] "A mere lad accomplished these deeds at the end of seven years after his birth," [1]continued Fiachu son of Fiarba;[1] "for he overcame heroes and battle-champions at whose hands two-thirds of the men of Ulster had fallen, and these had not got their revenge on them until that scion rose up for them. No need then is there of wonder or of surprise, though he came to the border, though he slew one man or two men or three men or four men, [2]though he cut off the four-headed pole with one cut and one blow of his shining sword[2] when now are fulfilled his seventeen years at the time of the Tain Bo Cualnge."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 729-730.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

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[3]Albeit gladness, joy and happiness was the part of the men of Ulster for that, sorrow, grief and unhappiness was the part of the men of Erin, for they knew that the little lad that had done those deeds in the time of his boyhood, it would be no wonder if he should do great deeds of valour in the time of his manhood.[3]

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

These, accordingly, are some of the youthful exploits of Cuchulain on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge, and the Prologue of the Tale, and the Names of the Roads and the March of the Host up to this Point.

The Story proper is this which follows now.

* * * * *

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Vllc

[1]BELOW IS A SEPARATE VERSION AS FAR AS THE SLAYING OF ORLAM

“Let us fare forth now,” quoth Ailill. Thereafter they reached Mag Mucceda (‘the plain of the Swineherd.’) Cuchulain lopped off an oak that was before him in that place and set an ogam-writing on its side. This is what was on it: ‘That no one should pass by till a chariot-warrior with a chariot should overleap it.’

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 733-766.

They pitch there their tents and proceed to leap over the oak in their chariots. Thereat thirty horses fall and thirty chariots are broken. Now, Belach Ane (‘the Pass of Sport’) is the name of that place forever.

They bide there till morning. Fraech [2]son of Fidach[2] was summoned to them. “Help us, O Fraech,” spake Medb; “deliver us from the strait we are in. Rise up for us to meet Cuchulain, if perchance thou wilt fight him.”

[2-2] YBL. 741.

Betimes in the morning, with nine men Fraech went out from thence till he arrived at Ath Fuait, when he saw the youth Cuchulain bathing in the river. “Bide here,” spake Fraech to his people, “till I fight with yonder man; he is not good in the water,” said he. He doffs his clothes and goes into the water to meet him. “Come not before me,” cried Cuchulain; “it shall be thy death and it would grieve me to kill thee.” “Nay, but I will go,” answered Fraech, “so that we come together in the water, and it behoves thee to

engage with me.” “Settle that as seemeth thee good,” Cuchulain made answer. “Each of us with his arms round the other,” said Fraech. They fall to wrestling for a long time in the water and Fraech is thrust under. Cuchulain brings him above again. “This time,” spake Cuchulain, “wilt thou acknowledge that I saved thee?” “I will not,” Fraech answered. Cuchulain thrusts him under again, so that Fraech is destroyed.

He is placed on the ground. His people bear the body [10]with them[10] to the camp. Ath Fraeich (‘Fraech’s Ford’) is the name of that ford for ever. All the army keen [2]their[2] Fraech, till they see a troop of women, in green tunics standing over the corpse of Fraech son of Fidach. These women bear him into the fairy dwelling. Sid Fraeich (‘Fraech’s Mound’) is the name of the Elfmound ever since.



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[10-10] *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] YBL. 758.

Fergus leaps over the oak-stump in his [3]own[3] chariot [4]and knocks off its head.[4]
[5]According to another version,[5] they proceed till they reach [6]Ath Meislir.[6]
Cuchulain destroys six of them there, namely, [7]Meislir *et reliqua*,[7] [8]the six Dungals
of Irrus.[8]

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

[5-5] YBL. 762.

[6-6] Reading with YBL. '*Ath Taiten*,' LU. 762.

[7-7] YBL. 763.

[8-8] LU. 763.

They go thence to Fornocht. Medb had a whelp named Baiscne. Cuchulain made a cast at him, so that he struck off his head. Now, Druim ('Ridge') is the name of that place ever after.[1]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 733-766 (see page 80).

[9]According to another version, however, it is there that the youth who was in the chariot by the side of Medb and the pet bird were slain by the casts, but, according to this version, that happened after the slaying of Orlam.[9]

[9] YBL. 766-769.

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VIII

THE SLAYING OF ORLAM

[W.1393.] The four grand provinces of Erin set forth on the morrow eastwards over Cronn ('the Round'), which is a mountain. Cuchulain had gone out before them, till he came upon the charioteer of Orlam son of Aililla and of Medb. This was at Tamlacht Orlaim ('Orlam's Gravestone') [1]a little to the[1] north of Disert Lochaid ('Lochat's



Hermitage'). The charioteer was engaged in cutting chariot-poles from a holly-tree in the wood. [2]But according to another version it is the hind pole of Cuchulain's chariot that was broken and it was to cut a pole he had gone when Orlam's charioteer came up. [2] [3]According to this version, it was the charioteer who was cutting the pole.[3]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 772.

[2-2] YBL. 773-775.

[3-3] LU. 773-775.

[4]Not long was the battle-victorious Hound there when he heard a sound and an uproar.[4] "Behold, O Laeg," cried Cuchulain; "[5]who of the host of the foe have come into this land to carry off a share of cattle and booty from the province wherein they came?[5] How bold are the ways of the Ulstermen, if it be they that cut down the woods in this fashion in the face of the men of Erin. But, [6]check the horses and hold the chariot.[6] Tarry thou here a little, till I know who cuts down the woods in this manner." Then Cuchulain went on till he came up to [7]Orlam's[7] charioteer, [W.1401.] [1]to stop him; he thought he was one of the men of Ulster.[1] "What dost thou here, gilla?" asked Cuchulain. "Indeed, then," answered the gilla, "I cut chariot-poles from this holm, because our chariots were broken yesterday in pursuit of that famous wildling, namely Cuchulain.

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And for thy manhood's sake, young warrior, pray come to my aid, so that that famous Cuchulain come not upon me." "Take thy choice, gilla," said Cuchulain, "to gather or to trim them, either." "I will see to gathering them, for it is easier," [2]the gilla answered.[2] Cuchulain started to cut the poles and he drew them between the forks of his feet and his hands against their bends and their knots, so that he made them smooth and straight and slippery and trimmed; he polished them so that not even a midge could find footing thereon when he had passed them away from him. Then full sure the gilla gazed upon him. "Far then, meseems, from fitting is the task I put on thee. [3]And for love of thy valour,[3] who art thou, say, O warrior?" the gilla asked, [4]for he was sore affrighted.[4] "That same renowned Cuchulain am I of whom thou spakest [5]a while ago[5] in the morning." "Woe is me then, by reason of this," cried the gilla; "for this am I lost forever." [LL.fo.68b.] [6]"Whence comest thou [7]and who art thou[7]?" Cuchulain asked. "Charioteer am I of Orlam, Ailill's son and Medb's,"[6] [8]said he.[8] [9]"Fear nothing;[9] I will not slay thee at all, boy," said Cuchulain; "for I slay nor charioteers nor horseboys nor persons unarmed. But, prithee, where is thy master, [10]gilla[10]?" "Over yonder by the trench, [11]with his back to the pillar-stone,[11]" answered the gilla. "Off with thee thither to him and bear him a warning that he be on his guard. For if we meet he shall fall by my hand."

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] Stowe.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 777.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 786

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 786-787.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] LU. 787.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 789.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[W.1419.] Thereupon the charioteer repaired [1]by one way[1] to his master, [2]and Cuchulain went by another,[2] and fast as the gilla sped to Orlam, faster still Cuchulain did reach him [3]and offered him combat[3] and he struck off his head, and raising it aloft displayed it to the men of Erin, [4]and he flourished it in the presence of the host.[4] [5]Then he put the head on the charioteer's back and said, "Take this with thee, and so go to the camp. Unless thou goest so, a stone out of my sling will reach thee."

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] Stowe, LU. and YBL. 792.

When the charioteer came nigh to the camp he took the head from his back and told his adventures to Ailill and Medb. "It is not the same, this exploit and the catching of birds," quoth she. "And he told me" (said the boy), "unless I brought it on my back to the camp, he would break my head with a stone." [5] [6]Hence Leaca Orlaim ('Orlam's Flagstones') to the north of Disert Lochaid is the name of the place where he fell. Tamlachta ('Gravestones') is another name for it, and it is for this reason it is so called because of the little gravestones and the violent deaths which Cuchulain worked on it." [6]

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[5-5] LU. and YBL. 793-799.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

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VIIIa

[1]THE SLAYING OF THE THREE MacARACH[1]

[W.1425.] Then came the three macArach on to the ford at Ard Ciannacht to encounter Cuchulain: Lon ('Ousel'), Uala ('Pride'), and Diliu ('Deluge');—Meslir ('Lir's Fosterling'), and Meslaoc ('Hero's Fosterling'), and Meslethain ('Lethan's Fosterling') were the names of their charioteers. This is why they came to engage with Cuchulain, for the deed he had done the day before they deemed past bearing, when the two sons of Nera son of Nuatar, son of Tacan, were slain at Ath Gabla ('Fork-ford'), and Orlam, Ailill's son and Medb's, was slain withal and his head displayed to the men of Erin, so that [2]their desire was[2] to kill Cuchulain in the same manner [3]in revenge for him,[3] [4]and that they should be the ones to rid the host of that pest[4] and bring his head with them to set it aloft. They went into the wood and cut off three [5]great[5] white-hazel wood-strips (and put them) into the hands of their charioteers, so that the six of them might engage in battle at one and the same time with Cuchulain. Cuchulain turned on them and smote their six heads from them. Thus fell the macArach at the hands of Cuchulain, [6]because they observed not fair fight with him. At that same time Orlam's charioteer was between Ailill and Medb. Cuchulain slung a stone at him, so that it broke his head and his brains came out over his ears. Fertedil was his name. Hence it is not true that Cuchulain slew no charioteers. Albeit he slew them not without fault.[6]

[1-1] H. 2. 17, and, similarly, LU. fo. 64a, in the margin. LU. reads *MacGarach*.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 806.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 806-807.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 808-812.

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VIIIb

[1]THE COMBAT OF LETHAN AND CUCHULAIN[1]

[W.1439.] There came also Lethan ('the Broad') to his ford on the Nith in the land of Conalle Murthemni, to fight with Cuchulain. [2]He was angered at what Cuchulain had wrought.[2] He came upon him at the ford. Ath Carpait ('Chariot-ford') is the name of the ford where they fought, for their chariots were broken in the combat on the ford. It is there that Mulcha, [3]Lethan's charioteer,[3] fell on the [4]shoulder of the[4] hill between the two fords, [5]for he had offered battle and combat to Laeg son of Riagabair.[5] Hence it is called Guala Mulchi ('Mulcha's Shoulder') ever since. It is there, too, that Cuchulain and Lethan met, and Lethan fell at Cuchulain's hands and he smote his head from his neck on the ford and left it therewith, that is, he left the head with the trunk. Wherefore the name of the ford [6]of the Nith[6] was called Ath Lethain ('Lethain's Ford') ever since in the district of Conalle Murthemni.

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[1-1] The superscription is taken from Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 837.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 841.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 841.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 839 and Stowe.

Then came [7]unto them[7] the Crutti Cainbili ('the Tuneful Harpers'), from Ess Ruaid in the north to amuse them, [8]out of friendship for Ailill and Medb.[8] They opined it was to spy upon them [9]they were come[9] from Ulster. [10]When they came within sight of the camp of the men of Erin, fear, terror, and dread possessed them,[10] and the hosts pursued [W.1450.] them as never men pursued, far and wide, till they escaped them in the shapes of deer near the standing stones at Lia Mor ('Great Stone') [1]in the north.[1] For though they were known as the 'Mellifluous Harpers' they were [2]druids,[2] men of great cunning and great power of augury and magic.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 835.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 835.

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VIIIc

[1]THE KILLING OF THE SQUIRREL AND OF THE TAME BIRD[1]

[W.1456.] Then Cuchulain made a threat [2]in Methe[2] that wherever he saw Medb he would cast a stone at her and that it would not go far from the side of her head. That he also fulfilled. In the place where he saw Medb west of the ford he cast a stone from his sling at her, so that it killed the pet bird that was on her shoulder. Medb passed over the

ford eastwards, and again he cast a stone from his sling at her east of the ford, so that it killed the tame squirrel that was on her shoulder. Hence the names of those places are still, Meide in Togmail ('Squirrel's Neck') and Meide ind Eoin ('Bird's Neck'). And Ath Srethe ('Ford of the Throw') is the name of the ford over which Cuchulain cast the stone from his sling.

[1-1] The superscription is taken from LU. fo. 64a, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 813.

[3] Then Reuin was drowned in his lake. Hence is Loch Reuin. "Your companion is not afar off from you," cried Ailill to the Mane. They stood up and looked around. When they sat down again, Cuchulain struck one of them so that his head was split. "It is well it was thou hast essayed that; thy[a] mirth was not seemly," quoth Mane the fool; "it is I would have taken his head off." Cuchulain flung a stone at him, so that his head was split. Thus these people were slain: Orlam, first of all, on his hill; the three sons of Arach[a] on their ford; Fertidil in his ... (?); Maenan on his hill. "I swear by the god by whom my people swear," cried Ailill; "the man that scoffs at Cuchulain here I will make two halves of. But above all let us hasten our way by day and by night," Ailill continued, "till we come to Cualnge. That man will slay two-thirds of your host in this fashion." [3]

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[3-3] LU. and YBL. 820-831 and, partly, in *Eg.* 1782.

[a] Literally, 'your.'

[a] '*Garech*,' LU. and YBL. 827.

[1] Then did the men of Erin deliberate about going to ravage and lay waste Mag Breg and Meath and the plain of Conall and the land of Cuchulain; and it was in the presence of Fergus macRoig they discussed it.[1]

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[W.1465.] The four grand provinces of Erin moved out on the morrow, and began to harry the plains of Breg and Murthemne. And the sharp, keen-edged anxiety [LL.fo.69a.] for Cuchulain came over his fosterer Fergus. And he bade the men of Erin be on their guard that night, for that Cuchulain would come upon them. And here again he sang in his praise, as we wrote it before,[b] and he uttered the lay:—

"If Cuchulain, Cualnge's Hound,
And Red Branch chiefs on you come,
Men will welter in their blood,
Laying waste Murthemne's plain!

[4]"Woe to him possesses wealth, 'Less he find a way to 'scape; And your wives will be enslaved, And your chiefs fill pools of blood![4]

"Far away he[c] held his course,
Till he reached Armenia's heights;
Battle dared he, past his wont,
And the Burnt-breasts[d] put to death!

"Hardest for him was to drive
Necht's sons from their chieftest haunts;
And the smith's hound—mighty deed—
Hath he slain with single hand!

[W.1483.] "More than this I've naught to say, As concerns Dechtire's son; My belief, in troth, is this: Ye will now meet with your fate."

[b] See above, p. 41.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[c] That is, Cuchulain.

[d] That is, the Amazons.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 820-831 and, partly, in *Eg.* 1782.

After this lay, that was the day that Donn ('the Brown Bull') of Cualnge came into the land of Margine [1]to Sliab Culinn[1] and with him fifty heifers of the heifers [2]of Ulster; [2] and there he was pawing and digging up the earth in that place, [3]in the land of Margine, in Cualnge;[3] that is, he flung the turf over him with his heels. [4]While the hosts were marching over Mag Breg, Cuchulain in the meanwhile laid hands on their camps.[4] It was on the same day that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, [5]the prophetess[5] of the fairy-folk, came [6]in the form of a bird,[6] and she perched on the standing-stone in Temair of Cualnge giving the Brown Bull of Cualnge warning [7]and lamentations[7] before the men of Erin. Then she began to address him and what she said was this: "Good, now, O luckless one, thou Brown Bull of Cualnge," so spake the Morrigan; "take heed; for the men of Erin. [8]are on thy track and seeking thee[8] and they will come upon thee, and [9]if thou art taken[9] they will carry thee away to their camp [10]like any ox on a raid,[10] unless thou art on thy guard." And she commenced to give warning to him in this fashion, [11]telling him he would be slain on the Tain, and she delivered this judgement[11] and spake these words aloud:[a]—

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[1-1] LU. and YBL. 853.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 857.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 842-843.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 844.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[a] The following passage in 'rosc' is exceedingly difficult and obscure, and the translation given here is consequently incomplete and uncertain.

"Knows not the restless Brown of the [12]truly deadly[12] [W.1502.] fray that is not uncertain?—A raven's[a] croak—The raven that doth not conceal—Foes range your checkered plain—[1]Troops on raids[1]—I have a secret—Ye shall know ... The waving fields—The deep-green grass ... and rich, soft plain—Wealth of flowers' splendour—Badb's cow-lowing—Wild the raven—Dead the men—A tale of woe—Battle-storms[b] on Cualnge evermore, to the death of mighty sons—Kith looking on the death of kin!"

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 846, and Stowe.

[a] The Morrigan, the Irish goddess of battle, most often appeared in the form of a raven.

[1-1] Reading with H. 2. 17.

[b] Translating *cloe*, as suggested by Windisch.

[2]When the Brown Bull of Cualnge heard those words[2] he moved on to Glenn na Samaisce ('Heifers' Glen') in Sliab Culinn ('Hollymount') [3]in the north of Ulster,[3] and fifty of his heifers with him, [4]and his herdsman accompanied him; Forgemen was the name of the cowherd.[4] [5]And he threw off the thrice fifty boys who were wont to play



on his back and he destroyed two-thirds of the boys.[5] This was one of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge: Fifty heifers he would cover every day. These calved before that same hour on the next day and such of them that calved not [6]at the due time[6] burst with the calves, because they could not suffer the begetting of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. One of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge were the fifty [7]grown[7] youths who engaged in games, [8]who[8] on his fine back [9]found room[9] every evening [10]to play draughts and assembly[c] and leaping[10]; [11]he would not put them from him nor would he totter under them.[11] Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was the hundred warriors [W.1535.] he screened from the heat and the cold under his shadow and shelter. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was that no goblin nor boggart nor sprite of the glen dared come into one and the same cantred with him. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was his musical lowing every evening as he returned to his haggard, his shed and his byre. It was music enough and delight for a man in the north and in the south, [1]in the east and the west,[1] and in the middle of the cantred of Cualnge, the lowing he made at even as he came to his haggard, his shed, and his byre. These, then, are some of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

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[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 854, and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 855-856.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[c] Apparently the name of some game.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

Thereupon on the morrow the hosts proceeded among the rocks and dunes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. [3]Cuchulain killed no one from Saile ('the Sea') around Dorthie in the land of Conalle, until he reached Cualnge. At that time Cuchulain was in Cuince, [2]that is a mountain.[2] He had threatened that, where he would see Medb, he would hurl a stone at her head. It was not easy to do this, for it was thus Medb went, with half the host around her and their canopy of shields over her head.[3] And Medb ordered a canopy of shields to be held over her head in order that Cuchulain might not strike her from the hills or hillocks or heights. Howbeit on that day, no killing nor attack came from Cuchulain upon the men of Erin, in the land of Murthemne among the rocks and dunes of Conalle Murthemni.

[2-2] LU. 860.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 858-863.

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VIIId

[1]THE SLAYING OF LOCHE[1]

[W.1552.] The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin bided their time in Rede Loche in Cualnge and pitched camp and took quarters therein for that night. Medb bade her fair handmaiden from amongst her attendants to go for her to the river for water for drinking and washing. Loche was the name of the maiden. Thereupon Loche went, and fifty[a] women in her train and the queen's diadem of gold on her head. And Cuchulain [2]espied them and he[2] [3]put a stone on his sling and[3] cast [LL.fo.69b.] a stone from his [4]staff[4]-sling at her, so that he broke the diadem of gold in three pieces and killed the maiden on her plain. Thence is Rede Loche ('the Plain of Loche') in Cualnge. For Cuchulain had thought, for want of acquaintance and knowledge, that it was Medb that was there.

[1-1] LU. fo. 65a, in the margin.

[a] 'forty,' H. 2. 17.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5]From Finnabair of Cualnge the hosts divided and set the country on fire. They gathered all their women and boys and girls and cattle in Cualnge together so that they all were in Finnabair. "Ye have not fared well," quoth Medb; "I see not the bull amongst you." "He is not in the land at all," replied every one. They summoned Lothar, the cowherd, to Medb. "Where, thinkest thou, is the bull?" she asked. "I have great fear to tell," said the cowherd. "The night," said he, "that the Ulstermen fell into their 'Pains,' the Donn went and three score heifers along with him; and he is at Dubcaire Glinni Gat ('the Black Corrie of the Osier-glen')." "Rise," said Medb, "and take a withy between each two of you." And they do accordingly. Hence is the name, Glenn Gatt, of that glen.

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[5-5] LU. and YBL. 867-887.]

Then they led the bull to Finnabair. In the place where the bull saw Lothar, the cowherd, he attacked him, and soon he carried his entrails out on his horns and together with his thrice fifty heifers he attacked the camp, so that fifty warriors perished. Hence this is the Tragical Death of Lothar on the Tain [1]and the Finding of the Bull according to this version.[1] [2]Thereafter the bull went from them away from the camp and they knew not whither he had gone from them and they were ashamed. Medb asked the cowherd if he might know where the bull was. "I trow he is in the wilds of Sliab Culinn."[2] Then they turned back ravaging Cualnge and they found not the bull there.[5]

[1-1] YBL. 882, which adds: 'We will not follow it further here.'

[2-2] LU., edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe, page 34, note 16.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 867-887.

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VIIIe

[1]THE KILLING OF UALA[1]

[W.1563.] [2]Early[2] on the morrow the hosts continued their way [3]to lay waste the plain of Murthemne and to sack Mag Breg and Meath and Machaire Conaill ('Conall's Plain') and the land of Cualnge. It was then that the streams and rivers of Conalle Murthemni rose to the tops of the trees, and the streams of the Cronn rose withal, until the hosts arrived at Glaiss Cruinn ('Cronn's Stream').[3] And they attempted the stream and failed to cross it [4]because of the size of its waves,[4] [5]so that they slept on its bank.[5] And Cluain Carpat ('Chariot-meadow') is the name of the first place where they reached it. This is why Cluain Carpat is the name of that place, because of the hundred[a] chariots which the river carried away from them to the sea. Medb ordered her people that one of the warriors should go try the river. And [6]on the morrow[6] there arose a great, stout, [7]wonderful[7] warrior of the [8]particular[8] people of Medb [9]and Ailill,[9] Uala by name, and he took on his back a massy rock, [10]to the end that Glaiss Cruinn might not carry him back.[10] And he went to essay the stream, and the stream threw him back dead, lifeless, with his [W.1571.] stone on his back [1]and so he was drowned.[1] Medb ordered that he be lifted [2]out of the river then[2] [3]by the men of Erin[3] and his grave dug [4]and his keen made[4] and his stone raised [5]over his grave,[5] so that it is thence Lia Ualann ('Uala's Stone') [6]on the road near the stream[6] in the land of Cualnge.

[1-1] LU. fo. 65a, in the margin.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. 887, a gloss.

[a] H. 2. 17 has 'fifty charioteers.'

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 889.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 889.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

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[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 891.

Cuchulain clung close to the hosts that day provoking them to encounter and combat. [7]Four and seven score kings fell at his hands at that same stream,[7] and he slew a hundred of their [8]armed,[8] [9]kinglike[9] warriors around Roen and Roi, the two chroniclers of the Tain. [10]This is the reason the account of the Tain was lost and had to be sought afterwards for so long a time.[10]

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 900.

[8-8] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] H. 2. 17; the story of the finding of the Tain is told in the *Imtheacht na Tromdhaimhe* ("The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution"), edited by Owen Connellan, in the Transactions of the Ossianic Society, vol. v, 1857, pp. 103 fl.

Medb called upon her people to go meet Cuchulain in encounter and combat [11]for the sake of the hosts.[11] "It will not be I," and "It will not be I," spake each and every one from his place. "No caitiff is due from my people. Even though one should be due, it is not I would go to oppose Cuchulain, for no easy thing is it to do battle with him."

[12]When they had failed to find the Donn Cualnge,[12] the hosts kept their way along the river [13]around the river Cronn to its source,[13] being unable to cross it, till they reached the place where the river rises out of the mountains, and, had they wished it, they would have gone between the river and the mountain, but Medb would not allow it, so they had to dig and hollow out the mountain [W.1585.] before her in order [1]that their trace might remain there forever and[1] that it might be for a shame and reproach to Ulster.

[11-11] Stowe.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[13-13] LU. and YBL. 893.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 895.

[2]They tarried there three days and three nights till they had dug out the earth before them.[2] And Bernais ('the Gap') of the [4]Foray of Medb and the Gap of the[4] Foray of Cualnge is another name for the place ever since, for it is through it the drove afterwards passed. [3]There Cuchulain killed Cronn and Coemdele and ...[3]

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 896.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 898-899.

The warriors of the four grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and took quarters that night at Belat Aileain ('the Island's Crossway'). Belat Aileain was its name up to then, but Glenn Tail ('Glen of Shedding') is henceforth its name because of the abundance of curds and of milk [5]and of new warm milk[5] which the droves of cattle and the flocks [6]of the land of Conalle and Murthemne[6] yielded there [7]that night[7] for the men of Erin. And Liasa Liac ('Stone Sheds') is another name for it [8]to this day,[8] and it is for this it bears that name, for it is there that the men of Erin raised cattle-stalls and byres for their herds and droves [9]between Cualnge and Conalle.[9] [10]Botha is still another name for it, for the men of Erin erected bothies and huts there.[10]

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[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 909.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

The four of the five grand provinces of Erin took up the march until they reached the Sechair [11]in the west on the morrow.[11] Sechair was the name of the river hitherto; Glaiss Gatlaig ('Osier-water') is its name henceforward. [12]And Glaiss Gatlaig rose up against them.[12] Now this is the reason it had that name, for it was in osiers and ropes that the men of Erin brought [W.1599.] their flocks and droves over across it, and the entire host let their osiers and ropes drift with the stream after crossing. Hence the name, Glaiss Gatlaig. [1]Then they slept at Druim Fene in Conalle. These then are their stages from Cualnge to the plain (of Conalle Murthemni) according to this version. Other authors [2]of this Work[2] and other books aver that they followed another way on their journeyings from Finnabair to Conalle.[1]

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 910.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 912-914.

[2-2] YBL. 914.

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VIII f

[1]THE HARRYING OF CUALNGE FOLLOWETH HERE BELOW[1]

[2]After every one had come with their spoils and they were all gathered in Finnabair of Cualnge, Medb spake: "Let the camp be divided here," said Medb; "the foray cannot be caried on by a single road. Let Ailill with half his force go by Midluachair. We and Fergus will go by Bernas Bo Ulad ('the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster')." "Not fair is the part that has fallen to us of the force," said Fergus; "the cattle cannot be driven over the

mountain without dividing.” This then is done. Hence cometh Bernas Bo Ulad (‘the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster’).

[1-1] LU. fo. 65b, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 916-1197, omitting 1079-1091.

Then spake Ailill to his charioteer Cuillius: “Find out for me to-day Medb and Fergus. I wot not what hath led them to keep thus together. I would fain have a token from thee.” Cuillius went where Medb and Fergus wantoned. The pair dallied behind while the warriors continued their march. Cuillius stole near them and they perceived not the spy. It happened that Fergus’ sword lay close by him. Cuillius drew it from its sheath and left the sheath empty. Then Cuillius betook himself to Ailill. “Well?” said Ailill. “Well, then,” replied [3]Cuillius;[3] “thou knowest the signification of this token. As thou hast thought,” continued Cuillius, “it is thus I discovered them, lying together.” “It is so, then.” Each of them laughs, at the other. “It is well so,” said Ailill; “she had no choice; to win his help on the Tain she hath done it. Keep the sword carefully by thee,” said Ailill; “put it beneath thy seat in the chariot and a linen cloth wrapped round it.”

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[3-3] LU. 930.]

When Fergus got up to take his sword, "Alas!" cried he. "What aileth thee?" Medb asked. "An ill deed have I done Ailill," said he. "Wait thou here till I come out of the wood," said Fergus, "and wonder not though it be long till I come." It happened that Medb knew not of the loss of the sword. Fergus went out taking his charioteer's sword with him in his hand, and he fashioned a sword from a tree in the wood. Hence is Fid Mor Thruailli ('Great Scabbard-Wood') in Ulster.

"Let us hasten after our comrades," said Fergus. The forces of all came together in the plain. They raised their tents. Fergus was summoned to Ailill for a game of chess. When Fergus entered the tent Ailill laughed at him.[a]

[a] Here follows in LU. and YBL. 946-1020, *Eg.* 1782, a most difficult passage, rendered more obscure by the incorporation of glossarial notes into the body of the text. It is almost incapable of translation; it consists of a dialogue or series of repartees during a game of chess, in which Ailill taunts Fergus on the episode just narrated and Fergus replies.

Cuchulain came so that he was before Ath Cruinn ('the Ford of the Cronn'). "O master Laeg," he cried to his driver, "here are the hosts for us." "I swear by the gods," said the charioteer, "I will do a mighty feat in the eyes of chariot-fighters, in quick spurring-on of the slender steeds; with yokes of silver and golden wheels shall they be urged on (?) in triumph. Thou shalt ride before heads of kings. The steeds I guide will bring victory with their bounding." "Take heed, O Laeg," said Cuchulain; "hold the reins for the great triumph of Macha, that the horses drag thee not over the mass at the ... (?) of a woman. Let us go over the straight plain of these ... (?). I call on the waters to help me," cried Cuchulain. "I beseech heaven and earth and the Cronn above all."

Then the Cronn opposes them,[a]
Holds them back from Murthemne,
Till the heroes'[b] work is done
On the mount of Ocaine![c]

[a] That is, the men of Erin.

[b] That is, Cuchulain and Laeg.

[c] See above, page 97.

Therewith the water rose up till it was in the tops of the trees.

Mane son of Ailill and Medb marched in advance of the rest. Cuchulain slew him on the ford and thirty horsemen of his people were drowned. Again Cuchulain laid low twice sixteen warriors of theirs near the stream. The warriors of Erin pitched their tents near



the ford. Lugaid son of Nos [1]grandson of Lomarc[1] Allcomach went to parley with Cuchulain. Thirty horsemen were with him. "Welcome to thee, O Lugaid," cried Cuchulain. "Should a flock of birds graze upon the plain of Murthemne, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. Should fish come to the falls or to the bays, thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have the three sprigs, even a sprig of

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cresses, a sprig of laver, and a sprig of sea-grass; there will be a man to take thy place at the ford." "This welcome is truly meant," replied Lugaid; "the choice of people for the youth whom I desire!" "Splendid are your hosts," said Cuchulain. "It will be no misfortune," said Lugaid, "for thee to stand up alone before them." "True courage and valour have I," Cuchulain made answer. "Lugaid, my master," said Cuchulain, "do the hosts fear me?" "By the god," Lugaid made answer, "I swear that no one man of them nor two men dares make water outside the camp unless twenty or thirty go with him." "It will be something for them," said Cuchulain, "if I begin to cast from my sling. He will be fit for thee, O Lugaid, this companion thou hast in Ulster, [1]if the men oppose me one by one.[1] Say, then, what wouldst thou?" asked Cuchulain. "A truce with my host." "Thou shalt have it, provided there be a token therefor. And tell my master Fergus that there shall be a token on the host. Tell the leeches that there shall be a token on the host, and let them swear to preserve my life and let them provide me each night with provision."

[1-1] LU. 1041.

[1-1] Literally, 'if there oppose me the strength of each single man.'

Lugaid went from him. It happened that Fergus was in the tent with Ailill. Lugaid called him out and reported that (proposal of Cuchulain's) to him. Then Ailill was heard:[a]

[a] The sense of this proposal of Ailill's, omitted in the translation (LU. 1064-1069 and *Eg.* 1782), is not clear.

"I swear by the god, I cannot," said [3]Fergus,[3] "unless I ask the lad. Help me, O Lugaid," said Fergus. "Do thou go to him, to see whether Ailill with a division may come to me to my company. Take him an ox with salt pork and a keg of wine." Thereupon Lugaid goes to Cuchulain and tells him that. "'Tis the same to me whether he go," said Cuchulain. Then the two hosts unite. They remain there till night, [4]or until they spend thirty nights there.[4] Cuchulain destroyed thirty of their warriors with his sling. "Your journeyings will be ill-starred," said Fergus (to Medb and Ailill); "the men of Ulster will come out of their 'Pains' and will grind you down to the earth and the gravel. Evil is the battle-corner wherein we are." He proceeds to Cul Airthir ('the Eastern Nook'). Cuchulain slays thirty of their heroes on Ath Duirn ('Ford of the Fist'). Now they could not reach Cul Airthir till night. Cuchulain killed thirty of their men there and they raised their tents in that place. In the morning Ailill's charioteer, Cuillius to wit, was washing the wheel-bands in the ford. Cuchulain struck him with a stone so that he killed him. Hence is Ath Cuillne ('Ford of Destruction') in Cul Airthir.'[2]

[3-3] 'Lugaid,' LU. 1069.

[4-4] YBL. 1075; but, 'they would be twenty nights there, as other books say,' LU.

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[2-2] LU. and YBL. 916-1197, omitting 1079-1091.

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IX

THE PROPOSALS

[W.1603.] The four grand provinces of Erin proceeded till they pitched camp and took quarters in Druim En ('Birds' Ridge') in the land of Conalle Murthemni, [1]and they slept there[1] that night, [2]as we said before,[2] and Cuchulain held himself at Ferta Illergaib ('the Burial-mound on the Slopes') hard by them that night, and he, Cuchulain, shook, brandished and flourished his weapons that night. [3]Every night of the three nights they were there he made casts from his sling at them, from Ochaine nearby,[3] so that one hundred warriors of the host perished of fright and fear and dread of Cuchulain. [4]"Not long will our host endure in this way with Cuchulain," quoth Ailill.[4] Medb called upon Fiachu son of Ferfebe of the Ulstermen to go parley with Cuchulain, to come to some terms with him. "What terms shall be given him?" asked Fiachu son of Ferfebe. "Not hard to answer," Medb replied: "He shall be recompensed [5]for the loss of his lands and estates,[5] for whosoever has been slain of the Ulstermen, so that it be paid to him as the men of Erin adjudge [6]according to the will of the Ulstermen and of Fergus and of the nobles of the men of Erin who are in this camp and encampment.[6] Entertainment shall be his at all times in Cruachan; wine and [W.1614.] mead shall be poured [LL.fo.70a.] out for him. [1]He shall have from the plain of Ai the equal of the plain of Murthemne and the best chariot that is in Ai and the equipment of twelve men. Offer, if it please him more, the plain wherein he was reared and thrice seven bondmaids.[1] And he shall come into my service and Ailill's, for that is more seemly for him than to be in the service of the lordling with whom he is, [2]even of Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathatch.[2]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1097.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1098.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1100-1101.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1100-1102.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1103-1105.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

Accordingly this was the greatest word of scorn and insult spoken on the Cow-Raid of Cualnge, to make a lordling of the best king of a province in Erin, even of Conchobar.

Then came Fiachu son of Ferfebe to converse with Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "[3]Welcome thy coming and thine arrival, O Fiachu," said Cuchulain.[3] "I regard that welcome as truly meant," [4]said Fiachu.[4] "It is truly meant for thee" [5]replied Cuchulain[5]; "[6]and thou shalt have a night of hospitality this night." "Victory and a blessing attend thee, O fosterling," replied Fiachu. "Not for hospitality am I come, but[6] to parley with thee am I come from Medb, [7]and to bring thee terms." [7] "What

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hast thou brought with thee?" "Thou shalt be recompensed for whatsoever was destroyed of Ulster which shall be paid thee as best the men of Erin adjudge. Entertainment shalt thou enjoy in Cruachan; wine and mead shall be poured out for thee and thou shalt enter the service of Ailill and Medb, for that is more seemly for thee than to be in the service of the lordling with whom thou art." "Nay, of a truth," answered Cuchulain, "I would not sell my mother's brother[a] for any other king!" "Further," [8]continued Fiachu,[8] "that [W.1627.] thou comest to-morrow to a tryst with Medb and Fergus in Glenn Fochaine.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] Stowe.

[a] That is, Conchobar.

[8-8] Stowe.

[1]Therewith Fiachu left behind a wish for long life and health with Cuchulain.[1]

[1-1] Stowe.

Accordingly, early on the morrow, Cuchulain set forth for Glenn Fochaine. Likewise Medb and Fergus went to meet him. And Medb looked narrowly at Cuchulain, and her spirit chafed her at him that day, for no bigger than the bulk of a stripling did he seem to her. "Is that yonder the renowned Cuchulain thou speakest of, O Fergus?" asked Medb, [2]"of whom it is said amongst ye Ulstermen that there is not in Erin a warrior for whom he is not a match and mighty combat?" "Not in Erin alone, did we say," Fergus made answer; "but there is not in the world a warrior for whom he is not a match and mighty combat." [2] And Medb began to address Fergus and she made this lay:—

Medb: "If that be the noble Hound,
Of whom ye of Ulster boast,
What man e'er stout foe hath faced,
Will fend him from Erin's men!"

Fergus: "Howe'er young the Hound thou seest,
That Murthemne's Plain doth course,



That man hath not stood on earth
Whom he'd crush not with his might!"

Medb: "We will bring this warrior terms;
If he slight them, he is mad:
Half his cows, his women, half.
He shall change his way of fight!"

Fergus: "My wish, that yell not o'ercome
This Hound from proud Murthemne!
Deeds he fears not—fierce and bright—
This I know, if it be he!"

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

"Accost Cuchulain, O Fergus," said Medb. "Nay, then," quoth Fergus, "but do thou accost him thyself, for ye are not asunder here in the valley, in Glenn Fochaine." [W.1653.] And Medb began to address Cuchulain and she made a lay, [1]to which he responded:[1]

Medb: "Culann's Hound, whom quatrains praise,[a]
Keep thy staff-sling far from us;
Thy fierce, famed fight hath us ruined,
Hath us broken and confused!"

Cuchulain: "Medb of Mur, he, Maga's son,
No base arrant wight am I.
While I live I'll never cease
Cualnge's raid to harass sore!"

Medb: "If thou wilt take this from us,
Valiant chief, thou Cualnge's Hound;
Half thy cows, thy women, half,
Thou shalt have [2]through fear of thee!"[2]

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Cuchulain: "As by right of thrusts am I
Ulster's champion and defence,
Naught I'll yield till I retrieve
Cow and woman ta'en from Gael!"

Medb: "What thou askest is too much,
After slaughtering our fair troops,
That we keep but steeds and gauds,
All because of one sole man!"

Cuchulain: "Eocho's daughter, fair, of Fal,
I'm not good at wars of words;
Though a warrior—[b] fair the cheer—[b]
Counsel mine is little worth!"

Medb: "Shame thou hast none for what thou sayest,
O Dechtire's lordly[c] son!
Famous are the terms for thee,
O thou battling Culann's Hound!"

[1-1] Stowe.

[a] Literally, 'love.'

[2-2] Reading with H. 1. 13 and Stowe.

[b-b] A cheville.

[c] Literally, 'richly trooped.'

When this lay was finished, Cuchulain accepted none of the terms which she had offered. In such wise they parted in the valley and withdrew in equal anger on the one side and on the other.

The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and took quarters for three days and three nights at Druim En ('Birds' Ridge') in Conalle Murthemni, but neither huts nor tents did they set up, nor did they [W.1688.] engage in feasts or repasts, nor sang they songs nor carols those three nights. And Cuchulain destroyed a hundred of their warriors every night ere the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.

[LL.fo.70b.] "Our hosts will not last long in this fashion," said Medb, "if Cuchulain slays a hundred of our warriors every night. Wherefore is a proposal not made to him and do we not parley with him?" "What might the proposal be?" asked Ailill. "Let the cattle that have milk be given to him and the captive women from amongst our booty. And he on his side shall check his staff-sling from the men of Erin and give leave to the hosts to

sleep, [1]even though he slay them by day." [1] "Who shall go with that proposal?" Ailill asked. "Who," answered Medb, "but macRoth the [2]chief[2] runner!" "Nay, but I will not go," said macRoth, "for I am in no way experienced and know not where Cuchulain may be, [3]and even though I should meet him, I should not know him.[3]" "Ask Fergus," quoth Medb; "like enough he knows [4]where he is.[4]" "Nay, then, I know it not," answered Fergus; "but I trow he is [5]in the snow[5] between Fochain and the sea, taking the wind and the sun after his sleeplessness last night, killing and slaughtering the host single handed." And so it truly was. [6]Then on that errand to Delga macRoth set forth, the messenger of Ailill and Medb. He it is that circles Erin in one day. There it is that Fergus opined that Cuchulain would be, in Delga.[6]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1128.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1109-1111.

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Heavy snow fell that night so that all the [7]five[7] provinces of Erin were a white plane with the snow. And Cuchulain doffed the seven-score waxed, boardlike tunics which were used to be held under cords and strings next his skin, in order that his sense might not be deranged when [W.1709.] the fit of his fury came on him. And the snow melted for thirty feet all around him, because of the intensity of the warrior's heat and the warmth of Cuchulain's body. And the gilla [1]remained a good distance from him for he[1] could not endure to remain near him because of the might of his rage and the warrior's fury and the heat of his body. "A single warrior approacheth, O Cuchulain," cried Laeg [2]to Cuchulain.[2] "What manner of warrior is he?" asked Cuchulain. "A brown, broad-faced, handsome fellow; [3]a yellow head of hair and a linen ornament round it[3]; a splendid, brown, [4]hooded[4] cloak, [5]with red ornamentation,[5] about him; a fine, bronze pin in his cloak; a leathern three-striped doublet next his skin; two gapped shoes between his two feet and the ground; a white-hazel dog-staff in one of his hands; a single-edged sword with ornaments of walrus-tooth on its hilt in the other. "Good, O gilla," quoth Cuchulain, "these be the tokens of a herald. One of the heralds of Erin is he to bring me message and offer of parley."

[7-7] Stowe.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1112.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1112.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1113.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1114.

Now was macRoth arrived at the place where Laeg was, "[6]How now[6]! What is thy title as vassal, O gilla?" macRoth asked. "Vassal am I to the youth up yonder," the gilla made answer. MacRoth came to the place where Cuchulain was. [7]Cuchulain was sitting in the snow there up to his two hips with nothing about him ... his mantle.[7] "[8]How now[8]! What is thy name as vassal, O warrior?" asked macRoth. "Vassal am I to Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach, [9]son of the High King of this province." [9] "Hast not something, [10]a name[10] more special than that?" "Tis enough for the nonce," answered Cuchulain. "Haply, thou knowest where I might find that famous Cuchulain of whom the men [W.1729.] of Erin clamour now on this foray?" "What wouldst thou say to him that thou wouldst not to me?" asked Cuchulain. "To parley with him am I come on the part of Ailill and Medb, with terms and friendly intercourse for him." "What terms hast thou brought with thee for him?" "The milch-kine and the bondwomen of the booty he shall have, and for him to hold back his staff-sling from the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder-feat he works every evening upon them." "Even though the one thou seekest were really at hand, he would not accept the proposals thou askest." "[1]How



so, then," said macRoth[1]; "for the Ulstermen, as amends for their honour and in reprisal for injuries and satires and hindrances [2]and for bands of troops and marauders,[2] will kill [3]for meat in the winter[3] the milch-cows ye have captured, should they happen to have no yeld cattle. And, what is more, they will bring their bondwomen to bed to them, and thus will grow up a base progeny on the side of the mothers in the land of Ulster, [4]and loath I am to leave after me such a disgrace on the men of Ulster.[4]

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[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1116-1118.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1120.

[1] H. 2. 17.

[2] H. 2. 17.

[3] LU. and YBL. 1135.

[4] H. 2. 17.

MacRoth went his way back [5]to the camp of the men of Erin to where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were.[5] "What! Didst thou not find him?" Medb asked. "Verily, [6]I know not, but[6] I found a surly, angry, hateful, wrathful gilla [7]in the snow[7] betwixt Fochain and the sea. Sooth to say, I know not if he were Cuchulain." "Hath he accepted these proposals [8]from thee?"[8] "Nay then, he hath not." And macRoth related [9]unto them all his answer,[9] the reason why he did not accept them. "It was he himself with whom thou spakest," said Fergus.

[5] H. 2. 17.

[6] H. 2. 17.

[7] H. 2. 17.

[8] Stowe.

[9] Stowe.

"Another offer shall be made him," said Medb. "What is the offer?" asked Ailill. "There shall be given to him [W.1747.] the yeld cattle and the noblest of the captive women of the booty, and his sling shall be checked from the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder-feat he works on them every evening." "Who should go make this covenant?" [1]said they.[1] "Who but macRoth [2]the king's envoy,"[2] [3]said every one.[3] "Yea, I will go," said macRoth, "because this time I know him."

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4]Thereupon[4] macRoth [5]arose and[5] came to parley with Cuchulain. "To parley with thee am I come this time [6]with other terms,[6] for I wis it is thou art the renowned Cuchulain." "What hast thou brought with thee now?" [7]Cuchulain asked.[7] "What is dry of the kine and what is noblest of the captives [8]shalt thou get,[8] and hold thy staff-sling [LL.fo.71a.] from the men of Erin and suffer the men of Erin to go to sleep, for not pleasant is the thunder-feat thou workest upon them every evening." "I accept not that offer, because, as amends for their honour, the Ulstermen will kill the dry cattle. For the men of Ulster are honourable men and they would remain wholly without dry kine and milch-kine. They would bring their free women ye have captured to the querns and to the kneading-troughs and into bondage and [9]other[9] serfdom [10]besides.[10] [11]This would be a disgrace.[11] Loath I should be to leave after me this shame in Ulster, that slave-girls and bondmaids should be made of the daughters of kings and princes of Ulster." "Is there any offer at all thou wilt accept this time?" [12]said macRoth[12] "Aye, but there is," answered Cuchulain. "Then wilt thou tell me the offer?" asked macRoth. "By my word," Cuchulain made answer, "'tis not I that will tell you." "It is a question, then," said macRoth. "If there be among you in the camp," said Cuchulain, "one that knows the terms I demand, let [W.1766.] him inform you, [1]and I will abide thereby." [1] "And if there be not?" [2] said macRoth. "If there be not," said Cuchulain,[2] "let no one come near me any more with offers or with friendly intercourse [3]or concerning aught other injunction,[3] for, whosoever may come, it will be the term of his life!"

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[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] Stowe.

MacRoth came back [4]to the camp and station of the men of Erin, to where Ailill, Medb, and Fergus were,[4] and Medb asked his tidings. "Didst thou find him?" Medb asked. "In truth, I found him," macRoth replied. "Hath he accepted [5]the terms?"[5] "He hath not accepted," replied macRoth. "[6]How so;" said Ailill,[6] "is there an offer he will accept?" "There is one, he said," [7]answered macRoth.[7] "Hath he made known to thee this offer?" "This is his word," said macRoth, "that he himself would not disclose it to ye." "'Tis a question, then," said Medb. "But" (macRoth continued), "should there be one in our midst that knows his terms, that one would tell it to me." "And if there be not," [8]said Ailill. "And if there be not,"[8] (answered macRoth), "let no one go seek him any more. But, there is one thing I promise [9]thee,"[9] said macRoth; "even though the kingdom of Erin were [10]given me[10] for it, I for one would not go [11]on these same legs to that place[11] to parley with him [12]again." [12] [13]"Belike, Fergus knows," quoth Ailill.[13] Therewith Medb looked at Fergus. "What are the terms yonder man demands, O Fergus?" Medb asked. [14]"I know what the man meant to disclose.[14] I see no advantage at all for ye in the terms he demands," Fergus replied. "[15]But[15] what are those terms?" asked Medb. "[16]Not difficult to say," replied Fergus.[16] "That a single champion of [W.1782.] the men of Erin [1]be sent[1] to fight [2]and contend[2] with him every day. The while he slayeth that man, the army will be permitted to continue its march. Then, when he will have slain that man, another warrior shall be sent to meet him on the ford. Either that, or the men of Erin shall halt and camp there till sunrise's bright hour in the morning. [3]And, by the ford whereon his single-handed



battle and fight takes place, the cattle shall not be taken by day or by night, to see if there come to him help from the men of Ulster. And I wonder," continued Fergus, "how long it will be till they come out of their 'Pains.' [3] [4] Whatever Ulstermen are injured or wounded nearby him, your leeches shall heal them and ye shall not be paid for the price of their healing. Whatever daughter of kings or of princes of the men of Erin shall love him, ye shall bring her to him together with her purchase and bride-price. [4] And further, Cuchulain's food and clothing shall be provided by you, [5] so long as he will be [5] on this expedition." [6] "Good, O Fergus," [6] asked Ailill, [a] [7] "will he abate aught of these terms?" "In sooth, will he," replied Fergus; "namely, he will not exact to be fed and clothed by you, but of himself will provide food and clothing." [7]

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[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] Stowe.

[12-12] Stowe.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] LU. and YBL. 1138.

[15-15] H. 2. 17.

[16-16] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1140-1143.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[a] 'Medb,' H. 2. 17.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

“By our conscience,” said Ailill, “this is a grievous proposal.” “What he asks is good,” replied Medb; “and he shall obtain those terms, for we deem it easier to bear that he should have one of our warriors every day than a hundred every night.” “Who will go and make known those terms to Cuchulain?” “Who, then, but Fergus?” replied Medb.

"[8]Come now, O Fergus," said Medb; "take upon thee to fulfil and make good those terms to him." [8] "Nevermore!" said Fergus. "Why not?" asked Ailill. [9]"I fear ye will not make true and fulfil them for [W.1792.] me." "They will truly be fulfilled," said Medb.[9] (Then said Fergus:) "Bonds and covenants, pledges and bail shall be given for abiding by those terms and for their fulfilment towards Cuchulain." "I abide by it," said Medb, and she fast bound Fergus to them in like manner.

[8-8] H. 2. 17

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

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X

[1]THE VIOLENT DEATH OF ETARCUMUL[1]

[W.1798.] Fergus' horses were brought and his chariot was hitched [2]and Fergus set forth on that errand.[2] And two horses were brought for Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn, a soft youth of the people of Medb and of Ailill. [3]Now Etarcumul followed Fergus.[3] "Whither goest thou?" Fergus demanded. "We go with thee," Etarcumul made answer. [4]"And why goest thou with me?" asked Fergus.[4] "To behold the form and appearance of Cuchulain, and to gaze upon him, [5]for he is unknown to me." [5] "Wilt thou do my bidding," said Fergus, "thou wilt in no wise go thither." "Why shall I not, pray?" [6]"I would not have thee go," said Fergus; "and it is not out of hatred of thee, only I should be loath to have combat between thee and Cuchulain.[6] Thy light-heartedness, [7]thy haughtiness and thy pride[7] and thine overweeningness (I know), but (I also know) the fierceness and valour and hostility, the [8]violence and vehemence[8] of the youth against whom thou goest, [9]even Cuchulain.[9] And methinks ye will have contention before ye part. [10]No good will come from your meeting." [10] "Art thou not able to come between us [11]to protect me?" [11] [W.1806.] "I am, to be sure," Fergus answered, "provided thou thyself seek not the combat[1] and treat not what he says with contempt." [1] "I will not seek it," [2]said Etarcumul,[2] "till the very day of doom!"

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[1-1] LU. fo. 68a, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1145.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1145.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1147-1149.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1149.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1150.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1150.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1152.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

Then they went their ways [3]in two chariots to Delga,[3] to come up to Cuchulain where Cuchulain was between Fochain and the sea. [4]There it is that he was that day, with his back to the pillar-stone at Crich Rois,[4] playing draughts with Laeg, [5]to wit, his charioteer.[5] [6]The back of his head was turned towards them that approached and Laeg faced them.[6] And not a [7]living[7] thing entered the [8]entire[8] plain without Laeg perceiving it and, notwithstanding, he continued to win every other game of draughts from Cuchulain. "A lone warrior cometh towards us [9]over the plain,[9] [10]my master[10] Cucuc," spake Laeg. "What manner of warrior?" queried Cuchulain. [11]"A fine, large chariot is there," said he.[11] [12]"But what sort of chariot?"[12] "As large as one of the chief mountains that are highest on a great plain appears to me [LL.fo.71b.] the chariot that is under the warrior; [13]and I would liken to the battlements of one of the vast, royal seats of the province the chariot that is in the trappings of those horses; [13] as large as one of the noble trees on a main fort's green meseems the curly, tressed, fair-yellow, all-golden hair hanging loose around the man's head; a purple mantle fringed with thread of gold [14]wrapped[14] around him; a golden, ornamented brooch in the mantle [15]over his breast;[15] [16]a bright-shining, hooded shirt, with red embroidery of red gold trussed up on his white [W.1819.] skin;[16] a broad and grey-shafted lance, [1]perforated from *mimasc*[a] to 'horn,'[1] flaming red in his hand; over him, a bossed, plaited shield, [2]curved, with an engraved edge of silvered bronze,[2]

[3]with applied ornaments of red gold thereon,[3] and a boss of red gold; a lengthy sword, as long as the oar[4] of a huge currach [5]on a wild, stormy night,[5] [6]resting on the two thighs[6] of the great haughty warrior that is within the chariot.[4]”

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1153.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] LL., in the margin.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1154-1155.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] H. 2. 17.

[15-15] Stowe.

[16-16] H. 2. 17.

[a] Some part of the spear.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1159.

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[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1158.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] Following Windisch's emendation of the text.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1160.

"Holla! Welcome the coming of this guest to us!" cried Cuchulain. "We know the man; it is my master Fergus that cometh hither. [7]Empty is the great paddle that my master Fergus carries," said Cuchulain; "for there is no sword in its sheath but a sword of wood. For I have heard," Cuchulain continued, "that Ailill got a chance at him and Medb as they lay, and he took away Fergus' sword from him and gave it to his charioteer to take care of, and the sword of wood was put into its sheath." [7]

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1160-1165.

"Yet another single chariot-fighter I see coming towards us. With fulness of skill and beauty and splendour his horses speed." [8]"A young, tender gilla in armour is in the chariot.[8]" "One of the youths of the men of Erin is he, O my master Laeg," responded Cuchulain. "To scan my appearance and form is that man come, for I am renowned amongst them in the midst of their camp, [9]and they know me not at all." [9]

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

Fergus came up [10]to where Cuchulain was[10] and he sprang from the chariot, and Cuchulain bade him [11]a hearty[11] welcome. [12]"Welcome to thine arrival and thy coming, O my master Fergus!" cried Cuchulain; "and a night's [W.1831.] lodging shalt thou have here this night." [12] [1]"Thy hospitality and eke thy welcome[1] I take for true," Fergus responded. "Verily, it is truly meant for thee," said Cuchulain; "for comes there a brace of birds into the plain, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. If fish rise to the river-mouths, [2]to the stones or waterfalls,[2] thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have a handful of watercress and a handful of sea-grass and a handful of laver [3]and a drink from the sand[3] [4]afterwards.[4] If thou hast a fight or combat [5]with warrior before thee,[5] I myself will go in thy stead to the ford. [6]I will bear the fight that thou mayest return safe to the camp and the fort of the men of Erin on the morrow,[6] [7]and thou shalt lie on a litter of fresh rushes till heavy sleep and slumber come on thee,[7] [8]and I will watch and guard thee as long as thou sleepest." [8] "Well, then, [9]mayest thou have victory and blessing, O fosterling," said Fergus.[9] "We know of what sort is thy hospitality on this occasion, on the Cow-spoil of Cualnge. [10]But, not to claim that are we come,[10] [11]a night's hospitality of thee, but

to fulfil and make good the terms thou askest.[11] As for this compact which thou hast asked of the men of Erin, single-handed combat with one man, thou shalt have it. It is for that I am come, to bind thee thereto, and do thou take it upon thee.” “I pledge myself truly,” said Cuchulain, [13]provided fair play and single-handed combat be granted to me.[13] “And, O, my master Fergus, [14]do thou take upon thee the pact,” said Cuchulain. “I bind myself to it,” replied Fergus.[14] [W.1841.] And no longer than that did he remain in parley, lest the men of Erin should say they were betrayed or deserted by Fergus for his disciple. Fergus’ two horses were brought and his chariot was harnessed and he went back.

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[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] H. 2. 17, and, similarly, Stowe.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1170 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] Reading with Stowe.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] H. 2. 17.

Etarcumul tarried behind gazing for a long time at Cuchulain. "At what starest thou, gilla?" asked Cuchulain. "I look at thee," said Etarcumul. "In truth then, thou hast not far to look," said Cuchulain. [1]"There is no need of straining thine eye for that; not far from thee within sight, thine eye seeth what is not smaller than I nor bigger.[1] If thou but knewest how angered is the little creature thou regardest, myself, to wit! And how then do I appear unto thee gazing upon me?" "Thou pleasest me as thou art; a comely, [2]shapely,[2] wonderful, beautiful youth thou art, with brilliant, striking, various feats. Yet as for rating thee where goodly warriors are or forward youths or heroes of bravery or sledges of destruction, we count thee not nor consider thee at all. [3]I know not why thou shouldst be feared by any one. I behold nothing of terror or fearfulness or of the overpowering of a host in thee. So, a comely youth with arms of wood and with showy feats is all thou art!"[3] [4]"Though thou revilest me,"[4] said Cuchulain, "it is a surety for thee that thou camest from the camp under the protection of Fergus, [5]as thou well

knowest.[5] For the rest, I swear by my gods whom I worship, were it not for the honour of Fergus, it would be only bits of thy bones and shreds of thy limbs, [6]thy reins drawn and thy quarters scattered[6] that would be brought back to the camp [7]behind thy horses and chariot!"[7] "But threaten me no longer [W.1858.] in this wise, [1]Cuchulain[1]!" [2]cried Etarcumul;[2] "for the [3]wonderful[3] terms thou didst exact of the men of Erin, [4]that fair play and[4] combat with one man [5]should be granted thee, [5] none other of the men of Erin but mine own self will come to-morrow [6]at morn's early hour on the ford[6] to attack thee."

[1-1] Reading with H. 2. 17.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1178-1180.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1181.

[5-5] Stowe; LL. reads 'I know.'

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1182-1183.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1185.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

"Come out, then," [7]said Cuchulain,[7] "and howso early thou comest, thou wilt find me here. I will not fly before thee. [8]Before no man have I put foot in flight till now on the Plunder of the Kine of Cualnge and neither will I fly before thee!"[8]

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[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

Etarcumul returned [9]from Methe and Cethe,[9] and began to talk with his driver. "I must needs fight with Cuchulain to-morrow, gilla," said Etarcumul, [10]"for I gave my word to go." [10] "'Tis true, thou didst," quoth the charioteer. [LL.fo.72a.] "Howbeit, I know not wilt thou fulfil it." "But what is better [11]for us,[11] to fulfil it to-morrow or forthwith to-night?" "To our thinking," said the gilla, "albeit no victory is to be won by fighting to-morrow, there is still less to be gained by fighting to-night, for thy combat [12]and hurt[12] is the nearer." "[13]Be that as it may," said he[13]; "turn the [14]horses and[14] chariot back again [15]from the hill[15] for us, gilla, [16]till we go to the ford of combat, [16] for I swear by the gods whom I worship, I will not return [17]to the camp[17] till the end of life and time, till I bring with me the head of that young wildling, [18]even[18] the head of Cuchulain, for a trophy!"

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1188.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[14-14] H. 2. 17.

[15-15] LU. and YBL. 1190.

[16-16] H. 2. 17.

[17-17] Stowe.

[18-18] Stowe.

The charioteer wheeled the chariot again towards the [W.1871.] ford. They brought the left[a] board to face the pair in a line with the ford. Laeg marked [1]this and he cried[1] [2]to Cuchulain[2]: ("Wist thou) the last chariot-fighter that was here a while ago, O Cucuc?" "What of him?" asked Cuchulain. "He has brought his left board towards us in the direction of the ford." "It is Etarcumul, O gilla, who seeks me in combat. [3]I owe no refusal,[3] but far from pleased am I thereat [4]that he should come and seek combat of me. And unwelcome is his coming,[4] because of the honour of my foster-father [5]Fergus[5] under whom he came forth from the camp [6]of the men of Erin.[6] But not that I would protect him do I thus. Fetch me my arms, gilla, to the ford. [7]Bring me my

horse and my chariot after me.[7] I deem it no honour for myself if [8]the fellow[8] reaches the ford before me.” And straightway Cuchulain betook himself to the ford, and he bared his sword over his fair, well-knit spalls and he was ready on the ford to await Etarcumul.

[a] A sign of hostility and an insult.
[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1191.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1192.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

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Then, too, came Etarcumul. "What seekest thou, gilla?" demanded Cuchulain. "Battle with thee I seek," replied Etarcumul. "Hadst thou been advised by me," said Cuchulain, "thou wouldst never have come. [9]I do not desire what thou demandest of me.[9] [10]I have no thought of fighting or contending with thee, Etarcumul.[10] Because of the honour of Fergus under whom thou camest out of the camp [11]and station of the men of Erin,[11] and not because I would spare thee, do I behave thus." [12]"Thou hast no choice but to fight," replied Etarcumul.[12] Thereupon Cuchulain gave him a long-blow whereby [W.1886.] he cut away the sod that was under the soles of his feet, so that he was stretched out like a sack on his back, and [1]his limbs in the air[1] and the sod on his belly. Had Cuchulain wished it it is two pieces he might have made of him. [2]"Hold, fellow.[2] Off with thee now, for I have given thee warning. [3]It mislikes me to cleanse my hands in thee. I would have cloven thee into many parts long since but for Fergus."[3] "I will not go. We will fight on," said Etarcumul. Cuchulain dealt him a well-aimed edge-stroke. [4]With the edge of his sword[4] he sheared the hair from him from poll to forehead, from one ear to the other, as if it were with a light, keen razor he had been shorn. [5]Not a scratch of his skin gave blood.[5] [6]"Hold, fellow.[6] Get thee home now," said Cuchulain, "for a laughing-stock I have made of thee." "I go not," [7]rejoined Etarcumul.[7] "We will fight to the end, till I take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee, or till thou takest my head and my spoils and boastest over me!" "So let it be, what thou saidst last, that it shall be. I will take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee!" [8]When now the churl became troublesome and persistent,[8] Cuchulain [9]sprang from the ground, so that he alighted on the edge of Etarcumul's shield, and he[9] dealt him a cleaving-blow on the crown of the head, so that it drove to his navel. He dealt him a second crosswise stroke, so that at the one time the three portions of his body came to the ground. Thus fell Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1194-1195.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 1195.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1197-1199.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1204.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1206-1207.

[9-9] H. 2. 17.

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[10]Then Etarcumul's charioteer went his way after Fergus,[10] and Fergus knew not that the combat had been. For thus was his wont: [11]From the day Fergus took warrior's arms in hand,[11] he never for aught looked back, whether at [W.1904.] sitting or at rising or when travelling or walking, in battle or fight or combat, lest some one might say it was out of fear he looked back, but ever he looked at the thing that was before and beside him. [1]Fergus saw the chariot go past him and a single man in it.[1] [2]And when[2] Etarcumul's squire came up abreast of Fergus, Fergus asked, "But, where is thy lord, gilla?" "He fell a while since at the ford by the hand of Cuchulain," the gilla made answer. "That indeed was not fair!" exclaimed Fergus, "for that elf-like sprite to wrong me in him that came under my safeguard [3]and protection[3] [4]from the camp and fort of the men of Erin.[4] Turn the chariot for us, gilla," cried Fergus, "that we may go to [5]the ford of fight and combat[5] for a parley with Cuchulain."

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1208.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

Thereupon the driver wheeled the chariot. They fared thither towards the ford. [6]Fergus turned to rebuke Cuchulain.[6] "How darest thou offend me, thou wild, [7]perverse, little[7] elf-man," cried Fergus, "in him that came under my safeguard and protection? [8]Thou thinkest my club short." [8] [LL.fo.72b.] [9]"Be not wroth with me, my master Fergus," said Cuchulain.[9] "After the nurture and care thou didst bestow on me [10]and the Ulstermen bestowed and Conchobar[10] tell me, which wouldst thou hold better, [11]for the Ulstermen to be conquered without anyone to punish them but me alone and[11] for him to triumph and boast over me, or for me to triumph and boast over him? And yet more, [12]of his own fault he fell.[12] Ask his own gilla which of us was in fault in respect of the other; [13]it was none other but he.[13][a] [1]Reproach me not, O Fergus my master." He bent down so that Fergus' chariot went past him thrice. "Ask his charioteer, is it I that have caused it?" "Not thou indeed," answered his charioteer. "He said," Cuchulain went on, "he would not go till either he took my head or he left me his own." [1] [2]Then Etarcumul's gilla related to Fergus how it all befel. When Fergus heard that, what he said was:[2] [W.1921.] "Liefer to me what thou hast done, [3]O fosterling," said Fergus, "that Etarcumul is slain, and[3] a blessing on the hand that smote him, [4]for it is he that was overweening." [4]

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1209.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1210. Probably a proverbial expression.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1210.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] H. 2. 17.

[12-12] H. 2. 17.

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[13-13] H. 2. 17.

[a] Lines 1212-1216 LU. and YBL. (Edition of Strachan and O'Keefe) are omitted in the translation.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1216-1220.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1222.

So then they bound two spancels about the ankle-joints of Etarcumul's feet and he was dragged along behind his horses and chariot. At every rock that was rough for him, his lungs and his liver were left on the stones and the rugged places. At every place that was smooth for him, his skilfully severed limbs came together again round the horses. In this wise he was dragged through the camp to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb: "There's your young warrior for you," cried Fergus, "for 'Every restoration together with its restitution' is what the law saith." [a] Medb came forth to the door of her tent and she raised her [5]quick, splitting,[5] loud voice [6]of a warrior.[6] Quoth Medb. "Truly, methought that great was the heat and the wrath of this young hound [7]on leaving us awhile since[7] at the beginning of the day as he went from the camp. [8]It is no fortune for a tender youth that falls on thee now.[8] We had thought that the honour under which he went, even the honour of Fergus, was not the honour of a dastard!" "What hath crazed the virago and wench?" cried Fergus. "Good lack, [W.1935.] is it fitting for the mongrel to seek the Hound of battle whom [1]the warriors and champions[1] of four of the five grand provinces of Erin dare not approach nor withstand? What, I myself was glad to escape whole from him!"

[a] A law maxim. Since Etarcumul had broken his promise not to fight, Fergus deems himself absolved from the spirit of his engagement to bring back Etarcumul but fulfils the letter of it.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] H. 2. 17.



[2]Etarcumul's grave was then dug and his tombstone erected; his name was written in ogam and they raised the keens over him. Cuchulain shot not from his sling at them that night[2] [3]and the women and maidens were brought over to him and half the cattle, and they brought provision to him by day.[3] In this manner fell Etarcumul and such was the combat of Etarcumul with Cuchulain.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1230-1232.

[3-3] LU. fo. 69, between the columns.

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XI

[1]THE SLAYING OF NATHCRANTAIL[1]

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[2]Then the men of Erin held counsel who would be fit to fight and contend with Cuchulain and drive him off from the men of Erin.[2] [3]"What man have ye to face Cuchulain to-morrow?" asked Lugaid. "They will give him to thee to-morrow," answered Mane son of Ailill. "We find no one to meet him," quoth Medb; "let us have a truce with him then till a man be found to oppose him." This they obtain. "Whither will ye turn," asked Ailill, "to find the man to oppose Cuchulain?" "There is not in Erin," Medb answered, "one that could be got to meet him unless Curoi macDare come, or Nathcrantail the warrior." A man of Curoi's people was in the tent. "Curoi will not come," said he; "he weens enough of his people have come!" "Let a message be sent then for Nathcrantail." [3] [W.1941.] Then arose a huge warrior of Medb's people, Nathcrantail by name. [4]Mane Andoe ('the Unslow') goes to him. They tell him their message. "Come with us for the sake of the honour of Connacht." "I will not go," said he, "unless they give Finnabair to me." Afterwards he goes with them. They bring his armour in a car from the east of Connacht and place it in the camp.[4] [5]Then was Nathcrantail called into the tent of Ailill and Medb.[5] [6]"Wherefore am I summoned to ye?" Nathcrantail asked. "It would please us well," Medb replied, "werest thou to fight and contend with Cuchulain on the ford and ward him off from us at the morning hour early on the morrow.[6] [1]Thou shalt have Finnabair," said Medb, "for going to fight yonder man." "I will do it," said he.[1] [2]He engaged to undertake the battle and combat and that night be made ready, and early on the morrow Nathcrantail arose for the battle and combat and he took his warlike implements with him to the fight, and though early he arose, Cuchulain arose still earlier.[2] [3]That night Lugaid came to Cuchulain. "Nathcrantail comes to meet thee to-morrow. Alas for thee, thou wilt not withstand him." "That matters not," Cuchulain made answer.[3][a]

[1-1] Stowe, and LU. fo. 69a, in the margin.

[2-2] Stowe, and, similarly, H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1233-1242 and *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1242-1246.

[5-5] H. 2. 17.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1246-1247.

[2-2] H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1248-1250.

[a] Here follows one line (1251 in LU., edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe, and almost similarly in YBL.) which seems to refer to some saying of Cuchulain's about Nathcrantail which we cannot locate.

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[4]On the morrow Nathcrantail went forth from the camp[4] and he came to attack Cuchulain. [W.1942.] He did not deign to bring along arms but thrice nine spits of holly after being sharpened, burnt and hardened in fire. And there before him on the pond was Cuchulain [5]a-fowling and his chariot hard by him,[5][b] and there was no shelter whatever. [6]And when Nathcrantail perceived Cuchulain[6] he [7]straightway[7] cast a dart at Cuchulain. Cuchulain sprang [8]from the middle of the ground[8] till he came on the tip of the dart. [9]And he performed a feat on the point of the dart and it hindered him not from catching the birds.[9] And again Nathcrantail threw a second dart. Nathcrantail threw a third dart and Cuchulain sprang on the point of the second [W.1951.] dart and so on till he was on the point of the last dart. It was then, [1]when Nathcrantail threw the ninth dart,[1] that the flock of birds [2]which Cuchulain pursued[2] on the plain [3]flew away from Cuchulain.[3] Cuchulain chased them even as any bird [4]of the air.[4] [5]He hopped on the points of the darts like a bird from each dart to the next, pursuing the birds[5] that they might not escape him but that they might leave behind a portion of food for the night. For this is what sustained and served Cuchulain, fish and fowl and game on the Cualnge Cow-spoil. Something more remains to be told: Nathcrantail deemed full surely that Cuchulain went from him in rout of defeat and flight. And he went his way till he came to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb and he lifted up his loud voice [6]of a warrior[6]: "That famous Cuchulain that ye so talk of ran and fled in defeat [7]before me when he came to me[7] in the morning." "We knew," spake Medb, "it would be even so when able warriors and goodly youths met him, that this beardless imp would not hold out; for when a mighty warrior, [8]Nathcrantail to wit, [8] came upon him, he withstood him not but before him he ran away!"

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1253.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1255.

[b] Here follow lines 1945-1946, edition of Windisch, which are unintelligible and have been omitted in the translation.

[6-6] H. 2. 17.

[7-7] H. 2. 17.

[8-8] H. 2. 17.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1256-1257.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1258.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1258.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1259-1260.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe.

And Fergus heard that, and Fergus [9]and the Ulstermen[9] were sore angered that any one should boast that Cuchulain had fled. And Fergus addressed himself to Fiachu, Feraba's son, that he should go to rebuke Cuchulain. "And tell [LL.fo.73a.] him it is an honour for him to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as he does deeds of valour upon them, but that it were fitter for him to hide himself than to fly before any one of their warriors, [10]forasmuch as the dishonour would be not greater for him than for the rest of Ulster." [10]

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[9-9] LU. 1264.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1268.

[W.1969.] Thereupon Fiachu went to address Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "I trow that welcome to be truly meant, but it is for counsel with thee I am come from thy fosterer Fergus. And he has said, 'It would be a glory for thee to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as thou doest valiantly [1]with them;[1] but it would be fitter for thee to hide thyself than to fly before any one of their warriors!'" "How now, who makes that boast among ye?" Cuchulain asked. "Nathcrantail, of a surety," Fiachu answered. "How may this be? Dost not know, thou and Fergus and the nobles of Ulster, that I slay no charioteers nor heralds nor unarmed people? And he bore no arms but a spit of wood. And I would not slay Nathcrantail until he had arms. And do thou tell him, let him come here early in the morning, [2]till he is between Ochaine and the sea, and however early he comes, he will find me here[2] and I will not fly before him!"

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1273-1275.

[3]Fiachu went back to the camp[3] [4]and to the station of the men of Erin, and he bound Nathcrantail to go to the ford of combat on the morrow. They bided there that night,[4] and it seemed long to Nathcrantail till day with its light came for him to attack Cuchulain. He set out early on the morrow to attack Cuchulain. Cuchulain arose early [5]and came to his place of meeting[5] and his wrath bided with him on that day. And [6]after his night's vigil,[6] with an angry cast he threw his cloak around him, so that it passed over the pillar-stone [7]near by, the size of himself,[7] and snapped the pillar-stone off from the ground between himself and his cloak. And he was aware of naught because of the measure of anger that had come on and raged in him. Then, too, came Nathcrantail. [8]His arms were brought with him on a wagon,[8] and he spake, "Where is [W.1987.] this Cuchulain?" shouted Nathcrantail. "Why, over yonder [1]near the pillar-stone before thee,"[1] answered Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar. "Not such was the shape wherein he appeared to me yesterday," said Nathcrantail. "Repel yon warrior," quoth Cormac, "and it will be the same for thee as if thou repellst Cuchulain!" [2]"Art thou Cuchulain?" "And if I am?" answered Cuchulain. "If thou be truly he," said Nathcrantail, "I would not bring a lambkin's head to the camp. I will not take thy head, the head of a beardless boy." "It is not I at all," said Cuchulain; "go find him around the hill!" Cuchulain hastens to Laeg. "Rub a false beard on me; I cannot get the warrior to fight with me beardless." This was done for him. He goes to meet Nathcrantail on the hill. "Methinks that more fitting. Now fight with me fairly," said Nathcrantail. "Thou shalt have thy wish, if only we know it," Cuchulain made answer. "I will make a cast at thee," said Nathcrantail, "and thou

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shalt not avoid it." "I will not avoid it except on high," said Cuchulain. Nathcrantail makes a cast at him. Cuchulain springs on high before it. "'Tis ill of thee to avoid the cast," cried Nathcrantail. "Avoid then my cast on high!" quoth Cuchulain. Cuchulain lets the spear fly at him and it went on high, so that from above it alighted on Nathcrantail's crown and through him it went to the ground. "Alas," said he, "the best warrior in Erin art thou," spake Nathcrantail. "Four and twenty sons have I in the camp. I will go and tell them what hidden treasure I have and then return for thee to behead me, for I shall die if the spear be taken out of my head." "It is well," quoth Cuchulain; "thou shalt come back." Then Nathcrantail returns to the camp. They all come to meet him. "Where is the madman's head with thee?" [1]every one asks.[1] "Wait, ye warriors, till I tell my tale to my sons and return to do battle with Cuchulain." [2]

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Egerton 93 begins here.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1276.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1277.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1277-1278.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1279.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1281-1305.

[1-1] LU. 1303.

[W.1992.] Soon came Nathcrantail [3]to seek Cuchulain[3] and he made a wide sweep with his sword at Cuchulain. [4]Cuchulain leaps on high,[4] so that the sword encountered the pillar of stone that was between Cuchulain and his cloak, and the sword broke [5]atwain[5] on the pillar-stone. [6]Then Cuchulain became filled with rage, as he had been with the boys in Emain, and[6] he sprang from the ground and alighted on the top of the boss of Nathcrantail's shield and dealt him a side stroke over the upper edge of the shield, so that he struck off his head from his trunk. He raised his hand quickly again and gave him another blow on the top of the trunk so that he cleft him in twain down to the ground. [7]His four severed parts fell to the ground.[7] Thus fell Nathcrantail slain by Cuchulain. Whereupon Cuchulain spoke [8]the verse:—[8]

"Now that Nathcrantail has fallen, [9]There will be increase of strife![9] Would that Medb had battle [10]now,[10] And the third part of the host!"



[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1305.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1306.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1307.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1307-1308.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1310.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Stowe, and LU. and YBL. 1313.

[10-10] Stowe, and YBL. and LU. 1313.

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XII

[1]THE FINDING OF THE BULL[1]

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[W.2007.] Thereafter [2]on the morrow[2] Medb proceeded with a third of the host of the men of Erin about her, [3]and she set forth by the highroad of Midluachair[3] till she reached Dun Sobairche in the north. And Cuchulain pressed heavily on Medb that day. [4]Medb went on to Cuib to seek the bull and Cuchulain pursued her. Now on the road to Midluachair she had gone to invade Ulster and Cruthne as far as Dun Sobairche.[4] [5]There it is that Cuchulain slew all those we have mentioned in Cuib.[5] Cuchulain killed Fer Taidle, whence cometh Taidle; and [6]as they went northwards[6] he killed the macBuachalla ('the Herdsman's sons') [7]at their cairn,[7] whence cometh Carn macBuachalla; and he killed Luasce on the slopes, whence Lettre Luasc ('the Watery Slopes of Luasc'); and he slew Bobulge in his marsh, whence Grellach ('the Trampled Place') of Bubulge; and he slew Murthemne on his hill, whence Delga ('the Points') of Murthemne; [8]he slew Nathcoirpthe at his trees, Cruthen on his ford, Marc on his hill, Meille on his mound and Bodb in his tower.[8] It was afterwards then [W.2016.] that Cuchulain turned back from the north [1]to Mag Murthemni,[1] to protect and defend his own borders and land, for dearer to him was [2]his own land and inheritance and belongings[2] than the land and territory and belongings of another.

[1-1] Stowe, and LU. fo. 70a.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1315-1317. *Eg.* 93 mentions a number of places to which Cuchulain pursued Medb.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1341.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1343.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1342-1344.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1345.]

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

It was then too that he came upon the Fir Crandce ('the men of Crannach') [3]from whom cometh Crannach in Murthemne;[3] to wit, the two Artinne and the two sons of Lecc, the two sons of Durcride, the two sons of Gabul, and Drucht and Delt and Dathen, Tae and Tualang and Turscur, and Torc Glaisse and Glass and Glassne, which are the same as the twenty men of Fochard. Cuchulain surprised them as they were pitching [LL.fo.73b.] camp in advance of all others—[4]ten cup-bearers and ten men-of-arms they were[4]—so that they fell by his hand.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1348.

Then it was that Buide ('the Yellow') son of Ban Blai ('the White') from [5]Sliab Culinn ('Hollymount'),[5] the country of Ailill and Medb, and belonging to the special followers of [6]Ailill and[6] Medb, met Cuchulain. Four and twenty[a] warriors [7]was their strength. [7] A [8]blue[8] mantle enwrapping each man, the Brown Bull of Cualnge plunging and careering before them after he had been brought from Glenn na Samaisce ('Heifers' Glen') to Sliab Culinn, and fifty of his heifers with him. [9]Cuchulain advances to meet them.[9] "Whence

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bring ye the drove, [10]ye men?"[10] Cuchulain asks. "From yonder mountain," Buide answers. [11]"Where are its herdsmen?" Cuchulain asks. "One is here where we found him," the warrior answers. Cuchulain made three leaps after them, seeking to speak [W.2031.] with them, as far as the ford. Then it was he spoke to the leader[11], "What is thine own name?" said Cuchulain. "One that neither loves thee nor fears thee," Buide made answer; "Buide son of Ban Blai am I, from the country of Ailill and Medb." [1]"Wella-day, O Buide," cried Cuchulain; "haste to the ford below that we exchange a couple of throws with each other." They came to the ford and exchanged a couple of throws there.[1] "Lo, here for thee this short spear," said Cuchulain, and he casts the spear at him. It struck the shield over his belly, so that it shattered three ribs in his farther side after piercing his heart in his bosom. And Buide son of Ban Blai fell [2]on the ford.[2] So that thence is Ath Buidi ('Athboy') in Crich Roiss ('the land of Ross').

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1318.

[6-6] Stowe.

[a] 'Sixty' is the number in LU. and YBL.; 'eight' in *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] Stowe and LU. and YBL. 1319.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1320.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 1322-1325.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] LU. and YBL 1328.

For as long or as short a space as [3]these bold champions and battle-warriors[3] were engaged in this work of exchanging their two short spears—for it was not in a moment they had accomplished it—the Brown Bull of Cualnge was carried away in quick course and career [4]by the eight great men[4] to the camp [5]of the men of Erin[5] as swiftly as any beeve can be brought to a camp. [6]They opined then it would not be hard to deal with Cuchulain if only his spear were got from him.[6] From this accordingly came the greatest shame and grief and madness that was brought on Cuchulain on that hosting.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1330-1331.

As regards Medb: every ford [7]and every hill[7] whereon she stopped, Ath Medba ('Medb's Ford') [8]and Dindgna Medba ('Medb's Hill')[8] is its name. Every place wherein she pitched her tent, Pupall Medba ('Medb's Tent') is its name. Every spot she rested her horselash, Bili Medba ('Medb's Tree') is its name.

[7-7] LU. and YBL 1353.

[8-8] LU. and YBL 1354.

On this circuit Medb [9]turned back from the north after [W.2047.] she had remained a fortnight laying waste the province[9] [1]and plundering the land of the Picts and of Cualnge and the land of Conall son of Amargin,[1] and having offered battle [2]one night[2] to Findmor ('the Fair-large') wife of Celtchar [3]son of Uthechar[3] at the gate of Dun Sobairche; and she slew Findmor and laid waste Dun Sobairche; [5]and, after taking Dun Sobairche from her, she brought fifty of [4]her[4] women into the province of Dalriada.[5] [6]Then she had them hanged and crucified. Whence cometh Mas na Righna ('Queen's Buttock') as the name of the hill, from their hanging.[6]

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[9-9] LU. and YBL 1348-1349.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1351-1352.

[6-6] *Eg.* 33.

Then came the warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin at the end of a long fortnight[a] to camp and station [7]at Fochard,[7] together with Medb and Ailill and the company that were bringing the bull.

[a] Omitting *ar mis* (LL.), which is not found in the other MSS.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1355.

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XIIa

THE DEATH OF FORGEMEN

[W.2054.] And the bull's cowherd would not allow them [1]to carry off[1] the Brown Bull of Cualnge, so that they urged on the bull, beating shafts on shields, till they drove him into a narrow gap, and the herd trampled the cowherd's body thirty feet into the ground, so that they made fragments and shreds of his body. Forgemén was the neatherd's name. [2]And this is the name of the hill, Forgemén.[2] This then is the Death of Forgemén on the Cattle-prey of Cualnge. [3]Now there was no peril to them that night so long as a man was got to ward off Cuchulain from them on the ford.[3]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1359.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1360-1361.

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XIIb

[1]HERE IS NARRATED THE SLAYING OF REDG THE LAMPOONIST[1]

[W.2061.] When the men of Erin had come together in one place, both Medb and Ailill and the force that was bringing the bull to the camp and enclosure, they all declared Cuchulain would be no more valiant than another [2]of the men of Erin[2] were it not for the wonderful little trick he possessed, the spearlet of Cuchulain. Accordingly the men of Erin despatched from them Redg, Medb's[a] jester, to demand the light javelin [3]of Cuchulain.[3]

[1-1] LU. page 70b, in the margin.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[a] 'Ailill's,' LU. and YBL. 1332 and *Eg.* 1782.

[3-3] Stowe.

So Redg [4]came forward to where Cuchulain was and[4] asked for the little javelin, but Cuchulain did not give him the little javelin [5]at once[5]; he did not deem it good and proper to yield it. [6]"Give me thy spear," said the jester. "Nay then, I will not," answered Cuchulain; "but I will give thee treasure." "I will not take it," said the jester. Then he wounded the jester because he would not accept from him what he had offered him.[6] Redg declared he would deprive Cuchulain of his honour [7]unless he got the little javelin.[7] Thereupon Cuchulain hurled the javelin at him, so that it struck him in the nape of the neck[b]

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and fell out through his mouth on the ground. And the only words Redg uttered were these, "This precious gift is readily [W.2072.] ours," and his soul separated from his body at the ford. Therefrom that ford is ever since called Ath Solom Shet ('Ford of the Ready Treasure'). And the copper of the javelin was thrown into the river. Hence is Uman-Sruth ('Copperstream') ever after.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1333-1336.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1337.

[b] More literally, 'in the pit of his occiput.'

[1]"Let us ask for a sword-truce from Cuchulain," says Ailill. "Let Lugaid go to him," one and all answer. Then Lugaid goes to parley with him. "How now do I stand with the host?" Cuchulain asks. "Disgraceful indeed is the thing thou hast demanded of them," Lugaid answers, "even this, that thou shouldst have thy women and maidens and half of thy kine. But more grievous than all do they hold it that they themselves should be killed and thou provisioned."

Every day there fell a man by Cuchulain till the end of a week. [2]Then[2] faith is broken with Cuchulain. Twenty are despatched at one time to attack him and he destroys them all. "Go to him, O Fergus," says Ailill, "that he may vouchsafe us a change of place." A while after this they proceed to Cronech. These are they that fell in single combat with him in that place, to wit: the two Roth, the two Luan, two women-thieves, ten fools, ten cup-bearers, the ten Fergus, the six Fedelm, the six Fiachu. Now these were all killed by him in single combat.

[2-2] *Eg.* 1782.

When their tents were pitched by them in Cronech they discussed what they had best do with Cuchulain. "I know," quoth Medb, "what is best here. Let some one go to him from us for a sword-pact from him in respect of the host, and he shall have half the cattle that are here." This message they bring to him. "I will do it," said Cuchulain, "provided the bond is not broken by you[1] [3]to-morrow.[3]"

[1-1] LU. 1362-1379.

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

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XIIC

[1]HERE IS TOLD THE MEETING OF CUCHULAIN AND FINNABAIR[1]

[2]"Let a message be sent to him," said Ailill, "that Finnabair my daughter will be bestowed on him, and for him to keep away from the hosts." Mane Athramail ('Fatherlike') goes to him. But first he addresses himself to Laeg. "Whose man art thou?" spake Mane. Now Laeg made no answer. Thrice Mane addressed him in this [3]same[3] wise. "Cuchulain's man," Laeg answers, "and provoke me not, lest it happen I strike thy head off thee!" "This man is mad," quoth Mane as he leaves him. Then he goes to accost Cuchulain. It was there Cuchulain had doffed his tunic, and the [4]deep[4] snow was around him where he sat, up to his belt, and

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the snow had melted a cubit around him for the greatness of the heat of the hero. And Mane addressed him three times in like manner, whose man he was? "Conchobar's man, and do not provoke me. For if thou provokest me any longer I will strike thy head off thee as one strikes off the head of a blackbird!" "No easy thing," quoth Mane, "to speak to these two." Thereupon Mane leaves them and tells his tale to Ailill and Medb.

[1-1] LU. fo. 71a, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. 1380-1414.

[3-3] *Eg.* 1782.

[4-4] *Eg.* 1782.

"Let Lugaid go to him," said Ailill, "and offer him the girl." Thereupon Lugaid goes and repeats this to Cuchulain. "O master Lugaid," quoth Cuchulain, "it is a snare!" "It is the word of a king; he hath said it," Lugaid answered; "there can be no snare in it." "So be it," said Cuchulain. Forthwith Lugaid leaves him and takes that answer to Ailill and Medb. "Let the fool go forth in my form," said Ailill, "and the king's crown on his head, and let him stand some way off from Cuchulain lest he know him; and let the girl go with him and let the fool promise her to him, and let them depart quickly in this wise. And methinks ye will play a trick on him thus, so that he will not stop you any further till he comes with the Ulstermen to the battle."

Then the fool goes to him and the girl along with him, and from afar he addresses Cuchulain. The Hound comes to meet him. It happened he knew by the man's speech that he was a fool. A slingstone that was in his hand he threw at him so that it entered his head and bore out his brains. He comes up to the maiden, cuts off her two tresses and thrusts a stone through her cloak and her tunic, and plants a standing-stone through the middle of the fool. Their two pillar-stones are there, even the pillar-stone of Finnabair and the pillar-stone of the fool.

Cuchulain left them in this plight. A party was sent out from Ailill and Medb to search for their people, for it was long they thought they were gone, when they saw them in this wise. This thing was noised abroad by all the host in the camp. Thereafter there was no truce for them with Cuchulain.[2]

[2-2] LU. 1380-1414.

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XIId

[1]HERE THE COMBAT OF MUNREMAR AND CUROI[1]

[2]While the hosts were there in the evening they perceived that one stone fell on them coming from the east and another from the west to meet it. The stones met one another in the air and kept falling between Fergus' camp, the camp of Ailill and the camp of Nera. This sport and play continued from that hour till the same hour on the next day, and the hosts spent the time sitting down, with their shields over their heads to protect them from the blocks of stones, till the plain was full of the boulders,

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whence cometh Mag Clochair ('the Stony Plain'). Now it happened it was Curoi macDare did this. He had come to bring help to his people and had taken his stand in Cotal to fight against Munremar son of Gerrcend.[a] The latter had come from Emain Macha to succour Cuchulain and had taken his stand on Ard ('the Height') of Roch. Curoi knew there was not in the host a man to compete with Munremar. These then it was who carried on this sport between them. The army prayed them to cease. Whereupon Munremar and Curoi made peace, and Curoi withdrew to his house and Munremar to Emain Macha and Munremar came not again till the day of the battle. As for Curoi, he came not till the combat of Ferdiad.

[1-1] LU. fo. 71b, in the margin.

[a] Here a sheet is missing in *Eg.* 1782.

[2-2] LU. 1415-1486.

"Pray Cuchulain," said Medb and Ailill, "that he suffer us to change our place." This then was granted to them and the change was made.

The 'Pains' of the Ulstermen left them then. When now they awoke from their 'Pains,' bands of them came continually upon the host to restrain it again.

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XIIe

[1]THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BOY-TROOP[1][a]

Now the youths of Ulster discussed the matter among themselves in Emain Macha. "Alas for us," said they, "that our friend Cuchulain has no one to succour him!" "I would ask then," spake Fiachu Fulech ('the Bloody') son of Ferfebe and own brother to Fiachu[b] Fialdana ('the Generous-daring') son of Ferfebe, "shall I have a company from you to go to him with help?"

[1-1] LU. fo. 71b, in the margin.

[a] The LU. version of the episode is given under XVIIa, page 184.

[b] Fiachna, in LU. 1436.



Thrice fifty youths accompany him with their play-clubs, and that was a third of the boy-troop of Ulster. The army saw them drawing near them over the plain. "A great army approaches us over the plain," spake Ailill Fergus goes to espy them. "Some of the youths of Ulster are they," said he, "and it is to succour Cuchulain they come." "Let a troop go to meet them," said Ailill, "unknown to Cuchulain; for if they unite with him ye will never overcome them." Thrice fifty warriors went out to meet them. They fell at one another's hands, so that not one of them got off alive of the number of the youths of Lia Toll. Hence is Lia ('the Stone') of Fiachu son of Ferfebe, for it is there that he fell.

"Take counsel," quoth Ailill; "inquire of Cuchulain about letting you go from hence, for ye will not go past him by force, now that his flame of valour has risen." For it was usual with him, when his hero's flame arose in him, that his feet would turn back on him and his buttocks, before him, and the knobs of his calves would come on his shins, and one eye would be in his head and the other one out of his head. A man's head would have gone into his mouth. There was not a hair on him that was not as sharp as the thorn of the haw, and a drop of blood was on each single hair. He would recognize neither comrades nor friends. Alike he would strike them before and behind. Therefrom it was that the men of Connacht gave Cuchulain the name Riastartha ('the Contorted One').

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XII f

[1]THE SLAUGHTER OF THE KING'S BODYGUARD[1]

"Let us ask for a sword-truce from Cuchulain," said Ailill and Medb. Lugaid goes to him and Cuchulain accords the truce. "Put a man for me on the ford to-morrow," said Cuchulain. There happened to be with Medb six royal hirelings, to wit: six princes of the Clans of Deda, the three Dubs ('the Blacks') of Imlech, and the three Dergs ('the Reds') of Sruthair, by name. "Why should it not be for us," quoth they, "to go and attack Cuchulain?" So the next day they went and Cuchulain put an end to the six of them.[2]

[1-1] LU. fo. 72b, in the margin.

[2-2] See page 141, note 2.

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XIII

[1]THE COMBAT OF CUR WITH CUCHULAIN[1]

[W.2076.] The men of Erin discussed among themselves who of them would be fit to attack [2]and contend with[2] Cuchulain, [LL.fo.74a.] [3]and drive him off from them on the ford at the morning-hour early on the morrow.[3] And what they all said was that Cur ('the Hero') son of Da Loth should be the one to attack him. For thus it stood with Cur: No joy was it to be his bedfellow or to live with him. [4]He from whom he drew blood is dead ere the ninth day.[4] And [5]the men of Erin[5] said: "Even should it be Cur that falls, a trouble [6]and care[6] would be removed from the hosts; [7]for it is not easy to be with him in regard to sitting, eating or sleeping.[7] Should it be Cuchulain, it would be so much the better." Cur was summoned to Medb's tent. "For what do they want me?" Cur asked. "To engage with Cuchulain," replied Medb, [8]"to do battle, and ward him off from us on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow." [8] [9]Cur deemed it not fitting to go and contend with a beardless boy.[9] "Little ye rate our worth. Nay, but it is wonderful how ye regard it. Too tender is the youth with whom ye compare me. Had I known [10]I was sent against him[10] I would not have come myself. I would have lads [11]enough[11] of [W.2086.] his age from amongst my people to go meet him on a ford."

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1488.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1491.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1491-1492.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1492-1493.

[11-11] Stowe and LU. and YBL. 1493.

“Indeed, it is easy to talk so,” quoth Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar. “It would be well worth while for thyself if by thee fell Cuchulain.” [1]“Howbeit,” said Cur, “since on myself it falls,[1] make ye ready a journey [2]for me[2] at morn’s early hour on the morrow, for a pleasure I will make of the way [3]to this fight,[3] [4]a-going to meet Cuchulain.[4] It is not this will detain you, namely the killing of yonder wildling, Cuchulain!”

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[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1496-1497.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1499-1500.

[5] There they passed the night. [5] Then early on the morrow morn arose Cur macDa Loth [6] and he came to the ford of battle and combat; and however early he arose, earlier still Cuchulain arose. [6] A cart-load of arms was taken along with him wherewith to engage with Cuchulain, and he began to ply his weapons, seeking to kill Cuchulain.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

Now Cuchulain had gone early that day [7] to practise [7] his feats [8] of valour and prowess. [8] These are the names of them all: the Apple-feat, and the Edge-feat, and the Level Shield-feat, and the Little Dart-feat, and the Rope-feat, and the Body-feat, and the Feat of Catt, and the Hero's Salmon-leap, [a] and the Pole-cast, and the Leap over a Blow (?), and the Folding of a noble Chariot-fighter, and the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear') and the Vantage (?) of Swiftess, and the Wheel-feat, [9] and the Rim-feat, [9] and the Over-Breath-feat, and the Breaking of a Sword, and the Champion's Cry, and the Measured Stroke, and the Side Stroke, and the Running up a Lance and standing erect on its Point, and the Binding of the [10] noble [10] Hero (around spear points).

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1500.

[8-8] Stowe.

[a] "The Salmon-leap—lying flat on his face and then springing up, horizontally, high in the air."—J.A. Synge, "The Aran Islands," page 111, Dublin, 1907.

[9-9] YBL. 1504.

[10-10] LU. 1506.

[W.2121.] Now this is the reason Cuchulain was wont to practise early every morning each of those feats [1] with the agility of a single hand, as best a wild-cat may, [1] in order that they might not depart from him through forgetfulness or lack of remembrance.

[1-1] An obscure gloss in LL.

And macDa Loth waited beside his shield until the third part of the day, [2]plying his weapons,[2] seeking the chance to kill Cuchulain; [3]and not the stroke of a blow reached Cuchulain, because of the intensity of his feats, nor was he aware that a warrior was thrusting at him.[3] It was then Laeg[a] [4]looked at him[4] and spake to Cuchulain, “Hark! Cucuc. Attend to the warrior that seeks to kill thee.” Then it was that Cuchulain glanced at him and then it was that he raised and threw the eight apples on high [5]and cast the ninth apple[5] a throw’s length from him at Cur macDa Loth, so that it struck on the disk of his shield [6]between the edge and the body of the shield[6] and on the forehead [7]of the churl,[7] so that it carried the size of an apple of his brains out through the back of his head. Thus fell Cur macDa Loth also at the hand of Cuchulain. [8]According to another version[8] [9]it was in Imslige Glendamnach that Cur fell.[9]

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1507.

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[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1508-1509.

[a] 'Fiachu,' LU. and YBL. 1510.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Following Windisch's emendation of the text.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1512.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1513.

[8-8] LU. 1513.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1513-1514.

[10]Fergus greeted each one there and this is what he said:[10] "If your engagements and pledges bind you now," said Fergus, "another warrior ye must send to him yonder on the ford; else, do ye keep to your camp and your quarters here till the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow, for Cur son of Da Loth is fallen." [11]"We will grant that," said Medb, "and we will not pitch tents nor take quarters here now, but we will remain where we were last night in camp.[11] [W.2136.] Considering why we have come, it is the same to us even though we remain in those same tents."

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93.

[1]The four great provinces of Erin[1] remained in that camp till Cur son of Da Loth had fallen, and Loth son of Da Bro and Srub Dare son of Feradach and [2]Morc[2] son of Tri Aigneach. These then fell in single combat with Cuchulain. But it is tedious to recount one by one the cunning and valour of each man of them.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] Stowe.

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XIV

[1]THE SLAYING OF FERBAETH ('THE WITLESS')[1]

[2]Then again the men of Erin took counsel who would be fit to fight and do combat with Cuchulain and to ward him off from them on the ford at the morning-hour early on the morrow. What they each and all said was, that it would be his own friend and companion and the man who was his equal in arms and feats, even Ferbaeth son of Ferbend.

[1-1] LU. fo. 73a, in the margin.

Then was Ferbaeth son of Ferbend summoned to them, to the tent of Ailill and Medb. "Wherefore do ye call me to you?" Ferbaeth asked. "In sooth, it would please us," Medb answered, "for thee to do battle and contend with Cuchulain, and to ward him off from us on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow."

Great rewards they promised to him for making the battle and combat.[2] [3]Finnabair is given to him for this and the kingdom of his race, for he was their choice to combat Cuchulain. He was the man they thought worthy of him, for they both had learned the same service in arms with Scathach.[3]

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1529-1553.

[4]"I have no desire to act thus," Ferbaeth protested. "Cuchulain is my foster-brother and of everlasting covenant with me. Yet will I go meet him to-morrow, so shall I strike off his head!" "It will be thou that canst do it," Medb made answer.[4]

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1538-1540.

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[W.2143.] Then it was that Cuchulain said to his charioteer, namely to Laeg: "Betake thee thither, O master Laeg," said Cuchulain, "to the camp of the men of Erin, and bear a greeting [LL.fo.74b.] from me to my comrades and foster-brothers and age-mates. Bear a greeting to Ferdiad son of Daman, and to Ferdet son of Daman, and to Brass son of Ferb, and to Lugaid son of Nos, and to Lugaid son of Solamach, to Ferbaeth son of Baetan, and to Ferbaeth son of Ferbend, and a particular greeting withal to mine own foster-brother, to Lugaid son of Nos, for that he is the one man that still has friendliness and friendship with me now on the hosting. And bear him a blessing. [1]Let it be asked diligently of him[1] that he may tell thee who [2]of the men of Erin[2] will come to attack me on the morrow."

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1525.

[2-2] Stowe.

Then Laeg went his way to the camp of the men of Erin and brought the aforementioned greetings to the comrades and foster-brothers of Cuchulain. And he also went into the tent of Lugaid son of Nos. Lugaid bade him welcome. "I take [3]that welcome[3] to be truly meant," said Laeg. "'Tis truly meant for thee," replied Lugaid. "To converse with thee am I come from Cuchulain," said Laeg, "and I bring these greetings truly and earnestly from him to the end that thou tell me who comes to fight with Cuchulain to-day." [4]"Truly not lucky is it for Cuchulain," said Lugaid, "the strait wherein he is alone against the men of Erin.[4] The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood and of his friendship and affection [5]and of his arms[5] be upon that man; even his own real foster-brother himself, [6]even the companion of us both,[6] Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. [7]He it is that comes to meet him to-morrow.[7] He was invited into the tent of [8]Ailill and[8] Medb a while [W.2165.] since. The daughter Finnabair was set by his side. It is she who fills up the drinking-horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink that he takes; it is she who serveth the food [1]to him.[1] Not for every one with Medb is the ale[a] that is poured out for Ferbaeth [2]till he is drunk.[2] Only fifty wagon-loads of it have been brought to the camp."

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1526-1527.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1528.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1527.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1528.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1532.

[1-1] H. 1. 13.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1535.

[a] In LU. and YBL. it is wine.

Then with heavy head, sorrowful, downcast, heaving sighs, Laeg retraced his steps to Cuchulain. "With heavy head, sorrowful, downcast and sighing, my master Laeg comes to meet me," said Cuchulain. "It must be that one of my brothers-in-arms comes to attack me." For he regarded as worse a man of the same training in arms as himself than aught other warrior. "Hail now, O Laeg my friend," cried Cuchulain; "who

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comes to attack me to-day?" "The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood, of his friendship and affection be upon him; even thine own real foster-brother himself, namely Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. A while ago he was summoned into the tent of Medb. The maiden was set by his side; It is she who fills up the drinking-horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink; it is she who serveth his food. Not for every one with Medb is the ale that is poured out for Ferbaeth. Only fifty wagon-loads of it have been brought to the camp."

[3]Cuchulain bade Laeg go to Lugaid, that he come to talk with him. Lugaid came to Cuchulain. "So Ferbaeth comes to oppose me to-morrow," said Cuchulain. "Aye, then," answered Lugaid.[3] [4]"Evil is this day," cried Cuchulain. "I shall not be alive thereafter. Two of the same age are we, two of equal deftness, two of equal weight, when we come together. O Lugaid, greet him for me. Tell him, also, it is not the part of true valour to come to oppose me. Tell him to come meet me to-night to speak with me."

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1541-1544.

Lugaid brought back this word to Ferbaeth. [W.2183.] Now inasmuch as Ferbaeth shunned not the parley,[4] he by no means waited till morn but he went straightway [1]to the glen[1] [2]that night[2] to recant his friendship with Cuchulain, [3]and Fiachu son of Ferfebe went with him.[3] And Cuchulain called to mind the friendship and fellowship and brotherhood [5]that had been between them,[5] [6]and Scathach, the nurse of them both,[6] and Ferbaeth would not consent to forego the fight.[a] [7]"I must fight," said Ferbaeth. "I have promised it [8]to Medb." [8] [9]"Friendship with thee then is at an end,"[9] cried Cuchulain,[7] and in anger he left him and drove the sole of his foot against a holly-spit [10]in the glen,[10] so that it pierced through flesh and bone and skin [11]and came out by his knee.[11] [12]Thereat Cuchulain became frantic, and he gave a strong tug and[12] drew the spit out from its roots, [13]from sinew and bone, from flesh and from skin.[13] [14]"Go not, Ferbaeth, till thou seest the find I have made." "Throw it then," cried Ferbaeth.[14] And Cuchulain threw the holly-spit over his shoulder after Ferbaeth, and he would as lief that it reached him or that it reached him not. The spit struck Ferbaeth in the nape of the neck,[b] so that it passed out through his [W.2192.] mouth [1]in front[1] and fell to the ground, and thus Ferbaeth fell [2]backward into the glen.[2]

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1544-1549.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93, LU. and YBL. 1549.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1550.

[4-4] See page 152, note 4.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1551-1552.

[a] Reading, with Windisch, from Stowe which gives a better meaning than LL.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1552-1553.

[8-8] YBL. 1553.

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[9-9] Literally, 'Keep thy covenant, then!'

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1554.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 1555.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93.

[13-13] *Eg.* 93.

[14-14] LU. and YBL. 1556-1557.

[b] See note, page 137.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1559.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1559-1560.

"Now that was a good throw, Cucuc!" cried [3]Fiachu son of Ferfebe,[3] [4]who was on the mound between the two camps,[4] for he considered it a good throw to kill that warrior with a spit of holly. Hence it is that Focherd Murthemni ('the good Cast of Murthemne') is the name of the place where they were.

[3-3] "Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar." *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5]Straightway Ferbaeth died in the glen. Hence cometh Glenn Ferbaeth. Something was heard. It was Fergus who sang:—

"Fool's[a] emprise was thine, Ferbaeth,
That did bring thee to thy grave.
Ruin hath come on anger here;
Thy last end in Croen Corann!

Fithi was the hill's old name,
In Croenech in Murthemne.
'Ferbaeth' now shall be the name
Of the plain where Ferbaeth fell!"[5]

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1563-1569.

[a] With a play on the word Ferbaeth, 'a foolish man.'

* * * * *

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XIVa

[1]THE COMBAT OF LARINE MacNOIS[1]

[2]Lugaid spake: "Let one of you be ready on the morrow to go against that other."
"There shall not any one at all be found to go," quoth Ailill, "unless guile be used.
Whatever man comes to you, give him wine, so that his soul may be glad, and let him
be told that that is all the wine that has been brought to Cruachan: 'It would grieve us
that thou shouldst drink water in our camp.' And let Finnabair be placed on his right
hand and let him be told, 'She shall go with thee if thou bring us the head of the
Contorted.'" So a summons was sent to each warrior, one on each night, and those
words used to be told him. Cuchulain killed every man of them in turn. At length no one
could be got to attack him.[2]

[1-1] LU. fo. 73b, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1574-1584 and *Eg.* 1782. Here *Eg.* 1782 breaks off.

[W.2197.] [3]"Good,[3] my master Laeg," [4]said Cuchulain,[4] "go for me to the camp of
the men of Erin to hold converse with Lugaid [5]macNois,[5] [6]my friend, my companion
and my foster-brother,[6] [7]and bear him a greeting from me and bear him my blessing,
for he is the one man that keeps amity and friendship with me on the great hosting of
the Cattle-raid of Cualnge.[7] And discover [8]in what way they are in the camp,[8]
whether or no anything has [W.2199.] happened to Ferbaeth,[a] [1]whether Ferbaeth
has reached the camp;[1] [2]and inquire for me if the cast I made a while ago reached
Ferbaeth or did not reach, and if it did reach him,[2] ask who [3]of the men of Erin[3]
comes to meet me [4]to fight and do battle with me at the morning hour early[4] on the
morrow."

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[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and *Eg.* 209.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and *Eg.* 209.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1572.

[a] From here to p. 170 is lacking in LL. owing to the loss of a sheet.
This is supplied from Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe. *Eg.* 209 and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] H. 2. 17.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

Laeg proceeds to Lugaid's tent. Lugaid bids him welcome. [5]"Welcome to thy coming and arrival, O Laeg," said Lugaid.[5] "I take that welcome as truly meant," Laeg replied. "It is truly meant for thee," quoth Lugaid, [6]"and thou shalt have entertainment here to-night." [6] [7]"Victory and blessing shalt thou have," said Laeg; "but not for entertainment am I come, but [7] to hold converse with thee am I come from [8]thine own friend and companion and [8] foster-brother, [9]from Cuchulain,[9] that thou mayest tell me whether Ferbaeth [10]was smitten." [10] "He was," answered Lugaid, "and a blessing on the hand that smote him, for he fell dead in the valley a while ago." "Tell me who [11]of the men of Erin [11] comes to-morrow to [12]combat and [12] fight with Cuchulain [13]at the morning hour early on the morrow?" [13] "They are persuading a brother of mine own to go meet him, a foolish, haughty arrogant youth, yet dealing stout blows and stubborn. [14]And he has agreed to do the battle and combat.[14] And it is to this end they will send him to fight Cuchulain, that he, my brother, may fall at his hands, so that I myself must then go to avenge him upon Cuchulain. But I will not go there till the very day of doom. Larine great-grandson [W.2211.] of Blathmac is that brother. [1]And, do thou tell Cuchulain to come to Ferbaeth's Glen and [1] I will go [2]thither [2] to speak with Cuchulain about him," said Lugaid.

[5-5] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] *Eg.* 209.

[10-10] Following *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93.

[13-13] *Eg.* 93.

[14-14] *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3]Laeg betook him to where Cuchulain was.[3] Lugaid's two horses were taken and his chariot was yoked to them [4]and[4] he came [5]to Glen Ferbaeth[5] to his tryst with Cuchulain, so that a parley was had between them. [6]The two champions and battle-warriors gave each other welcome.[6] Then it was that Lugaid spake: [7]"There is no condition that could be promised to me for fighting and combating with thee," said Lugaid, "and there is no condition on which I would undertake it, but[7] they are persuading a

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brother of mine to come fight thee [8]on the morrow,[8] to-wit, a foolish, dull, uncouth youth, dealing stout blows. [9]They brought him into the tent of Ailill and Medb and he has engaged to do the battle and combat with thee.[9] [10]He is befooled about the same maiden.[10] And it is for this reason they are to send him to fight thee, that he may fall at thy hands, [11]so that we two may quarrel,[11] and to see if I myself will come to avenge him upon thee. But I will not, till the very day of doom. And by the fellowship that is between us, [12]and by the rearing and nurture I bestowed on thee and thou didst bestow on me, bear me no grudge because of Larine.[12] Slay not my brother [13]lest thou shouldst leave me brotherless."[13]

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1592 and *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1593 and *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] *Eg.* 209.

[9-9] *Eg.* 93.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1595-1596.

[11-11] LU. 1597.

[12-12] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[13-13] LU. and YBL. 1596-1597.

"By my conscience, truly," cried Cuchulain, [14]kill him I will not, but[14] the next thing to death will I inflict on him. [15]No worse would it be for him to die than what I [W.2222.] will give him."[15] "I give thee leave. [1]It would please me well shouldst thou beat him sorely,[1] for to my dishonour he comes to attack thee."

[14-14] *Eg.* 93.

[15-15] *Eg.* 209.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1597 and *Eg.* 93.

Thereupon Cuchulain went back and Lugaid returned to the camp [2]lest the men of Erin should say it was betraying them or forsaking them he was if he remained longer parleying with Cuchulain.[2]

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

Then [3]on the next day[3] it was that Larine son of Nos, [4]brother of Lugaid king of Munster,[4] was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Finnabair was placed by his side. It was she that filled up the drinking-horns for him and gave him a kiss with each draught that he took and served him his food. "Not to every one with Medb is given the drink that is poured out for Ferbaeth or for Larine," quoth Finnabair; "only the load of fifty wagons of it was brought to the camp." [a]

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1598.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1585.

[a] Emending the text to agree with the two similar passages above.

[5]Medb looked at the pair. "Yonder pair rejoiceth my heart," said she.[5] "Whom wouldst thou say?" asked [6]Ailill.[6] "The man yonder, [7]in truth,"[7] said she. "What of him?" asked Ailill. "It is thy wont to set the mind on that which is far from the purpose (Medb answered). It were more becoming for thee to bestow thy thought on the couple in whom are united the greatest distinction and beauty to

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be found on any road in Erin, namely Finnabair, [8]my daughter,[8] and Larine macNois. [9]'Twould be fitting to bring them together." [9] "I regard them as thou dost," answered Ailill; [10]"I will not oppose thee herein. He shall have her if only he brings me the head of Cuchulain." [a] "Aye, bring it I will," said Larine. [10] [W.2235.] It was then that Larine shook and tossed himself with joy, so that the sewings of the flock bed burst under him and the mead of the camp was speckled with its feathers.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1586.

[6-6] Corrected from LL., which has 'Medb.'

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1588.

[a] Literally, 'of the Contorted.'

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 1588-1590.

[1]They passed the night there.[1] Larine longed for day with its full light [2]to go[2] to attack Cuchulain. At the early day-dawn on the morrow he came, [3]and the maiden came too to embolden him,[3] and he brought a wagon-load of arms with him, and he came on to the ford to encounter Cuchulain. The mighty warriors of the camp and station considered it not a goodly enough sight to view the combat of Larine; only the women and boys and girls, [4]thrice fifty of them,[4] went to scoff and to jeer at his battle.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 1599.

[4-4] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

Cuchulain went to meet him at the ford and he deemed it unbecoming to bring along arms [5]or to ply weapons upon him,[5] so Cuchulain came to the encounter unarmed [6]except for the weapons he wrested from his opponent.[6] [7]And when Larine reached the ford, Cuchulain saw him and made a rush at him.[7] Cuchulain knocked all of Larine's weapons out of his hand as one might knock toys out of the hand of an infant. Cuchulain ground and bruised him between his arms, he lashed him and



clasped him, he squeezed him and shook him, so that he spilled all the dirt out of him, [8]so that the ford was defiled with his dung[8] [9]and the air was fouled with his dust[9] and an [10]unclean, filthy[10] wrack of cloud arose in the four airts wherein he was. Then from the middle of the ford Cuchulain hurled Larine far from him across through the camp [11]till he fell into Lugaid's two hands[11] at the door of the tent of his brother. [W.2252.] Howbeit [1]from that time forth[1] [2]for the remainder of his life[2] he never got up without a [3]sigh and a[3] groan, and [4]he never lay down without hurt, and he never stood up without a moan;[4] [5]as long as he lived[5] he never ate [6]a meal[6] without plaint, and never thenceforward was he free from weakness of the loins and oppression of the chest and without cramps and the frequent need which obliged him to go out. Still he is the only man that made escape, [7]yea though a bad escape,[7] after combat with Cuchulain on the Cualnge Cattle-raid. Nevertheless that maiming took effect upon him, so that it afterwards brought him his death. Such then is the Combat of Larine on the Tain Bo Cualnge.



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[5-5] *Eg.* 209.

[6-6] *Eg.* 209.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1602.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1603.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 1604.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93, H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 209.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1604.

[6-6] *Eg.* 209.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1607.

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XIVb

[1]THE COLLOQUY OF THE MORRIGAN AND CUCHULAIN[1]

[2]Then Cuchulain saw draw near him a young woman with a dress of every colour about her and her appearance was most surpassing. "Who art thou?" Cuchulain asked. "Daughter of Buan ('the Eternal'), the king," she answered. "I am come to thee; I have loved thee for the high tales they tell of thee and have brought my treasures and cattle with me." "Not good is the time thou hast come. Is not our condition weakened through hunger? Not easy then would it be for me to foregather with a woman the while I am engaged in this struggle." "Herein I will come to thy help." "Not for the love of a woman[a] did I take this in hand." "This then shall be thy lot," said she, "when I come against thee what time thou art contending with men: In the shape of an eel I will come



beneath thy feet in the ford; so shalt thou fall.” “More likely that, methinks, than daughter of a king! I will seize thee,” said he, “in the fork of my toes till thy ribs are broken, and thou shalt remain in such sorry plight till there come my sentence of blessing on thee.” “In the shape of a grey she-wolf will I drive the cattle on to the ford against thee.” “I will cast a stone from my sling at thee, so shall it smash thine eye in thy head” (said he), “and thou wilt so remain maimed till my sentence of blessing come on thee.” “I will attack thee,” said she, “in the shape of a hornless red heifer at the head of the cattle, so that they will overwhelm thee on the waters and fords and pools and thou wilt not see me before thee.” “I will,” replied he, “fling a stone at thee that will break thy leg under thee, and thou wilt thus be lamed till my sentence of blessing come on thee.” Therewith she went from him.[2]

[1-1] LU. fo. 74a, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1609-1629.

[a] Literally, ‘*non causa podicis feminae.*’ The MS. is partly erased here.

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XV

[1]HERE FOLLOWETH THE COMBAT OF LOCH AND CUCHULAIN ON THE TAIN,[1]

[2]AND THE SLAYING OF LOCH SON OF MOFEMIS[2]

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[3]Then it was debated by the men of Erin who would be fitted to fight and contend with Cuchulain and ward him off from them on the ford at the morning-hour early on the morrow. What they all agreed was that it should be Loch Mor ('the Great') son of Mofemis, the royal champion of Munster.[3] [W.2260.] It was then that Loch Mor son of Mofemis was summoned [4]like the rest[4] to the pavilion of Ailill and Medb, [5]and he was promised the equal of Mag Murthemni of the smooth field of Mag Ai, and the accoutrement of twelve men, and a chariot of the value of seven bondmaids.[5] "What would ye of me?" asked Loch. "To have fight with Cuchulain," replied Medb. "I will not go on that errand, for I esteem it no honour nor becoming to attack a tender, young, smooth-chinned, beardless boy. [6]'Tis not seemly to speak thus to me, and ask it not of me.[6] And not to belittle him do I say it, but I have [7]a doughty brother, [8]the match of himself,"[8] said Loch,[7] "a man to confront him, Long macEmonis, to wit, and he will rejoice to accept an offer from you; [9]and it were fitting for him to contend with Cuchulain for Long has no beard on cheek or lip any more than Cuchulain." [9]

[1-1] YBL. 1630.

[2-2] LU. fo. 74b, between the columns.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1631.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1631-1633.

[6-6] *Eg.* 209.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[W.2266.] [1]Thereupon[1] Long was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Medb promised him great gifts, even livery for twelve men of cloth of every colour, and a chariot worth four[a] times seven bondmaids, and Finnabair to wife for him alone, and at all times entertainment in Cruachan, and that wine[b] would be poured out for him.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[a] 'Thrice.' *Eg.* 209.

[b] 'Ale,' *Eg.* 209.



[2]They passed there that night and he engaged to do the battle and combat, and early on the morrow[2] went Long [3]to the ford of battle and combat[3] to seek Cuchulain, and Cuchulain slew him and [5]they brought him dead into the presence of his brother, namely of Loch. And Loch [4]came forth and raised up his loud, quick voice and[4] cried, had he known it was a bearded man that slew him, he would slay him for it.[5] [6]And it was in the presence of Medb that he said it.[6] [7]"Lead a battle-force against him," Medb cried to her host, "over the ford from the west, that ye may cross, and let the law of fair fight be broken with Cuchulain." The seven Mane the warriors went first, till they saw him to the west of the edge of the ford. He wore his festive raiment on that day and the women clambered on the men that they might behold him. "It grieves me," said Medb. "I cannot see the boy because of whom they go there."

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"Thy mind would not be the easier for that," quoth Lethrenn, Ailill's horseboy, "if thou shouldst see him." Cuchulain came to the ford as he was. "What man is that yonder, O Fergus?" asked Medb.[c] And Medb, too, climbed on the men to get a look [W.2272.] at him.[7] [1]Then[1] Medb called upon [2]her handmaid for two woman-bands,[2] [3]fifty or twice fifty[3] of her women, to go speak with Cuchulain and to charge him to put a false beard on. The woman-troop went their way to Cuchulain and told him to put a false beard on [4]if he wished to engage in battle or combat with goodly warriors or with goodly youths of the men of Erin;[4] [5]that sport was made of him in the camp for that he had no beard, and that no good warrior would go meet him but only madmen. It were easier to make a false beard:[5] "For no brave warrior in the camp thinks it seemly to come fight with thee, and thou beardless," [6]said they.[6] [7]"If that please me," said Cuchulain, "then I shall do it." [7] Thereupon Cuchulain [8]took a handful of grass and speaking a spell over it he [8] bedaubed himself a beard [9]in order to obtain combat with a man, namely with Loch.[9] And he came onto the knoll overlooking the men of Erin and made that beard manifest to them all, [10]so that every one thought it was a real beard he had.[10] [11]"Tis true," spake the women, "Cuchulain has a beard. It is fitting for a warrior to fight with him." They said that to urge on Loch.[11] Loch son of Mofemis saw it, and what he said was, "Why, that is a beard on Cuchulain!" "It is what I perceive," Medb answered. Medb promised the same great terms to Loch to put a check to Cuchulain. [12]"I will not undertake the fight till the end of seven days from this day," exclaimed Loch. "Not fitting is it for us to leave that man unattacked for all that time," Medb answered. "Let us put a warrior every night to spy upon him if, peradventure, we might get a chance at him." This then they did. A warrior went every night to spy upon him and he slew them all. These are the names of the men who fell there: the seven Conall, the seven Oengus, the seven Uargus, the seven Celtri, the eight Fiach, the ten Ailill, the ten Delbrath, the ten Tasach. These are the deeds of that week on Ath Grenca.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1637-1639.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] LU. fo. 61, note 7, edition O'Keeffe and Strachan.

[c] Fergus' answer, eight lines in *rosc*, LU. page 61, note 7, edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe (these lines are not in YBL.), has been omitted in the translation.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 1640-1641.

[6-6] *Eg.* 209.

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[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] LU. 1643.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1642.]

[10-10] LU. 1644.

[11-11] LU. 1645-1647.

[a] In *Eg.* 93, this is said by Medb.

Medb sought counsel, what was best to be done with Cuchulain, for she was sore grieved at all of her host that had been slain by him. This is the counsel she took: To despatch keen, high-spirited men at one time to attack him when he would come to an appointment she would make to speak with him. For she had a tryst the next day with Cuchulain, to conclude the pretence of a truce with him in order to get a chance at him. She sent forth messengers to seek him to advise him to come to her, and thus it was that he should come, unarmed, for she herself would not come but with her women attendants to converse with him.

The runner, namely Traigtren ('Strongfoot') [1]son of Traiglethan ('Broadfoot')[1] went to the place where Cuchulain was and gave him Medb's message. Cuchulain promised that he would do her will. "How liketh it thee to meet Medb to-morrow, O Cuchulain?" asked Laeg. "Even as Medb desires it," answered Cuchulain. "Great are Medb's deeds," said the charioteer; "I fear a hand behind the back with her." "How is it to be done [2]by us[2] then?" asked he. "Thy sword at thy waist," the charioteer answered, "that thou be not taken off thy guard. For a warrior is not entitled to his honour-price if he be taken without arms, and it is the coward's law that falls to him in this manner." "Let it be so, then," said Cuchulain.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

Now it was on Ard ('the Height') of Aigneche which is called Fochard to-day that the meeting took place. Then fared Medb to the tryst and she stationed fourteen men of those that were bravest of her bodyguard in ambush against him. These were they: the two Glassine, the two sons of Buccridi, the two Ardan, the two sons of Licce, the two Glasogma, the two sons of Crund, Drucht and Delt and Dathen, Tea and Tascur and Tualang, Taur and Glese.

Then Cuchulain comes to meet her. The men rise against him. Fourteen spears are hurled at him at the same time. The Hound defends himself, so that neither his skin nor protection (?) is touched and he turns in upon them and kills them, the fourteen men.

Hence these are the 'Fourteen men of Fochard.' And they are also the 'Men of Cronech,' for it is in Cronech at Fochard they were slain. And it is of this Cuchulain spake:—

"Good my skill[a] in champion's deeds.
Valorous are the strokes I deal
On the brilliant phantom host.
War with numerous bands I wage,
For the fall of warlike chief—
This, Medb's purpose and Ailill's—
Direful (?) hatred hath been raised!"[b]

[a] With a play on the name *Focherd*, as is explained in the following paragraph.

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[b] Here follow six lines in *rosc*, LU. 1692-1697, edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe (the passage does not occur in YBL.), of uncertain meaning; they are omitted in the translation.

This is the reason why the name Focherd clung to that place, to wit: *Fo* 'Good' and *Cerd* 'Art,' which signifieth 'Good the feat of arms' that happened to Cuchulain there.

Then came Cuchulain and he overtook [1]the hosts[1] pitching camp, and there were slain the two Daigri, the two Anli and the four Dungai of Imlech. And there Medb began to urge on Loch: "Great is the scorn that is made of thee," said she, "that the man that killed thy brother should be destroying our host [2]here before thee[2] and thou not attack him. For sure we are that such as he yonder, that great and fierce madman, will not be able to withstand the valour and rage of a warrior such as thou art. And, further, from one and the same instructress the art was acquired by you both." [12]

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[12-12] LU. 1647-1708 and *Eg.* 93 (*Revue Celtique*, t. xv. 1894, pp. 64-66).

[W.2283.] "I will go forth and attack him," cried Loch. Loch went to attack Cuchulain, [1]to take vengeance on him for his brother,[1] [2]for it was shown him that Cuchulain had a beard;[2] so they met on the ford where Long had fallen. "Let us move to the upper ford," said Loch, "for I will not fight on this ford," since he held it defiled, [3]cursed and unclean,[3] the ford whereon his brother had fallen. [4]Now when Cuchulain came to look for the ford, the men drove the cattle across.[4] [5]"The cattle[5] [6]will be across thy water here to-day," said Gabran[6] [7]the poet.[7] [8]Hence cometh Ath Tarteise ('the Ford over thy Water') and Tir Mor Tarteise ('the Great Land over thy Water').[8] Thereafter they fought on the upper ford [9]between Methe and Cethe at the head of Tir Mor,[9] [10]and they were for a long space and time at their feats wounding and striking each other.[10]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1709 and *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and LU. 1709.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. and, partly, YBL. 1711.

[5-5] YBL. 1711.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1711.

[7-7] LU. 1712.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1712.

[9-9] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93.

Then it was that the Morrigan daughter of [11]Aed[11] Ernmas came from the fairy dwellings to destroy Cuchulain. For she had threatened on the Cattle-raid of Regomain [a] that she would come to undo Cuchulain what time he would be [13]in sore distress[13] when engaged in [14]battle and[14] combat with a goodly warrior, [15]with Loch,[15] in the course of the Cattle-spoil of Cualnge. Thither then the Morrigan [W.2293.] came in the shape

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of a white, [1]hornless,[1] red-eared heifer, with fifty heifers about her and a chain of silvered bronze between each two of the heifers. [2]She bursts upon the pools and fords at the head of the cattle. It was then that Cuchulain said, "I cannot see the fords for the waters." [2] The women [3]came with their strange sorcery, and [3] constrained Cuchulain by geasa and by inviolable bonds [4]to check the heifer for them [4] lest she should escape from him without harm. Cuchulain made an unerring cast [5]from his sling-stick [5] at her, so that he shattered one of the Morrigan's eyes.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[12-12] See page 165, note 12.

[a] Edited by Wh. Stokes and E. Windisch, in *Irische Texte*, Bd. II, SS. 241-254.

[13-13] *Eg.* 93.

[14-14] *Eg.* 93.

[15-15] *Eg.* 209.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1722.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1722.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[6]Now when the men met on the ford and began to fight and to struggle, and when each of them was about to strike the other,[6] the Morrigan came thither in the shape of a slippery, black eel down the stream. Then she came on the linn and she coiled [7]three folds[7] [8]and twists[8] around the [9]two[9] feet [10]and the thighs and forks[10] of Cuchulain, [11]till he was lying on his back athwart the ford[11] [12]and his limbs in the air.[12]

[6-6] LU. 1713.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 1713.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.



[9-9] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 1714.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

While Cuchulain was busied freeing himself [13]and before he was able to rise,[13] Loch wounded him crosswise through the breast, [14]so that the spear[a] went through him[14] [15]and the ford was gore-red with his blood.[15] [16]"Ill, indeed," cried Fergus, "is this deed in the face of the foe. Let some of ye taunt him, ye men," he cried to his people, "to the end that he fall not in vain!"

[13-13] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[14-14] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[a] 'Sword,' LU. and YBL. 1734.

[15-15] LU. 1714.

Bricriu Nemthenga ('Of the Venom-tongue') son of Carbad arose and began to revile Cuchulain. "Thy strength has gone from thee," said he, "when a little salmon overthrows thee even now when the Ulstermen are about to come out of their 'Pains.'"[16] [1]Hard it would be for thee to take on thee warrior's deeds in the presence of the men of Erin and to repel a stout warrior clad in his armour!"[1]

[16-16] LU., edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe, p. 63, note 17.
Similarly, YBL. 1714-1716, and *Eg.* 93.

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[1-1] LU. fo. 63, note 19, edit. Strachan and O'Keeffe, and *Eg.* 93.

[2]Then[2] [3]at this incitation[3] [4]Cuchulain arose,[4] [5]and with his left heel he smote the eel on the head,[5] [6]so that its ribs broke within it[6] [7]and he destroyed one half of its brains after smashing half of its head.[7] [8]And the cattle were driven by force past the hosts to the east and they even carried away the tents on their horns at the thunder-feat the two warriors made on the ford.[8]

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1716.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1717.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1717.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] LU. and YBL. 1718-1720.

[W.2302.] The Morrigan next came in the form of a rough, grey-red bitch-wolf [9]with wide open jaws[9] [10]and she bit Cuchulain in the arm[10] [11]and drove the cattle against him westwards,[11] [12]and Cuchulain made a cast of his little javelin at her, strongly, vehemently, so that it shattered one eye in her head.[12] During this space of time, whether long or short, while Cuchulain was engaged in freeing himself, Loch wounded him [13]through the loins.[13] Thereupon Cuchulain chanted a lay.[a]

[9-9] *Eg.* 209.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] LU. and YBL. 1721.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17, and, similarly, LU. and YBL. 1721.

[13-13] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[a] The three stanzas of this lay in YBL. (four in LU.) are found, with slight changes, in the lay on page 172fl.

[14]Then did Cuchulain to the Morrigan the three things he had threatened her on the Cattle-raid of Regomain,[14] and his anger arose within him and he [LL.fo.75a.] wounded Loch with the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed-spear'), so that it passed through



[W.2307.] his heart in his breast. [1]For truly it must have been that Cuchulain could not suffer the treacherous blows and the violence of Loch Mor the warrior, and he called for the Gae Bulgae from Laeg son of Rianganabair. And the charioteer sent the Gae Bulga down the stream and Cuchulain made it ready. And when Loch heard that, he gave a lunge down with his shield, so that he drove it over two-thirds deep into the pebbles and sand and gravel of the ford. And then Cuchulain let go the Barbed-spear upwards, so as to strike Loch over the border of his hauberk and the rim of his shield.[1] [2]And it pierced his body's covering, for Loch wore a horn skin when fighting with a man,[2] [3]so that his farther side was pierced clear after his heart had been thrust through in his breast.[3]

[14-14] LU. and YBL. 1732.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1735-1736.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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[4]"That is enough now," spake Loch; "I am smitten by that.[4] [5]For thine honour's sake[5] [6]and on the truth of thy valour and skill in arms,[6] grant me a boon now, O Cuchulain," said Loch. "What boon askest thou?" "'Tis no boon of quarter nor a prayer of cowardice that I make of thee," said Loch. "But fall back a step from me [7]and permit me to rise,[7] that it be on my face to the east I fall and not on my back to the west toward the warriors of Erin, to the end that no man of them shall say, [8]if I fall on my back,[8] it was in retreat or in flight I was before thee, for fallen I have by the Gae Bulga!" "That will I do," answered Cuchulain, "for 'tis a [9]true[9] warrior's prayer that thou makest."

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] *Stowe.*

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Stowe.*

[8-8] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[9-9] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

And Cuchulain stepped back, [10]so that Loch fell on his face, and his soul parted from his body and Laeg despoiled him.[10] [11]Cuchulain cut off his head then.[11] Hence cometh [W.2314.] the name the ford bears ever since, namely Ath Traged ('Foot-ford') in Cenn Tire Moir ('Great Headland'). [1]It was then they broke their terms of fair fight that day with Cuchulain, when five men went against him at one time, namely the two Cruaid, the two Calad and Derothor. All alone, Cuchulain killed them. Hence cometh Coicsius Focherda ('Fochard's Fortnight') and Coicer Oengoirt ('Five Warriors in one Field'). Or it may be, fifteen days Cuchulain passed in Fochard and it is hence cometh Coicsius Focherda on the Tain.[1]

[10-10] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] LU. fo. 77a, in the margin.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 1739-1743.

And deep distress[a] possessed Cuchulain that day [2]more than any other day[2] for his being all alone on the Tain, [3]confronting four of the five grand provinces of Erin,[3] [4]and he sank into swoons and faints.[4] Thereupon Cuchulain enjoined upon Laeg his charioteer to go to the men of Ulster, that they should come to defend their drove. [5]And, on rising, this is what he said:[5] [6]"Good, O Laeg, get thee to Emain to the Ulstermen, and bid them come henceforward to look after their drove for I can defend their fords no longer. For surely it is not fair fight nor equal contest for any man for the

Morrigan to oppose and overpower him and Loch to wound and pierce him." [6] And weariness of heart and weakness overcame him, and he gave utterance to a lay:—

“Rise, O Laeg, arouse the hosts,
Say for me in Emain strong:
I am worn each day in fight,
Full of wounds, and bathed in gore!

“My right side and eke my left:
Hard to say which suffers worse;
Fingin’s [b] hand hath touched them not,
Stanching blood with strips of wood!

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[W.2329.] "Bring this word to Conchobar dear, I am weak, with wounded sides. Greatly has he changed in mien, Dechtire's fond, rich-trooped son!

"I alone these cattle guard,
Leave them not, yet hold them not.
Ill my plight, no hope for me,
Thus alone on many fords!

"Showers of blood rain on my arms,
Full of hateful wounds am I.
No friend comes to help me here,
Save my charioteer alone!

"Few make music here for me,
Joy I've none in single horn.
When the mingled trumpets sound,[a]
This is sweetest from the drone!

"This old saying, ages old:—
'Single log gives forth no flame;'
Let there be a two or three,
Up the firebrands all will blaze!

"One sole log burns not so well
As when one burns by its side.
Guile can be employed on one;
Single mill-stone doth not grind!

"Hast not heard at every time,
'One is duped'?—'tis true of me.
That is why I cannot last
These long battles of the hosts!

"However small a host may be,
It receives some thought and pains;
Take but this: its daily meat
On one fork is never cooked!

"Thus alone I've faced the host,
By the ford in broad Cantire;
Many came, both Loch and Badb,
As foretold in 'Regomain!'[b]



“Loch has mangled my two thighs;
Me the grey-red wolf hath bit;
Loch my sides[c] has wounded sore,
And the eel has dragged me down!

“With my spear I kept her off; I put out the she-wolf’s eye; [W.2371.] And I broke her lower leg, At the outset of the strife!

“Then when Laeg sent Aife’s spear,[a]
Down the stream—like swarm of bees—
That sharp deadly spear I hurled,
Loch, [1]Mobebuis’[1] son, fell there!

“Will not Ulster battle give
To Ailill and Eocho’s lass,[b]
While I linger here in pain,
Full of wounds and bathed in blood?

[LL.fo.75b.] “Tell the splendid Ulster chiefs They shall come to guard their drove.
Maga’s sons[c] have seized their kine And have portioned them all out!

“Fight on fight—though much I vowed,
I have kept my word in all.
For pure honour’s sake I fight;
’Tis too much to fight alone!

“Vultures joyful at the breach
In Ailill’s and in Medb’s camp.
Mournful cries of woe are heard;
On Murthemne’s plain is grief!

“Conchobar comes not out with help;
In the fight, no troops of his.
Should one leave *him* thus alone,
Hard ’twould be his rage to tell!

[1]“Men have almost worn me out In these single-handed fights; Warrior’s deeds I cannot do, Now that I must fight alone!”[1]

[a] Literally ‘repentance.’

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[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[b] Physician to King Conchobar.

[a] Following Windisch's emended reading of LL.

[b] See above, page 168, note a.

[c] Literally, 'liver.'

[a] That is, the 'barbed' spear.

[1-1] Reading with MS. Stowe.

[b] That is, Medb.

[c] That is, the followers of Ailill.]

[1-1] LU. page 64, note 5, edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe.

[2]Although Cuchulain spoke thus, he had no strength for Laeg to leave him.[2]

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

This then is the Combat of Loch Mor ('the Great') son of Mofemis against Cuchulain on the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge.

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XVI

[1]THE VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT[1]

[2]Then were five men sent against Cuchulain on the morrow to contend with him and he killed them, so that they fell by his hand, and 'the Five of Cenn Cursighi' was their

name.[2] [W.2400.] Then it was that Medb despatched six men at one and the same time to attack Cuchulain, to wit: Traig ('Foot') and Dorn ('Fist') and Dernu ('Palm'), Col ('Sin') and Accuis[a] ('Curse') and Eraise ('Heresy'), three druid-men and three druid-women, [3]their three wives.[3] Cuchulain attacked them, [4]the six of them, and struck off their six heads,[4] so that they fell at his hands [5]on this side of Ath Tíre Moire ('Big Land's Ford') at Methe and Cethe.[5]

[1-1] This heading is supplied by Windisch.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[a] LU. 1764, H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93 have for this, *Mebul*, 'Shame.'

[3-3] LU. 1767.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. 1766-1767.

[6]Then it was that Fergus demanded of his sureties that fair-dealing should not be broken with Cuchulain. And it was there that Cuchulain was at that time,[6] [7]that is, at Delga Murthemni. Then Cuchulain killed Fota in his field, Bomailce on his ford, Salach in his homestead, Muine in his fort, Luar in Lethbera, Fertoithle in Toithle. These are the names of these lands forever, every place in which each man of them fell.[7]

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1759-1760.

[7-7] LU. 1761-1765.

Forasmuch as covenant and terms of single combat had been broken with Cuchulain, Cuchulain took his sling in hand that day and began to shoot at the host from Delga ('the Little Dart') in the south, [8]in Murthemne.[8] Though [W.2406.] numerous were the men of Erin on that day, not one of them durst turn his face southwards [1]towards Cuchulain, towards the side where he was[1] [2]between Delga and the sea,[2] whether dog, or horse, or man. [3]So that he slew an hundred warriors till came the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.[3]



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[8-8] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 1745.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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XVIa

[1]THE HEALING OF THE MORRIGAN[1]

[W.2410.] [2]Great weariness came over Cuchulain after that night, and a great thirst, after his exhaustion.[2] Then it was that the Morrigan, daughter of Emmas, came from the fairy dwellings, in the guise of an old hag, [3]with wasted knees, long-legged,[3] [4]blind and lame,[4] engaged in milking a [5]tawny,[5] three-teated [6]milch[6] cow before the eyes of Cuchulain.[a] And for this reason she came in this fashion, that she might have redress from Cuchulain. For none whom Cuchulain ever wounded recovered therefrom without himself aided in the healing. Cuchulain, maddened with thirst, begged her for a milking. She gave him a milking of one of the teats [7]and straightway Cuchulain drank it.[7] "May this be a cure in time for me, [8]old crone," quoth Cuchulain, "and the blessing of gods and of non-gods upon thee!" said he;[8] and one of the queen's eyes became whole thereby. He begged the milking of [9]another[9] teat. [10]She milked the cow's second teat and[10] gave it to him and [11]he drank it and said,[11] "May she straightway be sound that gave it." [12]Then her head was healed so that it was whole.[12] He begged a third drink [W.2418.] [1]of the hag.[1] [2]She milked the cow's third teat[2] and gave him the milking of the teat [3]and he drank it.[3] "A blessing on thee of gods and of non-gods, O woman! [4]Good is the help and succour thou gavest me." [4] [5]And her leg was made whole thereby.[5] [6]Now these were their gods, the mighty folk: and these were their non-gods, the folk of husbandry.[6] And the queen was healed [7]forthwith.[7] [8]"Well, Cuchulain,[8] [9]thou saidst to me," spake the Morrigan, "I should not get healing [10]nor succour[10] from thee forever." "Had I known it was thou," Cuchulain made answer, "I would never have healed thee." Or, it may be Drong Conculainn ('Cuchulain's Throng') on Tarthesc is the name of this tale in the Reaving of the Kine of Cualnge.[9]

[1-1] LU. fo. 77a, in the margin.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 1748.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[a] Reading *fiadnaisse*.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[12-12] LU. and YBL. 1753.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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[4-4] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] LU. and YBL 1755.

[6-6] A gloss incorporated in the text of LL., LU., YBL., Stowe, H. 2. 17. and *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[8-8] *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] LU. and YBL. 1755-1758.

[10-10] *Eg.* 93.

[11] Then it was she alighted in the form of a royston crow on the bramble that grows over Grelach Dolair ('the Stamping-ground of Dolar') in Mag Murthemni. "Ominous is the appearance of a bird in this place above all," quoth Cuchulain. Hence cometh Sge nah Einchi ('Crow's Bramble') as a name of Murthemne.[11]

[11-11] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

Then Medb ordered out the hundred [12]armed[12] warriors [13]of her body-guard[13] at one and the same time to assail Cuchulain. Cuchulain attacked them all, so that they fell by his hand [14]at Ath Ceit Cuile ('Ford of the First Crime').[14] "It is a dishonour for us that our people are slaughtered in this wise," quoth Medb. "It is not the first destruction that has befallen us from that same man," replied Ailill. Hence Cuilenn Cind Duni ('The Destruction of the Head [W.2426.] of the Dun') is henceforth the name of the place where they were,[1] the mound whereon Medb and Ailill tarried that night.[1] Hence Ath Cro ('Gory Ford') is the name of the ford where they were, [2]and Glass Cro ('River of Gore') the name of the stream.[2] And fittingly, too, because of the abundance of gore and blood that went with the flow of the river.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[13-13] LU. 1768.

[14-14] LU. 1769.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17, and, similarly, LU. 1771.

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XVII

THE GREAT ROUT ON THE PLAIN OF MURTHEMNE FOLLOWETH HERE BELOW

[W.2431.] [1]That night[1] the warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and made their station in the place called Breslech Mor ('the Great Rout') in the Plain of Murthemne. Their portion of cattle and spoils they sent on before them to the south to the cow-stalls of Ulster. [LL.fo.76a.] Cuchulain took station at Ferta ('the Gravemound') at Lerga ('the Slopes') hard by them. And his charioteer kindled him a fire on the evening of that night, namely Laeg son of Rianganabair. Cuchulain saw far away in the distance the fiery glitter of the bright-golden arms over the heads of four of the five grand provinces of Erin, in the setting of the sun in the clouds of evening. Great anger and rage possessed him at their sight, because of the multitude of his foes, because of the number of his enemies [2]and opponents, and because of the few that were to avenge his sores and his wounds upon them.[2]

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[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3]Then Cuchulain arose and[3] he grasped his two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook his shield and brandished his spears and wielded his sword and sent out the hero's shout from his throat, so that the fiends and goblins and sprites of the glens and demons of the air gave answer for the fearfulness of the shout [4]that he lifted on [W.2444.] high,[4] until Nemain, [1]which is Badb,[1] brought confusion on the host. The warriors of the four provinces of Erin made such a clangour of arms with the points of their spears and their weapons that an hundred [2]strong, stout-sturdy[2] warriors of them fell dead that night of fright and of heartbreak in the middle of the camp and quarters [3]of the men of Erin at the awfulness of the horror and the shout which Cuchulain lifted on high.[3]

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] Translating from Stowe, H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] Stowe, and LL., in the margin.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

As Laeg stood there he descried something: A single man coming from the north-eastern quarter athwart the camp of the four grand provinces of Erin making directly for him. "A single man here cometh towards us now, Cucucan," cried Laeg. "But what manner of man is he?" Cuchulain asked. "Not hard to say," [4]Laeg made answer.[4] "A great, well-favoured man, then. Broad, close-shorn hair upon him, and yellow and curly his back hair. A green mantle wrapped around him. A brooch of white silver[a] in the mantle over his breast. A kirtle of silk fit for a king, with red interweaving of ruddy gold he wears trussed up on his fair skin and reaching down to his knees. [5]A great one-edged sword in his hand.[5] A black shield with hard rim of silvered bronze thereon. A five-barbed spear in his hand. A pronged bye-spear beside it. Marvellous, in sooth, the feats and the sport and the play that he makes. But him no one heeds, nor gives he heed to any one. [6]No one shows him courtesy nor does he show courtesy to any one, [6] like as if none saw him in the camp of the four grand provinces of Erin." "In sooth, O fosterling," answered Cuchulain, "it is one of my friends of fairy kin [7]that comes[7] to take pity upon me, because they know the great distress wherein I am now all alone against the four grand provinces of Erin on the Plunder of the Kine of [W.2463.] Cualnge, [1]killing a man on the ford each day and fifty each night, for the men of Erin grant me not fair fight nor the terms of single combat from noon of each day." [1]

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[a] 'Of gold,' *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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Now in this, Cuchulain spoke truth. When the young warrior was come up to Cuchulain he bespoke him and condoled with him [2]for the greatness of his toil and the length of time he had passed without sleep.[2] [3]"This is brave of thee, O Cuchulain," quoth he. "It is not much, at all," replied Cuchulain. "But I will bring thee help," said the young warrior. "Who then art thou?" asked Cuchulain. "Thy father from Faery am I, even Lug son of Ethliu." "Yea, heavy are the bloody wounds upon me; let thy healing be speedy." [3] "Sleep then awhile, O Cuchulain," said the young warrior, "thy heavy fit of sleep by Ferta in Lerga ('the Gravemound on the Slopes') till the end of three days and three nights and I will oppose the hosts during that time." [4]He examined each wound so that it became clean. Then he sang him the 'men's low strain' till Cuchulain fell asleep withal. It was then Lug recited[4] [5]the Spell-chant of Lug.[5]

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] LU. 1803-1807, and, similarly, *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] LU. 1810-1811.

[5-5] LU. fo. 78a, in the margin; also in H. 2. 17. and *Eg.* 93.

Accordingly Cuchulain slept his heavy fit of sleep at 'the Gravemound on the Slopes' till the end of three days and three nights. And well he might sleep. Yet as great as was his sleep, even so great was his weariness. For from the Monday before Samain[a] ('Summer-end') even to the Wednesday after Spring-beginning,[b] Cuchulain slept not for all that space, except for a brief snatch after mid-day, leaning against his spear, and his head on his [W.2475.] fist, and his fist clasping his spear, and his spear on his knee, [LL.fo.76b.] but hewing and cutting, slaying and destroying four of the five grand provinces of Erin during that time.

[a] Hallowtide, the first of November and the beginning of winter.

[b] *I.e.* Candlemas. Stowe contains a Christian addition: 'to the feast of Brigit;' that is, the first of February.

Then it was that the warrior [1]from Faery[1] laid plants from the fairy-rath and healing herbs and put a healing charm into the cuts and stabs, into the sores and gaping wounds of Cuchulain, so that Cuchulain recovered during his sleep without ever perceiving it.

[1-1] LU. 1826.

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XVIIa

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE YOUTHS OF ULSTER[a]

[W.2482.] That was the time the youths came out of the north from Emain Macha [1]to the help of Cuchulain.[1] Thrice fifty boys of the sons of the kings of Ulster, accompanying Follomain, Conchobar's son, and three battles they offered to the hosts, so that thrice their number fell and the youths also fell, save Conchobar's son Follomain. Follomain vowed that never till the very day of doom and of life would he return to

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Emain unless he should bring Ailill's head with him together with the diadem of gold that was on it. That was no easy thing for him to achieve, for the two sons of Bethe son of Ban—the two sons of Ailill's foster-mother and foster-father [2]to whom King Ailill's diadem had been entrusted[2]—attacked and wounded [3]Follomain,[3] so that he fell by their hands. This then is the Massacre of the youths of Ulster and of Follomain son of Conchobar.

[a] The LU. version of this episode was given above under Xlle, page 143.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

Touching Cuchulain, he remained in his sound, heavy sleep till the end of three days and three nights at the 'Gravemound on the Slopes.' Thereafter Cuchulain arose from his sleep. He passed his hand over his face and he became as a wild[b] wheel-thunder (?) from his crown to the ground, and he felt his courage strengthened, and he would have [W.2497.] been able to go into an assembly or on a march or to a tryst with a woman or to an ale-house or into one of the chief assemblies of Erin. "How long am I asleep now, young warrior?" Cuchulain asked. "Three days and three nights," the young warrior made answer. "Woe is me for that!" quoth Cuchulain. "Why so?" asked the young warrior. "For that the hosts have not been attacked in that time," answered Cuchulain. "Nay, not so were they spared," the young warrior made answer. "I would fain inquire who then attacked them?" Cuchulain asked. "The youths came hither out of the north from Emain Macha, thrice fifty boys accompanying Follomain, Conchobar's son, and they the sons of the kings of Ulster. And three battles they offered the hosts in the space of the three days and three nights wherein thou wast till now asleep, and thrice their number are fallen at their hands and the youths themselves are fallen except Follomain [1]alone,[1] Conchobar's son. And Follomain vowed that never till the very day of doom and of life [3]would he return [2]north[2] to Emain Macha till he carried off Ailill's head with the diadem of gold which was on it. Howbeit not such was his luck, for he fell at the hands of the two sons of Bethe son of Ban, after engaging in battle with them." [3]

[b] Literally, 'crimson.'

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] Stowe.

"Alas, that I was not [4]there[4] in my strength!" cried Cuchulain; "for had I been in my strength the youths would not have fallen, as now they have, and Follomain would not have perished." "But this avow, O Cucan,"[a] [5]said the young warrior;[5] "it is no reproach to thine honour and no disgrace to thy valour." "Bide here this night with us, young warrior," said Cuchulain, "that together we avenge the youths on the hosts." "Nay then, I may not tarry," answered the [W.2515.] young warrior. [1]"Why so?" asked Cuchulain. "Easy to say," replied the young warrior;[1] "for however prodigious the deeds of valour and skill in arms one may perform in thy company, not on him will fall the glory nor the honour nor the fame but on thyself. For this reason will I not tarry with thee, but do thou thyself try thy feats of arms [2]and the strength of thy hands[2] alone on the hosts, for not with them is the power over thy life on this occasion."

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[4-4] Stowe.

[a] A pet name for Cuchulain.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3]Then the young warrior from Faery went from him and they knew not what way he had gone. "Good, O my master Laeg," said Cuchulain; "together we will go to avenge the youths on the hosts." "I will go with thee," Laeg made answer.[3] "And the scythed chariot, my friend Laeg," said Cuchulain. "Canst thou get it ready? If thou canst get it ready and hast its equipment, make it ready, and if its equipment is not at hand, make it not ready."

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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XVIIb

THE SCYTHED CHARIOT

[W.2525.] Thereupon the charioteer arose and donned his yeoman's suit for charioteering. Of this [LL.fo.77a.] yeoman's suit for charioteering, this is what he put on him: His soft kirtle of skin which was light and airy, which was smooth and sparkling, which was stitched and of buckskin, so that it hindered not the movements of his arms outside. Over that he put outside an over-mantle of raven's feathers, which Simon Magus had made [1]as a gift[1] [2]for Darius[2] [3]Nero,[3] king of the Romans. Darius bestowed it upon Conchobar; Conchobar gave it to Cuchulain; Cuchulain presented it to [4]Laeg son of Riagabair,[4] his charioteer. The same charioteer took the crested, plated, four-bordered battle-cap with variety of every colour and every figure, reaching [5]down[5] over the middle of his shoulders behind. It was an adornment for him and not an encumbrance. With his hand he placed the red-yellow frontlet—like one red-golden strip of glowing gold smelted over the edge of an anvil—on his forehead as a token of charioteering, to distinguish him from his master. He opened the hobbles that fastened his steeds and grasped his gold-mounted goad in his right hand. In his left hand he seized the lines, that is, the bridle-reins of his horses for restraining his steeds before performing his charioteering.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] Stowe and LU. 1874.

[3-3] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93, instead of, 'Darius.'

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[W.2542.] He next threw the iron-sheathed gold-bedecked coats of mail over his horses, so that they covered them from forehead to forehead. [1]The chariot was[1] [2]studded with[2] dartlets, lancelets, spearlets, and hardened spits, so that every portion of the frame bristled with points in that chariot and every corner and end and point and face of that chariot was a passage of laceration.

[1-1] There is a gap in the MS., and these words are supplied from the context.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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Then cast he a spell of concealment over his horses and over his fellow, so that they were not visible to any one in the camp, while all in the camp were visible to them, [3]and over this veil of protection he wounded each one and through it and behind it.[3] Well indeed was it that he cast that charm, for on that day the charioteer had to perform the three gifts of charioteership, namely leaping over a cleft in the ranks, unerring driving, and the handling of the goad.

[3-3] *Eg. 93 and H. 2. 17.*

Then [4]arose[4] the champion and battle-warrior and the instrument of Badb's corpse-fold[a] among the men of the earth,[c] Cuchulain son of Sualtair, and he donned his war-dress of battle and fight and combat. To that war-dress of battle and fight and combat which he put about him belonged seven and twenty[b] waxed, board-like, equally close skin-tunics which were girded by cords and swathings and ropes on his fair skin, to the end that his wit and reason might not become deranged when the violence of his nature came over him.

[4-4] *Eg. 93 and H. 2. 17.*

[a] That is, the piled up bodies of the slain.

[c] 'Of Erin,' *Eg. 93.*

[b] 'Eight and twenty,'. *Eg. 93 and H. 2. 17.*

Over him he put on the outside his battle-girdle of a champion, of tough, tanned, stout leather cut from the forequarters of seven ox-hides of yearlings, so that it reached from the slender parts of his waist to the stout part under [W.2562.] his arm-pits. He was used to wear it to keep off spears and points and irons and lances and arrows. For in like manner they would bound back from it as if from stone or rock or horn they rebounded. Then he took his silken, glossy trews with their band of spotted pale-gold against the soft lower parts of his loins. His brown, well-sewn kilt of brown leather from the shoulders of four ox-hides of yearlings, with his battle-girdle of cow-skins, he put underneath over the shining silken trews on the outside, [1]so that it covered him from the slender part of his waist to the thick part of his thighs and reached up to the battle-belt of the hero.[1] Then the king-hero [LL.fo.77a.] [2]and king-warrior[2] seized his battle-arms of battle and fight and combat. This is what belonged to those warlike weapons of battle: He took his eight little swords together with the bright-faced, tusk-hilted straightsword [3]along with his quiver;[3] he took his eight little spears besides his five-pronged spear; he took his eight little darts together with his javelin with its walrus-tooth ornaments; he took his eight little shafts along with his play-staff; he took his eight shields for feats together with his dark-red bent-shield, whereon a show-boar could lie in its hollow boss, with its very sharp, razor-like, keen-cutting, hard [4]iron[4] rim all around

it, so that it would cut a hair against the stream because of its sharpness and fineness and

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keenness. When the young warrior would perform the edge-feat withal, it was the same whether he cut with his shield or his spear or his sword. Next he put round his head his crested war-helm of battle and fight and combat, [5]wherein were four carbuncle-gems on each point and each end to adorn it,[5] whereout was uttered the cry of an hundred young warriors with the long-drawn wail from each of its angles and corners. [W.2583.] For this was the way that the fiends, the goblins and the sprites of the glens and the demons of the air screamed before and above and around him, what time he went forth for the shedding of blood of heroes and champions, [1]exulting in the mighty deeds wrought underneath it[1]. His veil of concealment was thrown over him then, of raiment from Tir Tairngire ('the Land of Promise') which had been brought to him [2]as a gift[2] by Manannan son of Ler ('the Sea') from the king of Tir na Sorcha ('the Land of Light'), [3]his foster-father in magic[3]. [4]His fair, purple-red fan was placed in front of his face. Past it and through it and over it everything was visible to him and no one wounded him past it nor through it nor over it[4].

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. 1914.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] Stowe and LU. 1927.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

Then took place the first twisting-fit [5]and rage[5] of [6]the royal hero[6] Cuchulain, so that he made a terrible, many-shaped, wonderful, unheard of thing of himself. His flesh trembled about him like a pole against the torrent or like a bulrush against the stream, every member and every joint and every point and every knuckle of him from crown to ground. He made a mad whirling-feat of his body within his hide. His feet and his shins and his knees slid so that they came behind him. His heels and his calves and his hams shifted so that they passed to the front. The muscles of his calves moved so that they came to the front of his shins, so that each huge knot was the size of a soldier's balled fist. He stretched the sinews of his head so that they stood out on the nape of his

neck, and as large as the head of a month-old child was each of the hill-like lumps, huge, incalculable, vast, immeasurable.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

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He next made a ruddy bowl of his face and his countenance. He gulped down one eye into his head so that it [W.2603.] would be hard work if a wild crane succeeded in drawing it out on to the middle of his cheek from the rear of his skull. Its mate sprang forth till it came out on his cheek, [1]so that it was the size of a five-fist kettle, and he made a red berry thereof out in front of his head.[1] His mouth was distorted monstrously [2]and twisted up to his ears[2]. He drew the cheek from the jaw-bone so that the interior of his throat was to be seen. His lungs and his lights stood out so that they fluttered in his mouth and his gullet. He struck a mad lion's blow with the upper jaw [3]on its fellow[3] so that as large as a wether's fleece of a three year old was each [4]red,[4] fiery flake [5]which his teeth forced[5] into his mouth from his gullet. There was heard the loud clap of his heart against his breast like the yelp of a howling bloodhound or like a lion going among bears. [LL.fo.78a.] There were seen the [a]torches of the Badb,[a] and the rain clouds of poison, and the sparks of glowing-red fire, [6]blazing and flashing[6] in hazes and mists over his head with the seething of the truly-wild wrath that rose up above him. His hair bristled all over his head like branches of a redthorn thrust into a gap in a great hedge. Had a king's apple-tree laden with royal fruit been shaken around him, scarce an apple of them all would have passed over him to the ground, but rather would an apple have stayed stuck on each single hair there, for the twisting of the anger which met it as it rose from his hair above him. The Lon Laith ('Champion's Light') stood out of his forehead, so that it was as long and as thick as a warrior's whetstone, [7]so that it was as long as his nose, till he got furious handling the shields, thrusting out the charioteer, destroying the hosts.[7] As high, as thick, as strong, as steady, as long as the sail-tree of some huge [W.2623.] prime ship was the straight spout of dark blood which arose right on high from the very ridgepole of his crown, so that a black fog of witchery was made thereof like to the smoke from a king's hostel what time the king comes to be ministered to at nightfall of a winter's day.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Reading with Stowe.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[5-5] Reading with *Eg.* 93.

[a-a] A kenning for 'swords.'

[6-6] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[7-7] LU. 1958-1959.

When now this contortion had been completed in Cuchulain, then it was that the hero of valour sprang into his scythed war-chariot, with its iron sickles, its thin blades, its hooks and its hard spikes, with its hero's fore-prongs, with its opening fixtures, with its stinging nails that were fastened to the poles and thongs and bows and lines of the chariot, [1]lacerating heads and bones and bodies, legs and necks and shoulders.[1]

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[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

It was then he delivered [2]over his chariot[2] the thunder-feat of a hundred and the thunder-feat of two hundred and the thunder-feat of three hundred and the thunder-feat of four hundred, and he ceased at the thunder-feat of five hundred. For he did not deem it too much that such a great number should fall by his hand at his first onset and first battle-assault on four of the five grand provinces of Erin, [3]while avenging on them the slaughter of the youths and of Follomain son of Conchobar,[3] In such wise fared he forth for to seek his foes, and he drove his chariot in a wide circuit round about the hosts of the four grand provinces of Erin. And he led his chariot a heavy way. The chariot's iron wheels sank into the ground so that [4]the earth dug up by the iron wheels[4] might have served for a dun and a fortress, so did the chariot's iron wheels cut into the ground. For in like manner the clods and boulders and rocks and the clumps and the shingle of the earth arose up outside on a height with the iron wheels. It was for this cause he made this circling [5]hedge[5] of the Badb [W.2646.] round about the hosts of four of the five grand provinces of Erin, that they might not escape him nor get away before he would come on them to press a reprisal for the boys. And he went into the midst of the ranks and mowed down huge walls of the corpses of his foes [1]and enemies and opponents[1] in a great circle round about the host. And he made the onslaught of a foe amongst foes upon them, so that they fell sole to sole, neck to neck, [2]arm to arm, elbow to elbow, and rib to rib, [3]such was the closeness of their bodies, [3] and there were pools of ruddy blood where they moved.[2] Thrice again in this manner he circled them round, so that he left them in beds of six in a great ring around them, even the soles of three to the backs of three men in a circle around the camp. Hence Sessrech Breslige ('Great sixfold Slaughter')[a] is the name of this event on the Tain, and it is one of the three unreckonable events of the Tain, which were, to wit, Sessrech Breslige, Immslige Glennamnach ('the Mutual Slaying at Glennamain'), and the battle of Garech [LL.fo.78b.] and Ilgarech; only that here, hound and horse and man were one to him [4]in the great rout on Mag Murthemni that night avenging the youths on four of the five grand provinces of Erin.[4]

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[3-3] LU. 1996.

[a] Or, 'Ploughland of the Great Slaughter.'

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and *H.* 2. 17.

What others say is that Lug son of Ethliu fought on Cuchulain's side at the Sessrech Breslige.

Their number is not known and it cannot be reckoned how many fell there of the rabble rout, but only their chiefs have been counted. Here below are their names, to wit:—

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The two Cruad, two Calad, two Cir, two Ciar, two Ecell, three Cromm, three Cur, three Combirge, four Feochar, four Furachar, four Casse, four Fota, five Caur, five Cerman, [W.2679.] five Cobtach, six Saxan, six Duach, six Dare, [1]six Dunchadh, six Daimiach, [1] seven Rochad, seven Ronan, seven Rurthech, eight Rochlad, eight Rochtad, eight Rindach, [2]eight Corpre,[2] eight Malach, nine Daigith, nine Dare, nine Damach, ten Fiach, ten Fiacach, ten Fedlimid.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93 and *H.* 2. 17.

[2-2] *LU.* and *YBL.* 2010.

Ten and six-score[b] kings, [3]leaders and men of the land,[3] Cuchulain laid low in the great slaughter on the Plain of Murthemne, besides a countless horde of dogs and horses and women and boys and children and common folk; for there escaped not a third man of the men of Erin [4]without a wound or a hurt or a blueing or a reddening or a lump or a mark or breaking of thigh or of leg or of shinbone,[4] without having hip-bone broken or half his skull or an eye hurt, or without an enduring mark for the course of his life. [5]And he left them then after inflicting that battle upon them, without having his blood drawn or wound brought on himself or on his charioteer or on either of his horses.[5]

[b] 'Nineteen and nine-score,' *H.* 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and *H.* 2. 17.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and *H.* 2. 17.

[5-5] *LU.*, edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe, page 72, note 19.

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XVIIc

[1]THE ACCOUNT OF THE APPEARANCE OF CUCHULAIN[1]

[W.2706.] [2]Early[2] the next morning Cuchulain came to observe the host and to display his comely, beautiful form to the matrons and dames and girls and maidens and poets and men of art,[a] for he did not consider it an honour nor becoming, the [3]wild, [3] proud shape of magic which had been manifested to them the night before. It was for that then that he came to exhibit his comely, beautiful form on that day.

[1-1] *LU.* fo. 81a, in the margin.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[a] A general term for poets, singers, seers and druids.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

Truly fair was the youth that came there to display his form to the hosts, Cuchulain, to wit son of Sualtaim [4]son of Boefoltach ('Of little possessions') son of Morfoltach ('Of great possessions') son of Red Neil macRudhraidh.[4] Three heads of hair he wore; brown at the skin, blood-red in the middle, a golden-yellow crown what thatched it. Beautiful was the arrangement of the hair, with three coils of hair wound round the nape of his neck, so that like to a strand of thread of gold was each thread-like, loose-flowing, deep-golden, magnificent, long-tressed, splendid, beauteous-hued hair as it fell down over

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his shoulders. A hundred bright-purple windings of gold-flaming red gold at his neck. A hundred salmon-coloured (?) cords strung with carbuncles as a covering round his head. Four spots on either of his two cheeks, even a yellow spot, and a green spot, and a blue spot, [W.2722.] and a purple spot. Seven jewels of the eye's brilliance was either of his kingly eyes. Seven toes to either of his two feet. Seven fingers to either of his two hands, with the clutch of hawk's claw, with the grip of hedgehog's talon in every separate one of them.

[4-4] H. 2. 17.

He also put on him that day his fair-day dress. To this apparel about him belonged, namely, a beautiful, well-fitting, purple, fringed, five-folded mantle. A white brooch of [1]silvered bronze or of[1] white silver incrustated with burnished gold over his fair white breast, as if it were a full-fulgent lantern that eyes of men could not behold [LL.fo.79a.] for its resplendence and crystal shining. A [2]striped[2] chest-jacket of silk on his skin, fairly adorned with borders and braidings and trimmings of gold and silver and silvered bronze; it reached to the upper hem of his dark, brown-red warlike breeches of royal silk. A magnificent, brown-purple buckler he bore, [3]with five wheels of gold on it,[3] with a rim of pure white silver around it. A gold-hilted hammered sword [4]with ivory guards, raised high at his girdle[4] at his left side. A long grey-edged spear together with a trenchant bye-spear for defence, with thongs for throwing and with rivets of whitened bronze, alongside him in the chariot. Nine heads he bore in one of his hands and ten in the other, and these he brandished before the hosts in token of his prowess and cunning. [5]This then was a night's attack for Cuchulain on the hosts of four of the five provinces of Erin.[5] Medb hid her face beneath a shelter of shields lest Cuchulain should cast at her that day.

[1-1] YBL. 2040.

[2-2] YBL. 2043.

[3-3] LU. and YBL. 2045.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 2046.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 2050.

Then it was that the maidens [6]of Connacht[6] besought the men of Erin to lift them up on the flat of the shields above the warriors' shoulders; [7]and the women [8]of Munster[8] clomb on the men[7] to behold the aspect of [W.2746.] Cuchulain. For they marvelled at the beautiful, comely appearance he showed them that day compared with the low, arrogant shape of magic in which they had seen him the night before.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 1205.

[7-7] LU. and YBL. 2052.

[8-8] YBL, added later above the line.

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XVIIId

DUBTHACH'S JEALOUSY[a]

[W.2749.] [1]And Dubthach's wife prayed to be lifted to regard the form of Cuchulain.[1] Then it was that jealousy, ill-will and envy possessed Dubthach Doel ('the Black-tongue')[b] of Ulster because of his wife [2]in regard to Cuchulain; for he saw his wife climb on the men to get a glimpse of Cuchulain;[2] and he counselled the hosts to act treacherously towards Cuchulain and to entrap him, even to lay up an ambush around him on all sides to the end that he might fall by them. And he spake these words:—

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"If this be the Twisted one,
By him shall men's bodies fall;
Shrieks there shall be round the liss;
Deeds to tell of shall be wrought!

"Stones shall be on graves from him;
Kingly martyrs shall increase.
Not well have ye battle found
On the slopes with this wild Hound!

[3]"If this be the Twisted one, Men shall soon be slain by him; 'Neath his feet shall corpses lie; Under bushes mantles white! [3]

"Now the Wildman's form I see,
Nine[c] heads dangling by his side;
Shattered spoils he has, behold;
Ten[d] heads as his treasure great!

[W.2766.] "And your women, too, I see, Raise their heads above the lines; I behold your puissant queen Makes no move t'engage in fight!

"Were it mine to give advice,
Men would be on every side,
That they soon might end his life;
If this be the Twisted one!"

[a] This superscription is not found in the MSS.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[b] Literally, 'the Chafer (or Scorpion?).'

[2-2] *Stowe.*

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and *H.* 2. 17.

[c] 'Eight,' *LU.* and *YBL.* 2060.

[d] 'Nine,' *LU.* and *YBL.* 2061, *H.* 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

Fergus macRoig heard this and he deemed it an outrage that Dubthach should counsel how to betray Cuchulain to the hosts. And he reached him a strong, sharp kick with his foot away from him, so that Dubthach struck with his mouth against the group outside. And Fergus reproached him for all the wrongs and iniquities and treachery and

shameful deeds he had ever done to the Ulstermen of old and anew. And then he spake these words:—

“If this ‘Black-tongue’ Dubthach be,
Let him skulk behind the hosts;
No good hath he ever wrought,
Since he slew the princesses! [a]

“Base and foul, the deed he wrought:
Fiachu, Conchobar’s son, he slew.
No more fair was heard of him:
Carbre’s death, Fedilmid’s son!

“Ne’er for Ulster’s weal doth aim
Lugaid’s son, Casruba’s scion; [b]
Such is how he acts to men:
Whom he stabs not he incites!

“Ulster’s exiles it would grieve
If their beardless boy [c] should fall.
If on you come Ulster’s troops
They will make your herds their spoil!

“Strewn afar your herds will be
By the rising Ulstermen.
Tales there’ll be of mighty deeds
That will tell of far-famed queens!

[W.2800.] [1]“Corpses will be under foot, [1] [2]Food there’ll be at ravens’ rests; [2]
Bucklers lying on the slopes; Wild and furious deeds increase! [3]” I behold just now your
wives Raise their heads above the ranks. I behold your puissant queen Moves not to
engage in war! [3]

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[LL.fo.79b.] “Valour none nor generous deed Comes from Lugaid’s craven son; Nor will kings see lances red, If this ‘Black-tongue’ Dubthach be!”

[a] The reference is to the maidens of Emain Macha slain by Dubthach in punishment for the death of the sons of Usnech.

[b] That is, Dubthach.

[c] That is, Cuchulain.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 2077.

[2-2] Reading: *Betit buind fri brannfossaib*.

[3-3] This quatrain is almost identical with the one translated on page 199.

Thus far ‘The Scythed Chariot.’[a]

[a] A very obscure and fragmentary passage in LU. and YBL. (lines 2083-2106, edition of Strachan and O’Keeffe, lacking in *Eg.* 93, *Revue Celtique*, tome xv, page 204), consisting of a series of short strains in *rosc* spoken in turn by Ailill, Medb, Gabran the poet, and Fergus, is omitted in the translation.

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XVIII

[1]THE SLAYING OF OENGUS SON OF OENLAM[1]

[W.2814.] Then it was that a very bold young warrior of the Ulstermen came nigh the hosts; his bye-name was Oengus son of Oenlam Gabe (‘the One-handed Smith’). And he drove the hosts before him from Moda Loga, which at that time was called Lugmud, to Ath da Fert (‘the Ford of the Two Gravemounds’) in Sliab Fuait. [2]And he suffered them not to go by, but he showered them with stones.[2] What scholars say is: If Oengus son of Oenlam Gabe had fought them in single combat, [3]two-thirds of[3] the host would have fallen before that by him in single battle [4]at Emain Macha.[4] Howbeit it was by no means so that they acted, but they attacked him from ambush on every side, till he fell at their hands [5]in unequal fight[5] at Ath da Fert in Sliab Fuait.

[1-1] LU. fo. 82a, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 2135-2136.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] LU. and YBL. 2137.

[5-5] LU. and YBL. 2139.

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XVIIIa

HERE NOW IS TOLD THE MISTHROW AT BELACH EOIN.

[W.2823.] Then came to them Fiacha Fialdana ('the Generous and Intrepid') of the Ulstermen to speak with the son of his mother's sister, namely with Mane Andoe ('the Unslow') of the Connachtmen. And thus he came, and Dubthach Doel ('the Black Tongue') of Ulster with him. It was in this wise that Mane Andoe came, and Doche son of Maga along with him. When now Doche macMagach espied Fiacha Fialdana, he straightway hurled a spear at him, but so that it went through his own friend, through Dubthach Doel of Ulster. Then Fiacha Fialdana hurled a spear at Doche macMagach, so that it went through his own friend, through Mane Andoe of Connacht. Thereupon said the men of Erin: "A mishap in throwing," they said, "is what hath happened to the men, for each of them to kill his friend and nearest relation." Hence this is entitled Imroll Belaig Eoin ('the Misthrow at Bird-pass'). And 'the Other Misthrow at Bird-pass' is another name for it.

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[1]Or it may be this from which cometh Imroll Belaig Eoin: The hosts proceed to Belach Eoin ('Bird-pass'). Their two troops wait there. Diarmait macConchobar of the Ulstermen comes from the north. "Let a horseman start from you," cries Diarmait, "that Mane may come with one man to parley with me, and I will go with another man to parley with him." A while thereafter they meet "I am come," says Diarmait, "from Conchobar, with commands to Ailill and Medb that they let the cows go and make good all the ill they have done here and bring hither the bull[a] from the west to meet the other bull,[b] to the end that they may encounter, since Medb has pledged it." "I will go," says Mane, "to tell them." He takes this message to Medb and Ailill. "This cannot be had of Medb," Mane reported. "Let us make a fair exchange of arms, then," says Diarmait, "if perchance that pleaseth thee better." "I am content," replies Mane. Each of them casts his spear at the other so that both of them die, and hence the name of this place is Imroll Belaig Eoin. Their forces rush upon one another. Three-score of each force fall. Hence is Ard in Dirma ('the Height of the Troop').[1]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 2114-2128.

[a] The 'White-horned.'

[b] The 'Brown of Cualnge.'

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XVIIIb

HERE NOW FOLLOWETH THE DISGUIISING OF TAMON

[W.2837.] Then said the men of Erin to Tamon the fool that he should don the garments of Ailill and the king's golden shawl, and go to the ford that was close before them. So he put the garments and golden shawl of Ailill upon him. [1]Ailill's people placed the king's diadem on the head of Tamon the fool, for Ailill dared not wear it himself,[1] and he went on to the ford under their eyes. The men of Erin began to scoff and to shout and jeer at him. "It is a disguising of Tamon ('a Stump') for thee, O Tamon the fool," they cried, "with the dress and the golden shawl of Ailill upon thee!" When Cuchulain saw him, it seemed to him in his ignorance and lack of knowledge that it was Ailill himself that was there. And he slung a stone from his staff-sling at him so that [2]his head was broken thereby[2] and Tamon the fool was smitten lifeless where he was on the ford. Hence Ath Tamuin ('the Ford of a Stump') [3]is the name of that ford ever since[3] and 'the Disguising of Tamon' [4]is the name of the tale.[4]

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 2129.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 2131.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

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XIX

[1]THE BATTLE OF FERGUS AND CUCHULAIN[1]

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[W.2851.] The hosts of the four grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and entrenched themselves for that night at the pillar-stone in Crich Roiss ('the Borders of Ross'). Then Medb called upon the men of Erin for one of them to contend and do battle with Cuchulain on the morrow. And every one of them spake thus: "It shall not be I! it shall not be I!" [2]cried each from his place.[2] "No victim is owing from my people, [3]and even if one were it would not be myself whom ye would send as a victim in his stead.[3] [4]I will not be the man to go in his place to fight with Cuchulain till the very day of doom and of life!"[4]

[1-1] LU. fo. 82b, in the margin.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 2141.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17., LU. and YBL. 2142-2143.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

Thereupon Medb summoned Fergus to [5]go forth and[5] contend and fight with Cuchulain, [6]to drive him off from them on the ford[6] [7]at the early morning-hour[7] [8]on the morrow,[8] for that the men of Erin had failed her [9]to go and do battle with him.[9] "Ill would it befit me," quoth Fergus, "to fight with a callow young lad without any beard, and mine own disciple, [10]the fosterling of Ulster,[10] [11]the foster-child that sat on Conchobar's knee, the lad from Craeb Ruad ('Red Branch')." [11] Howbeit Medb [W.2861.] murmured sore that Fergus foreswore her combat and battle. [1]They filled him with wine till he was heavily drunken and then they questioned him about going to the combat.[1] They bode the night in that place. Early on the morrow Fergus arose, [2]since they importuned him urgently,[2] [3]and his horses were got ready for him and his chariot harnessed[3] and he fared forth to the place of combat where Cuchulain was.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 2. 17.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93 and H. 2. 17.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] H. 2. 17 and *Eg.* 93.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] H. 2. 17.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] LU. and YBL. 2145-2146.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 2147.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4]When now[4] Cuchulain saw him coming nigh, [5]this is what he said:[5] [6]"Welcome thine arrival and thy coming, O my master Fergus," spoke Cuchulain. "Truly given we esteem thy greeting," Fergus answered. "It is truly given for thee, O Fergus" said Cuchulain; "and thou shalt have a night's lodging here this night." "Success and a blessing attend thee, O fosterling; not for hospitality from thee am I come, but to fight and do battle with thee." [6] "A vain surety [LL.fo.80a.] is the one wherewith my master Fergus comes to me; for no sword is in the sheath of the great staff he bears." It was true what he said. A year before this tale,[a] [7]before the expedition of the Tain,[7] Ailill had found Fergus going to a tryst with Medb on the hillside in Cruachan and his

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sword on a [8]branch[8] near by him. And Ailill had torn the sword from its sheath and put a wooden sword in its stead and vowed he would not restore him the sword till came the day of the great battle, [9]when the men of Erin would clash in the great battle of the Cualnge Cattle-raid at Garech and Ilgarech.[9] [10]"It is a perilous thing for thee to come to a place of fight, O my master Fergus, without thy sword." [10] "It matters not to me, O fosterling," replied Fergus; "for had I a sword in this, it never would cut thee nor be plied on thee. But, by [W.2874.] the honour and training I bestowed upon thee and the Ulstermen and Conchobar bestowed, [1]by the troth of thy valour and knighthood[1] I adjure thee, give way before me this day in the presence of the men of Erin!" "Truly I am loath [2]to do that,"[2] answered Cuchulain, "to flee before any one man on the Cattle-spoil of Cualnge." "Nay then it is not a thing to be taken amiss by thee," said Fergus; "for I in my turn will retreat before thee when thou wilt be covered with wounds and dripping with gore and pierced with holes in the battle of the Tain. And when I alone shall turn in flight [3]before thee,[3] so will all the men of Erin also flee [4]before thee in like manner." [4] So zealous was Cuchulain to do whatever made for Ulster's weal that he had his chariot brought to him, and he mounted his chariot and he went in confusion and flight [5]from Fergus in the presence[5] of the men of Erin. [6]As far as Grellach Dolluid ('the Stamping-place at Dolluid') he fled, in order that Fergus might give way before him on the day of the battle.[6] [7]When[7] the men of Erin saw that, [8]they were joyful, and what they said was this:[8] "He is fled from thee! He is fled from thee, O Fergus!" cried all. "Pursue him, pursue him [9]quickly,[9] O Fergus," Medb cried, "that he do not escape thee." "Nay then," said Fergus, "I will pursue him no further. [10]It is not like a tryst. Yon fellow is too speedy for me.[10] For however little ye may make of the flight I have put him to, none of the men of Erin, [11]not even four of the five provinces of Erin[11] could have obtained so much as that of him on the Cow-creagh of Cualnge. For this cause, till the men of Erin take turns in single combat, I will not engage again with this same man." Hence here we have the [12]'White[12] [W.2891.] Battle' of Fergus [1]on the Tain thus far; and it is for this cause it is called the 'White Battle,' because no 'blood on weapons'[a] resulted therefrom.[1] [2]They continue their march past Cuchulain and pitch camp in Crich Roiss.[2]

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[a] See above, page 99.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] Reading with Stowe; LL. has 'on the slope.'

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] Stowe.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

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[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] LU. and YBL. 2154-2155.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] LU. and YBL. 2157.

[11-11] *Eg.* 93.

[12-12] *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[a] A traditional tag; it occurs again, page 216.

[2-2] LU. and YBL. 2158-2159.

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XIXa

HERE NOW COMETH THE HEAD-PLACE OF FERCHU

[W.2893.] Ferchu Longsech ('the Exile'), [1]a wonderful warrior from Loch Ce, outlawed from his land by Ailill and Medb,[1] although of the Connachtmen, was engaged in battle and plunder with Ailill and Medb. From the day these came to the kingship, there never was a time that he fared to their camp or took part in their expeditions or shared in their straits or their needs or their hardships, but he was ever at their heels, pillaging and plundering their borders and land. At that time he sojourned in the eastern part of Mag Ai. Twelve[a] men was his muster. He learned that a single man checked and stopped four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring, slaying a man on the ford every one of those days and a hundred warriors every night. He weighed his plan privily with his people. "What better plan could we devise?" quoth he, "than to go and attack yonder man that checketh and stoppeth four of the five grand provinces of Erin, and bring his head and his arms with us to Ailill and



Medb? However great the injuries and wrongs we have done to Ailill and Medb, we shall obtain our peace therefor, if only that man fall by our hand.” [2]He made no doubt that if Cuchulain fell through him, the eastern territory of Connacht would be his.[2] Now this was the [W.2908.] resolve they took, and they proceeded to where Cuchulain was [1]at Ath Aladh (‘Speckled Ford’) on the Plain of Murthemne.[1] And when they came, [2]they espied the lone warrior and knew that it was Cuchulain.[2] It was not fair fight nor combat with one they vouchsafed him, but at one and the same time the twelve men fell upon him [3]so that their spears sank up to their middles into his shield.[3] Cuchulain on his part [4]drew his sword from the sheath of the Badb to attack them, and he fell to to cut away their weapons and to lighten his shield. Then he[4] turned on them, [5]front and back, to the left and the right,[5] and straightway he smote off their twelve heads; [6]and he engaged in a furious, bloody and violent battle with Ferchu himself, after killing his people. And not long did it avail Ferchu thus, for he fell at last by Cuchulain, [6] [7]and Cuchulain cut off Ferchu’s head to the east of the ford.[7] And he set up twelve stones in the earth for them, and he put the head of each one of them on its stone and he likewise put Ferchu Longsech’s head on its stone. Hence Cinnit Ferchon Longsig is [8]henceforth the name of[8] the place where Ferchu Longsech left his head [9]and his twelve men theirs and their arms and their trophies,[9] to wit, Cenn-aitt Ferchon (‘the Head-place of Ferchu’).

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[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[a] 'Thirteen,' LU. and YBL. 2161, and *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[1-1] *Eg.* 93.

[2-2] *Eg.* 93.

[3-3] *Eg.* 93.

[4-4] *Eg.* 93.

[5-5] *Eg.* 93.

[6-6] *Eg.* 93.

[7-7] *Eg.* 93.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] *Eg.* 93.

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XIXb

[1]MANN'S FIGHT[1]

[2]Medb despatched Mann son of Muresc son of Dare, of the Dommandach, to fight with Cuchulain. Own brothers were he and Daman, Ferdiad's father. A man, rough, inordinate in eating and sleeping was this Mann. An ill-tongued foul-mouthed man like Dubthach Doel ('Black-tongue') of Ulster. A man, stout, mighty, with strength of limb like Munremur ('Thick-neck') son of Gercend ('Short-head'). A fiery champion like Triscoth, the strong man of Conchobar's household. "I will go," said he, "and unarmed, and I will grind him between my hands, for I consider it no honour nor credit to use arms against a beardless madcap such as he."

[1-1] LU., fo. 82, in the margin.

Therewith he went to attack Cuchulain. There he was, himself and his charioteer on the ford watching the host. "A lone warrior approacheth us here," cried Laeg to Cuchulain.



“What manner of man?” asked Cuchulain. “A dark, black man, strong, bull-like, and he unarmed.” “Let him go by thee,” said Cuchulain. At that he comes nigh them. “To fight with thee am I come,” Mann announced. Therewith they fell to wrestling for a long time, and thrice Mann threw Cuchulain, till the charioteer incited Cuchulain. “Were it the champion’s portion thou wast contending for in Emain,” spake Laeg, “thou wouldst be all powerful over the young bloods in Emain!” At these words the hero’s wrath and warrior’s rage returned to Cuchulain, so that he overcame Mann at the pillar-stone and he fell to pieces in morsels. Hence cometh Mag Mandachta (‘the Plain of Mann’s death’).[2]

[2-2] YBL., and, partly, LU. 2163-2181. Here the LU. version breaks off, fo. 82b.

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XIXc

[1]THE COMBAT OF CALATIN’S CHILDREN[1]

[W.2918.] Then was it debated by the men of Erin who would be fit to contend and cope with Cuchulain at the morning hour early on the next day. What they all said was, that Calatin Dana (‘the Bold’) would be the one, with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson[a] Glass macDelga. Thus were they: Poison was on every man of them and poison on every weapon of their arms; and not one of them missed his throw, and there was no one on whom one of them drew blood that, if he succumbed not on the spot, would

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not be dead before the end of the ninth day. Great gifts were promised to them for engaging to do battle and to contend [LL.fo.80b.] [2]with Cuchulain.[2] And they took the matter in hand, and it should be in the presence of Fergus that the covenant would be made. But Fergus refused to have part therein, for what they [3]all[3] contended was that they would hold it as a single combat, [4]a combat, to wit, of[4] Calatin Dana and his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga; for their contention was that his son was a limb of his limbs and a part of his parts, and that to Calatin Dana belonged all that proceeded from his body.

[1-1] The title is taken from the colophon at the end of the chapter.

[a] 'Nephew.' Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

Fergus betook himself to his tent and to his people and he breathed his sigh of weariness aloud. "Grievous it [W.2935.] seems to us, the deed to be done here on the morrow," quoth Fergus. "What deed may that be?" asked his people. "The slaying of Cuchulain," answered Fergus. "Alas," said they, "who should kill him?" "Calatin Dana," he replied, "with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga. For this is their nature: Poison is on every man of them and poison on every weapon of their arms; and there is no one on whom one of them draws blood, that, if he succumb not on the spot, will not be dead before the end of the ninth day. And there is no one [1]of you[1] that would go and learn for me and be witness of the battle and fight and bring me news how Cuchulain died on whom I would not bestow my blessing and armour." "I will go thither," spake Fiachu son of Ferfebe.

[1-1] Stowe.

They abode so that night. Early on the morrow Calatin Dana arose with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga, and they went forward to where Cuchulain was. And there went also Fiachu son of Ferfebe. And when Calatin arrived at the place where Cuchulain was, they forthwith hurled their nine and twenty spears, and not one of them went past him by a misthrow. Cuchulain played the edge-feat with his shield, so that all the spears sank up to their middles into the shield. But for all that theirs was no erring cast, not one of the spears was blooded or reddened upon him. Thereupon Cuchulain drew [2]his[2] sword from the sheath of the Badb, to cut away the weapons and lighten the shield that was on him. While thus engaged, they rushed in



upon him and delivered their nine and twenty right fists at the same time on his head. They smote him and curbed him withal, till his face and his countenance and visage met the sand and gravel of the ford. Cuchulain raised his warrior's shout aloud and his cry of unequal combat, so that there was not an Ulsterman [W.2962.] alive [1]in the camp[1] of those that were not asleep but heard it. Then [2]when they all had reached for their swords,[2] came Fiachu

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son of Ferfebe [3]after them out of the camp,[3] and he saw what they did and a qualm of [4]love and[4] the bond of kindred came over him, and [5]when he saw all their hands raised against Cuchulain, he leaped from his chariot and[5] drew his sword from the sheath of the Badb and dealt them a blow, so that he cut off their nine and twenty right fists from them at one stroke, and they all fell backwards from the intensity of the exertion and hold which they had.

[2-2] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 2186.

[3-3] YBL. 2187.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 2187-2188.

Cuchulain raised his head and drew breath and gave a sigh of weariness and perceived who it was that had come to his aid. "A ready relief, O foster-brother, [6]what thou hast done,"[6] said Cuchulain. "Although for thee a ready relief," said Fiachu, "yet is it not so for us. Even though we are the best division of three thousand of the Clann Rudraige in the camp and station of the men of Erin, [7]nevertheless this small thing is a breach of covenant in us men of Ulster. If one of Calatin's children reaches the camp,[7] we shall all be brought under the mouth of spear and of sword, however feeble thou mayst deem the blow I struck, if this treason be found in us." "I give my word," quoth Cuchulain; "so soon as I raise my head and draw breath, [8]not a man of them shall reach the camp alive,[8] and unless thou thyself tellest the tale not one of these ever will tell it!"

[6-6] YBL. 2190.

[7-7] YBL. 2190-2191.

[8-8] YBL. 2193.

With that, Cuchulain turned on them, and he fell to smiting and hewing them, so that he sent them [LL.fo.81a.] from him in small disjointed pieces and divided quarters eastwards and westwards along the ford. A single man got away from him, trusting to his speed while Cuchulain was busied [W.2981.] beheading the rest; it was Glass macDelga. And Cuchulain raced after him like a blast of wind, and Glass ran on round the tent of Ailill and Medb, and all he could pant out was, "Fiach! Fiach!"[a] when Cuchulain fetched him a stroke that cut off his head.



[a] There is a play on words. Glass attempts to pronounce the name 'Fiachu,' but is only able to utter the first syllable of the word which alone means 'debt.'

"'Tis quick work was made of that man," quoth Medb. "What debt was that he spoke of, O Fergus?" "I know not," Fergus answered, "unless it be some one in the camp and quarters that owed him a debt. It is that which troubled his mind. But be that as it may," continued Fergus, "it is a debt of blood and flesh for him. And upon my word," Fergus added, "now are his debts paid to him for good and all!"



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In this wise fell Calatin Dana ('the Bold') at the hands of Cuchulain, together with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga [1]and the two sons of Ficce with them, two bold warriors of Ulster who had come to use their strength on the host.[1] So that for evermore in the bed of the ford is still the rock whereabout they had their strife and struggle [2]and their slaughtering of each other;[2] and the mark of their sword-hilts is in it and of their knees and their elbows [3]and their fists[3] and the butt-ends of their spears. [4]And their nine and twenty standing stones were set up there.[4] Hence Fuil Iairn ('Blood of Iron') to the west[b] of Ath Firdead ('Ferdia's Ford') is the name of the ford. It is for this it is called Fuil Iairn, because of the 'blood over weapons'[c] that was there.

[1-1] YBL. 2194-2196.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 2198.

[4-4] YBL. 2198.

[b] 'South,' YBL. 2184.

[c] See page 208, note a.

Thus far then [5]this exploit on the Tain,[5] the Combat of the Clann Calatin [6]of his children and his grandson with Cuchulain,[6] [7]when they went to do battle with Cuchulain.[7]

[5-5] YBL. 2196.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] YBL. 2196-2197.

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XX

THE COMBAT OF FERDIAD [1]AND CUCHULAIN[1]

[2]The four grand provinces of Erin were side by side and against Cuchulain, from Monday before Samain-tide[a] to Wednesday after Spring-beginning, and without leave to work harm or vent their rage on the province of Ulster, while yet all the Ulstermen

were sunk in their nine days' 'Pains,' and Conall Cernach ('the Victorious') sought out battle in strange foreign lands paying the tribute and tax of Ulster. Great was the plight and strait of Cuchulain during that time, for he was not a day or a night without fierce, fiery combat waged on him by the men of Erin, until he killed Calatin with his seven and twenty sons and Fraech son of Fiadach and performed many deeds and successes which are not enumerated here. Now this was sore and grievous for Medb and for Ailill.
[2]

[1-1] Stowe and YBL. 2200 and *Eg.* 106.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

[a] See note p. 182.

[W.3001.] Then the men of Erin took counsel who would be fit [3]to send to the ford[3] to fight and do battle with Cuchulain, [4]to drive him off from them[4] at the morning hour early on the morrow.

[3-3] YBL. 2203.

[4-4] YBL. 2202.

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[5]With one accord[5] they declared that it should be Ferdiad son of Daman son of Dare, the great and valiant warrior of the men of Domnann, [6]the horn-skin from Irrus Domnann, the irresistible force, and the battle-rock of destruction, the own, dear, foster-brother of Cuchulain.[6] [W.3005.] [1]And fitting it was for him to go thither,[1] for well-matched and alike was their manner of fight and of combat. Under the same instructresses had they done skilful deeds of valour and arms, when learning the art with Scathach ('the Modest') and with Uathach ('the Dreadful') and with Aife ('the Handsome'). [2]Yet was it the felling of an oak with one's fists, and the stretching of the hand into a serpent's nest, and a spring into the lair of a lion, for hero or champion in the world, aside from Cuchulain, to fight or combat with Ferdiad on whatever ford or river or mere he set his shield.[2] And neither of them overmatched the other, save in the feat of the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear') which Cuchulain possessed. Howbeit, against this, Ferdiad was horn-skinned when fighting and in combat with a warrior on the ford; [3]and they thought he could avoid the Gae Bulga and defend himself against it, because of the horn about him of such kind that neither arms nor multitude of edges could pierce it. [3]

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6-6] YBL. 2204-2206.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] YBL. 2208-2209.

Then were messengers and envoys sent [4]from Medb and Ailill[4] to Ferdiad. Ferdiad denied them their will, and dismissed and sent back the messengers, and he went not with them, for he knew wherefore they would have him, to fight and combat with his friend, with his comrade and foster-brother, [5]Cuchulain.[5]

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

Then did Medb despatch the druids [6]and the poets of the camp,[6] the lampoonists and hard-attackers,[a] for Ferdiad, to the end that they might make three satires to stay him and three scoffing speeches against him, [7]to mock at him and revile and disgrace him,[7] that they might raise three blisters on his face, Blame, Blemish and Disgrace, [8]that he might not find a place in the world to lay his head,[8] [W.3021.] if he came not [1]with them[1] [2]to the tent of Medb and Ailill on the foray.[2]

[6-6] Stowe, *Eg.* 106, *Eg.* 209.

[a] Literally, 'the cheek-blisterers.'

[7-7] YBL. 2213.

[8-8] YBL. 2214.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 2214.

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Ferdiad came with them for the sake of his own honour and [3]for fear of their bringing shame on him,[3] forasmuch as he deemed it better to fall by the shafts of valour and bravery and skill, than to fall by the shafts of satire, abuse and reproach. And when [4]Ferdiad[4] was come [5]into the camp,[5] [6]Medb and Ailill beheld him, and great and most wonderful joy possessed them, and they sent him to where their trusty people were, and [6]he was honoured and waited on, and choice, well-flavoured strong liquor was poured out for him till he became drunken and merry. [7]Finnabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, was seated at his side. It was Finnabair that placed her hand on every goblet and cup Ferdiad quaffed. She it was that gave him three kisses with every cup that he took. She it was that passed him sweet-smelling apples over the bosom of her tunic. This is what she ceased not to say, that her darling and her chosen sweetheart of the world's men was Ferdiad.[7] [8]And when Medb got Ferdiad drunken and merry,[8] great rewards were promised him if he would make the fight and combat.

[3-3] YBL. 2215.

[4-4] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

[5-5] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

[6-6] *Eg.* 106.

[7-7] YBL. 2216-2221.

[8-8] *Eg.* 106.

[9]When now Ferdiad was satisfied, happy and joyful, it was that Medb spoke: "Hail now, Ferdiad. Dost know the occasion wherefore thou art summoned to this tent?" "I know not, in truth," Ferdiad replied; "unless it be that the nobles of the men of Erin are here. Why is it less fitting for me to be here than any other good warrior?" "'Tis not that, forsooth," answered Medb: "but to give thee[9] a chariot worth four[a] times seven bondmaids, and the apparel of two men and ten men, of cloth of every colour, [W.3028.] and the equivalent [1]of the Plain of Murthemne[1] of the rich Plain of Ai, [2]and that thou shouldst be at all times in Cruachan, and wine be poured out for thee there; the freedom of thy descendants and thy race forever,[2] free of tribute, free of rent, without constraint to encamp or take part in our expeditions, [LL.fo.81b.] without duress for [3]thy son, or for thy grandson, or for thy great-grandson, till the end of time and existence;[3] [4]this leaf-shaped golden brooch of mine shall be thine, wherein are ten-score ounces, and ten-score half ounces, and ten-score scruples, and ten-score quarters;[4] Finnabair, [5]my daughter and Ailill's,[5] to be thine own one wife, [6]and mine own most intimate friendship, if thou exactest that withal." "He needs it not," they cried, one and all; "great are the rewards and gifts!"[6]

[9-9] YBL. 2221-2225.

[a] 'Thrice seven,' YBL. 2226, Stowe, and *Eg.* 209.

[1-1] YBL. 2227.

[2-2] YBL. 2228.

[3-3] In LL. this passage is reported in indirect discourse; consequently, instead of 'thy,' LL. has 'his.'



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[4-4] YBL. 2229-2231.

[5-5] YBL. 2231-2232.

[6-6] YBL. 2232-2234.

Such were the words of Medb, and she spake them here and Ferdiad responded:—

Medb: “Great rewards in arm-rings,
Share of plain and forest,
Freedom of thy children
From this day till doom!
Ferdiaid son of Daman,
More than thou couldst hope for,
Why shouldst thou refuse it,
That which all would take?”

Ferdiaid: “Naught I’ll take without bond—
No ill spearman am I—
Hard on me to-morrow:
Great will be the strife!
Hound that’s hight of Culann,
How his thrust is grievous!
No soft thing to stand him;
Rude will be the wound!”

Medb: “Champions will be surety,
Thou needst not keep hostings.
Reins and splendid horses
Shall be given as pledge!
[W.3056.] Ferdiad, good, of battle,
For that thou art dauntless,
Thou shalt be my lover,
Past all, free of cain!”

Ferdiaid: “Without bond I’ll go not
To engage in ford-feats;
It will live till doomsday
In full strength and force.
Ne’er I’ll yield—who hears me,
Whoe’er counts upon me—
Without sun- and moon-oath,
Without sea and land!”



Medb: "Why then dost delay it?
Bind it as it please thee,
By kings' hands and princes',
Who will stand for thee!
Lo, I will repay thee,[a]
Thou shalt have thine asking,
For I know thou'lt slaughter
Man that meeteth thee!"

Ferdiad: "Nay, without six sureties—
It shall not be fewer—
Ere I do my exploits
There where hosts will be!
Should my will be granted,
I swear, though unequal,
That I'll meet in combat
Cuchulain the brave!"

Medb: "Domnall, then, or Carbre,
Niaman famed for slaughter,
Or e'en folk of barddom,
Natheless, thou shalt have.
Bind thyself on Morann,
Wouldst thou its fulfilment,
Bind on smooth Man's Carbre,
And our two sons, bind!"

Ferdiad: "Medb, with wealth of cunning,
Whom no spouse can bridle,
Thou it is that herdest
Cruachan of the mounds!
High thy fame and wild power!
Mine the fine pied satin;
Give thy gold and silver,
Which were proffered me!"

Medb: [W.3100.] "To thee, foremost champion,
I will give my ringed brooch.
From this day till Sunday,
Shall thy respite be!
Warrior, mighty, famous,
All the earth's fair treasures
Shall to thee be given;
Everything be thine!

"Finnabair of the champions (?),
Queen of western Erin,

When thou'st slain the Smith's Hound,
Ferdiad, she's thine!"

Ferdiad: [1]"Should I have Finnabair to wife,
Falls of Ai and Cruachan too,
And to dwell for alway there,
I'd not seek the deedful Hound!

"Equal skill to me and him—"
Thus spake Ferdiad withal—
"The same nurses raised us[a] both,
And with them we learned our art.



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"Not for fear of battle hard,
Noble Eocho Fedlech's maid,
Would I shun the Blacksmith's Hound,
But my heart bleeds for his love!"

Medb: "Thou shalt have, dear, bright-scaled[b] man,[c]
One swift, proud, high-mettled steed.
Thou shalt have domains and land
And shalt stay not from the fight (?)!"

Ferdiad: "But that Medb entreated so,
And that poets' tongues did urge,
I'd not go for hard rewards
To contend with mine own friend!"

Medb: "Son of Daman of white cheeks,
Shouldst thou check this heroes' Hound,
E'er so long thy fame will live,
When thou comest from Ferdiad's Ford!"[1]

[a] Translating from Stowe.

[1-1] *Eg. 106 (Revue Celtique, t. x, page 339). The metre is changed designedly to agree with the original.*

[a] MS. 'ye.'

[b] Referring to Ferdiad's horn-skin.

[c] Literally, 'calf.'

[2]Then said they, one and all, those gifts were great. [3]"Tis true, they are great.[3] But though they are," said [W.3113.] Ferdiad, "with Medb herself I will leave them, and I will not accept them if it be to do battle or combat with my foster-brother, the man of my alliance and affection, [1]and my equal in skill of arms,[1] namely, with Cuchulain." And he said:—

"Greatest toil, [2]this, greatest toil,[2]
Battle with the Hound of gore!
Liefer would I battle twice
With two hundred men of Fal!

"Sad the fight, [2]and sad the fight,[2]
I and Hound of feats shall wage!

We shall hack both flesh and blood;
Skin and body we shall hew!

“Sad, O god, [2]yea, sad, O god,[2]
That a woman should us part!
My heart’s half, the blameless Hound;
Half the brave Hound’s heart am I!

“By my shield, [2]O, by my shield,[2]
If Ath Cliath’s brave Hound should fall,
I will drive my slender glaive
Through my heart, my side, my breast!

“By my sword, [2]O, by my sword,[2]
If the Hound of Glen Bolg fall!
No man after him I’ll slay,
Till I o’er the world’s brink spring!

“By my hand, [2]O, by my hand![2]
Falls the Hound of Glen in Sgail,
Medb with all her host I’ll kill,
And then no more men of Fal!

“By my spear, [2]O, by my spear![2]
Should Ath Cro’s brave Hound be slain,
I’ll be buried in his grave;
May one grave hide me and him!

[3]“Liefer would I, [2]liefer far,[2] Arms should slay me in fierce fight, Than the death of
heroes’ Hound,”[a] Should be food for ravenous birds?[3]

“Tell him this, [2]O, tell him this,[2]
To the Hound of beauteous hue,
Fearless Scathach hath foretold
My fall on a ford through him!

[W.3149.] “Woe to Medb, [1]yea, woe to Medb,[1] Who hath used her [3]guile[3] on us;
She hath set me face to face ’Gainst Cuchulain—hard the toil!”

[2-2] Stowe, Add. 18,748 and *Eg.* 209.

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[3-3] YBL. 2234.

[1-1] *Eg.* 106, *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] *Eg.* 209.

[a] The word is illegible in the manuscript.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[1-1] *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] Reading with *Eg.* 209.

"Ye men," spake Medb, in the wonted fashion of stirring up disunion and dissension, [4]as if she had not heard Ferdiad at all,[4] "true is the word Cuchulain speaks." "What word is that?" asked Ferdiad. "He said, then," replied Medb, "he would not think it too much if thou shouldst fall by his hands in the choicest feat of his skill in arms, in the land whereto he should come." "It was not just for him to speak so," quoth Ferdiad; "for it is not cowardice or lack of boldness that he hath ever seen in me [5]by day or by night.[5] [6]And I speak not so to him, for I have it not to say of him.[6] And I swear by my arms [7]of valour,[7] if it be true that he spoke so, I will be the first man of the men of Erin to contend with him on the morrow, [8]how loath soever I am to do so!"[8]

[4-4] YBL. 2238.

[5-5] YBL. 2242.

[6-6] *Eg.* 106.

[7-7] *Eg.* 209.

[8-8] *Eg.* 106.

[9]And he gave his word in the presence of them all that he would go and meet Cuchulain. For it pleased Medb, if Ferdiad should fail to go, to have them as a witness against him, in order that she might say it was fear or dread that caused him to break his word.[9] "A blessing [10]and victory[10] upon thee for that!" said Medb; "it pleaseth me more than for thee to show fear and lack of boldness. For every man loves his own land, and how is it better for him to seek the welfare of Ulster, [11]because his mother was descended from the Ulstermen,[11] than for thee to seek the welfare of Connacht, [2] [12]as thou art the son of a king of Connacht?"[12]

[9-9] *Eg.* 106.

[10-10] YBL. 2244.

[11-11] YBL. 2247.

[12-12] YBL. 2248.

Then it was that Medb obtained from Ferdiad the easy [W.3163.] surety of a covenant to fight and contend on the morrow with six warriors [1]of the champions of Erin,[1] or to fight and contend with Cuchulain alone, if to him this last seemed lighter. Ferdiad obtained [2]of Medb[2] the easy surety, [3]as he thought,[3] to send the aforesaid six men for the fulfilment of the terms which had been promised him, should Cuchulain fall at his hands.

[1-1] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] Stowe, *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] A gloss, in LL.

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[4]There was a wonderful warrior of the Ulstermen present at that covenant, and that was Fergus macRoig. Fergus betook him to his tent. "Woe is me, for the deed that will be done on the morning of the morrow!" "What deed is that?" his tent-folk asked. "My good fosterling Cuchulain will be slain!" "Good lack! who makes that boast?" "Not hard to say: None other but his dear, devoted foster-brother, Ferdiad son of Daman. Why bear ye not my blessing," Fergus continued, "and let one of you go with a warning and mercy to Cuchulain, if perchance he would leave the ford on the morn of the morrow?" "As we live," said they; "though it were thyself was on the ford of battle, we would not go near him to seek thee." "Come, my lad," cried Fergus, "get our horses for us, and yoke the chariot!"[4]

[4-4] YBL. fo. 36a, 21-36.

Then were Fergus' horses fetched for him and his chariot was yoked, and he came forward to the place [5]of combat[5] where Cuchulain was, to inform him [6]of the challenge, that Ferdiad was to fight with him.[6]

[5-5] YBL. fo. 36a, 38.

[6-6] *Eg.* 209.

[7]"A chariot cometh hither towards us, O Cuchulain!" cried Laeg. For in this wise was the gilla, with his back towards his lord. He used to win every other game of draughts and of chess from his master. Watch and guard of the four airts was he besides. "What manner of chariot is it?" asked Cuchulain. "A chariot like to a royal fort, huge, with its yoke, strong, golden; with its great board of copper; with its shafts of bronze; with its thin-framed, dry-bodied box (?) ... set on two horses, black, swift, stout, strong-forked, thick-set, under beautiful shafts. One kingly, broad-eyed warrior is the combatant in the chariot. A curly, forked beard he wears that reaches below outside over the smooth lower part of his soft tunic, which would shelter fifty warriors on a day of storm and rain under the heavy shield of the warrior's beard. A bent buckler, white, beautiful, of many colours, he bears, with three stout-wrought chains, so that there is room from edge to edge for four troops of ten men behind the leather of the shield which hangs upon the broad back of the warrior. A long, hard-edged, broad, red sword in a sheath woven and twisted of white silver, over the ... of the battle-warrior. A strong, three-ridged spear, wound and banded with all-gleaming white silver he has lying across the chariot."

[7-7] YBL. fo. 36a, 39-36b, 15.

"Not difficult to recognize him," said Cuchulain: "'tis my master Fergus that cometh hither with a warning and with compassion for me, before all the four provinces of Erin."

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[W.3172.] Fergus drew nigh and sprang from his chariot.[7] Cuchulain bade him welcome. [LL.fo.82a.] "Welcome is thy coming, O my master Fergus!" cried Cuchulain. [1]"If a flock of birds comes into the plain, thou shalt have a duck with half of another. If a fish comes into the river-mouths, thou shalt have a salmon with half of another. A handful of water-cress and a bunch of laver and a sprig of sea-grass and a drink of cold water from the sand thou shalt have thereafter." "Tis an outlaw's portion, that," said Fergus. "Tis true; 'tis an outlaw's portion is mine," answered Cuchulain.[1] "Truly intended, methinks, the welcome, O [W.3174.] fosterling," said Fergus. "But, [1]were it for this I came, I should think it better to leave it.[1] It is for this I am here, to inform thee who comes to fight and contend with thee at the morning hour early on the morrow." "E'en so will we hear it from thee," said Cuchulain. "Thine own friend and comrade and foster-brother, the man thine equal in feats and in skill of arms and in deeds, Ferdiad son of Daman son of Dare, the great and mighty warrior of the men of Domnann." [2]"As my soul liveth,"[2] replied Cuchulain, "it is not to an encounter we wish our friend to come, and [3]not for fear, but for love and affection of him;[3] [4]and almost I would prefer to fall by the hand of that warrior than for him to fall by mine." [4] "It is even for that," answered Fergus, "thou shouldst be on thy guard and prepared. [5]Say not that thou hast no fear of Ferdiad, for it is fitting that thou shouldst have fear and dread before fighting with Ferdiad.[5] For unlike all to whom it fell to fight and contend with thee on the Cualnge Cattle-raid on this occasion is Ferdiad son of Daman son of Dare, [9]for he hath a horny skin about him [6]in battle against a man,[6] [7]a belt,[7] [8]equally strong, victorious in battle,[8] and neither points nor edges are reddened upon it[9] [10]in the hour of strife and anger. For he is the fury of a lion, and the bursting of wrath, and the blow of doom, and the wave that drowneth foes." [10] [12]"Speak not thus!" cried Cuchulain, "for I swear [11]by my arms of valour,[11] the oath that my people swear, that every limb and every joint will be as soft as a pliant rush in the bed of a river under the point of sword, if he show himself to me on the ford! [12] Truly am I here," said Cuchulain, "checking and [W.3185.] staying four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at[a] Summer's end till[b] the beginning of spring, [1]and I have not left my post for a night's disport, through stoutly opposing the men of Erin on the Cattle-lifting of Cualnge.[1] And in all this time, I have not put foot in retreat before any one man [2]nor before a multitude,[2] and methinks just as little will I turn foot in flight before him."

[1-1] YBL. 36b, 27-28.

[7-7] YBL. fo. 36a, 39-36b, 15.

[1-1] YBL. 36b, 18-24.

[2-2] Literally, 'I say our confession.'

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[3-3] Stowe, *Eg.* 209, *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] *Eg.* 106.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6-6] YBL. fo. 36b, 38.

[7-7] *Eg.* 106.

[8-8] *Eg.* 106.

[9-9] Stowe and *Eg.* 209, and, similarly, YBL. 36b, 37.

[10-10] *Eg.* 106.

[11-11] *Eg.* 106.

[12-12] YBL. 36b, 38-43

[1-1] YBL. 36b, 25-26.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3]And thus spake he, that it was not fear of Ferdiad that caused his anxiety for the fight, but his love for him. [3]And, on his part, so spake Fergus, putting him on his guard [4]because of Ferdiad's strength,[4] and he said these words and Cuchulain responded:

Fergus: "O Cuchulain—splendid deed—
Lo, 'tis time for thee to rise.
Here in rage against thee comes
Ferdiaid, red-faced Daman's son!"

Cuchulain: "Here am I—no easy task—[c]
Holding Erin's men at bay;
Foot I've never turned in flight
In my fight with single foe!"

Fergus: "Dour the man when anger moves,
Owing to his gore-red glaive;
Ferdiaid wears a skin of horn,
'Gainst which fight nor might prevails!"



Cuchulain: "Be thou still; urge not thy tale,
Fergus of the mighty arms.
On no land and on no ground,
For me is there aught defeat!"

Fergus: "Fierce the man with scores of deeds;
No light thing, him to subdue.
Strong as hundreds—brave his mien—
Point pricks not, edge cuts him not!"

Cuchulain: "If we clash upon the ford,
I and Ferdiad of known skill,
We'll not part without we know:
Fierce will be our weapon fight!"

Fergus: [W.3214.] "More I'd wish it than reward,
O Cuchulain of red sword,
Thou shouldst be the one to bring
Eastward haughty Ferdiad's spoils!"

Cuchulain: "Now I give my word and vow,
Though unskilled in strife of words,
It is I will conquer this
Son of Daman macDare!"

Fergus: "It is I brought east the host,
Thus requiting Ulster's wrong.
With me came they from their lands,
With their heroes and their chiefs!"

Cuchulain: "Were not Conchobar in the 'Pains,'
Hard 'twould be to come near us.
Never Medb of Mag in Scail
On more tearful march had come!"

Fergus: "Greatest deed awaits thy hand:
Fight with Ferdiad, Daman's son.
Hard stern arms with stubborn edge,[b]
Shalt thou have, thou Culann's Hound!"

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[a] Stowe and H. 1. 13: 'before'; YBL. 36b, 24: 'after.'

[b] 'Till Wednesday after Spring,' is the reading of H. 1. 13.

[3-3] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209.

[4-4] Stowe.

[c] Literally, 'no meagre sail.'

[b] Or, 'which quatrains love (?),' a cheville.

[1]After that,[1] Fergus returned to the camp and halting-place [2]of the men of Erin,[2]
[3]lest the men of Erin should say he was betraying them or forsaking them, if he should
remain longer than he did conversing with Cuchulain. And they took farewell of each
other.[3]

[1-1] YBL. 37a, 22.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[4]Now as regards the charioteer of Cuchulain [5]after Fergus went from them:[5] "What
wilt thou do to-night?" asked Laeg. "What, indeed?" said Cuchulain. "It will be thus"
(said the charioteer) "Ferdiad will come to attack thee, with new beauty of plaiting and
dressing of hair, and washing and bathing, and the four provinces of Erin with him to
look at the combat. I would that thou wouldst go where thou wilt get a like adorning for
thyself, to the place where is Emer Foltchain ('Emer of the Beautiful Hair,' thy wife),
[6]daughter of Forgal Monach,[6] at Cairthenn in Cluan da Dam, ('two Oxen's Meadow')
in Sliab Fuait, [1]where thou wilt get even such an adorning for thyself." [1] [2]"It is fitting
to do so," said Cuchulain.[2] Then Cuchulain went thither that night [3]to Dundelgan,[3]
and passed the night with his wife. His doings from that time are not related here now.
[4]

[4-4] YBL. 37a, 29-39, and, similarly, *Eg.* 106.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6-6] *Eg.* 106.

[1-1] *Eg.* 106.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[W.3235.] [5]As for[5] Ferdiad, he betook himself to his tent and to his people, and imparted to them the easy surety which Medb had obtained from him to do combat and battle with six warriors on the morrow, or to do combat and battle with Cuchulain alone, if he thought it a lighter task. He made known to them also the fair terms he had obtained from Medb of sending the same six warriors for the fulfilment of the covenant she had made with him, should Cuchulain fall by his hands.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6]The folk of Ferdiad were not joyful, blithe, cheerful or merry that night,[6] [LL.fo.82b.] but they were sad, sorrowful and downcast, for they knew that where the two champions and the two bulwarks in a gap for a hundred, [7]the two pillars of battle and strife of the men of Erin[7] [8]of that time[8] met in combat, one or other of them would fall there or both would fall, and if it should be one of them, they believed it would be [9]their king and[9] their own lord [10]that would fall there,[10] for it was not easy to contend and do battle with Cuchulain on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge.

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[6-6] LL., with the help of Stowe; LL. being partly illegible here.

[7-7] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209, *Eg.* 106 and YBL. 37a, 43.

[8-8] YBL. 37a, 43.

[9-9] H. 1. 13.

[10-10] Stowe.

Ferdiad slept right heavily the first part of the night, but when the end of the night was come, his sleep and his heaviness left him. And the anxiousness of the combat and the battle came upon him. [11] But most troubled in spirit was he that he should allow all the treasures to pass from him, and the maiden, by reason of combat with one man. Unless he fought with that one man, he must needs fight with six champions on the morrow. What tormented him more than that was, should he once show himself on the ford to Cuchulain he was certain he would never have power of head or of life ever after. And Ferdiad arose early on the morrow.[11] [W.3252.] And he charged his charioteer to take his horses and to yoke his chariot. The charioteer sought to dissuade him [1] from that journey.[1] [2] "By our word," [2] said the gilla, "'twould be better for thee[a] [3] to remain than to go thither," said he; "for, not more do I commend it for thee than I condemn it." [3] "Hold thy peace about us, boy!" quoth Ferdiad, [4] "for we will brook no interference from any one concerning this journey.[4] [5] For the promise we gave to Medb and Ailill in the presence of the men of Erin, it would shame us to break it; for they would say it was fear or dread that caused us to break it. And, by my conscience, I would almost liefer fall myself by Cuchulain's hand than that he should fall by mine on this occasion. And should Cuchulain fall by my hand on the ford of combat, then shall Medb and many of the men of Erin fall by my hand because of the pledge they extorted from me, and I drunken and merry.[5] And in this manner he spake, [6] conversing with the charioteer,[6] and he uttered these words, [7] the little lay that follows, urging on the charioteer,[7] and the henchman responded:—

Ferdiad: "Let's haste to th' encounter,
To battle with this man;
The ford we will come to,
O'er which Badb will shriek!
To meet with Cuchulain,
To wound his slight body,
To thrust the spear through him
So that he may die!"

The Henchman: [W.3266.] "To stay it were better;
Your threats are not gentle;
Death's sickness will one have,



And sad will ye part!
To meet Ulster's noblest,
To meet whence ill cometh;
Long will men speak of it.
Alas, for your[a] course!"

Ferdiad: "Not fair what thou speakest;
No fear hath the warrior;
We owe no one meekness;
We stay not for thee!
Hush, gilla, about us!
The time will bring strong hearts;
More meet strength than weakness;
[1]Let's on to the tryst!"[1]

[11-11] YBL. 37a, 47-37b, 5.

[1-1] Stowe, *Eg.* 106 and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] YBL. 37b, 7.

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[a] MSS.: 'ye.'

[3-3] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 106, *Eg.* 109 and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209, *Eg.* 106 and H. 1. 13.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6-6] YBL. 37b, 9.

[7-7] YBL. 37b, 10.

[a] MS.: 'his.'

[1-1] YBL. 37b, 22.

Ferdiad's horses were now brought forth and his chariot was hitched, and he set out [2]from the camp[2] for the ford of battle when yet day with its full light had not come there for him. [3]"My lad," spake Ferdiad, "it is not fitting that we make our journey without bidding farewell to the men of Erin. Turn the horses and the chariot for us towards the men of Erin." Thrice the servant turned the heads of the horses and the chariot towards the men of Erin. Then he came upon Medb letting her water from her on the floor of the tent. "Ailill, sleepest thou still?" asked Medb. "Not so!" replied Ailill. "Dost hear thy new son-in-law taking farewell, of thee?" "Is that what he doth?" asked Ailill. "'Tis that, verily," Medb made answer; "but I swear by what my tribe swears, not on the same feet will the man who makes that greeting come back to you." "Howbeit, we have profited by a happy alliance of marriage with him," quoth Ailill; "if only Cuchulain falls by his hand, I should be pleased if they both fell, yet would I prefer that Ferdiad should escape."

[2-2] YBL. 37b, 24.

[3-3] YBL. 37b, 25-38a, 25.

Ferdiad came to the ford of combat. "Look, my lad!" said Ferdiad, "is Cuchulain on the ford?" "That he is not," replied the gilla. "Look well for us," said Ferdiad. "Cuchulain is not a little speck where he would be in hiding," answered the gilla. "'Tis true, then, my lad; till this day Cuchulain hath not heard of a goodly warrior coming to meet him on the Cow-spoil of Cualnge, and now when he has heard of one, he has left the ford."

"Shame for thee to slander Cuchulain in his absence. Rememberest thou not when ye gave battle to German Garbglas above the borders of the Tyrrhene Sea, thou leftest thy sword with the hosts, and it was Cuchulain who slew a hundred warriors till he reached it and brought it to thee? And mindest thou well where we were that night?" the gilla asked further. "I know not," Ferdiad answered. "At the house of Scathach's steward,"

said the other; “and thou wentest ... and proudly in advance of us all into the house. The churl gave thee a blow with his three-pointed fork in the small of the back, so that thou flewest like a bolt out over the door. Cuchulain came in and gave the churl a blow with his sword, so that he made two pieces of him. I was their house-steward whilst ye were in that place. If it were that day, thou wouldst not say thou wast a better warrior than Cuchulain.” “Wrong is what thou hast done, O gilla,” said Ferdiad; “for I would not have come to the combat, hadst thou spoken

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thus to me at first. Why dost thou not lay the chariot-poles at my side and the skin-coverings under my head, that so I may sleep now?" "Alas," said the gilla, "'tis a sorry sleep before deer and packs of wolves here!" "How so, gilla? Art thou not able to keep watch and guard for me?" "I am," the gilla answered; "unless they come in clouds or in the air to attack thee, they shall not come from east or from west to attack thee without warning, without notice." [3] "Come, gilla," said Ferdiad, [1]"unharness the horses and [1] [W.3285.] spread for me the cushions and skins of my chariot under me here, so that I sleep off my heavy fit of sleep and slumber here, for I slept not the last part of the night with the anxiousness of the battle and combat."

[1-1] Stowe.

The gilla unharnessed the horses; he unfastened the chariot under him, [1]and spread beneath him the chariot-cloths.[1] He slept off the heavy fit of sleep that was on him. [2]The gilla remained on watch and guard for him.[2]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

Now how Cuchulain fared [3]is related[3] here: He arose not till the day with its bright light had come to him, lest the men of Erin might say it was fear or fright of the champion he had, if he should arise [4]early.[4] And when day with its full light had come, he [5]passed his hand over his face and[5] bade his charioteer take his horses and yoke them to his chariot. "Come, gilla," said Cuchulain, "take out our horses for us and harness our chariot, for an early riser is the warrior appointed to meet us, Ferdiad son of Daman son of Dare. [6]If Ferdiad awaits us, he must needs think it long." [6] "The horses are taken out," [7]said the gilla; [7] "the chariot is harnessed. Mount, and be it no shame to thy valour [8]to go thither!" [8] [9]Cuchulain stepped into the chariot and they pressed forward to the ford.[9] Then it was that the cutting, feat-performing, battle-winning, red-sworded hero, Cuchulain son of Sualtaim, mounted his chariot, so that there shrieked around him the goblins and fiends and the sprites of the glens and the demons of the air; for the Tuatha De Danann ('the Folk of the Goddess Danu') were wont to set up their cries around him, to the end that the dread and the fear and the fright and the terror of him might be so much the greater in every [W.3304.] battle and on every field, in every fight and in every combat wherein he went.

[3-3] Stowe and YBL. 38a, 28.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe, and, similarly *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[6-6] YBL. 38a, 30.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] H. 1. 13.

[9-9] YBL. 38a, 31-32.

Not long had Ferdiad's charioteer waited when he heard something: [1]A rush and a crash and a hurtling sound, and a din and a thunder,[1] [LL.fo.83a.] and a clatter and a clash, namely, the shield-cry of feat-shields, and the jangle of javelins, and the deed-striking of swords, and the thud of the helmet, [2]and the ring of spears,[2] and the clang of the cuirass, and the striking of arms, the fury of feats, the straining of ropes, and the whirr of wheels, and the creaking of the chariot, and the trampling of horses' hoofs, and the deep voice of the hero and battle-warrior [3]in grave speech with his servant[3] on his way to the ford to attack his opponent.

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[1-1] From Stowe; LL. is illegible here.

[2-2] H. 1. 13.

[3-3] Stowe.

The servant came and touched his master with his hand [4]and awakened him.[4]
“Ferdiad, master,” said the youth, “rise up! They are here to meet thee at the ford.”
[5]Then[5] [6]Ferdiad arose and girt his body in his war-dress of battle and combat.[6]
And the gilla spake these words:—

“The roll of a chariot,
Its fair yoke of silver;
A man great and stalwart
O’ertops the strong car!
O’er Bri Ross, o’er Brane
Their swift path they hasten;
Past Old-tree Town’s[a] tree-stump,
Victorious they speed!

“A sly Hound that driveth,
A fair chief that urgeth,
A free hawk that speedeth
His steeds towards the south!
Gore-coloured, the Cua,[b]
'Tis sure he will take us;
We know—vain to hide it—
He brings us defeat![c]

[W.3335.] “Woe him on the hillock,
The brave Hound before him;
Last year I foretold it,
That some time he’d come!
Hound from Emain Macha,
Hound formed of all colours,
The Border-hound, War-hound,
I hear what I’ve heard!”

[4-4] YBL. 38a, 35.

[5-5] H. 1. 13.

[6-6] Stowe and, similarly, *Eg.* 209, *Eg.* 106 and H. 1. 13.

[a] *Baile in bile*, MSS.



[b] A shortened form for 'Cuchulain.'

[c] Literally, 'battle, strife.'

"Come, gilla," said Ferdiad; "for what reason laudest thou this man ever since I am come from my house? And it is almost a cause for strife with thee that thou hast praised him thus highly. But, Ailill and Medb have prophesied to me that this man will fall by my hand. And since it is for a reward, he shall quickly be torn asunder by me. [1]And make ready the arms on the ford against his coming." "Should I turn my face backward," said the gilla; "methinks the poles of yon chariot will pass through the back of my neck." "Too much, my lad," said Ferdiad, "dost thou praise Cuchulain, for not a reward has he given thee for praising,[1] but it is time to fetch help." And he spake these words, and the henchman responded:—

Ferdiad: "'Tis time now to help me;
Be silent! cease praising!
'Twas no deed of friendship,
No doom o'er the brink (?) [a]
The Champion of Cualnge,
Thou seest 'midst proud feats,
For that it's for guerdon,
Shall quickly be slain!" [b]

The Henchman: "I see Cualnge's hero,
With feats overweening,
Not fleeing he flees us,
But towards us he comes.
He runneth—not slowly—
Though cunning—not sparing—
Like water 'down high cliff
Or thunderbolt quick!"

Ferdiad: [W.3365.] "'Tis cause of a quarrel,
So much thou hast praised him;
And why hast thou chose him,
Since I am from home?
And now they extol him,
They fall to proclaim him;
None come to attack him,
But soft simple men (?)."

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[1-1] YBL. 38b, 46-57.

[a] The meaning is obscure.

[b] Literally, 'torn.'

[1] Here followeth the Description of Cuchulain's chariot, one of the three chief Chariots of the Tale of the Foray of Cualnge.[1]

[1-1] YBL. 38a, 48-49. In the following description of the chariot and steeds has been incorporated part of the parallel passages in LU. 1969-1977 and YBL. 38a-38b. *Eg.* 106, *Eg.* 109 and H. 2. 12 (*Revue Celtique*, xi, 25) contain more adjectives.

It was not long that Ferdiad's charioteer remained there when he saw something:
[2]"How beholdest thou Cuchulain?" asked Ferdiad of his charioteer. "I behold," said he,
[2] "a beautiful, live-pointed chariot, [3]broad above, of white crystal, with a thick yoke of gold, with stout plates of copper, with shafts of bronze, with wheel-bands of bronze covered with silver,[3] approaching with swiftness, with speed, with perfect skill; with a green shade, with a thin-framed, dry-bodied (?) box surmounted with feats of cunning, [4]straight-poled,[4] as long as a warrior's sword. [5]On this[5] was room for a hero's seven arms, the fair seat for its lord; [6]two wheels, dark, black; a pole of tin, with red enamel, of a beautiful colour; two inlaid, golden bridles.[6] [7]This chariot was placed[7] behind two fleet steeds, [8]nimble, furious, small-headed,[8] bounding, large-eared, [9]small-snouted, sharp-beaked, red-chested,[9] gaily prancing, with inflated[a] nostrils, broad-chested, quick-hearted, high-flanked, broad-hoofed, slender-limbed, overpowering and resolute. A grey, broad-hipped, small-stepping, long-maned horse, [10]whose name was Liath ('the Roan') of Macha,[10] was under [W.3379.] one of the yokes of the chariot; a black, crisped-maned, swift-moving, broad-backed horse, [1]whose name was Dubh ('the Black') of Sithleann,[1] under the other. Like unto a hawk after its prey on a sharp tempestuous day, or to a tearing blast of wind of Spring on a March day over the back of a plain, or unto a startled stag when first roused by the hounds in the first of the chase, [LL.fo.83b.] were Cuchulain's two horses before the chariot, as if they were on glowing, fiery flags, so that they shook the earth and made it tremble with the fleetness of their course.

[2-2] YBL. 38a, 51-52.

[3-3] YBL. 38b, 1-3.

[4-4] LU. 1973.

[5-5] YBL.

[6-6] YBL. 38b. 19-21.

[7-7] LU. 1972.

[8-8] LU. 1973.

[9-9] LU. 1973.

[10-10] *Eg.* 209.

[a] Literally, 'bagnosed.'

[1-1] *Eg.* 209.

[2]"In the front of this chariot is a man with fair, curly, long hair. There is around him a cloak, blue, Parthian purple. A spear with red and keen-cutting blades, flaming-red in his hand. The semblance of three heads of hair he has, namely, brown hair next to the skin of his head, blood-red hair in the middle, a crown of gold is the third head of hair.

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"Beautiful is the arrangement of that hair so that it makes three coils down behind over his shoulders. Even as a thread of gold it seems, when its hue has been wrought over the edge of an anvil; or like to the yellow of bees whereon shines the sun on a summer's day is the shining of each single hair of his hair. Seven toes he has on each of his feet and seven fingers on each of his hands and the brilliance of a very great fire is around his eye.

"Befitting him is the charioteer beside him, with curly, jet-black hair, shorn broad over his head. A cowled garment around him, open at the elbows. A horse-whip, very fine and golden in his hand, and a light-grey cloak wrapped around him, and a goad of white silver in his hand. He plies the goad on the horses whatever way would go the deed-renowned warrior that is in the chariot." [2]

[2-2] YBL. 38b, 21-44.

And Cuchulain reached the ford. Ferdiad waited on [W.3387.] the south side of the ford; Cuchulain stood on the north side. Ferdiad bade welcome to Cuchulain. "Welcome is thy coming, O Cuchulain!" said Ferdiad. "Truly spoken meseemed thy welcome till now," answered Cuchulain; "but to-day I put no more trust in it. And, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain, "it were fitter for me to bid thee welcome than that thou should'st welcome me; for it is thou that art come to the land and province wherein I dwell; and it is not fitting for thee to come to contend and do battle with me, but it were fitter for me to go to contend and do battle with thee. For before thee in flight are my women and my boys and my youths, my steeds and my troops of horses, my droves, my flocks and my herds of cattle."

"Good, O Cuchulain," spake Ferdiad; "what has ever brought thee out to contend and do battle with me? For when we were [1]together[1] with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aife, [2]thou wast not a man worthy of me, for[2] thou wast my serving-man, even for arming my spear and dressing my bed." "That was indeed true," answered Cuchulain; "because of my youth and my littleness did I so much for thee, but this is by no means my mood this day. For there is not a warrior in the world I would not drive off this day [3]in the field of battle and combat." [3]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4]It was not long before they met in the middle of the ford.[4] And then it was that each of them cast sharp-cutting reproaches at the other, renouncing his friendship; and Ferdiad spake these words there, and Cuchulain responded:—



Ferdiad: "What led thee, O Cua,
To fight a strong champion?
Thy flesh will be gore-red
O'er smoke of thy steeds!
Alas for thy journey,
A kindling of firebrands;
In sore need of healing,
If home thou shouldst reach!"

Cuchulain: [W.3417.] "I'm come before warriors
Around the herd's wild Boar,[a]
Before troops and hundreds,
To drown thee in deep.
In anger, to prove thee
In hundred-fold battle,
Till on thee come havoc,
Defending thy head!"



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Ferdiad: "Here stands one to crush thee,
'Tis I will destroy thee,
[1]...[1]

From me there shall come
The flight of their warriors
In presence of Ulster,
That long they'll remember
The loss that was theirs!"

Cuchulain: "How then shall we combat?
For wrongs shall we heave sighs?
Despite all, we'll go there,
To fight on the ford!
Or is it with hard swords,
Or e'en with red spear-points,
Before hosts to slay thee,
If [2]thy[2] hour hath come?"

Ferdiad: "'Fore sunset, 'fore nightfall—
If need be, then guard thee—
I'll fight thee at Bairche,
Not bloodlessly fight!
The Ulstermen call thee,
'He has him!' Oh, hearken!
The sight will distress them
That through them will pass[b]!"

Cuchulain: "In danger's gap fallen,
At hand is thy life's term;
On thee plied be weapons,
Not gentle the skill!
One champion will slay thee;
We both will encounter;
No more shalt lead forays,
[3]From this day till Doom!"[3]

Ferdiad: [W.3457.] "Avaunt with thy warnings,
Thou world's greatest braggart;
Nor guerdon nor pardon,
[1]Low warrior for thee![1]
'Tis I that well know thee,
Thou heart of a cageling
This lad merely tickles—
Without skill or force!"



Cuchulain: "When we were with Scathach,
 For wonted arms training,
 Together we'd fare forth,
 To seek every fight.
 Thou wast my heart's comrade.
 My clan and my kinsman;
 Ne'er found I one dearer;
 Thy loss would be sad!"

Ferdiad: [LL.fo.84a.] "Thou wager'st thine honour
 Unless we do battle;
 Before the cock croweth,
 Thy head on a spit!
 Cuchulain of Cualnge,
 Mad frenzy hath seized thee
 All ill we'll wreak on thee,
 For thine is the sin!"

[4-4] YBL. 39a. 14.

[a] That is, King Conchobar.

[1-1] A line has dropped out here in the MS., and cannot be reconstructed, since the stanza is found only in LL. For this reason the meaning of the following line is uncertain.

[2-2] Reading with YBL. 39a, 34.

[B] Literally, 'it will go over and through them!'

[3-3] Translating from YBL. fo. 39a, 41.

[1-1] Literally, '(For) thou art not a bush (i.e. a hero) over a bush (hero).'

"Come now, O Ferdiad," cried Cuchulain, "not meet was it for thee to come to contend and do battle with me, because of the instigation and intermeddling of Ailill and Medb, [2]and because of the false promises that they made thee. Because of their deceitful terms and of the maiden have many good men been slain.[2] And all that came [3]because of those promises of deceit,[3] neither profit nor success did it bring them, and they have fallen by me. And none the more, [4]O Ferdiad,[4] shall it win victory or increase of fame for thee; and, [5]as they all fell,[5] shalt thou too fall by my hand!" Thus he spake, [W.3486.] and he further uttered these words and Ferdiad hearkened to him:

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"Come not nigh me, noble chief,
Ferdiad, comrade, Daman's son.
Worse for thee than 'tis for me;
Thou'lt bring sorrow to a host!

"Come not nigh me 'gainst all right;
Thy last bed is made by me.
Why shouldst thou alone escape
From the prowess of my arms?

"Shall not great feats thee undo,
Though thou'rt purple, horny-skinned?
And the maid thou boastest of,
Shall not, Daman's son, be thine!

"Finnabair, Medb's daughter fair,
Great her charms though they may be,
Fair as is the damsel's form,
She's for thee not to enjoy!

"Finnabair, the king's own child,
Is the lure, if truth be told;
Many they whom she's deceived
And undone as she has thee!

"Break not, weetless, oath with me;
Break not friendship, break not bond;
Break not promise, break not word;
Come not nigh me, noble chief!

"Fifty chiefs obtained in plight
This same maid, a proffer vain.
Through me went they to their graves;
Spear-right all they had from me!

"Though for brave was held Ferbaeth,
With whom was a warriors' train,
In short space I quelled his rage;
Him I slew with one sole blow!

"Sruidare—sore sank his might—
Darling of the noblest dames,
Time there was when great his fame—
Gold nor raiment saved him not!

“Were she mine affianced wife,
Smiled on me this fair land’s head,[a]
I would not thy body hurt.
Right nor left, in front, behind!”

[2-2] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[5-5] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[a] That is, Queen Medb.

[W.3527.] “Good, O Ferdiad!” cried Cuchulain. [1]A pity it is for thee to abandon my alliance and my friendship for the sake of a woman that has been trafficked to fifty other warriors before thee, and it would be long before I would forsake thee for that woman.[1] Therefore, it is not right for thee to come to fight and combat with me; for when we were with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aife, [2]we were together in practice of valour and arms of the world, and[2] it was together we were used to seek out every battle and every battle-field, every combat and every contest, every wood and every desert, every covert and every recess.” And thus he spake and he uttered these words:—

Cuchulain: “We were heart-companions once;
We were comrades in the woods;
We were men that shared a bed,
When we slept the heavy sleep,

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After hard and weary fights.
Into many lands, so strange,
Side by side we sallied forth,
And we ranged the woodlands through,
When with Scathach we learned arms!"

Ferdiad: "O Cuchulain, rich in feats,
Hard the trade we both have learned;
Treason hath o'ercome our love;
Thy first wounding hath been bought;
Think not of our friendship more,
Cua, it avails thee not!"

[1-1] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 106 and *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] Stowe, and, similarly, *Eg.* 106 and *Eg.* 209.

"Too long are we now in this way," quoth Ferdiad; "and what arms shall we resort to to-day, O Cuchulain?" "With thee is thy choice of weapons this day till night time," answered Cuchulain, "for thou art he that first didst reach the ford." "Rememberest thou at all," asked Ferdiad, "the choice deeds of arms we were wont to practise with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aife?" "Indeed, and I do remember," answered Cuchulain. "If thou rememberest, let us begin [3]with them." [3]

[3-3] Stowe.

[W.3555.] They betook them to their choicest deeds of arms. They took upon them two equally-matched shields for feats, and their eight-edged targes for feats, and their eight small darts, and their eight straightswords with ornaments of walrus-tooth and their eight lesser, ivoried spears which flew from them and to them like bees [LL.fo.84b.] on a day of fine weather.

They cast no weapon that struck not. Each of them was busy casting at the other with those missiles from morning's early twilight till noon at mid-day, the while they overcame their various feats with the bosses and hollows of their feat-shields. However great the excellence of the throwing on either side, equally great was the excellence of the defence, so that during all that time neither of them bled or reddened the other. "Let us cease now from this bout of arms, O Cuchulain," said Ferdiad; "for it is not by such our decision will come." "Yea, surely, let us cease, if the time hath come," answered

Cuchulain. [1]Then[1] they ceased. They threw their feat-tackle from them into the hands of their charioteers.

“To what weapons shall we resort next, O Cuchulain?” asked Ferdiad. “Thine is the choice of weapons till nightfall,” replied Cuchulain; “for thou art he that didst first reach the ford.” “Let us begin, then,” said Ferdiad, “with our straight-cut, smooth-hardened throwing-spears, with cords of full-hard flax on them.” “Aye, let us begin then,” assented Cuchulain. Then they took on them two hard shields, equally strong. They fell to their straight-cut, smooth-hardened spears with cords of full-hard flax on them. Each of them was engaged in casting at the other with the spears from the middle of noon [2]till yellowness came over

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the sun^[2] at the hour of evening's sundown. However great the excellence of the defence, equally great was the excellence of the throwing on either side, so that [W.3578.] each of them bled and reddened and wounded the other during that time. [1]"Wouldst thou fain make a truce, O Cucugan?"[a] asked Ferdiad. "It would please me," replied Cuchulain; "for whoso begins with arms has the right to desist." [1] "Let us leave off from this now, O Cuchulain," said Ferdiad. "Aye, let us leave off, an the time hath come," answered Cuchulain. So they ceased. They threw their arms from them into the hands of their charioteers.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] H. 2. 12.

[1-1] H. 2. 12.

[a] See note, page 185.

Thereupon each of them went toward the other ^[2]in the middle of the ford,^[2] and each of them put his hand on the other's neck and gave him three kisses ^[3]in remembrance of his fellowship and friendship.^[3] Their horses were in one and the same paddock that night, and their charioteers at one and the same fire; and their charioteers made ready a litter-bed of fresh rushes for them with pillows for wounded men on them. Then came healing and curing folk to heal and to cure them, and they laid healing herbs and grasses and a curing charm on their cuts and stabs, their gashes and many wounds. Of every healing herb and grass and curing charm that ^[4]was brought from the fairy dwellings of Erin to Cuchulain and^[4] was applied to the cuts and stabs, to the gashes and many wounds of Cuchulain, a like portion thereof he sent across the ford westward to Ferdiad, ^[5]to put to his wounds and his pools of gore,^[5] so that the men of Erin should not have it to say, should Ferdiad fall at his hands, it was more than his share of care had been given to him.

[2-2] H. 2. 12.

[3-3] H. 2. 12.

[4-4] H. 2. 12.

[5-5] H. 2. 12.

Of every food and of every savoury, soothing and strong drink that was brought by the men of Erin to Ferdiad, a like portion thereof he sent over the ford northwards to Cuchulain; for the purveyors of Ferdiad were more numerous than the purveyors of Cuchulain. All the men of Erin were purveyors to Ferdiad, to the end that he might keep

[W.3598.] Cuchulain off from them. But only the inhabitants of Mag Breg ('the Plain of Breg') were purveyors to Cuchulain. They were wont to come daily, that is, every night, to converse with him.

They bided there that night. Early on the morrow they arose and went their ways to the ford of combat. "To what weapons shall we resort on this day, O Ferdiad?" asked Cuchulain. [LL.fo.85a.] "Thine is the choosing of weapons till night time," Ferdiad made answer, "because it was I had my choice of weapons on the day aforegone." "Let us take, then," said Cuchulain, "to our great, well-tempered lances to-day, for we think that the thrusting will bring nearer the decisive

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battle to-day than did the casting of yesterday. Let our horses be brought to us and our chariots yoked, to the end that we engage in combat over our horses and chariots on this day." "Aye, let us go so," Ferdiad assented. Thereupon they girded two full-firm broad-shields on them for that day. They took to their great, well-tempered lances on that day. Either of them began to pierce and to drive, to throw and to press down the other, from early morning's twilight till the hour of evening's close. If it were the wont for birds in flight to fly through the bodies of men, they could have passed through their bodies on that day and carried away pieces of blood and flesh through their wounds and their sores into the clouds and the air all around. And when the hour of evening's close was come, their horses were spent and their drivers were wearied, and they themselves, the heroes and warriors of valour, were exhausted. "Let us give over now, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain, "for our horses are spent and our drivers tired, and when they are exhausted, why should we too not be exhausted?" And in this wise he spake, and he uttered these words at that place:—

"We need not our chariots break—
This, a struggle fit for giants.

[W.3626.] Place the hobbles on the steeds,
Now that din of arms is o'er!"

"Yea, we will cease, if the time hath come," replied Ferdiad. They ceased [1]then.[1] They threw their arms away from them into the hands of their charioteers. Each of them came towards his fellow. Each laid his hand on the other's neck and gave him three kisses. Their horses were in the one pen that night, and their charioteers at the one fire. Their charioteers prepared [2]two[2] litter-beds of fresh rushes for them with pillows for wounded men on them. The curing and healing men came to attend and watch and mark them that night; for naught else could they do, because of the direfulness of their cuts and their stabs, their gashes and their numerous wounds, but apply to them philtres and spells and charms, to staunch their blood and their bleeding and their deadly pains. Of every magic potion and every spell and every charm that was applied to the cuts and stabs of Cuchulain, their like share he sent over the ford westwards to Ferdiad. Of every food and every savoury, soothing and strong drink that was brought by the men of Erin to Ferdiad, an equal portion he sent over the ford northwards to Cuchulain, for the victuallers of Ferdiad were more numerous than the victuallers of Cuchulain. For all the men of Erin were Ferdiad's nourishers, to the end that he might ward off Cuchulain from them. But the indwellers of the Plain of Breg alone were Cuchulain's nourishers. They were wont to come daily, that is, every night, to converse with him.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

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They abode there that night. Early on the morrow they arose and repaired to the ford of combat. Cuchulain marked an evil mien and a dark mood that day [3]beyond every other day[3] on Ferdiad. "It is evil thou appearest to-day, O Ferdiad," spake Cuchulain; "thy hair has [W.3653.] become dark[a] to-day, and thine eye has grown drowsy, and thine upright form [LL.fo.85b.] and thy features and thy gait have gone from thee!" "Truly not for fear nor for dread of thee is that happened to me to-day," answered Ferdiad; "for there is not in Erin this day a warrior I could not repel!" [1]"Alas, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain, "a pity it is for thee to oppose thy foster-brother and thy comrade and friend, on the counsel of any woman in the world!" "A pity it is, O Cuchulain," Ferdiad responded. "But, should I part without a struggle with thee, I should be in ill repute forever with Medb and with the nobles of the four grand provinces of Erin." "A pity it is, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain; "not on the counsel of all the men and women in the world would I desert thee or would I do thee harm. And almost would it make a clot of gore of my heart to be combating with thee!"[1]

[3-3] *Eg.* 209 and *Eg.* 106.

[a] An unusual colour of the hair betokened misfortune.

[1-1] *Eg.* 106.

And Cuchulain lamented and moaned, and he spake these words and Ferdiad responded:—

Cuchulain: "Ferdiaid, ah, if it be thou,
Well I know thou'rt doomed to die!
To have gone at woman's hest,
Forced to fight thy comrade sworn!"

Ferdiaid: "O Cuchulain—wise decree—
Loyal champion, hero true,
Each man is constrained to go
'Neath the sod that hides his grave!"

Cuchulain: "Finnabair, Medb's daughter fair,
Stately maiden though she be,
Not for love they'll give to thee,
But to prove thy kingly might!"

Ferdiaid: "Proved was my might long since,
Cu of gentle spirit thou.
Of one braver I've not heard;
Till to-day I have not found!"



Cuchulain: "Thou art he provoked this fight,
Son of Daman, Dare's son,
To have gone at woman's word,
Swords to cross with thine old friend!"

Ferdiad: [W.3679.] "Should we then unfought depart,
Brothers though we are, bold Hound,
Ill would be my word and fame
With Ailill and Cruachan's Medb!"

Cuchulain: "Food has not yet passed his lips,
Nay nor has he yet been born,
Son of king or blameless queen,
For whom I would work thee harm!"

Ferdiad: "Culann's Hound, with floods of deeds,
Medb, not thou, hath us betrayed;
Fame and victory thou shalt have;
Not on thee we lay our fault!"

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Cuchulain: "Clotted gore is my brave heart,
Near I'm parted from my soul;
Wrongful 'tis—with hosts of deeds—
Ferdiad, dear, to fight with thee!"

[1]After this colloquy, Ferdiad spake:[1] "How much soever thou findest fault with me to-day," said Ferdiad, [2]"for my ill-boding mien and evil doing, it will be as an offset to my prowess." And he said,[2] "To what weapons shall we resort to-day?" "With thyself is the choice of weapons to-day till night time," replied Cuchulain, "for it is I that chose on the day gone by." "Let us resort, then," said Ferdiad, "to our heavy, hard-smiting swords this day, for we trow that the smiting each other will bring us nearer to the decision of battle to-day than was our piercing each other on yesterday." "Let us go then, by all means," responded Cuchulain.

[1-1] Stowe, *Eg.* 106.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

Then they took two full-great long-shields upon them for that day. They turned to their heavy, hard-smiting swords. Each of them fell to strike and to hew, to lay low and cut down, to slay and undo [3]his fellow,[3] till as large as the head of a month-old child was each lump and each cut, [4]each clutter and each clot of gore[4] that each of them took from the shoulders and thighs and shoulder-blades of the other.

[3-3] Stowe, *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] *Eg.* 106.

[W.3708.] Each of them was engaged in smiting the other in this way from the twilight of early morning till the hour of evening's close. "Let us leave off from this now, O Cuchulain!" cried Ferdiad. "Aye, let us leave off, if the hour has come," said Cuchulain. They parted [1]then, and[1] threw their arms away from them into the hands of their charioteers. Though it had been the meeting of two happy, blithe, cheerful, joyful men, their parting that night was of two that were sad, sorrowful and full of suffering. [2]They parted without a kiss a blessing or aught other sign of friendship, and their servants disarmed the steeds, the squires and the heroes; no healing or curing herbs were sent from Cuchulain to Ferdiad that night, and no food nor drink was brought from Ferdiad to him.[2] Their horses were not in the same paddock that night. Their charioteers were not at the same fire.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] H. 2. 12.



They passed there that night. It was then that Ferdiad arose early on the morrow and went alone to the ford of combat, [3]and dauntless, vengeful and mighty was the man that went thither that day, even Ferdiad son of Daman.[3] For he knew that that would be the decisive day of the battle and combat; and he knew that one or other of them would fall there that day, or that they both would fall. It was then he donned his battle-weed of battle and fight and combat, [LL.fo.86a.] or ever Cuchulain came to meet him. And thus was the manner of this harness

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of battle and fight and combat: He put his silken, glossy trews with its border of speckled gold, next to his white skin. Over this, outside, he put his brown-leathern, well-sewed kilt. Outside of this he put a huge, goodly flag, the size of a millstone, [4]the shallow (?) stone of adamant which he had brought from Africa and which neither points nor edges could pierce.[4] He put his solid, very deep, iron kilt of twice molten iron over the huge, goodly flag as large as a millstone, through [W.3730.] fear and dread of the Gae Bulga on that day. About his head he put his crested war-cap of battle and fight and combat, whereon were forty carbuncle-gems beautifully adorning it and studded with red-enamel and crystal and rubies and with [1]shining stones[1] of the Eastern world. His angry, fierce-striking spear he seized in his right hand. On his left side he hung his curved battle-falchion, [2]which would cut a hair against the stream with its keenness and sharpness,[2] with its golden pommel and its rounded hilt of red gold. On the arch-slope of his back he slung his massive, fine-buffalo shield [3]of a warrior,[3] whereon were fifty bosses, wherein a boar could be shown in each of its bosses, apart from the great central boss of red gold. Ferdiad performed divers, brilliant, manifold, marvellous feats on high that day, unlearned from any one before, neither from foster-mother nor from foster-father, neither from Scathach nor from Uathach nor from Aife, but he found them of himself that day in the face of Cuchulain.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] *Eg.* 209.

[1-1] Reading with Egerton 106, which gives better sense than LL.'s 'brilliant plants.'

[2-2] *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

Cuchulain likewise came to the ford, and he beheld the various, brilliant, manifold, wonderful feats that Ferdiad performed on high. "Thou seest yonder, O Laeg my master, the divers, bright, numerous, marvellous feats that Ferdiad performs on high, and I shall receive yon feats one after the other, and, therefore, [4]O Laeg," cried Cuchulain,[4] "if defeat be my lot this day, do thou prick me on and taunt me and speak evil to me, so that the more my spirit and anger shall rise in me. If, however, before me his defeat takes place, say thou so to me and praise me and speak me fair, to the end that the greater may be my courage!" "It shall surely be done so, if need be, O Cucuc," Laeg answered.

[4-4] Stowe.



Then Cuchulain, too, girded his war-harness of battle and [W.3757.] fight and combat about him, and performed all kinds of splendid, manifold, marvellous feats on high that day which he had not learned from any one before, neither with Scathach nor with Uathach nor with Aife.

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Ferdiad observed those feats, and he knew they would be plied against him in turn. "To what weapons shall we resort [1]to-day[1], O Ferdiad?" asked Cuchulain. "With thee is thy choice of weapons till night time," Ferdiad responded. "Let us go to the 'Feat of the Ford,' then," said Cuchulain. "Aye, let us do so," answered Ferdiad. Albeit Ferdiad spoke that, he deemed it the most grievous thing whereto he could go, for he knew that in that sort Cuchulain used to destroy every hero and every battle-soldier who fought with him in the 'Feat of the Ford.'

[1-1] Stowe.

Great indeed was the deed that was done on the ford that day. The two heroes, the two champions, the two chariot-fighters of the west of Europe, the two bright torches of valour of the Gael, the two hands of dispensing favour and of giving rewards [2]and jewels and treasures[2] in the west of the northern world, [LL.fo.86b.] [3]the two veterans[3] of skill and the two keys of bravery of the Gael, [4]the man for quelling the variance and discord of Connacht, the man for guarding the cattle and herds of Ulster[4], to be brought together in encounter as from afar, [5]set to slay each other or to kill one of them[5], through the sowing of dissension and the incitement of Ailill and Medb.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Reading with Stowe.

[4-4] *Eg.* 106.

[5-5] Stowe and *Eg.* 106.

Each of them was busy hurling at the other in those deeds of arms from early morning's gloaming till the middle of noon. When mid-day came, the rage of the men became wild, and each drew nearer to the other.

Thereupon Cuchulain gave one spring once from the bank of the ford till he stood upon the boss of Ferdiad macDaman's shield, seeking to reach his head and to strike [W.3779.] it from above over the rim of the shield. Straightway Ferdiad gave the shield a blow with his left elbow, so that Cuchulain went from him like a bird onto the brink of the ford. Again Cuchulain sprang from the brink of the ford, so that he alighted upon the boss of Ferdiad macDaman's shield, that he might reach his head and strike it over the rim of the shield from above. Ferdiad gave the shield a thrust with his left knee, so that Cuchulain went from him like an infant onto the bank of the ford.

Laeg espied that. "Woe then, [1]O Cuchulain!"[1] cried Laeg; [2]"meseems[2] the battle-warrior that is against thee hath shaken thee as a fond woman shakes her child. He hath washed thee as a cup is washed in a tub. He hath ground thee as a mill grinds



soft malt. He hath pierced thee as a tool bores through an oak. He hath bound thee as the bindweed binds the trees. He hath pounced on thee as a hawk pounces on little birds, so that no more hast thou right or title or claim to valour or skill in arms till the very day of doom and of life, thou little imp of an elf-man!" cried Laeg.

[1-1] Stowe.

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[2-2] Stowe.

Thereat for the third time, Cuchulain arose with the speed of the wind, and the swiftness of a swallow, and the dash of a dragon, and the strength (of a lion) [3]into the clouds[3] of the air, till he alighted on the boss of the shield of Ferdiad son of Daman, so as to reach his head that he might strike it from above over the rim of his shield. Then it was that the battle-warrior gave the shield a [4]violent and powerful[4] shake, so that Cuchulain flew from it into the middle of the ford, the same as if he had not sprung at all.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

It was then the first twisting-fit of Cuchulain took place, so that a swelling and inflation filled him like breath in a bladder, until he made a dreadful, terrible, many-coloured, wonderful bow of himself, so that as big as a giant or a man [W.3805.] of the sea was the hugely-brave warrior towering directly over Ferdiad.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their heads encountered above and their feet below and their hands in the middle over the rims and bosses of the shields.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their shields burst and split from their rims to their centres.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their spears bent and turned and shivered from their tips to their rivets.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that the boccanach and the bananach ('the puck-faced Fays' and 'the white-faced Fays') and the sprites of the glens and the eldritch beings of the air screamed from the rims of their shields and from the guards of their swords and from the tips of their spears.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that they forced the river out of its bed and out of its course, so that there might have been a reclining place [LL.fo.87a.] for a king or a queen in the middle of the ford, and not a drop of water was in it but what fell there with the trampling and slipping which the two heroes and the two battle-warriors made in the middle of the ford.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that the steeds of the Gael broke loose affrighted and plunging with madness and fury, so that their chains and their shackles, their traces and tethers snapped, and the women and children and pygmy-folk, the weak and the madmen among the men of Erin brake out through the camp south-westward.

At that time they were at the edge-feat of swords. It was then Ferdiad caught Cuchulain in an unguarded moment, and he gave him a thrust with his tusk-hilted blade, so that he buried it in his breast, and his blood fell into his belt, [W.3831.] till the ford became crimsoned with the clotted blood from the battle-warrior's body. Cuchulain endured it not, under Ferdiad's attack, with his death-bringing, heavy blows, and his long strokes and his mighty, middle slashes at him.

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[1]Then Cuchulain bethought him of his friends from Faery and of his mighty folk who would come to defend him and of his scholars to protect him, what time he would be hard pressed in the combat. It was then that Dolb and Indolb arrived to help and to succour their friend, namely Cuchulain, [2]and one of them went on either side of him and they smote Ferdiad, the three of them, and Ferdiad did not perceive the men from Sid ('the Faery Dwelling')[2]. Then it was that Ferdiad felt the onset of the three together smiting his shield against him, and he gave all his care and attention thereto, and thence he called to mind that, when they were with Scathach and with Uathach [3]learning together, Dolb and Indolb used to come to help Cuchulain out of every stress wherein he was.[3] Ferdiad spake: "Not alike are our foster-brotherhood and our comradeship, O Cuchulain," quoth he. "How so, then?" asked Cuchulain. "Thy friends of the Fairy-folk have succoured thee, and thou didst not disclose them to me before," said Ferdiad. "Not easy for me were that," answered Cuchulain; "for if the magic veil be once revealed to one of the sons of Mile,[a] none of the Tuatha De Danann ('the Folk of the Goddess Danu') will have power to practise concealment or magic. And why complainest thou here, [4]O Ferdiad?" said Cuchulain.[4] "Thou hast a horn skin whereby to multiply feats and deeds of arms on me, and thou hast not shown me how it is closed or how it is opened."

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13. *Eg.* 106 and *Eg.* 209.

[2-2] *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] *Eg.* 106.

[a] That is, the Milesians, the ancestors of the Irish.

Then it was they displayed all their skill and secret cunning to one another, so that there was not a secret of [W.3851.] either of them kept from the other except the Gae Bulga, which was Cuchulain's. Howbeit, when the Fairy friends found Cuchulain had been wounded, each of them inflicted three great, heavy wounds on him, on Ferdiad, to wit. It was then that Ferdiad made a cast to the right, so that he slew Dolb with that goodly cast. Then followed the two woundings and the two throws that overcame him, till Ferdiad made a second throw towards Cuchulain's left, and with that throw he stretched low and killed Indolb dead on the floor of the ford. Hence it is that the story-teller sang the rann:—

"Why is this called Ferdiad's Ford,
E'en though three men on it fell?
None the less it washed their spoils—
It is Dolb's and Indolb's Ford!"



What need to relate further! When the devoted, equally great sires[a] [2]and champions,[2] and the hard, battle-victorious wild beasts that fought for Cuchulain had fallen, it greatly strengthened the courage of Ferdiad, so that he gave two blows for every blow of Cuchulain's. When Laeg son of Riagabair saw his lord being overcome by the crushing blows of the champion who oppressed him, Laeg began to stir up and rebuke Cuchulain, in such a way that a swelling and an inflation filled Cuchulain [3]from top to ground,[3] as the wind fills a spread, open banner, so that he made a dreadful, wonderful bow of himself like a sky-bow in a shower of rain, and he made for Ferdiad with the violence of a dragon or the strength of a blood-hound.[1]

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[1-1] See note 1, page 255.

[2-2] H. 1. 13.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

And Cuchulain called for the Gae Bulga from Laeg son of Rianganabair. This was its nature: With the stream it was made ready, and from between the fork of the foot [a] Cuchulain was partly of divine birth, on one side the son of Lugh lamh-fhada ('Lug long-hand'), the Irish sun-god; on the earthly side he had also a mortal father, Sualtam or Sualtach.] [W.3874.] it was cast; the wound of a single spear it gave when entering the body, and thirty[a] barbs had it when it opened, and it could not be drawn out of a man's flesh till [1]the flesh[1] had been cut about it.

[a] 'Twenty four,' YBL. 39b, 23, and *Eg.* 106; but 'five,' *Eg.* 209.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2]Thereupon Laeg came forward to the brink of the river and to the place where the fresh water was dammed, and the Gae Bulga was sharpened and set in position. He filled the pool and stopped the stream and checked the tide of the ford. Ferdiad's charioteer watched the work, for Ferdiad had said to him early [3]in the morning:[3] "Now, gilla, do thou hold back Laeg from me to-day, and I will hold back Cuchulain from thee [4]and thy men forever." [4] "This is a pity," quoth the henchman; "no match for him am I; for a man to combat a hundred is he [5]amongst the men of Erin,[5] and that am I not. Still, however slight his help, it shall not come to his lord past me."

[2-2] Stowe, *Eg.* 106, *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] *Eg.* 209.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6]Thus were the henchmen: two brothers were they, namely, Id[b] son of Rianganabair, and Laeg[c] son of Rianganabair. As for Id son of Rianganabair,[6] he was then watching his brother [7]thus making the dam[7] till he filled the pools and went to set the Gae Bulga downwards. It was then that Id went up and released the stream and opened the dam and undid the fixing of the Gae Bulga. Cuchulain became deep purple and red all over when he saw the setting undone on the Gae Bulga. He sprang from the top of the ground so that he alighted light and quick on the rim of Ferdiad's shield. Ferdiad gave a [8]strong[8] shake to the shield, so that he hurled Cuchulain the measure of nine paces out to the westward over the ford. Then Cuchulain called and shouted to Laeg to set about preparing the Gae Bulga for him. Laeg hastened to the pool and began the



work. Id [W.3895.] ran and opened the dam and released it before the stream. Laeg sprang at his brother and they grappled on the spot. Laeg threw Id and handled him sorely, for he was loath to use weapons upon him. Ferdiad pursued Cuchulain westwards over the ford. Cuchulain sprang on the rim of the shield. Ferdiad shook the shield, so that he sent Cuchulain the space of nine paces eastwards over the ford. Cuchulain called and shouted to Laeg, [1]and bade him stop the

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stream and make ready the spear.[1] Laeg attempted to come nigh it, but Ferdiad's charioteer let him not, so that Laeg turned on him and left him on the sedgy bottom of the ford. He gave him many a heavy blow with clenched fist on the face and countenance, so that he broke his mouth and his nose and put out his eyes and his sight, [3]and left him lying wounded (?) and full of terror.[3] And forthwith Laeg left him and filled the pool and checked the stream and stilled the noise of the river's voice, and set in position the Gae Bulga. After some time Ferdiad's charioteer arose from his death-cloud, and set his hand on his face and countenance, and he looked away towards the ford of combat and saw Laeg fixing the Gae Bulga. He ran again to the pool and made a breach in the dike quickly and speedily, so that the river burst out in its booming, bounding, bellying, bank-breaking billows making its own wild course. Cuchulain became purple and red all over when he saw the setting of the Gae Bulga had been disturbed, and for the third time he sprang from the top of the ground and alighted on the edge of Ferdiad's shield, so as to strike him over the shield from above. Ferdiad gave a blow with his left knee against the leather of the bare shield, so that Cuchulain was thrown into the waves of the ford.

[6-6] *Eg.* 106.

[b] Ferdiad's charioteer.

[c] Cuchulain's charioteer.

[7-7] *Eg.* 106.

[8-8] *Eg.* 106.

[1-1] *Eg.* 106.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

Thereupon Ferdiad gave three severe woundings to Cuchulain. Cuchulain cried and shouted [4]loudly[4] to Laeg to make ready the Gae Bulga for him. Laeg attempted to [W.3919.] get near it, but Ferdiad's charioteer prevented him. Then Laeg grew [1]very[1] wroth [3]at his brother[3] and he made a spring at him, and he closed his long, full-valiant hands over him, so that he quickly threw him to the ground and straightway [4]bound[4] him. And [5]then[5] he went from him quickly and courageously, so that he filled the pool and stayed the stream and set the Gae Bulga. And he cried out to Cuchulain that it was served, for it was not to be discharged without a quick word of warning before it. Hence it is that Laeg cried out:—

“Ware! beware the Gae Bulga,
Battle-winning Culann's hound!” *et reliqua.*

[4-4] *Eg.* 106.

[1-1] *Eg.* 106.

[2-2] See note 2, page 257.

[3-3] *Eg.* 106.

[4-4] Reading with *Eg.* 106.

[5-5] *Eg.* 106.

[6]And he sent it to Cuchulain along the stream.[6]

[6-6] YBL. 39b, 20.

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Then it was that Cuchulain let fly the white Gae Bulga from the fork of his irresistible right foot. [7]Ferdiad began to defend the ford against Cuchulain, so that the noble Cu arose with the swiftness of a swallow and the wail of the storm-play in the rafters of the firmament, so that he laid hold of the breadth of his two feet of the bed of the ford, in spite of the champion.[7] Ferdiad prepared for the feat according to the testimony thereof. He lowered his shield, so that the spear went over its edge into the watery, water-cold river. And he looked at Cuchulain, and he saw all his various, venomous feats made ready, and he knew not to which of them he should first give answer, whether to the 'Fist's breast-spear,' or to the 'Wild shield's broad-spear,' or to the 'Short spear from the middle of the palm,' or to the white Gae Bulga over the fair, watery river. [2]

[7-7] *Eg.* 209.

[8]When Ferdiad saw that his gilla had been thrown[8] and heard the Gae Bulga called for, he thrust his shield down to protect the lower part of his body. Cuchulain gripped the short spear [9]which was in his hand,[9] cast it [W.3938.] off the palm of his hand over the rim of the shield and over the edge of the [1]corselet and[1] horn-skin, so that its farther half was visible after piercing his heart in his bosom. Ferdiad gave a thrust of his shield upwards to protect the upper part of his body, though it was help that came too late. The gilla set the Gae Bulga down the stream, and Cuchulain caught it in the fork of his foot, and [2]when Ferdiad raised his shield[2] Cuchulain threw the Gae Bulga as far as he could cast [3]underneath[3] at Ferdiad, so that it passed through the strong, thick, iron apron of wrought iron, and broke in three parts the huge, goodly stone the size of a millstone, so that it cut its way through the body's protection into him, till every joint and every limb was filled with its barbs.

[8-8] *Eg.* 106.

[9-9] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

[3-3] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

"Ah, that now sufficeth," sighed Ferdiad: "I am fallen of that! But, yet one thing more: mightily didst thou drive with thy right foot. And 'twas not fair of thee for me to fall by thy hand." And he yet spake and uttered these words:—

"O Cu of grand feats,
Unfairly I'm slain!



Thy guilt clings to me;
My blood falls on thee!

"No meed for the wretch[a]
Who treads treason's gap.
Now weak is my voice;
Ah, gone is my bloom!

"My ribs' armour bursts,
My heart is all gore;
I battled not well;
I'm smitten, O Cu!

[4]"Unfair, side by side, To come to the ford. 'Gainst my noble ward[b] Hath Medb
turned my hand!

"There'll come rooks and crows
To gaze on my arms,
To eat flesh and blood.
A tale, Cu, for thee!"[4]



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[a] Reading *taobh re taobh*.

[b] Omitting *seng*; the line has a syllable too many in the original.

[4-4] *Eg. 106 (Revue Celtique, tome xi, p. 327).*

[W.3964.] Thereupon Cuchulain hastened towards Ferdiad and clasped his two arms about him, and bore him with all his arms and his armour and his dress northwards over the ford, that so it should be [1]with his face[1] to the north[a] of the ford the triumph took place and not to the west[b] of the ford with the men of Erin. [LL.fo.87b.] Cuchulain laid Ferdiad there on the ground, and a cloud and a faint and a swoon came over Cuchulain there by the head of Ferdiad. Laeg espied it, and the men of Erin all arose for the attack upon him. "Come, O Cucuc," cried Laeg; "arise now [2]from thy trance,[2] for the men of Erin will come to attack us, and it is not single combat they will allow us, now that Ferdiad son of Daman son of Dare is fallen by thee." "What availeth it me to arise, O gilla," moaned Cuchulain, "now that this one is fallen by my hand?" In this wise the gilla spake and he uttered these words and Cuchulain responded:—

Laeg: "Now arise, O Emain's Hound;
Now most fits thee courage high.
Ferdiaid hast thou thrown—of hosts—
God's fate! How thy fight was hard!"

Cuchulain: "What avails me courage now?
I'm oppressed with rage and grief,
For the deed that I have done
On his body sworded sore!"

Laeg: "It becomes thee not to weep;
Fitter for thee to exult!
Yon red-speared one thee hath left
Plaintful, wounded, steeped in gore!"

Cuchulain: "Even had he cleaved my leg,
And one hand had severed too;
Woe, that Ferdiad—who rode steeds—
Shall not ever be in life!"

Laeg: [W.3993.] "Liefer far what's come to pass,
To the maidens of Red Branch;
He to die, thou to remain;
They grudge not that ye should part!"



Cuchulain: "From the day I Cualnge left,
Seeking high and splendid Medb,
Carnage has she had—with fame—
Of her warriors whom I've slain!"

Laeg: "Thou hast had no sleep in peace,
In pursuit of thy great Tain;
Though thy troop was few and small,
Oft thou wouldst rise at early morn!"

[1-1] *Eg.* 106.

[a] That is, in Ulster. Stowe and *Eg.* 106 read '(with his face) to the south.'

[b] That is, in Connacht.

[2-2] Stowe.

Cuchulain began to lament and bemoan Ferdiad, and he spake the words:

"Alas, O Ferdiad," [1]spake he,[1] "'twas thine ill fortune thou didst not take counsel with any of those that knew my real deeds of valour and arms, before we met in clash of battle!

[1-1] Stowe.

"Unhappy for thee that Laeg son of Rianganabair did not make thee blush in regard to our comradeship!

"Unhappy for thee that the truly faithful warning of Fergus thou didst not take!

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“Unhappy for thee that dear, trophied, triumphant, battle-victorious Conall counselled thee not in regard to our comradeship!

[2]“For those men would not have spoken in obedience to the messages or desires or orders or false words of promise of the fair-haired women of Connacht.

“For well do those men know that there will not be born a being that will perform deeds so tremendous and so great [3]among the Connachtmen as I,[3] till the very day of doom and of everlasting life, whether at handling of shield and buckler, at plying of spear and sword, at playing at draughts and chess, at driving of steeds and chariots.”[2]

[2-2] The order of these two paragraphs is that of Stowe; they are found in the reverse order in LL.

[3-3] Reading with Stowe.

[4]And he spake these warm words, sadly, sorrowfully in praise of Ferdiad:—[4]

[4-4] *Eg.* 209.

[W.4022.] “There shall not be found the hand of a hero that will wound warrior’s flesh, like cloud-coloured Ferdiad!

[1]“There shall not be heard from the gap[a] the cry of red-mouthed Badb[b] to the winged, shade-speckled flocks![1]

[1-1] This difficult sentence is composed of two alliterating groups, which it is impossible to follow in the translation.]

[a] That is, the battle breach.

[b] That is, the fury of war and carnage which appeared in the form of a carrion crow.

“There shall not be one that will contend for Cruachan that will obtain covenants equal to thine, till the very day of doom and of life henceforward, O red-cheeked son of Daman!” said Cuchulain.

Then it was that Cuchulain arose and stood over Ferdiad: “Ah, Ferdiad,” spake Cuchulain “greatly have the men of Erin deceived and abandoned thee, to bring thee to contend and do battle [LL.fo.88a.] with me. For no easy thing is it to contend and do battle with me on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge! [2]And yet, never before have I found combat that was so sore or distressed me so as thy combat, save the combat with Oenfer Aife,[c] mine own son.”[2] Thus he spake, and he uttered these words:



“Ah, Ferdiad, betrayed to death.
Our last meeting, oh, how sad!
Thou to die, I to remain.
Ever sad our long farewell!

“When we over yonder dwelt
With our Scathach, steadfast, true,
This we thought till end of time,
That our friendship ne’er would end!

“Dear to me thy noble blush;
Dear thy comely, perfect form;
Dear thine eye, blue-grey and clear;
Dear thy wisdom and thy speech!

“Never strode to rending fight,
Never wrath and manhood held,
Nor slung shield across broad back,
One like thee, Daman’s red son!

[W.4051.] “Never have I met till now, Since I Oenfer Aife slew, One thy peer in deeds of arms, Never have I found, Ferdiad!

“Finnabair, Medb’s daughter fair,
Beauteous, lovely though she be,
As a gad round sand or stones,
She was shown to thee, Ferdiad!”

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[2-2] Stowe, *Eg.* 106 and *Eg.* 209.

[c] That is, Conlaech.

Then Cuchulain turned to gaze on Ferdiad. "Ah, my master Laeg," cried Cuchulain, "now strip Ferdiad and take his armour and garments off him, that I may see the brooch for the sake of which he entered on the combat and fight [1]with me." [1] Laeg came up and stripped Ferdiad. He took his armour and garments off him and he saw the brooch [2]and he placed the brooch in Cuchulain's hand, [2] and Cuchulain began to lament and complain [3]over Ferdiad, [3] and he spake these words:—

"Alas, golden brooch;
Ferdiaid of the hosts,
O good smiter, strong,
Victorious thy hand!

"Thy hair blond and curled,
A wealth fair and grand.
Thy soft, leaf-shaped belt
Around thee till death!

"Our comradeship dear;
Thy noble eye's gleam;
Thy golden-rimmed shield;
Thy sword, [a] treasures worth!

[4]"Thy white-silver torque Thy noble arm binds. Thy chess-board worth wealth; Thy fair, ruddy cheek! [4]

"To fall by my hand,
I own was not just!
'Twas no noble fight.
Alas, golden brooch!

[1]"Thy death at Cu's hand Was dire, O dear calf! [a] Unequal the shield Thou hadst for the strife!

"Unfair was our fight,
Our woe and defeat!
Fair the great chief;
Each host overcome
And put under foot!
Alas, golden brooch!" [1]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[a] Reading with YBL. 39b, 31, as more intelligible than the 'chess-board' of LL., which occurs in the next stanza.

[4-4] YBL. 39b, 31-33.

[1-1] YBL. 39b, 35-39.

[a] A term of endearment which survives in Modern Irish.

[W.4092.] "Come, O Laeg my master," cried Cuchulain; "now cut open Ferdiad and take the Gae Bulga out, because I may not be without my weapons." Laeg came and cut open Ferdiad and he took the Gae Bulga out of him. And Cuchulain saw his weapons bloody and red-stained by the side of Ferdiad, and he uttered these words:—

"O Ferdiad, in gloom we meet.
Thee I see both red and pale.
I myself with unwashed arms;
Thou liest in thy bed of gore!

"Were we yonder in the East,
Scathach and our Uathach near,
There would not be pallid lips
Twixt us two, and arms of strife!

"Thus spake Scathach trenchantly (?),
Words of warning, strong and stern:
'Go ye all to furious fight;
German, blue-eyed, fierce will come!'

"Unto Ferdiad then I spake,
And to Lugaid generous,
To the son of fair Baetan,[b]
German we would go to meet!

"We came to the battle-rock,
Over Lake Linn Formait's shore.
And four hundred men we brought[c]
From the Isles of the Athissech!

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“As I stood and Ferdiad brave At the gate of German’s fort, [LL.fo.88b.] I slew Rinn the son of Nel; He slew Ruad son of Fornell![W.4122.] “Ferdiad slew upon the slope Blath, of Colba ‘Red-sword’ son. Lugaid, fierce and swift, then slew Mugairne of the Tyrrhene Sea!

“I slew, after going in,
Four times fifty grim, wild men.
Ferdiad killed—a furious horde—
Dam Dremenn and Dam Dilenn!

“We laid waste shrewd German’s fort
O’er the broad, bespangled sea.
German we brought home alive
To our Scathach of broad shield!

“Then our famous nurse made fast
Our blood-pact[a] of amity,
That our angers should not rise
’Mongst the tribes of noble Elg!

“Sad the morn, a day in March,
Which struck down weak Daman’s son.
Woe is me, the friend is fall’n
Whom I pledged in red blood’s draught![a]

“Were it there I saw thy death,
Midst the great Greeks’ warrior-bands,
I’d not live on after thee,
But together we would die!

“Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach’s fosterlings,
Me sore wounded, red with blood,
Thee no more to drive thy car!

“Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach’s fosterlings,
Me sore wounded, stiff with gore,
Thee to die the death for aye!

“Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach’s fosterlings,
Thee in death, me, strong, alive.
Valour is an angry strife!”

[b] That is, Ferbaeth.

[c] That is, as prisoners.

[a] Referring to the Celtic custom of binding an alliance by each of the parties thereto drinking the blood of the other.

“Good, O Cucuc,” spake Laeg, “let us leave this ford now; too long are we here!” “Aye, let us leave it, O my master Laeg,” replied Cuchulain. “But every combat and battle I have fought seems a game and a sport to me compared with the combat and battle of Ferdiad.” Thus he spake, and he uttered these words:—

[W.4164.] “All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
One task for both of us,
Equal our reward.
Our kind, gentle nurse
Chose him over all!

“All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
One our life, one our fear,
One our skill in arms.
Shields gave Scathach twain
To Ferdiad and me!

“All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Dear the shaft of gold[a]
I smote on the ford.
Bull-chief of the tribes,
Braver he than all!

“Only games and only sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Lion, furious, flaming, fierce;
Swollen wave that wrecks like doom!

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“Only games and only sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Loved Ferdiad seemed to me
After me would live for aye!
Yesterday, a mountain’s size—
He is but a shade to-day!

“Three things countless on the Tain
Which have fallen by my hand:
Hosts of cattle, men and steeds,
I have slaughtered on all sides!

“Though the hosts were e’er so great,
That came out of Cruachan wild,
More than third and less than half,
Slew I in my direful sport!

“Never trod in battle’s ring;
Banba[b] nursed not on her breast;
Never sprang from sea or land,
King’s son that had larger fame!”

[a] That is, Ferdiad.

[b] An old name for Ireland.

Thus far [1]the Combat of Ferdiad with Cuchulain[1] and the Tragical Death of Ferdiad.

[1-1] Stowe and *Eg.* 209.

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XXI

[1]CUCHULAIN AND THE RIVERS[1]

[2]Now while the hosts proceeded from Ath Firdead (‘Ferdiad’s Ford’) southwards, Cuchulain lay in his sickbed in that place.[2] [LL.fo.89a.] Then came certain men of the Ulstermen thither to help and succour Cuchulain. [W.4205.] [3]Before all,[3] Senoll Uathach and the two sons of Gege: Muridach and Cotreb, to wit. And they bore him to the streams and rivers of Conalle Murthemni, to rub and to wash his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his many wounds in the face of these streams and rivers. For the Tuatha



De Danann ('the Tribes divine of Danu') were wont to put herbs and plants of healing and a curing charm in the waters and rivers of the territory of Conalle Murthemni, to help and to succour Cuchulain, so that the streams were speckled and green-topped therewith.

[1-1] This sub-title is supplied by Windisch.

[2-2] YBL. 40a, 1-2.

[3-3] YBL. 40a, 3.

Accordingly these are the names of the healing rivers of Cuchulain:—

Sas, Buan, [4]Buas,[4] Bithslan, Findglas ('Whitewater'), Gleoir, Glenamain, Bedg, Tadg, Telameit, Rind, Bir, Brenide, Dichaem, Muach, Miliuc, Cumung, Cuilind, Gainemain, Drong, Delt, Dubglas ('Blackwater').

[4-4] Stowe.

[5]Then was the grave of Ferdiad dug by the men of Erin and his funeral games were held.[5]

[5-5] Stowe.

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XXII

[1]CETHERN'S STRAIT-FIGHT[1]

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[2]While now Cuchulain went to bathe in the waters, the hosts went by to the south till they pitched camp at Imorach Smiromrach ('Edge of the Marrow-bath').[2] [W.4238.] Then said the men of Erin to macRoth the chief runner, to go watch and keep guard for them at Sliab Fuait, to the end that the Ulstermen might not come upon them without warning and unobserved. Thereupon macRoth went [3]from the host southwards[3] as far as Sliab Fuait [4]to spy out the men of Ulster, to learn if any one came after them.[4] MacRoth was not long there when he saw something: a lone chariot on Sliab Fuait making from the north straight towards him. A fierce man, stark-naked, in that chariot coming towards him, without arms, without armour at all save an iron spit in his hand. In equal manner he goaded his driver and his horses [5]at one and the same time.[5] And it seemed to him that he would never in his life come up to the hosts. And macRoth hastened to tell this news [6]at the fort[6] where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were and the nobles of the men of Erin. Ailill asked tidings of him on his arrival. "Aye, macRoth," inquired Ailill; "hast thou seen any of the Ulstermen on the track of the host this day?" "That, truly, I know not," answered macRoth; "but I saw something: a lone chariot coming over Sliab Fuait [W.4252.] [1]from the north[1] straight towards us. A [2]white, grey,[2] wild, stark-naked man in the chariot, without arms or armour at all, except for an iron spit in his hand. In equal manner he prodded his driver and his steeds. It seemed to him he would never in his life come up to the host. [3]A brindled greyhound before him." [3] "Who, thinkest thou, might it be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. [4]"Is it Conchobar or Celtchar?" [4] "Of a truth, [5]that is not likely," [5] Fergus answered; "meseems it is Cethern son of [6]generous, red-edged[6] Fintan [7]from Line in the north[7] that came there. [8]And if so it be, ye shall be on your guard against him!" [8] Fergus indeed spoke true, that it was Fintan's son Cethern that was come there. And so Cethern son of Fintan came on them, and the camp and the garrison were confounded and he wounded all around him in every direction and on all sides [9]and they wounded him in like manner.[9] And then [10]Cethern[10] left them, [11]and it was thus he went, and the front-guard of the chariot pressed up against his belly to keep his entrails and vitals within him,[11] [12]and his intestines were wound about his legs.[12] He came to the place where was Cuchulain, to be healed and cured, and he demanded a leech of Cuchulain to heal and to cure him. [13]Cuchulain had compassion on his wounds;[13] [14] a bed of fresh rushes was made for him and a pillow set to it.[14] "Come, master Laeg!" cried Cuchulain. [15]"Arise,[15] away with thee to the garrison and camp of the men of Erin and summon [LL.fo.89.] the leeches to come out to cure Cethern macFintain. I give my word, e'en though it be under the [W.4270.] ground or in a well-shut house they are, I myself will bring death and destruction and slaughter upon them before this hour to-morrow, if they come not [1]to minister to Cethern." [1]

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[1-1] This heading is taken from the colophon of the episode.

[2-2] YBL. 40a, 9-12.

[3-3] YBL. 40a, 12-13.

[4-4] YBL. 40a, 12-14.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe, and YBL. 41a, 10.

[2-2] YBL. 41a, 11.

[3-3] YBL. 41a, 15.

[4-4] YBL. 40a, 17.

[5-5] YBL. 40a, 17.

[6-6] YBL. 40a, 18.

[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe and YBL. 41a, 10.

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] I have translated from the more circumstantial account in Stowe. LL. has, simply, 'his entrails and bowels outside on him.'

[12-12] YBL. 40a, 21.

[13-13] YBL. 40a, 22.

[14-14] YBL. 40a, 23-24.

[15-15] Stowe.

[1-1] YBL. 40a, 29.

Laeg went his way to the quarters and camp of the men of Erin, and he called upon the leeches of the men of Erin to go forth to cure Cethern son of Fintan. Truth to tell, the leeches of the men of Erin were unwilling to go cure their adversary, their enemy and their stranger-foe. But they feared Cuchulain would work death and destruction and slaughter upon them if they went not. And so they went. As one man of them [2]after the other[2] came to him, Cethern son of Fintan showed him his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his bloody wounds. [3]When the first leech that came looked at him, "thou wilt not live," he declared. "Neither wilt thou for this," replied Cethern.[3] Each man of them that said he would not live and could not be healed, Cethern son of Fintan struck him a blow with his right fist in the front of his forehead, so that he drove the brains out through the windows of his ears and the seams of his skull. Howbeit Cethern son of Fintan killed them till, by reason of him, there had come fifteen[a] leeches of the leeches of the men of Erin, [4]as the historian hath declared in proof thereof:—

"These the leeches of the Tain,
Who by Cethern—bane—did fall.
No light thing, in floods of tribes,
That their names are known to me:

"Litte, Luaidren, known o'er sea,
Lot and Luaimnech, 'White-hand' Lonn,
Latheirne skilful, also Lonn,
Laisre, Slanoll 'That cures all.'

"Dubthach, Fintan's blameless son,
Fintan, master Firfial, too,
Maine, Boethan 'Gives not pain,'
Eke his pupil, Boethan's son.

"These the leeches, five and ten,
Struck to death by Cethern, true;
I recall them in my day;
They are in the leeches' roll!"[4]

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 40a, 31-33.

[a] 'Fifty or fifteen,' YBL. 40a, 35.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add. 18,748.

[W.4284.] Yea, even the fifteenth leech, it was but the tip of a blow that reached him. Yet he fell lifeless of the great stun between the bodies of the other physicians and lay there for a long space and time. Ithall, leech of Ailill and Medb, was his name.

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Thereafter Cethern son of Fintan asked another leech of Cuchulain to heal and to cure him [1]forasmuch as the leeches of the men of Erin had failed him.[1] "Come, master Laeg," quoth Cuchulain, "go for me to Fingin the seer-leech, at 'Fingin's Grave-mound' at Leccan ('the Brow') of Sliab Fuait, [2]him that is[2] leech to Conchobar. Bid him come to heal Cethern son of Fintan."

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 40a, 40.

Laeg hastened to Fingin the seer-leech at 'Fingin's Grave-mound' at Leccan of Sliab Fuait, to the leech of Conchobar. And he told him to go cure Cethern son of Fintan. Thereupon Fingin the prophet-leech came [3]with him to where Cuchulain and Cethern were.[3] As soon as he was come, Cethern son of Fintan showed him his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his bloody wounds.

[3-3] Stowe.

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XXIIa

[1]CETHERN'S BLOODY WOUNDS[1]

[W.4299.] [2]"Look at this bloody wound for me, O Fingin," said Cethern.[2] Fingin looked at the bloody wound. "Why, it is a slight, unwillingly given wound we behold here," said the leech; [3]"even a wound that some one of thine own blood hath given thee, and no desire or wish had he therefor,[3] and it will not carry thee off at once." "That, now, is true," exclaimed Cethern. "A lone man came upon me there; bushy hair on him; a blue mantle wrapped around him; a silver brooch in the mantle over his breast; an oval shield with plaited rim he bore; a five-pointed spear in his hand; a pronged spare spear at his side. He gave this bloody wound. He bore away a slight wound from me too." "Why, we know that man!" cried Cuchulain; "'twas Illann Ilarchless ('Illann of many feats') son of Fergus [4]macRoig.[4] And he would not wish that thou shouldst fall by his hand, but he gave thee this mock-blow that the men of Erin might not have it to say it was to betray them or to forsake them if he gave it not."

[1-1] The heading is taken from LL.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] YBL. 41b, 19.

“Now look at this bloody wound for me, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. Fingin looked closely into the bloody wound. “Why, ’tis a woman’s wanton deed of arms we behold here,” said the leech; [5]“namely the wound which a warrior-woman inflicted on thee,” said he.[5] “Aye, that is true then,” quoth Cethern; “a woman [W.4314.] came upon me there by herself. A woman, beautiful, fair-faced, long-cheeked, tall; a golden-yellow head of hair [1]down to the top of her two shoulder-blades she wore; a smock of royal sammet next to her white skin;[1] [2]two birds of gold on her shoulders;[2] a purple cloak without other colour she had around her; [LL.fo.90a.] a brooch of gold in the cloak over her bosom; a straight, ridged spear, red-flaming in her hand. She it was that gave me this bloody wound. She bore away a slight wound from me too.” “Ah, but we know that woman,” cried Cuchulain; “Medb daughter of Eocho Fedlech, daughter of the High King of Erin; it is she that came unto us in that dress. A victory and triumph and trophy she had considered it hadst thou fallen at her hands.”

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[5-5] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 41b, 5.

“Look at this bloody wound for me too, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. Fingin looked at the bloody wound. “Why, the feat of arms of two warriors is this,” said the leech; [3]“that is to say, two warriors inflicted these two wounds as one wound upon thee.”[3] “Yea, that is true,” answered Cethern. “There came two [4]men-at-arms[4] upon me in that place; two, with bushy hair on them; two blue cloaks wrapped around them; brooches of silver in the cloaks over their breasts; a necklace of all-white silver around the neck of each of them; [5]two long shields they bore; two hard chains of silver on each of them; a band of silver around them; two five-pointed spears they bore; a vein of silver around them.[5] [6]They smote me this wound and I smote a little wound on each of them.”[6] “Indeed we know that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; “Oll and Othine they, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb; they never go to a hosting, [7]to battle or combat,[7] but when the wounding of a man is certain. They would have held [W.4330.] it for victory and triumph and a boast hadst thou fallen at their hands.”

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 41b, 21-26.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe.

“Look on this bloody wound also for me, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. Fingin looked closely at the bloody wound. “There came upon me a pair of young warriors of the Fian,” [1]said Cethern;[1] “a splendid, manly appearance they had. Each of them cast a spear at me. I drave this spear through the one of them.” Fingin looked into the bloody wound. “Why, this blood is all black,” quoth the leech; “through thy heart those spears passed so that they formed a cross of themselves through thy heart, [2]and thy healing and curing are not easy;[2] and I prophesy no cure here, but I would get thee some healing plants and curing charms that they destroy thee not forthwith.” “Ah, but we know them, that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; “Bun and Mecconn (‘Stump’ and ‘Root’) are they, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb. It was their hope that thou shouldst fall at their hands.”

[1-1] YBL. 41b, 30.

[2-2] Stowe.



“Look at this bloody wound for me, too, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. Fingin examined the bloody wound. “Why, it is the red rush of the two sons of Ri Caile (‘the King of the Woods’) that is here,” said the leech. “Aye, ’tis so,” replied Cethern; “there attacked me there two fair-faced, dark-browed youths, huge, with diadems of gold [3]on their heads.[3] Two green mantles folded about them; two pins of bright silver on the mantles over their breasts; two five-pronged spears in their hands.” “Why, near each other are the bloody wounds they gave thee,” said the leech; “into thy gullet they went, so that the points of the spears struck one another within thee, and none the easier is it to work thy cure here.” “We know that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; [4]“noble youths of Medb’s great household,[4] Broen and Brudni, are they, [5]two[5] [W.4352.] sons of Ri teora Soillse (‘the King of the three Lights’), that is, the two sons of the King of the Woods. It had been victory and triumph and a boast for them, hadst thou fallen at their hands.”

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[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] YBL. 41b, 41.

[5-5] Stowe.

“Look at this bloody wound for me, too, my good Fingin,” said Cethern. Fingin looked into the bloody wound. “The joint deed of two brothers is here,” said the leech. “’Tis indeed true,” replied Cethern. “There came upon me two leading, king’s warriors. Yellow hair upon them; dark-grey mantles with fringes, wrapped around them; leaf-shaped brooches of silvered bronze in the mantles over their breasts; broad, grey lances in their hands.” “Ah, but we know that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; “Cormac Colomon rig (‘King’s pillar’) is the one, and Cormac son of Mael Foga, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb (the other). What they sought was that thou shouldst fall at their hands.”

“Look at this bloody wound for me too, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. [LL.fo.90b.] Fingin looked into that bloody wound. “The assault of two brothers is here,” said the leech. “Aye then, ’tis true,” answered Cethern. “There came upon me two tender youths there; very much alike were they; curly [1]dark[1] hair on the one of them; curly yellow hair on the other; two green cloaks wrapped around them; two bright-silver brooches in the cloaks over their breasts; two tunics of smooth yellow silk [2]with hoods and red embroidery[2] next their skin; [3]two[3] white-hilted swords at their belts; two bright shields having the likenesses of beasts in white silver they bore; two five-pronged spears with veins of all-white silver in their hands.” “Ah, but we know that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; “Mane ‘Like to his mother’ and Mane ‘Like to his father,’ two sons of Ailill and Medb; and it would be matter of victory, [W.4377.] triumph and boasting to them, hadst thou fallen at their hands.”

[1-1] YBL. 42a, 28.

[2-2] YBL. 42a, 30-31.

[3-3] Stowe.

“Look at this bloody wound for me, too, O Fingin my master,” said Cethern. “There came upon me a pair of young warriors of the Fian there. A brilliant appearance, stately-tall and manlike, they had; wonderful garments from far-away countries upon them. Each of them thrust [1]the spear he had[1] at me. [2]Then[2] I thrust [3]this spear[3] through each of them.” Fingin looked into the bloody wound. “Cunning are the bloody wounds they inflicted upon thee,” said the leech; “they have severed the strings of thy heart within thee, so that thy heart rolls about in thy breast like an apple in motion or like a ball of yarn in an empty bag, and there is no string at all to support it; [4]and there is no means to cure thee or to save thee,[4] and no healing can I effect here.” “Ah, but we know those twain,” quoth Cuchulain; “a pair of champions from Norway

who, [5]because of their cunning and violence,[5] have been sent particularly by Ailill and Medb to slay thee; for not often does one ever issue alive from their combats, and it would be their will that thou shouldst fall at their hands.”

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[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe and YBL. 42a, 1.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

“Look upon this bloody wound for me too, my good Fingin,” said Cethern. Fingin looked at that bloody wound in like manner. “Why, the alternate woundings of a son and his father we behold here,” answered the leech. “Yea, it is so,” quoth Cethern; “two tall men, red as torches, came upon me there, with diadems of burnished gold upon them; kingly garments they wore; gold-hilted, hammered swords at their girdles, with scabbards of pure-white silver, [6]with a cunningly ornamented and delicate embossing[6] and supports of mottled gold outside upon them. “Ah, but we know that pair,” quoth Cuchulain; “Ailill and his [W.4399.] son are they, Mane ‘That embraces the traits of them all.’ They would deem it victory and triumph and a boast shouldst thou fall at their hands.”

[6-6] Stowe.

Thus far the “Bloody Wounds” of the Tain.

“Speak, O Fingin prophetic leech,” spake Cethern son of Fintan; “what verdict and what counsel givest me now?” “This verily is what I say to thee,” replied Fingin the prophetic leech: “Count not on thy big cows for yearlings this year; for if thou dost, it is not thou that will enjoy them, and no profit will they bring thee.” “This is the judgement and counsel the other surgeons did give me, and certain it is it brought them neither advantage nor profit, and they fell at my hands; and none the more will it bring thee advantage or profit, and thou shalt fall at my hands!” And he gave Fingin a strong, stiff kick with his foot, and sent him between the chariot’s two wheels [1]and the creaking of the chariot might be heard afar off.[1]

[1-1] Stowe.

“Oh, but vicious is the kick from the old warrior,” cried Cuchulain; [2]”would be more fitting if thou shouldst ply it on foes than on leech!”[2] Hence, from this saying, is the name Uachtar Lua (‘the Height of the Kick’) in the land of Ross from then until this day.

[2-2] YBL. 42a, 50-51.

Nevertheless [LL.fo.91a.] Fingin the prophet-leech gave his choice to Cethern son of Fintan: A long illness for him and afterwards to obtain help and succour, or a red[a]



healing for the space of three days and three nights, so that he might then employ his strength on his enemies. What Cethern son of Fintan chose was a red healing for the space of three days and three nights, to the end that he might then vent [3]his anger and[3] strength on his enemies. For what he said was that there would not be found after him any one he would rather have vindicate or avenge him than himself. [W.4420.] Thereupon Fingin the prophetic leech asked of Cuchulain a vat of marrow wherewith to heal and to cure Cethern son of Fintan. Cuchulain proceeded to the camp and entrenchment of the men of Erin, and whatsoever he found of herds and flocks and droves there he took away with him.

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And he made a marrow-mash of their flesh and their bones and their skins; and Cethern son of Fintan was placed in the marrow-bath till the end of three days and three nights. And his flesh began to drink in the marrow-bath about him and the marrow-bath entered in within his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his many wounds. Thereafter he arose from the marrow-bath at the end of three days and three nights, [1]and he slept a day and a night after taking in the marrow.[1] [2]"I have no ribs more," said Cethern; "put the ribs of the chariot-box into me." "Thou shalt have it," Cuchulain made answer.[2] It was thus Cethern arose, with a slab of the chariot pressed to his belly so that his entrails and bowels would not drop out of him. [3]"Had I my own weapons," said Cethern, "the story of what I would do would live forever!"[3]

[a] That is, 'extreme or drastic.'

[3-3] Stowe.

[1-1] YBL. 42b, 7.

[2-2] YBL. 42b, 8-9.

[3-3] YBL. 42b, 10-11.

That was the time when his wife came from the north, from Dun da Benn ('Fort of the two Gables'), and she brought his sword with her, even Finna daughter of Eochu. [4]"What seest thou?" asked Cethern.[4] [5]"Meseems," answered Cuchulain, "'tis the chariot of little Finna, Eochu's daughter, thy wife, that comes nigh us."[5] [6]And they saw the woman, with the arms in the chariot.[6] Cethern son of Fintan [7]seized his arms[7] and proceeded to attack the men of Erin, [8]with the chariot-box bound around his back, for he was not the stronger therefor.[8] But this is to be added: They sent a warning before him; Ithall,[a] physician of Ailill and Medb, had remained as one dead of [W.4436.] the great stun [1]from the blow of Cethern[1] among the bodies of the other leeches for a long space and time, [2]and continued in that state till then; at last he rose and rushed to the encampment,[2] [3]and he, the leech that had alone escaped from Cethern, brought the alarm to the camp.[3]

[4-4] YBL. 42b, 13.

[5-5] YBL. 42b, 14.

[6-6] YBL. 42b, 16.

[7-7] YBL. 42b, 17.

[8-8] YBL. 42b, 18-19.

[a] See above, page 272.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 42b, 20.

“Hark, ye men of Erin,” shouted the leech; “Cethern son of Fintan comes to attack you, now that he has been healed and cured by Fingin the prophetic leech, and take ye heed of him!” Thereat the men of Erin [4]in fear[4] put Ailill’s dress and his golden shawl [5]and his regal diadem[5] on the pillar-stone in Crich Ross, that it might be thereon that Cethern son of Fintan should first give vent to his anger on his arrival. [6]Eftsoons[6] Cethern [7]reached the place where he[7] saw those things, namely Ailill’s dress and his golden shawl around the standing-stone in Crich Ross, and he, being unaware and weetless, conceived it to be Ailill himself that

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was in it. And he made a rush at it like a blast of wind and drave the sword through the stone pillar till it went up to its pommel, [8]so that his fist went through it after the sword. [8] "Deceit is here," cried Cethern son of Fintan, "and on me have ye worked this deceit. And I swear an oath, till there be found among ye [9]of the men of Erin[9] one that will put yon royal dress about him and the golden shawl, I will not stay my hand from them, slaughtering and destroying withal!"

[4-4] YBL. 42b, 22.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe

[8-8] YBL. 42b, 24.

[9-9] Stowe.

Mane Andoe son of Ailill and Medb heard that, and he put [10]his father's[10] royal raiment about him and the golden shawl [11]and the diadem on his head, and he snatched them up in his chariot before him[11] and dashed off through the midst of the men of Erin. Cethern son of Fintan pursued him closely and hurled his shield the length of a cast at him, [W.4454.] so that the chiselled rim of the shield clave him[a] to the ground, with chariot, driver, and horses. [1]When the men of Erin saw that,[1] they surrounded Cethern on every side [2]and made him a victim of spears and lances,[2] so that he fell at their hands in the strait wherein he was. Wherefore 'Cethern's Strait-Fight and the Bloody Wounds of Cethern' [3]is the name of this tale.[3]

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] YBL. 42b, 29-30.

[a] Omitting *i tri*, 'in three'; it is not found in Stowe or in YBL. and seems out of place here.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4]His wife, Finna[b] daughter of Eocho Salbuide ('Yellow-heel') stood over him and she was in great sorrow, and she made the funeral-song below:—

"I care for naught, care for naught;
Ne'er more man's hand 'neath my head,
Since was dug the earthy bed,
Cethern's bold, of Dun da Benn!

"Kingly Cethern, Fintan's son;
Few were with him on the ford.
Connacht's men with all their host,
For nine hours he left them not!

"Arms he bore not—this an art—
But a red, two-headed pike;
With it slaughtered he the host,
While his anger still was fresh!

"Felled by double-headed pike,
Cethern's hand held, with their crimes,[c]
Seven times fifty of the hosts,
Fintan's son brought to their graves!

"Willa-loo, oh, willa-loo!
Woman's[d] wandering through the mist.
Worse it is for him that's dead.
She that lives may find a man![e]

"Never I shall take a man[e]
Of the hosts of this good world;
Never shall I sleep with man;
Never shall my man with wife!



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[W.4485.] "Dear the homestead, 'Horse-head's Dun,'[a] Where our hosts were wont to go. Dear the water, soft and sweet; Dear the isle, 'Isle of the Red!'[b]

"Sad the care, oh, sad the care,
Cualnge's Cow-raid brought on me:
Cethern, Fintan's son, to keen.
Oh that he had shunned his woe!

"Great the doings, these, oh, great,
And the deed that here was done:
I bewailing him till death,
Him that has been smitten down!

"Finna, Eocho's daughter, I,
Found a fight of circling spears.
Had my champion had his arms:
By his side a slaughtered heap!"[4]

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add. 18,748.

[b] Reading Finna, to agree with the reading in LL., *supra*, page 279.
Inna, in Stowe, *etc.*

[c] That is, unshrived of their sins (?), a Christian intrusion

[d] Literally, 'heifer's.'

[e] Literally, 'a bull.'

[a] In Irish, *Dun cind eich*.

[b] In Irish, *Innis ruaidh*.

[4-4] See note 4, page 211.

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XXIII

HERE FOLLOWETH THE TOOTH-FIGHT OF FINTAN



[W.4502.] Fintan, himself the son of Niall Niamglonnach ('of the brilliant Exploits') from Dun da Benn [1]in the north,[1] was father of Cethern son of Fintan. And he came to save the honour of Ulster and to avenge his son upon the hosts. Thrice fifty [2]with many pointed weapons[2] was his number. And thus it was they came, and two spear-heads on each shaft with them, a spear-head on the top and a spear-head at the butt, so that it made no difference whether they wounded the hosts with the points or with the butts. They offered three[a] battles to the hosts. And thrice their own number fell at their hands, and there fell also the people [LL.fo.91b.] of Fintan son of Niall, all excepting Fintan's son Crimthann alone,[3] so that there did not escape any of his people excepting himself and his son.[3] This one was saved under a canopy of shields by Ailill and Medb. [4]And the son was separated from him, his father Fintan, and was saved by Ailill out of fear of Fintan and in order that Fintan might not wreak his fury on them till he should come with Conchobar to the battle.[4] Then said the men of Erin, it would be no disgrace for Fintan son of Niall to withdraw from the camp and quarters, and that they would give up Crimthann son of Fintan to him, and then the hosts would fall back a day's march to the north again; and that he [W.4515.] should cease from his deeds of arms against the hosts till he would come to encounter them on the day of the great battle at the place where the four grand provinces of Erin would clash at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Cattle-reaving of

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Cualnge, as was foretold by the druids of the men of Erin. Fintan son of Niall consented to that, and they gave over his son to him. [1]He made friendship with them then when his son had been restored to him.[1] He withdrew from the camp and station, and the hosts marched a day's journey back to the north again, to stop and cease their advance. [2]Thereafter Fintan went to his own land.[2] In this manner they found each man of the people of Fintan son of Niall and each man of the men of Erin, with the lips and the nose [3]and the ear[3] of each of them in the teeth and tusks of the other [4]after they had used up their arms.[4] The men of Erin gave thought to that: "This is a tooth-fight for us," said they; "the tooth-fight of Fintan's people and of Fintan himself." So this is the 'Tooth-fight' of Fintan.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 42b, 36.

[a] 'Seven,' YBL. 42b, 38.

[3-3] YBL. 42b, 38-39.

[4-4] YBL. 42b, 39-43.

[1-1] YBL. 42b, 43-44.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

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XXIIla

THE RED-SHAME OF MENN FOLLOWETH HERE

[W.4529.] [1]It was then came [2]to them[2] great[1] Menn son of Salcholga, he from Renna ('the Waterways') of the Boyne [3]in the north.[3] Twelve[a] men [4]with many-pointed weapons,[4] that was his number. It was thus they came, and two spear-heads on each shaft with them, a spear-head on the top and a spear-head at the butt, so that it made no difference whether they wounded the hosts with the points or with the butts.



They offered three attacks upon the hosts. Three times their own number fell at their hands and there fell twelve men of the people of Menn, [5]so that there remained alive of them but Menn alone.[5] But Menn himself was [6]sorely[6] wounded in the strait, so that blood ran crimson on him [7]and his followers too were crimsoned.[7] Then said the men of Erin: "Red is this shame," said they, "for Menn son of Salcholga, that his people, [8]twelve men,[8] should be slain and destroyed and he himself wounded till blood ran crimson red upon him." Hence here is the 'Reddening Shame of Menn,' [9]the name of this tale on the Spoil of the Kine of Cualnge.[9]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] YBL. 42b, 45.

[3-3] Stowe.

[a] 'Thirty,' YBL. 42b, 45.

[4-4] YBL. 42b, 46.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] YBL. 42b, 49.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Stowe.

Then said the men of Erin, it would be no dishonour for Menn son of Salcholga to leave the camp and quarters, and that the hosts would go a day's journey back to the [W.4542.] north again, and that Menn should cease his weapon-feats[a] on the hosts till Conchobar arose out of his 'Pains' and battle would be offered them at Garech and Ilgarech [1]on the day of the great battle when the men of Erin and of Ulster would meet together in combat in the great battle of the Cualnge Cow-spoil,[1] as the druids and soothsayers and the knowers of the men of Erin had foretold it.

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[a] Following Windisch's emendation of the text.

[1-1] Stowe.

Menn son of Salcholga agreed to that, to leave the camp and halting-place. And the hosts fell back a day's march for to rest and wait, [2]and Menn went his way to his own land.[2]

[2-2] Stowe.

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XXIIIb

HERE FOLLOWETH THE ACCOUTREMENT OF THE CHARIOTEERS

[W.4551.] Then came the charioteers of the Ulstermen to them. Thrice fifty was their number. They offered three battles to the hosts. Thrice their number fell at their hands, and the charioteers themselves fell on the field whereon they stood. Hence this here is the 'Accoutrement of the Charioteers.' [1]It is for this cause it is called the 'Accoutrement of the Charioteers,' because it is with rocks and with boulders and with clumps of earth they accomplished the defeat of the men of Erin.[1]

[1-1] Stowe.

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XXIIIc

[LL. fo. 92a.] [1]THE WHITE-FIGHT OF ROCHAD NOW FOLLOWETH[1]

[W.4556.] [2]Cuchulain despatched his charioteer to[2] Rochad [3]Rigderg ('Red-king') [3] son of Fathemon, [4]from Rigdorn in the north,[4] [5]that he should come to his aid. [5] He was of Ulster. [6]The gilla comes up to Rochad and tells him, if he has come out of his weakness, to go to the help of Cuchulain, that they should employ a ruse to reach the host to seize some of them and slay them. Rochad set out from the north.[6] Thrice fifty[a] warriors was his number, and he took possession of a hill fronting the hosts. [7]"Scan the plain for us to-day," said Ailill. "I see a company crossing the plain," the watchman answered, "and a tender youth comes in their midst; the other warriors reach



but up to his shoulder.” “Who is that warrior, O Fergus?” asked Ailill. “Rochad son of Fathemon,” he answered; “and it is to bring help to Cuchulain he comes. I know what ye had best do with him,” Fergus continued. “Let a hundred warriors go from ye with the maiden yonder to the middle of the plain and let the maid go before them, and let a horseman go tell Rochad to come alone to hold converse with the maid and let hands be laid on him, and thus shall be removed all fear of his people from us.[7] Finnabair, [W.4558.] daughter of Ailill and Medb, perceived that and she went to speak to her mother thereof, even to Medb. [1]Now it happened that Finnabair loved Rochad. It is he was the fairest young warrior in Ulster at that time.[1] [2]And Finnabair disclosed her secret and her love[a] to her mother.[2] “Truly have I loved yonder warrior for a long time,” said she; “and it is he is my sweetheart, [3]my first love[3] and mine own choice one in wooing [4]of the men of Erin.”[4] “An thou hast [5]so[5] loved him, daughter,” [6]quoth Ailill and Medb,[6] “sleep with him this night and crave for us a truce of him for the hosts, until [7]with Conchobar[7] he encounters us on the day of the great battle when four of the grand provinces of Erin will meet at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Foray of Cualnge.”

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[1-1] The LU. version of the 'White-fight,' which occurs much earlier (fo. 72a, edition of Strachan and O'Keeffe, lines 1457 and fol.), is incorporated with the LL. version above.

[2-2] LU. 1457.

[3-3] YBL. 43a, 6.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] LU. 1458.

[6-6] LU. 1460-1463.

[a] 'One hundred fighting men,' LU. 1463.

[7-7] LU. 1463-1472.

[1-1] LU. 1458.

[2-2] Stowe.

[a] Literally, 'whisper.'

[3-3] YBL. 43a, 10.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 43a, 10.

[6-6] YBL. 43a, 10

[7-7] YBL. 43a, 11.

[8] This then is done. Rochad sets forth to meet the horseman. "I am come," says the horseman, "from Finnabair to meet thee that thou come to speak with the maiden." Thereupon Rochad goes alone to converse with her. The army surrounds him on all sides; he is seized and hands are laid on him; his followers are routed and driven in flight. Afterwards he is set free and bound over not to oppose Ailill's host till the time he will come with all the warriors of Ulster. Also they promise to give Finnabair to him.[8]

[8-8] LU. 1472-1478.

Rochad son of Fathemon accepted the offer [9] and thereupon he left them [9] and that night the damsel slept with him.

[9-9] LU. 1478-1479.

An Under-king of Munster that was in the camp heard the tale. He went to his people to speak of it. "Yonder maiden was plighted to me [10]on fifteen hostages[10] once long ago," said he; "and it is for this I have now come on this [W.4568.] hosting." Now wherever it happened that the seven[a] Under-kings of Munster were, what they all said was that it was for this they were come. [1]"Yonder maiden was pledged to each of us in the bargain as our sole wife, to the end that we should take part in this warfare." They all declared that that was the price and condition on which they had come on the hosting.[1] "Why," said they, [2]"what better counsel could we take?[2] Should we not go to avenge our wife and our honour on the Mane [3]the sons of Ailill[3] who are watching [4]and guarding[4] the rear of the army at Imlech in Glendamrach ('Kettle-glen's navel)?"

[10-10] YBL 43a, 17.

[a] 'Twelve,' Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 43a, 20.

[4-4] Stowe.

This was the course they resolved upon. And with their seven divisions of thirty hundreds they arose, [5]each man of them to attack the Mane. When Ailill heard that,[5] he arose [6]with a start with ready shield[6] against them and thirty hundred [7]after them.[7] Medb arose with her thirty hundred. The sons of Maga with theirs and the Leinstermen and the Munstermen and the people of Tara.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

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[7-7] Stowe.

[8]Then arose Fergus with his thirty hundred to intervene between them, and that was a hand for that mighty work.[8] And a mediation was made between them so that each of them sat down near the other and hard by his arms. Howbeit before the intervention took place, eight hundred[b] very valiant warriors of them had fallen [9]in the slaughter of Glenn Domain ('Deep Glen').[9]

[8-8] Stowe.

[b] 'Seven hundred,' YBL. 43a, 24 and Stowe.

[9-9] YBL. 43a, 25.

Finnabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, had tidings that so great a number of the men of Erin had fallen for her sake and on account of her. And her heart broke in her breast even as a nut, through shame and disgrace, so that Finnabair Slebe ('Finnabair of the Mount') is the name of the place where she fell, [10]died and was buried.[10]

[10-10] Stowe.

[W.4585.] Then said the men of Erin, "White is this battle," said they, "for Rochad son of Fathemon, in that eight hundred exceeding brave warriors fell for his sake and on his account, and he himself goes[1] safe and whole to his country and land[1] without blood-shedding or reddening on him." Hence this is the 'White-fight' of Rochad.

[1] Stowe.

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XXIIId

HERE FOLLOWETH ILIACH'S CLUMP-FIGHT

[W.4590.] [1]Then came to them[1] Iliach son of Cass son of Bacc son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige. [2]He was at that time an old man cared for by his son's son, namely by Loegaire Buadach ('the Victorious') in Rath Imbil in the north.[2] It was told him that the four grand provinces of Erin even then laid waste and invaded the lands of Ulster and of the Picts [3]and of Cualnge[3] from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring, [4]and were carrying off their women and their cows and their children, their flocks, their herds and their cattle, their oxen and their kine and their droves, their steeds and their horses.[4] He then conceived a plan [5]in his mind[5] and he made

perfect his plan privily with his people. “What counsel were better for me to make than to go and attack the men of Erin [6]and to use my[a] strength on them[6] and have [7]my boast and[7] victory over them, and thus avenge the honour of Ulster. And I care not though I should fall myself there thereafter.”

[1-1] YBL. 43a, 29.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

[a] The MS. has ‘his.’

[7-7] Stowe.

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[LL.fo.92b.] And this is the counsel he followed. His two withered, mangy, [8]sorrel[8] nags that were upon the strand hard by the fort were led to him. And to them was fastened his ancient, [9]worn-out[9] chariot. [10]Thus he mounted his chariot,[10] without either covers or cushions; [W.4601.] [1]a hurdle of wattles around it.[1] His [2]big,[2] rough, pale-grey shield of iron he carried upon him, with its rim of hard silver around it. He wore his rough, grey-hilted, huge-smiting sword at his left side. He placed his two rickety-headed, nicked, [3]blunt, rusted[3] spears by his side in the chariot. His folk furnished his chariot around him with cobbles and boulders and huge clumps, [4]so that it was full up to its ...[4] (?)

[8-8] YBL. 43a, 36.

[9-9] YBL. 43a, 36.

[10-10] YBL. 43a, 35.

[1-1] YBL. 43a, 35.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] YBL. 48a, 38.

In such wise he fared forth to assail the men of Erin. And thus he came, [5]stark-naked, [5] [6]and the spittle from his gaping mouth trickling down through the chariot under him. [6] [7]When the men of Erin saw him thus, they began to mock and deride him.[7] "Truly it would be well for us," said the men of Erin,[a] "if this were the manner in which all the Ulstermen came to us [8]on the plain." [8]

[5-5] YBL. 43a, 40.

[6-6] This is the sense of Zimmer's translation, which is only conjectural, of this difficult passage (see *Zeitschrift fuer Deutsches Alterthum und Deutsche Litteratur*, Bd. xxxii, 1888, S. 275). The idea is probably more clearly expressed in Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 43a, 41, and may be rendered, '*membrum virile ejus coram viros Hiberniae et testes pendentes per currum.*'

[7-7] Stowe and, similarly, H. 1. 13.

[a] 'Said Medb,' Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe and, similarly, H. 1. 13, Add.



Doche son of Maga met him and bade him welcome. "Welcome is thy coming, O Iliach," spake Doche son of Maga. [9]"Who bids me welcome?" asked Iliach. "A comrade and friend of Loegaire Buadach am I, namely Doche macMagach." [9] "Truly spoken I esteem that welcome," answered Iliach; "but do thou [10]for the sake of that welcome [10] come to me when now, alas, my deeds of arms will be over and my warlike vigour will have vanished, [11]when I will have spent my rage upon the hosts, [11] so that thou be the one to cut off my head and none other of the men of Erin. However, my sword shall remain with [W.4615.] thee [1]for thine own friend, even [1] for Loegaire [2]Buadach!" [2]

[9-9] Stowe.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] Stowe.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

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He assailed the men of Erin with his weapons till he had made an end of them. And when weapons failed he assailed the men of Erin with cobbles and boulders and huge clumps [3]of earth[3] till he had used them up. And when these weapons failed him he spent his rage on the man [4]that was nearest him[4] of the men of Erin, and bruised him grievously between his fore-arms [5]and his sides[5] and the palms of his hands, till he made a marrow-mass of him, of flesh and bones and sinews and skin. Hence in memory thereof, these two masses of marrow still live on side by side, the marrow-mass that Cuchulain made of the bones of the Ulstermen's cattle for the healing of Cethern son of Fintan,[a] and the marrow-mass that Iliach made of the bones of the men of Erin. Wherefore this was one of the three innumerable things of the Tain, the number of them that fell at the hands of Iliach. So that this is the 'Clump-fight' of Iliach. It is for this reason it is called the 'Clump-fight' of Iliach, because with cobbles and boulders and massy clumps he made his fight.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[a] See above, page 279.

[6]Thereafter[6] Doche son of Maga met him. "Is not this Iliach?" asked Doche son of Maga. "It is truly I," Iliach gave answer; "and come to me now and cut off my head and let my sword remain with thee for thy friend, for Loegaire [7]Buadach ('the Victorious')." [7]

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe.

Doche came near him and gave him a blow with the sword so that he severed his head, [8]and he took with him the head and the spoils vauntingly to where were Ailill and Medb.[8] Thus to this point, the 'Clump-fight' of Iliach.

[8-8] Stowe.

* * * * *

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XXIIIe

HERE NOW THE DEER-STALKING OF AMARGIN IN TALTIU



[W.4638.] This Amargin was the son of Cass who was son of Bacc who was son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') who was son of Rudraige, [1]father of Conall Cernach ('the Triumphant').[1] He came upon the warriors going over Taltiu westward, and he made them turn before him over Taltiu northwards. And he put his left[a] elbow under him in Taltiu. And his people furnished him with rocks and boulders and great clumps [2]of earth,[2] and he began to pelt the men of Erin till the end of three days and three nights, [3]and he did great slaughter among them[3] [4]so that no man could show his face to him in Taltiu.[4]

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[a] As a challenge or sign of hostility.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] YBL. 43b, 13-14.

* * * * *

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XXIII^f

THE ADVENTURES OF CUROI SON OF DARE FOLLOW NOW

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[W.4645.] He was told that a single man was checking and stopping four of the five grand provinces of Erin [1]during the three months of winter[1] from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring. And he felt it unworthy of himself and he deemed it too long that his people were without him. And [2]it was then[2] he set out [3]to the host[3] to fight and contend with Cuchulain. And when he was come to the place where Cuchulain was, he saw Cuchulain there moaning, full of wounds and pierced through with holes, and he felt it would not be honourable nor fair to fight and contend with him after the combat with Ferdiad. [4]Because it would be said it was not that Cuchulain died of the sores [LL.fo.93a.] and wounds which he would give him so much as of the wounds which Ferdiad had inflicted on him in the conflict before.[4] Be that as it might, Cuchulain offered to engage with him in battle and combat.

[1-1] YBL. 43b, 17.

[2-2] YBL. 43b, 14-15.

[3-3] YBL. 43b, 15.

[4-4] Reading with Stowe, which is to be preferred to LL.

Thereupon Curoi set forth for to seek the men of Erin and, when he was near at hand, he espied Amargin there and his left elbow under him to the west of Taltiu. Curoi reached the men of Erin from the north. His people equipped him with rocks and boulders and great clumps, and he began to hurl them right over against Amargin, so that Badb's battle-stones collided in the clouds and in the air high above them, and every rock of them was shattered [W.4662.] into an hundred stones. "By the truth of thy valour, O Curoi," cried Medb, "desist from thy throwing, for no real succour nor help comes to us therefrom, but ill is the succour [1]and help[1] that thence come to us," "I pledge my word," cried Curoi, "I will not cease till the very day of doom and of life, till first Amargin cease!" "I will cease," said Amargin; "and do thou engage that thou wilt no more come to succour or give aid to the men of Erin." Curoi consented to that and went his way to return to his land and people.

[1-1] Stowe.

About this time [2]the hosts[2] went past Taltiu westwards. "It is not this was enjoined upon me," quoth Amargin: "never again to cast at the hosts [3]but rather that I should part from them." [3] And he went to the west of them and he turned them before him north-eastwards past Taltiu. And he began to pelt them for a long while and time [4]so that he slaughtered more of them than can be numbered.[4] [5]This is one of the three incalculable things on the Tain, the number of those he slew. And his son Conall Cernach ('the Victorious') remained with him providing him with stones and spears.[5]

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. fo. 43b, 34-36.

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Then it was also that the men of Erin said it would be no disgrace for Amargin to leave the camp and quarters, and that the hosts would retire a day's march back to the north again, there to stop and stay, and for him to quit his feats of arms upon the hosts until such time as he would meet them on the day of the great battle when the four grand provinces of Erin would encounter at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge. Amargin accepted that offer, and the hosts proceeded a day's march back to the northwards again. Wherefore the 'Deer-stalking' of Amargin in Taltiu [6]is the name of this tale.[6]

[6-6] Stowe.

* * * * *

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XXIV

THE REPEATED WARNING OF SUALTAIM

[1]Now while the deeds we have told here were being done,[1] [W.4685.] Sualtaim ('Goodly fosterer') son of Becaltach ('of Small belongings') son of Moraltach ('of Great belongings'), the same the father of Cuchulain macSualtaim, [2]of Sualtaim's Rath in the plain of Murthemne,[2] was told of the distress and [3]sore wounding[3] of his son contending in unequal combat on the Cualnge Cattle-spoil, even against Calatin Dana ('the Bold') with his seven and twenty[a] sons, and against Glass son of Delga, his grandson, [4]and at the last against Ferdiad son of Daman.[4]

[1-1] YBL. 43b, 38-39.

[2-2] YBL. 43b, 39-40.

[3-3] Stowe.

[a] 'Twelve,' YBL. 43b, 41.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5]It is then that Sualtaim said[5]: "Whate'er it be, [6]this that I hear[6] from afar," quoth Sualtaim, "it is the sky that bursts or the sea that ebbs or the earth that quakes, or is it the distress of my son overmatched in the strife on the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge?"

[5-5] Stowe and YBL. 43b, 42.

[6-6] Stowe.



In that, indeed, Sualtaim spoke true. And he went to learn all after a while, without hastening on his way. And when Sualtaim was come to where [7]his son[7] Cuchulain was [8]and found him covered with wounds and bloody gashes and many stabs,[8] Sualtaim began to moan and lament [9]for Cuchulain.[9]

[7-7] YBL. 43b, 46.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Stowe.

[W.4695.] Forsooth Cuchulain deemed it neither an honour nor glory that Sualtaim should bemoan and lament him, for Cuchulain knew that, wounded and injured though he was, Sualtaim would not be [1]the man[1] to avenge his wrong. For such was Sualtaim: He was no mean warrior and he was no mighty warrior, but only a good, worthy man was he. "Come, my father Sualtaim," said Cuchulain; [2]"cease thy sighing and mourning for me, and[2] do thou go to Emain [3]Macha[3] to the men of Ulster and tell them to come now to have a care for their droves, for no longer am I able to protect them in the gaps

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and passes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. All alone am I against four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring, every day slaying a man on a ford and a hundred warriors every night. Fair fight is not granted me nor single combat, and no [LL.fo.93b.] one comes to aid me nor to succour. [4]And such is the measure of my wounds and my sores that I cannot bear my garments or my clothing to touch my skin, so that[4] spancel-hoops hold my cloak over me. Dry tufts of grass are stuffed in my wounds. [5]There is not the space of a needle's point from my crown to my sole without wound or sore, and[5] there is not a single hair [6]on my body[6] from my crown to my sole whereon the point of a needle could stand, without a drop of deep-red blood on the top of each hair, save the left hand alone which is holding my shield, and even there thrice fifty bloody wounds are upon it. [7]And let them straightway give battle to the warriors,[7] and unless they avenge this anon, they will never avenge it till the very day of doom and of life!"

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] YBL. 43b, 49.

Sualtaim set out on Liath ('the Roan') of Macha as his only horse, with warning to the men of Ulster. And when [W.4716.] he was come alongside of Emain, he shouted these words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" cried Sualtaim.

He had not [1]the answer[1] that served him from the Ulstermen, and forasmuch as he had it not he went on further to the rampart of Emain. And he cried out the same words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" cried Sualtaim.

[1-1] Stowe.

And [2]a second time[2] he had not the response that served him from the men of Ulster. Thus stood it among the Ulstermen: It was geis for the Ulstermen to speak before their king, geis for the king to speak before his [3]three[3] druids. Thereafter Sualtaim drove on to the 'Flag-stone of the hostages' in Emain Macha. He shouted the

same words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cows carried off!" "But who has slain them, and who has stolen them, and who has carried them off?" asked Cathba the druid. "Ailill and Medb have, [4]with the cunning of Fergus mac Roig,[4] overwhelmed you. [5]Your people have been harassed as far as Dun Sobairche,"[5] said Sualtaim. "Your wives and your sons and your children, your steeds and your stock of horses, your herds and your flocks and your droves of cattle have been carried away. Cuchulain all alone is checking and staying the hosts of the four great provinces of Erin at the gaps and passes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. Fair fight is refused him, nor is he granted single combat, nor comes any one to succour or aid him. [6]Cuchulain has not suffered them to

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enter the plain of Murthemne or into the land of Ross. Three winter months is he there. [6] The youth is wounded, his limbs are out of joint. Spancel-hoops hold his cloak over him. There is not a hair from his crown to his sole whereon the point of a needle could stand, without a drop of deep-red [W.4737.] blood on the top of each hair, except his left hand alone which is holding his shield, and even there thrice fifty bloody wounds are upon it. And unless ye avenge this betimes, ye will never avenge it till the end of time and of life."

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 44a, 9.

[4-4] YBL. 44a, 13.

[5-5] YBL. 44a, 13.

[6-6] YBL. 44a, 15.

[LL.fo.94a.] "Fitter is death and doom and destruction for the man that so incites the king!" quoth Cathba the druid. "In good sooth, it is true!" [1]said the Ulstermen[1] all together.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2]Thereupon[2] Sualtaim went his way [3]from them,[3] indignant and angry because from the men of Ulster he had not had the answer that served him. Then reared Liath ('the Roan') of Macha under Sualtaim and dashed on to the ramparts of Emain. Thereat [4]Sualtaim fell under his own shield, so that[4] his own shield turned on Sualtaim and the [5]scalloped[5] edge of the shield severed Sualtaim's head, [6]though others say he was asleep on the stone, and that he fell thence onto his shield on awaking.[6] [7]Hence this is the 'Tragical Death of Sualtaim.'[7]

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 44a, 28.

[6-6] YBL. 44a, 32-33.

[7-7] Stowe.

The horse himself turned back again to Emain, and the shield on the horse and the head on the shield. And Sualtaim's head uttered the same words: "Men are slain, women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" spake the head of Sualtaim.

"Some deal too great is that cry," quoth Conchobar; "for yet is the sky above us, the earth underneath and the sea round about us. And unless the heavens shall fall with their showers of stars on the man-like[a] face of the world, or unless the ground burst open in quakes [8]beneath our feet,[8] or unless the furrowed, blue-bordered ocean break o'er the tufted brow of the earth, will I restore [W.4756.] to her byre and her stall, to her abode and her dwelling-place, each and every cow and woman of them with victory of battle and contest and combat!"

[a] Reading with LL. 5027 and 5975, which gives better meaning than the expression 'fort-face,' of LL.

[8-8] Stowe.

Thereupon a runner of his body-guard was summoned to Conchobar, Findchad Ferbenduma ('he of the copper Horn') to wit, son of Fraech Lethan ('the Broad'), and Conchobar bade him go assemble and muster the men of Ulster. And in like manner, in the drunkenness of sleep and of his 'Pains,' Conchobar enumerated to him their quick and their dead, and he uttered these words:—

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“Arise, O Findchad! [1]Thee I send forth:[1] A negligence not to be wished (?); Proclaim it to the chiefs of Ulster!”

[1-1] Reading with YBL. 44a, 41.

[2]The Order of the men of Ulster.[2]

[2-2] Stowe and YBL. 44a, 41.

[3]Go thou forward to Derg,[3] to Deda at his bay, to Lemain, to Follach, to Illann [4]son of Fergus[4] at Gabar, to Dornail Feic at Imchlar, to Derg Imdirg, to Fedilmid [5]son of Ilar Cetach of Cualnge[5] at Ellonn, to Reochad [6]son of Fathemon[6] at Rigdonn, to Lug, to Lugaid, to Cathba at his bay, to Carfre at Ellne, to Laeg at his causeway, to Gemen in his valley, to Senoll Uathach at Diabul Ard, [LL.fo.94b.] to Cethern son of Fintan at Carrloig, [7]to Cethern at Eillne,[7] to Tarothor, to Mulach at his fort, to the royal poet Amargin, to Uathach Bodba, to the Morrigan at Dun Sobairche, to Eit, to Roth, to Fiachna at his mound, to Dam drend, to Andiaraid, to Mane Macbriathrach ('the Eloquent'), to Dam Derg ('the Red'), to Mod, to Mothus, to Iarmothus at Corp Cliath, to Gabarlaig in Line, to Eochu Semnech in Semne, [8]to Eochaid Laithrech at Latharne,[8] to Celtchar son of Uthecar in Lethglas, to Errge Echbel ('Horsemouth') at Bri Errgi ('Errge's Hill'), to Uma son of Remarfessach ('Thickbeard') at Fedain [W.4819.] in Cualnge, to Munremur ('Thickneck') son of Gerrcend ('Shorthead') at Moduirn, to Senlabair at Canann Gall ('of the Foreigners'), to Fallomain, to Lugaid, [1]king of the Fir Bolg,[1] to Lugaid of Line, to Buadgalach ('the Victorious Hero'), to Abach, [2]to Fergna at Barrene,[2] to Ane, to Aniach, [3]to Abra,[3] to Loegaire Milbel ('Honey-mouth'), at his fire (?), to the three sons of Trosgal at Bacc Draigin ('Thornhollow'), to Drend, to Drenda, to Drendus, to Cimb, to Cimbil, to Cimbin at Fan na Coba ('the Slope of ...), to Fachtna son of Sencha at his rath, to Sencha, to Senchainte, to Bricriu, to Briccirne son of Bricriu, to Brecc, to Buan, to Barach, to Oengus of the Fir Bolg, to Oengus son of Lete, [4]to Fergus son of Lete,[4] to ...[a] (?), to Bruachar, to Slange, to Conall Cernach ('the Victorious') son of Amargin at Midluachar, to Cuchulain son of Sualtaim at Murthemne, to Menn son of Salcholga at Rena ('the Waterways'), to the three sons of Fiachna, Ross, Dare and Imchad at Cualnge, to Connud macMorna at the Callann, to Condra son of Amargin at his rath, to Amargin at Ess Ruaid, to Laeg at Leire, to Oengus Ferbenduma ('him of the copper Horn'), to Ogma Grianaineach ('Sun-faced') at Brecc, to Eo macForne, to Tollcend, to Sude at Mag Eol in Mag Dea, to Conla Saeb at Uarba, to Loegaire [5]Buadach ('the Triumphant')[5] at Immail, to Amargin Iarngiunnach ('the Darkhaired') at Taltiu, [LL.fo.94c.] to Furbaide Ferbenn ('the man with Horns on his helmet') son of Conchobar at Sil in Mag Inis ('the Island-plain'), to Cuscraid Menn ('the Stammerer') of Macha son of Conchobar at Macha, to Fingin at Fingabair, to Blae 'the Hospitaller of a score,' to

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Blae 'the Hospitaller of six men,' to Eogan son of Durthacht at Fernmag, to Ord at Mag Sered, to Oblan, to Obail at Culenn, to Curethar, to Liana at Ethbenna, to Fernel, to Finnchad [W.4892.] of Sliab Betha, to Talgoba [1]at Bernas ('the Gap'),[1] to Menn son of the Fir Cualann at Mag Dula, to Iroll at Blarine, [2]to Tobraide son of Ailcoth,[2] to lalla Ilgremma ('of many Captures'), to Ross son of Ulchrothach ('the Many-shaped') at Mag Dobra, to Ailill Finn ('the Fair'), to Fethen Bec ('the Little'), to Fethan Mor ('the Big'), to Fergus son of Finnchoem ('the Fair-comely') at Burach, to Olchar, to Ebadchar, to Uathchar, to Etatchar, to Oengus son of Oenlam Gabe ('the one-handed Smith'), to Ruadri at Mag Tail, [3]to Mane son of Crom ('the Bent'), to Nindech son of Cronn, to ... (?), to Mal macRochraidí,[3] to Beothach ('the Lively'), to Briathrach ('the Wordy') at his rath, to Narithla at Lothor, to the two sons of Feic, Muridach and Cotreb, to Fintan son of Niamglonnach ('of brilliant Exploits') at Dun da Benn ('the two-gabled Dun'), to Feradach Finn Fechnach ('the Fair and Upright') at Nemed ('the Shrine') of Sliab Fuait, [LL.fo.95a.] to Amargin son of Ecetsalach ('the grimy Smith') at the Buas, to Bunne son of Munremar, to Fidach son of Dorare, [4]to Muirne Menn ('the Stammerer').[4]

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] YBL. 44a, 46.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] YBL. 44a, 45.

[7-7] YBL. 44b, 7-8.

[8-8] YBL. 44b, 28-29, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[1-1] H. 1. 13 and YBL. 44b, 36.

[2-2] YBL. 44b, 40-41.

[3-3] YBL. 44b, 44.

[4-4] Stowe and YBL. 44b, 14.

[a] The readings are corrupt.

[5-5] YBL. 44b, 44.

[1-1] Reading with YBL. 45a, 14; LL. is corrupt.

[2-2] YBL. 45a, 3.

[3-3] YBL. 45a, 7.

[4-4] YBL. 45a, 14.

It was nowise a heavy task for Finnchad to gather this assembly and muster which Conchobar had enjoined upon him. For all there were [5]of Ulstermen[5] to the east of Emain and to the west of Emain and to the north of Emain set out at once for the field of Emain in the service of their king, and at the word of their lord, and to await the recovery of Conchobar. Such as were from the south of Emain [6]waited not for Conchobar, but[6] set out directly on the trail of the host and on the hoof-prints of the Tain.

[5-5] Stowe.

The first stage the men of Ulster marched under Conchobar was [7]from Emain[7] to the green in Iraid Cuillinn [W.4932.] that night. "Why now delay we, ye men?" Conchobar asked. "We await thy sons," they answered; "Fiacha and Fiachna who have gone [1]with a division[1] from us [2]to Tara[2] to fetch Erc son of thy daughter Fedlimid Nocruthach ('Nine-shaped'), son also of Carbre Niafer [3]king of Tara,[3] to the end that he should come with the number of his muster and his troops, his levy and his forces to our host at this time. [4]Until these two divisions come to us, no further advance will we make from this place." [4] "By my word," exclaimed Conchobar; "I will delay here no longer for them, lest the men of Erin hear of my rising from the weakness and 'Pains' wherein I was. For the men of Erin know not even if I am still alive!"

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[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] Stowe and YBL. 45a, 24.

[1-1] YBL. 45a, 26.

[2-2] YBL. 45a, 27.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] YBL. 45a, 29.

Thereupon Conchobar and Celtchar proceeded with thirty hundred spear-bristling chariot-fighters to Ath Irmidi ('the Ford of Spear-points'). And there met them there eight-score huge men of the body-guard of Ailill and Medb, with eight-score women [5]of the Ulstermen's women[5] as their spoils. Thus was their portion of the plunder of Ulster: A woman-captive in the hand of each man of them. Conchobar and Celtchar struck off their eight-score heads and released their eight-score captive-women. Ath Irmidi ('the Ford of Spear-points') was the name of the place till that time; Ath Fene is its name ever since. It is for this it is called Ath Fene, because the warriors of the Fene from the east and the warriors of the Fene from the west encountered one another in battle and contest man for man on the brink of the ford.

[6]Touching the four grand provinces of Erin, they encamped at Slemain Mide ('Slane of Meath') that night, and[6] Conchobar and Celtchar returned that night to the green in Iraid Cuillinn hard by the men of Ulster. Thereupon Celtchar aroused the men of Ulster.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

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XXIVa

[1]THE AGITATION OF CELTCHAR[1]

[W.4954.] It was then that Celtchar [2]in his sleep[2] uttered these words [3]to Conchobar[3] in the midst of the men of Ulster in Iraid Cuillinn that night:[a]—

"Thirty hundred chariot-men;
An hundred horse-companions stout;
An hundred with an hundred druids!



To lead us will not fail
The hero of the land,
Conchobar with hosts around him!
Let the battle line be formed!
Gather now, ye warriors!
Battle shall be fought
At Garech and Ilgarech
On aftermorrow's morn!"

[1-1] This title is supplied by the present writer.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] YBL. 45a, 38.

[a] I can make nothing of the first four lines of the following poem, and they are consequently omitted from the translation. The translation of the remainder of the *rosc* is largely conjectural.

[4]Or it was Cuscraid Menn ('the Stammerer') of Macha, Conchobar's son, who sang this lay on the night before the battle ..., [b] after the lay 'Arise ye Kings of Macha' which Loegaire Buadach ('the Victorious ') sang.[4]

[4-4] YBL. 45a, 45-45b, 2.

[b] There is a small gap in the MS.

On that same night Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, spake these words to the men of Erin at Slemain Mide that night:—

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[W.4973.] "A wonder of a morning, A wondrous [1]time![1] When hosts will be confused,
[2]Kings[2] turned back in flight! [3]Necks will be broken, The sand[a] made red,[3]
When forth breaks the battle, The seven chieftains before, Of Ulster's host round
Conchobar! Their women will they defend, For their herds will they fight At Garech and
Ilgarech, On the morning after the morrow! [4]Heroes will be slaughtered then, Hounds
cut to pieces, Steeds overwhelmed!"[4]

[1-1] YBL. 45b, 7.

[2-2] Reading with YBL. 45b, 8; LL. has 'hosts'.

[3-3] YBL. 45b, 8-9.

[a] Or, 'the sun.'

[4-4] YBL. 45b, 11-14.

On that same night, Dubthach Doel ('the Scorpion')[b] of Ulster [5]saw the dream
wherein were the hosts at Garech and Ilgarech. Then it was[5] he uttered these words
[6]in his sleep[6] among the men of Erin at Slemain Mide that night:—

"Great be the morn,
The morn of Meath!
Great be the truce
The [7]truce[7] of Culenn!

"Great be the fight,
The fight of [8]Clartha![8]
Great, too, the steeds,
The steeds of Assal!

"Great be the plague,
The plague of Tuath-Bressi![c]
Great be the storm,
Ulster's battle-storm round Conchobar!

"Their women will they defend,
For their herds will they fight
At Garech and Ilgarech,
On the morning after the morrow!"

[5-5] YBL. 45b, 4-5.

[6-6] YBL. 45b, 5-6.

[7-7] YBL. 45b, 19.

[8-8] Reading with Stowe.

[b] See note, page 198.

[c] Probably Connacht.

[W.5003.] Then [1]when the hosts were assembled at Garech and Ilgarech,[1] Dubthach was awakened from his sleep, so that Nemain brought confusion on the host and they fell trembling in their arms under the points of their spears and weapons, so that an hundred warriors of them fell dead [LL.fo.95b.] in the midst of their camp and quarters at the fearfulness of the shout they raised on high. Be that as it would, that night was not the calmest for the men of Erin that they passed before or since, because of the forebodings and predictions and because of the spectres and visions that were revealed to them.

[1-1] YBL. 45b, 4-5.

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XXV

[1]HERE FOLLOWETH THE ARRAY OF THE HOST[1]

[2]While these things were being done, the Connachtmen by the counsel of Ailill, Medb, and Fergus, resolved to send messengers from thence to spy out the men of Ulster, to make certain if they had taken possession of the plain.[2] [W.5011.] Said Ailill: "Truly have I succeeded," said he, "in laying waste Ulster and the land of the Picts [3]and Cualnge[3] from Monday at Summer's end till Spring's

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beginning. We have taken their women and their sons and their children, their steeds and their troops of horses, their herds and their flocks and their droves. We have laid level their hills after them, so that they have become lowlands and are all one height. For this cause, will I await them no longer here, but let them offer me battle on Mag Ai, if so it please them. But, say here what we will, some one shall go forth [4]from us[4] to watch the great, wide plain of Meath, to know if the men of Ulster come hither. And, should the men of Ulster come hither, I will in no wise be the first to retreat [5]till battle be given them,[5] for it was never the wont of a good king to retreat."

[1-1] YBL. 45b, 22.

[2-2] YBL. 45b, 23-26.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

"Who should fitly go thither?" asked all. "Who but macRoth our chief runner yonder," [6]answered another group of them.[6]

[6-6] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[W.5023.] MacRoth went his way to survey the great wide-spreading plain of Meath. Not long was macRoth there when he heard something: A rush and a crash and a clatter and a clash. Not slight the thing he judged it to be, but as though it was the firmament itself that fell on the man-like face of the world, or as though it was the furrowed, blue-bordered ocean that broke o'er the tufted brow of the earth, or as though the ground had gone asunder in quakes, or as though the forest fell, each of the trees in the crotches and forks and branches of the other. But why give further accounts! The wood's wild beasts were hunted out on the plain, so that beneath them the grassy forelocks of the plain of Meath were not to be seen.

MacRoth hastened to tell this tale at the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Erin. MacRoth related the whole matter to them.

"What was that there, O Fergus?" asked Ailill; [1]"to what likenest thou it?"[1] "Not hard [2]for me to say what it resembled.[2] It was the rush and tramp and clatter that he heard," said Fergus, "the din and thunder, the tumult and turmoil [3]of the Ulstermen.[3] It was the men of Ulster [4]arising from their 'Pains,'[4] who have come into the woods, the throng of champions and battle-heroes cutting down with their swords the woods in

the way of their chariots. This it was that hath put the wild animals to flight on the plain, so that the grassy forelocks of the field of Meath are hidden beneath them!"

[1-1] YBL. 46a, 2.

[2-2] YBL. 46a, 1-2.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] YBL. 46a, 3-4.

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Another time macRoth surveyed the plain and he saw something: A heavy, grey mist that filled [5]the glens and the slopes,[5] [6]the upper void and veil,[6] the space between the heavens and earth. It seemed to him that [7]the hills[7] were islands in lakes that he saw rising up out of the sloping [W.5044.] valleys of mist. It seemed to him they were wide-yawning caverns that he saw there leading into that mist. It seemed to him it was all-white, flaxy sheets of linen, or sifted snow a-falling that he saw there through a rift in the mist. It seemed to him it was a flight of many, varied, wonderful, numerous birds [1]that he[a] saw in the same mist,[1] or the constant sparkling of shining stars [LL.fo.96a.] on a bright, clear night of hoar-frost, or sparks of red-flaming fire. He heard something: A rush and a din and a hurtling sound, a noise and a thunder, a tumult and a turmoil, [2]and a great wind that all but took the hair from his[b] head and threw him[c] on his[b] back, and yet the wind of the day was not great.[2] He hastened on to impart these tidings at the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Erin. He reported the matter to them.

[5-5] YBL. 45b, 40-41.

[6-6] Stowe.

[7-7] YBL. 45b, 41.

[a] MS.: 'I.'

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] YBL. 45b, 46-46a, 1.

[b] MS. 'my.'

[c] MS. 'me.'

"But what was that, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Not hard to say," Fergus made answer. "This was the great, grey mist that he saw which filled the space between the heavens and earth, namely, the streaming breath both of horses and men, the smoke of the earth and the dust of the roads as it rose over them with the driving of the wind, so that it made a heavy, deep-grey misty vapour thereof in the clouds and the air.

"These were the islands over lakes that he saw there, and the tops of hills and of heights over the sloping valleys of mist, even the heads of the champions and battle-heroes over the chariots and the chariots withal. These were the wide-yawning caverns that he saw there leading into that mist, even the mouths and the nostrils of the horses and champions exhaling and inhaling the sun and the wind with the speed of the host. These were the all-white, flax-like cloths that he saw there or the streaming [W.5066.] snow a-falling, to wit the foam and the froth that the bridles of the reins flung from the

bits of strong, stout steeds with the stress, [1]with the swiftness and strength and speed[1] of the host.

[1-1] H. 1. 13.

“These were the flights of many, various, wonderful, numerous birds that he saw there, even the dust of the ground and the top of the earth [2]and the sods[2] which the horses flung from their feet and their hoofs and arose [3]over the heads of the host[3] with the driving of the wind.

[2-2] Stowe.

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[3-3] Stowe.

“This was the rush and the crash and the hurtling sound, the din and the thunder, the clatter and clash that he heard there, to wit the shield-shock of shields and the jangle of javelins and the hard-smiting of swords and the ring of helmets, the clangour of breast-plates and the rattle of arms and the fury of feats, the straining of ropes and the whirr of wheels and the trampling of horses’ hoofs and the creaking of chariots, and the deep voices of heroes and battle-warriors coming hither towards us.

“This was the constant sparkling of shining stars on a bright, clear night that he saw there and the sparks of red-flaming fire, even the bloodthirsty, terrible eyes of the champions and battle-warriors from under beautiful, well-shaped, finely-adorned battle-helmets; eyes full of the fury and rage they brought with them, against the which neither before nor since has equal combat nor overwhelming force of battle prevailed, and against which it will never prevail till the very day of doom and of life!”

“We make not much of that,” quoth Medb;[a] [4]“we will await them.[4] [5]For[5] there are goodly warriors and goodly fighting-men with us to cope with them.” [6]“Thou shall have need of them,” answered Fergus.[6] “Truly, I count not on that, O Medb. For I give my word, thou [W.5087.] shalt find no host in [1]all[1] Erin, nor in Alba, [2]nor in the western part of the world from Greece and Scythia westwards to the Orkney Islands, the Pillars of Hercules, Bregon’s Tower and the islands of Cadiz[2] to cope with the men of Ulster when once their anger comes on them!”

[a] ‘Ailill,’ YBL. 46a, 23.

[4-4] YBL. 46a, 22.

[5-5] Stowe.

[6-6] YBL. 46a, 23.

[1-1] YBL. 46a, 24.

[2-2] YBL. 45a, 25-28.

Then did the four grand provinces of Erin pitch camp and make lodgment at Clartha for that night. They sent forth folk to keep watch and guard against Ulster, to the end that the Ulstermen might not come upon them without warning, without notice.

Then it was that Conchobar and Celtchar with thirty hundred bristling chariot-fighters set forth, till they halted at Slemain Mide (‘Slane of Meath’) [LL.fo.96b.] in the rear of the host of Erin. But, though ‘halted’ we have said, [3]a very brief halt made they there.[3] Not straightway pitched they camp, but proceeded for a favourable sign to the quarters

of Ailill and Medb, so they might be the first of all to redden their hands [4]on the men of Erin.[4]

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

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[5]Then did macRoth go again to view the hosting of the men of Ulster, so that he reached their encampment at Slane of Meath.[5] It was not long macRoth had been there when he saw something: An incomparable, immense troop of horsemen in Slane of Meath coming straight from the north-east. He hastened forward to where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the chiefs of the men of Erin. Ailill asked tidings of him on his arrival: "Say, macRoth," queried Ailill; "sawest thou aught of the men of Ulster on the trail of the host this day?" "Truly I know not," answered macRoth; "but I saw an incomparable, immense troop of horsemen in Slane of Meath coming straight from the north-east." "But how many numbered the horse-troop?" asked Ailill. "Not fewer, meseemed, [W.5107.] than thirty hundred fully armed chariot-fighters were they, even ten hundred and twenty hundred fully armed chariot-fighters," macRoth made answer.

[5-5] YBL. 46a, 28-31.

"So, O Fergus," quoth Ailill, [1]"those are the warriors of Ulster with Conchobar![1] How thinkest thou to terrify us till now with the smoke and dust and the breath of a mighty host, while all the battle-force thou hast is that we see yonder!"

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

"A little too soon belittlest thou them," Fergus retorted; "for mayhap the bands are more numerous than is said they are."

"Let us take good, swift counsel on the matter," said Medb; "for yon huge, most fierce, most furious man will attack us we ween, Conchobar, to wit, son of Fachtna Fathach ('the Giant') son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') son of Rudraige, himself High King of Ulster and son of the High King of Erin. Let there be a hollow array of the men of Erin before Conchobar and a force of thirty hundred ready to close in from behind, and the men shall be taken and in no wise wounded; for, no more than is a caitiff's lot is this whereto they are come!" Wherefore this is the third most derisive word that was spoken on the Cattle-lifting of Cualnge, even to take Conchobar [2]and his people[2] prisoners without wounding, and to inflict a caitiff's lot on the ten hundred and twenty hundred who accompanied the kings of Ulster.

[2-2] Stowe.

And Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar heard that, and he knew that unless he took vengeance at once upon Medb for her great boast, he would not avenge it till the very day of doom and of life.

It was then that Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar arose with his troop of thirty hundred to inflict the revenge of battle and prowess upon Ailill and Medb. Ailill arose [W.5129.] with his thirty hundred to meet him. Medb arose with her thirty hundred. The Mane arose with their thirty hundred. The sons of Maga arose with their thirty hundred.

The Leinstermen and the Munstermen and the people of Temair arose and made interposition between them, so that on both sides each warrior sat down near to the other and near by his arms.

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Meanwhile a hollow array of men was made by Medb to face Conchobar and a [1]warlike[1] band of thirty hundred ready to close in from behind. Conchobar proceeded to attack the circle of men, [2]to force an opening.[2] And he was far from seeking any particular breach, but he worked a small gap, broad enough for a man-at-arms, right in front over against him in the circle of combatants, and effected a breach of an hundred on his right side, and a breach of an hundred on his left, and he turned in on them, and mingled [3]among them[3] on their ground, and there fell of them eight hundred fully brave warriors at his hands. And thereafter he left them without blood or bleeding from himself and took his station in Slane of Meath at the head of the men of Ulster.

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] Reading with Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

"Come, ye men of Erin!" cried Ailill. "Let some one go hence to scan the wide-stretching plain of Meath, to know in what guise the men of Ulster come to the height in Slane of Meath, to bring us an account of their arms and their gear [4]and their trappings, their kings and their royal leaders,[4] their champions and battle-warriors and gap-breakers of hundreds and their yeomen, [5]to which to listen will shorten the time for us." [5] [LL.fo.97a.] "Who should go thither?" asked all. "Who but macRoth the chief runner," Aililla[a] made answer.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[5-5] Following Stowe.

[a] 'Fergus,' H. 1. 13 and Stowe.

MacRoth went his way till he took his station in Slane [W.5151.] of Meath, awaiting the men of Ulster. The Ulstermen were busied in marching to that hill from gloaming of early morn till sunset hour in the evening. In such manner the earth was never left naked under them during all that time, every division of them under its king, and every band under its leader, and every king and every leader and every lord with the number of his force and his muster, his gathering and his levy apart. Howbeit, by sunset hour in the evening all the men of Ulster had taken position on that height in Slane of Meath.

MacRoth came forward with the account of their first company to the place where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were and the nobles of the men of Erin. Ailill and Medb asked tidings of him when he arrived. "Come, macRoth," quoth Ailill, "tell us in what manner of array do the Ulstermen advance to the hill of Slane in Meath?" "Truly, I know not," answered macRoth, "except [1]this alone:[1] There came a fiery, powerful, most well-



favoured company upon the hill of Slane in Meath," said macRoth. "It seemed, on scanning and spying, that[a] thrice thirty hundred[a] warriors were in it. [2]Anon[2] they all doffed their garments and threw up a turfy mound for their leader to sit on. A youth, slender, long, exceeding great of stature, fair to behold, proud of mien, in the van

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of the troop. Fairest of the princes of the world was he in the midst of his warriors, as well in fearsomeness and in awe, in courage and command; fair-yellow hair, curled, delicately arranged in ridges and bushy had he [3]reaching to the nape of his neck;[3] a comely, clear-rosy countenance he had, [4]narrow below and broad above;[4] a deep-blue-grey, angry eye, devouring. [W.5175.] and fear-inspiring, in his head; a two-forked beard, yellow, fairly curled, on his chin; a purple mantle with fringes and five-folded wrapped around him; a [1]conspicuous,[1] salmon-shaped brooch of [2]red[2] gold in the mantle over his breast; a shining-white, hooded shirt under red interweaving of red gold he wore next his white skin; a bright-white shield with figures of beasts of red gold thereon; a gold-hilted, hammered sword in one of his hands; a broad and grey-green lance-head [3]on an ashen shaft[3] in the other; [4]the pillar of a king's house on his back.[4] That warrior took his station on the top of the mound, so that each one came up to him and his company took their places around him.

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[a-a] 'Thirty hundred,' Stowe, H. 1. 13, and YBL. 46a, 47.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13, and, similarly, YBL. 46a, 42.

[4-4] YBL. 46a, 47.

[1-1] YBL. 46a, 44.

[2-2] YBL. 46a, 44.

[3-3] YBL. 46b, 3.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13. That is, 'a great spear.'

"There came also another company to the same height in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Second of the two divisions of thirty hundred it was, [5]and next to the other in numbers and attendance, in accoutrements and fearfulness and horror.[5] A [6]great, [6] [7]hero-like,[7] well-favoured warrior was there likewise at the head of that company; fair-yellow hair he wore; a bright, curly beard about his chin; a green mantle wrapped around him; a bright-silvern pin in the mantle at his breast; a brown-red, soldier's tunic under red interweaving of red gold trussed up against his fair skin down to his knees; a candle of a king's house[a] in his hand, with windings of silver and bands of gold; wonderful the feats and games performed with the spear in the hand of the youth; the windings of silver ran round it by the side of the bands of gold, now from the butt to the socket, while at other times it was the bands of gold that circled by the side of the

windings of silver from socket to spear-end; a smiting shield with [W.5195.] plaited edge he bore; a sword with hilt-pieces of ivory, and ornamented with thread of gold on his left side. This warrior took his station on the left of the leader[1] of the first company[1] who had come to the mound, and his followers got them seated around him. But, though we have said they sat, they did not verily seat themselves at once, but [2]they sat thus,[2] with their knees on the ground and the rims of their shields against their chins, so long it seemed to them till they should be let at us. But, one thing yet: Meseemed that [LL.fo.97b.] the great, fierce youth who led the troop stammered grievously [3]in his speech.[3]

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[5-5] YBL. 46b, 8-9.

[6-6] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[7-7] YBL. 46b, 9.

[a] That is, 'a flaming-red spear.'

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] YBL. 46b, 19.

[3-3] YBL. 46b, 21.

"Still another battalion there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Second to its fellow in number and followers and apparel. A handsome, broad-headed warrior at the head of that troop; dark-yellow hair in tresses he wore; an eager, dark-blue eye rolling restlessly in his head; a bright, curled beard, forked and tapering, at his chin; a dark-grey cloak with fringes, folded around him; a leaf-shaped brooch of silvered bronze in the mantle over his breast; a white-hooded shirt [4]reaching to his knees[4] [5]was girded[5] next to his skin; a bright shield with raised devices of beasts thereon he bore; a sword with white silver hilt in battle-scabbard at his waist; the pillar of a king's palace he bore on his back. This warrior took his station on the hill of turf facing the warrior who first came to the hill, and his company took their places around him. But sweet as the tone of lutes in masters' hands when long sustained, so seemed to me the melodious sound of the voice and the speech of the youth conversing with the warrior who first came to the hill and offering him every counsel."

[4-4] YBL. 46b, 30.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

"But who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. [W.5218.] "Truly, we know him well," Fergus made answer. "This, to wit, is the first hero for whom they threw up the mound of turf on the height of the hill and whom all approached, namely, Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige, High King of Ulster, and son of the High King of Erin. [1]It is he that sat on the mound of sods.[1] This, to wit, is the stammering, great warrior," [2]Fergus continued,[2] "who took station on [3]his father[3] Conchobar's left, namely, Cuscraid Menn ('the Stammerer') of Macha, Conchobar's son, with the sons of the king of Ulster [4]and the sons of the princes of the men of Erin[4] close by him. This is the spear he saw in his hand, even the 'Torch of Cuscraid,' with its windings of silver and bands of gold. It is the wont of that spear that neither before nor after do the silver windings run round it by the side of the bands of gold but only on the eve of a triumph. Belike, it is almost before a triumph they course round it now.

[1-1] YBL. 46b, 36.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 46b, 40.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

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"The well-favoured, broad-headed warrior who seated himself on the hill in the presence of the youth who first came on the mound, namely is Sencha son of Ailill son of Maelcho 'the Eloquent' of Ulster, he that is wont to appease the hosts of the men of Erin. But, yet a word more I say: It is not the counsel of cowardice nor of fear that he gives his lord this day on the day of strife, but counsel to act with valour and courage and wisdom and cunning. But, again one word further I say," added Fergus: "It is a goodly people for performing great deeds that has risen there early this day around Conchobar!" "We make not much of them," quoth Medb; "we have goodly warriors and stout youths to deal with them." "I count not that for much," answered Fergus again; "but I say this word: Thou wilt not find in Erin nor in Alba a host to be a match [W.5242.] for the men of Ulster when once their anger comes upon them."

"Yet another company there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. [1]"Not fewer than a battalion of thirty hundred was in it.[1] A fair, tall, great warrior [LL.fo.98a.] in the van of that battalion, and he of fiery spirit, with noble countenance. Brown, dark-coloured hair he wore, smooth and thin on his forehead; a dull-grey cloak girt around him; a silver pin in the cloak over his breast; a bright, sleeved tunic next to his skin; a curved shield with sharp, plaited rim he bore; a five-pronged spear in his hand; a straight sword with ornaments of walrus-tooth in its place." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "In very sooth, we know him," Fergus made answer. "The putting of hands on strife is he; a battle-warrior for combat and destruction on foes is the one who is come there, [2]even[2] Eogan son of Durthacht, [3]king of the stout-handed[3] Fernmag in the north, is the one yonder."

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13, and, similarly, YBL. 47a, 1.

[2-2] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 47a, 12.

[3-3] Reading with Stowe and H. 1. 13; LL. seems to be corrupt here.

"Another battalion there came thither to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "It is surely no false word that boldly they took the hill. Deep the terror, great the fear they brought with them. [4]Terrible the clangour of arms they made as they advanced.[4] Their raiment all thrown back behind them. A great-headed, warlike warrior in the forefront of the company, and he eager for blood, dreadful to look upon; spare, grizzly hair had he; huge, yellow eyes in his head; a yellow, close-napped (?) cloak around him; a pin of yellow gold in the cloak over his breast; a yellow tunic with lace next his skin; [5]a great, smiting sword under his waist;[5] in his hand a nailed, broad-plated, long-shafted spear with a drop [W.5262.] of blood on its edge." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "In truth then, we know him, that warrior," Fergus gave answer. "Neither battle nor battle-field nor combat nor contest shuns he, the one who is come thither. Loegaire Buadach ('the Victorious') son of Connad Buide ('the Yellow') son of Iliach, from Immail in the north, is the one yonder."

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[4-4] YBL. 47a, 18-19.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“Another company there came there too to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. “A thick-necked, burly warrior at the head of that troop; black, bushy hair he had; a scarred, crimsoned face he had; a deep-blue-grey, blazing eye in his head; a spear set with eyes of glass, casting shadows over him; a black shield with a hard rim of silvered bronze upon him; a dun-coloured cloak of curly wool about him; a brooch of pale gold in the cloak over his breast; a three-striped tunic of silk [1]with red embroidery[1] next to his skin; a sword with ivory hilt and with ornamentation of thread of gold over his dress on the outside.” “But, who might that man be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “We know him full well,” Fergus made answer. “He is the putting of hand on strife; a wave of the high sea that drowneth [2]the small streams;[2] he is the man of three shouts; the sea over walls; [3]the venomous destruction of enemies,[3] the man who comes thither. Muremur (‘Thick-neck’) son of Gerrcend (‘Short-head’) from Moduirn in the north is the one yonder.”

[1-1] YBL. 47a, 40.

[2-2] YBL. 47a, 43.

[3-3] YBL. 47a, 44.

“Still another company there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. [4]“Not fewer than thirty hundred, the battle line of the troops.[4] A [5]broad-headed,[5] stout warrior, pleasantly found of limb, in the front of that troop; he is dried and sallow; he is wild and bull-like; a dun, round eye, proud in his head; [W.5283.] yellow, very curly is his hair; a red, round shield with hard-silver rim about it he bore; a [1]trebly riveted,[1] broad-plated, long-shafted spear in his hand; a streaked-grey cloak around him; a salmon-shaped brooch of copper in the cloak over his breast; a hooded kirtle girded around him reaching down to his calves; a straightsword with ornaments of walrus-tooth on his left thigh.” “But who might he be?” [LL.fo.98b.] asked Ailill of Fergus. “I know him indeed,” Fergus made answer. “He is the prop of battle; [2]he is the wild heat of anger; he is the daring of every battle;[2] he is the triumph of every combat; he is the tool that pierces, is the man who comes thither. Connud macMorna, from the Callann in the north, is the man yonder.”

[4-4] YBL. 47b, 12-13.

[5-5] Reading with Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“There came still another company to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. [3]“A company most fair to look upon, most notable both in numbers and in



attendance and apparel.[3] It is indeed no lying word, it is with might and storm they gained the hill, so that [4]with the clash of arms they made at the approach of that company[4] they startled the hosts that had arrived there before them. A man, comely and noble, in advance of that band; most well-favoured to see of the men of the world, whether in shape or form or frame; [5]whether in hair

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or eyes or fearfulness; whether in voice or brightness or knowledge or adornment; whether in rank or wisdom or kindred;^[5] whether in arms or apparel; whether in size or worth or beauty; whether in figure or valour or conduct.” ^[6]“Who might that man be, O Fergus?” asked Ailill.^[6] “Then it is surely no lying word,” Fergus made answer: “A fitting saying is this, ‘No fool ’mongst the naked’^[a] is he who [W.5299.] comes thither. He is the foe of all others; he is a power irresistible; the storm-wave that drowneth, the glitter of ice is that well-favoured man. Fedilmid ^[1]son of^[1] ^[2]Ilar Cetach of Cualnge,^[2] from Ellonn in the north, is he yonder, ^[3]with trophies from other lands after dealing destruction to his enemies.”^[3]

[1-1] YBL. 47b, 20.

[2-2] YBL. 47b, 21-22.

[3-3] YBL. 47a, 48-49.

[4-4] YBL. 47a, 50-51.

[5-5] YBL. 47b, 1-3.

[6-6] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[a] A proverbial saying, the exact force of which we cannot determine. The reading of H. 1. 13 may be translated, ‘No fool on a board (or shield ?),’ that is, a clown or tumbler (?).

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] Reading with Stowe.

[3-3] YBL. 47b, 9-10.

“Still another battalion came thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” macRoth proceeded. ^[4]“It is the array of an army for greatness.^[4] Not often is a warrior seen more handsome than the warrior that is in the front rank of that company. Bushy, red-yellow hair he wore; ^[5]his countenance comely, ruddy, well-formed;^[5] his face ^[6]slender below,^[6] broad above; a deep-blue-grey, beaming eye, and it flashing and laughing in his head; a well-set, shapely man, tall, slender below and broad above; red, thin lips he had; teeth shining and pearl-like; ^[7]a clear, ringing voice;^[7] a white-skinned body; ^[8]most beautiful of the forms of men;^[8] ^[9]a purple cloak wrapped around him;^[9] a brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a ^[10]hooded^[10] tunic of royal silk with a red hem of red gold he wore next to his white skin; a bright, ^[11]curved^[11] shield with ^[12]wonderful,^[12] ^[13]many-coloured^[13] devious figures of beasts in red gold thereon

[14]and with hollows of silver he bore at his left side;[14] a gold-hilted, inlaid sword
[15]hanging from his neck[15] at his left side; a long, grey-edged spear [W.5313.] along
with a cutting bye-spear of attack, with thongs for throwing, with fastenings of silvered
bronze, in his hand.”

[4-4] YBL. 47b, 26.

[5-5] YBL. 47b, 29-30; Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[6-6] Translating from YBL. 47b, 30, Stowe and H. 1. 13; LL. has, 'very
beautiful.'

[7-7] YBL. 47b, 32.

[8-8] YBL. 47b, 34, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[9-9] Reading with Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[10-10] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 47b, 40-41.

[11-11] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 47b, 36.

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[12-12] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[13-13] YBL. 47b, 37.

[14-14] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 47b, 37.

[15-15] YBL. 47b, 40.

“But who might that man be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “We know him full well,” Fergus made answer. “He is half of a battle; he is the dividing[a] of combat; he is the wild rage of a watchhound, the man who is come thither; Rochad son of Fatheman, from Rigdonn in the north, is he yonder. [1]Your son-in-law is he[1]; [2]he wedded your daughter, namely Finnabair,[2] [3]without dower, and he brought neither marriage-gift nor bride-price to her.”[3]

[a] That is, ‘a single-handed warrior,’ translating from YBL. 47b, 43 and Stowe.

[1-1] YBL. 47b. 45.

[2-2] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 47b, 46.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“Another battalion there came to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. “A stalwart, thick-thighed, [4]gross-calved[4] warrior at the head of that company; little but every limb of him as stout as a man. Verily it is no lying word, he is a man down to the ground,” said he. “Brown, bushy hair upon his head; a round-faced, ruddy countenance [5]covered with scars[5] he had; a flashing, proud eye in his head; a splendid, dexterous man was there, in this wise: Accompanied by black-haired, black-eyed youths; with a red, flaming banner; [6]with terror and fearsomeness; with wonderful appearance, both of arms and apparel and raiment and countenance and splendour; with converse of heroes; with champions’ deeds;[6] with wilful rashness, so that they seek to rout overwhelming numbers outside of equal combat, [7]with their wrath upon foes, with raids into hostile lands,[7] with the violence of assault upon them, without having aught assistance from [W.5327.] Conchobar. [1]It is no lying word, stiffly they made their march, that company to Slane of Meath.”[1]

[4-4] YBL. 47b, 48, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[5-5] YBL. 48a, 2, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[6-6] Stowe, and, similarly, YBL. 48a, 4-6, H. 1. 13.

[7-7] YBL. 48a, 8-9, and, similarly, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and, similarly, YBL. 48a, 10-11.

“But, who might he be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Aye then we know him,” Fergus made answer. “A thirst for valour and prowess; a thirst for madness and fury; [2]a man of strength and of courage, of pride and of greatness of heart[2] is he that came thither. The welding of hosts and of arms; the point of battle and of slaughter of the men of the north of Erin, mine own real foster-brother himself, Fergus son of Lete, [3]the king[3] from Line in the north, is the man yonder!”

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] YBL. 48a, 14.

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“Still another [4]great, fierce[4] company came to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” macRoth continued. [5]“A battle-line with strange garments upon them,[5] steadfast, without equal. A [6]comely,[6] handsome, [7]matchless,[7] untiring warrior in the van of this company; [8]the flower of every form, whether as regards hair, or eye, or whiteness; whether of size, or followers or fitness.[8] Next to his skin a blue, narrow-bordered cloth, with strong, woven and twisted hoops of silvered bronze, with becoming, sharp-fashioned buttons of red gold on its slashes and breast-borders; a [9]green[9] mantle, pieced together with the choicest of all colours, [10]folded about him;[10] [11]a brooch of pale gold in the cloak over his breast;[11] five circles of gold, [LL.fo.99a.] that is, his shield, he bore on him; a tough, obdurate, straight-bladed sword for a hero’s handling hung high on his left side. A straight, fluted spear, flaming red [12]and venomous[12] in his hand.” “But, who might that be?” asked [W.5342.] Ailill of Fergus. “Truly, we know him well,” Fergus made answer. [1]“Fiery is the manner of the warlike champion who has so come thither.[1] The choice flower of royal poets is he. He is the rush on the rath; he is the way to the goal; fierce is his valour, the man that came thither; Amargin son of the smith Ecetsalach (‘the Grimy’), the noble poet from the Buas in the north, is he.”

[4-4] YBL. 48a, 16.

[5-5] YBL. 48a, 17.

[6-6] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 48a, 18.

[7-7] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[8-8] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 48a, 19-20.

[9-9] YBL. 48a, 21.

[10-10] YBL. 48a, 21.

[11-11] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and, similarly, YBL. 48a, 22.

[12-12] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[1-1] YBL. 48a, 24-25.

“There came yet another company there to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. “A fair, yellow-haired hero in the front rank of that band. Fair was the man, both in hair and eye and beard and eyebrows and apparel; a rimmed shield he bore; a gold-hilted, overlaid sword on his left side; in his hand, a five-pointed spear that reflected its glare over the entire host, [2]and a hollow lance in his hand. Hero-like was his coming!”[2]

[2-2] YBL. 48b, 1-2.

“But who was that man?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “In sooth, we know him well,” Fergus made answer. “Cherished, in truth, is that warrior by the people, he that to us is come thither; cherished, the stout-blow-dealing beast; cherished, the bear of great deeds against foes, [3]with the violence of his attack.[3] Feradach Finn Fectnach (‘the Fair and Righteous’) from Nemed (‘the Grove’) in Sliab Fuait in the north, is the one that is come there.”

[3-3] Reading with Stowe and H. 1. 13.

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[4]"Another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Three bold, high-spirited youths of noble countenance, [5]fiery and noble,[5] in the front rank of that company. Three cloaks of the one colour [6]they wore folded[6] upon them; [7]three close shorn, blae-yellow heads; three gold brooches over their arms; three sleeved tunics with embroidery of red gold, girded around them;[7] three shields wholly alike they bore; [8]three gold-hilted swords on their shoulders;[8] three five-pointed, [W.5360.] [1]broad and grey-green[1] spears in their [2]right[2] hands." "Who were those men there?" Ailill asked. "I know," Fergus answered; "the three princes of Roth, the three champions of Colph, the three of Midluachair, great in achievements, three seasoned warriors of the east of Erin, to wit, the three sons of Fiachna in quest of their bull are there, even Ros and Dare and Imchad, for theirs was the possession of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. Even had they come alone, they would have offered you battle in defence of their bull and their drove, even though before them the enemy should not be routed."[4]

[4-4] Stowe, and, partly, YBL. 48b, 33-45.

[5-5] YBL. 48b, 34.

[6-6] YBL. 48b, 36.

[7-7] YBL. 48b, 35-38.

[8-8] YBL. 48b, 39.

[1-1] YBL. 48b, 40.

[2-2] YBL. 48b, 40.

"Yet another company there came thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Two [3]fair,[3] tender, young warriors at the head of that company, [5]and both wholly alike. Brown, curly hair on the head of one of them; fair, yellow hair on that of the other;[5] two green cloaks wrapped about them; two bright-silver brooches in the cloaks over their breasts; two tunics of smooth yellow silk next to their skin; bright-hilted swords on their belts; [6]two bright shields with devious figures of beasts in silver;[6] two five-pronged spears with windings of pure bright silver in their hands. Moreover, their years were nigh the same. [7]Together they lifted their feet and set them down again, for it was not their way for either of them to lift up his feet past the other."[7]

[3-3] YBL. 48b, 20.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[6-6] YBL. 48b, 22.

[7-7] YBL. 48b, 23-25.

“But, who might they be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Well do we know them,” Fergus made answer. “Two single, strong-necked champions are they; two united flames; two united torches; two champions; two heroes; two ridge-poles of hosts[a]; two dragons; two thunderbolts; two destroyers (?); two boars; two bold ones; two mad ones; the two loved ones of Ulster around their king; [W.5378.] [1]two breach-makers of hundreds; two spencers; the two darlings of the north of Erin, namely[1] Fiacha and Fiachna have come thither, two sons of Conchobar son of Fachtna son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige.”

[a] That is, ‘two chiefs of hospitality.’

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[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“There came also another company to that same mound,” said macRoth. “’Tis the engulphing of the sea for size; red-flaming fire [2]for splendour;[2] a legion for number; a rock for strength; annihilation for battle; thunder for might. A [3]rough-visaged,[3] wrathful, terrible, ill-favoured one at the head of that band, and he was big-nosed, large-eared, apple-eyed, [4]red-limbed,[4] [5]great-bellied, thick-lipped.[5] Coarse, grizzly hair he wore; a streaked-grey cloak about him; a skewer of iron in the cloak over his breast, so that it reached from one of his shoulders to the other; a rough, three-striped tunic next to his skin; a sword of seven charges of remelted iron he bore on his rump; a brown hillock he bore, namely his shield; a great, grey spear with thirty nails driven through its socket he had in his hand. But, what need to tell further? [6]All the host arose to meet him, and[6] the lines and battalions were thrown into disorder at the sight of that warrior, as he came surrounded by his company to the hill, in Slane of Meath [7]and the stream of battle-hosts with him.”[7] “But who might that man be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Ah, but we know him well,” Fergus made answer. “He is the half of the battle; he is the head of strife [8]of Ulster;[8] he is the head [9]of combat[9] in valour; [10]he is the storm-wave that drowneth;[10] he is the sea overbounds, the man that is come thither; the mighty Celtchar son of Uthechar, from Lethglass in the north, is the man there!”

[2-2] YBL. 48a, 30.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 48a, 33.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and YBL. 48a, 36.

[5-5] YBL. 48a, 35.

[6-6] YBL. 48a, 42.

[7-7] H. 1. 13 and Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] YBL. 48a, 44.

[10-10] YBL. 48a, 45-46.

[W.5397.] “There came yet another company thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” said macRoth; “one that is firm and furious; one that is ugly and fearful. A great-bellied, big-mouthed champion, [1]the size of whose mouth is the mouth of a horse,[1] in the van of that troop; with but one clear eye, and [2]half-brained,[2] long-handed. Brown, very curly hair he wore; a black, flowing mantle around him; a wheel-shaped brooch of tin in the mantle over his breast; a cunningly wrought tunic next to his skin; a great long

sword under his waist; a well-tempered lance in his right hand; [LL.fo.99b.] a grey buckler he bore on him, that is, his shield."

[1-1] YBL. 48b, 9-10.

[2-2] YBL. has, 'broad-headed.'

"Pray, who might that man be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Indeed, but we know him," Fergus made answer; "the wild, red-handed, [3]rending[3] lion; the fierce, fearful bear that overcometh valour. [4]He is the high doer of deeds, warlike, and fierce,[4] Errge Echbel ('Horse-mouth'), from Bri Errgi ('Errge's Mound') in the north, is the one there."

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[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] YBL. 48b, 16.

“Yet another company there came to the same hill in Slane of Meath,” said macRoth. “A large, noble, [5]fiery[5] man at the head of that company; foxy-red hair he had; huge, crimson-red eyes in his head; bulging as far as the bend of a warrior’s finger is either of the very large crimson, kingly eyes he had; a many-coloured cloak about him; [6]a wheel-shaped brooch of silver therein;[6] a grey shield he bore [7]on his left arm;[7] a slender, blue lance above him; [8]a bright, hooded shirt tucked around him that reached down to his knees;[8] [9]a sword with silver hilt at his hip; a spear remarkable for keenness in his revengeful right hand;[9] a blood-smeared, becrimsoned company [W.5414.] around him; himself covered with wounds and blood in their midst.”

[5-5] YBL. 48b, 47.

[6-6] YBL. 48b, 49-50.

[7-7] YBL. 48b, 51.

[8-8] YBL. 48b, 52-49a, 1.

[9-9] YBL. 48b, 51-52.

“Now who might he be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Well do we know him,” Fergus made answer. “He is the bold, the ruthless, [1]the swift-moving eagle;[1] the eager lance; the goring beast; [2]the torrent[2] of the Colbtha; [3]the border-gate of the north of Erin;[3] the triumphant hero from Baile; he is the shaft (?); [a] he is the bellowing hero from Bernas (‘the Gap’); the furious bull; Menn son of Salcholga, from Rena (‘the Waterways’) of the Boyne [4]in the north; he hath come to take vengeance on ye for his bloody wounds and his sores which ye inflicted on him afore.”[4]

[1-1] Translating from Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[3-3] YBL. 49a, 7.

[a] A word has fallen out in the MS.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“Yet another company came thither to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. [5]“High spirited and worthy of one another.[5] A long-jawed, sallow-faced warrior, [6]huge, broad, and tall,[6] at the head of that company; black hair on his head;

long limbs are his legs; a cloak of red curly wool about him; a brooch of white silver in the cloak over his breast; an [7]all-white,[7] linen shirt next to his skin; a gory-red shield with a boss [8]of gold[8] he bore; a sword with hilt of [9]white[9] silver on his left side; a sharp-cornered, gold-socketed spear he held over him; [10]a broad, grey, interwoven spear-head, fairly set on an ashen shaft, in his hand." [10] "But, who might he be?" Ailill asked of Fergus. "Truly, we know him," Fergus made answer. [11]"The man of three stout blows has come;[11] the man of three highways is he; the man of three roads, the man of three paths, the man of three [W.5431.] ways; the man of three victories, the man of three triumphs; [1]the man of three shouts; the man that breaks battles on foes in another province;[1] Fergna son of Findchoem, king of Burach, [2]from Coronn,[2] [3]royal hospitaller[3] of Ulster in the north, has come thither."

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[5-5] YBL. 49a, 11-12.

[6-6] YBL. 49a, 12-13.

[7-7] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[8-8] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[9-9] YBL. 49a, 17.

[10-10] YBL. 49a, 18-20.

[11-11] YBL. 49a, 20-21.

[1-1] YBL. 49a, 23-24.

[2-2] YBL. 49a, 25.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

“Even another company came there to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” continued macRoth. [4]“Vaster than a division of three thousand was its appearance.[4] A large, [5]white-breasted,[5] well-favoured man in the van of that company. Like to Ailill yonder, with his pointed weapons, the restrainer, both in features and noble bearing and fairness, both in arms and apparel, in valour and bravery and fame and deeds. A blue shield [6]adapted for striking,[6] with boss of gold was [7]upon him.[7] A gold-hilted sword, [8]the pillar of a palace,[8] [9]along his shoulder[9] he bore on his left side; a five-pronged spear with gold, in his hand; [10]an exceeding fine cloak folded about him; a brooch of gold in the cloak over his breast; a tunic with red ornaments about him;[10] a golden crown on his head.”

[4-4] YBL. 49a, 28.

[5-5] YBL. 49a, 29.

[6-6] YBL. 49a, 34.

[7-7] YBL. 49a, 35, Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[8-8] YBL. 49a, 35.

[9-9] YBL. 49a, 35.

[10-10] YBL. 49a, 31-34.

“But, who might that be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Ah, but we know him well,” Fergus made answer. [11]“Truly, the sea over rivers is the one that is come thither; the wild rage of fire; not to be borne is his wrath against foes;[11] the root of all manhood; the assault of overwhelming power; the annihilation of men is he that is come thither. Furbaide Ferbenn son of Conchobar, from Sil in Mag Inis in the north, is there.”

[11-11] YBL. 49a, 36-38.

[12]“Yet another company came to the mound in Slane [W.5444.] of Meath,” continued macRoth. “A sharp, proud folk; a stately, royal company, with their apparel of many colours, as well white and blue and black and purple, so that to a king could be likened each spirited, chosen man in the noble, most wonderful troop. A feast for the eyes of a host, to gaze on their comeliness and their garb, as if it was going forth to some great surpassing assembly was each single man of that company. A trine of noble, distinguished men were in the front rank of that company. The first man of them with a dark-grey mantle fringed with gold thread about him; a brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a tunic of rare silk next to his skin; sandals of lamb’s skin he wore. Not many men in the world are better-favoured than is he. A light-yellow head of hair he has; a bright-faced sword with ivory hilt and with coils of gold thread, in his right hand. He flings on high the tooth-hilted sword, so that it falls on the head of the middle man but it simply grazes it.

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He catches it up in the air again, so that it falls on the head of the other man, and the first man catches it in his hand, and it divided not a ringlet nor the skin of the head of either of them, and these two men did not perceive it. Two brown, rich-hued, bright-faced youths; reddish-grey mantles around them; white-silver brooches in their mantles over their breasts; a bright-hilted sword under their waists; purple sandals they wore; as sweet as strings of lutes when long sustained in players' hands was the voice and song of one of the men, so that enough of delight it was to the host to listen to the sound of his voice. Worthy of a king or of a prince was each man in that company as regards apparel and appearance; thou wouldst think, at the sight of them, they were all kings. Neither spears nor swords do they bear, but their servants bear them."

[12-12] The following passage extending to page 337 is not found in LL. owing to the loss of a leaf. It is translated here from Stowe with the help of H. 1. 13 and Add. 18,748.

"An over-proud body is that," quoth Ailill; "and who may they be, O Fergus?" he asked. "I know full well," [W.5466.] replied Fergus; "the poets of Ulster are they, with that Fercerdne the fair, much-gifted, whom thou sawest, even the learned master of Ulster, Fercerdne. 'Tis before him that the lakes and rivers sink when he upbraids, and they swell up high when he applauds. The two others thou sawest are Athirne the chief poet, whom none can deny, and Ailill Miltenga ('Honey-tongue') son of Carba; and he is called Ailill 'Honey-tongue' for that as sweet as honey are the words of wisdom that fall from him."

"There came yet another company to the mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "A most terrible, dreadful sight to behold them. Blue and pied and green, purple, grey and white and black mantles; a kingly, white-grey, broad-eyed hero in the van of that company; wavy, grizzled hair upon him; a blue-purple cloak about him; a leaf-shaped brooch with ornamentation of gold in the cloak over his breast; a shield, stoutly braced with buckles of red copper; yellow sandals he wore; a large, strange-fashioned sword along his shoulder. Two curly-haired, white-faced youths close by him, wearing green cloaks and purple sandals and blue tunics, and with brown shields fitted with hooks, in their hands; white-hilted swords with silvered bronze ornaments they bore; a broad, somewhat light countenance had one of them. One of these cunning men raises his glance to heaven and scans the clouds of the sky and bears their answer to the marvellous troop that is with him. They all lift their eyes on high and watch the clouds and work their spells against the elements, so that the elements fall to warring with each other, till they discharge rain-clouds of fire downwards on the camp and entrenchments of the men of Erin."

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"Who might that be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "I know him," replied Fergus; "the foundation of knowledge; the master of the elements; the heaven-soaring one; he that blindeth the eyes; that depriveth his foe [W.5488.] of his strength through incantations of druids, namely Cathba the friendly druid, with the druids of Ulster about him. And to this end he makes augury when judging the elements, in order to ascertain therefrom how the great battle on Garech and Ilgarech will end. The two youths that are about him, they are his own two sons, to wit Imrinn son of Cathba and Genonn Gruadsolus ('Bright-cheek') son of Cathba, he that has the somewhat light countenance. Howbeit it will be hard for the men of Erin to withstand the spells of the druids."

"Yet another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A numberless, bright-faced band; unwonted garments they wore; a little bag at the waist of each man of them. A white-haired, bull-faced man in the front of that company; an eager, dragon-like eye in his head; a black, flowing robe with edges of purple around him; a many coloured, leaf-shaped brooch with gems, in the robe over his breast; a ribbed tunic of thread of gold around him; a short sword, keen and hard, with plates of gold, in his hand; they all came to show him their stabs and their sores, their wounds and their ills, and he told each one his sickness, and he gave each a cure, and what at last happened to each was even the ill he foretold him." "He is the power of leechcraft; he is the healing of wounds; he is the thwarting of death; he is the absence of every weakness, is that man," said Fergus, "namely Fingin the prophet mediciner, the physician of Conchobar, with the leeches of Ulster around him. It is he that knoweth the sickness of a man by the smoke of the house wherein he lies, or by hearing his groans. Their medicine bags are the sacks which thou sawest with them."

"Another company came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A powerful, heavy, turbulent company; they caused uproar in their deeds of arms [W.5512.] for the accomplishment of brilliant feats;[a] they tore up the sad-sodded earth with the strength of their bitter rage, for the mighty princes of the proud province of Conchobar would not allow them to proceed to the great camp till all should be arrived. Two youths, swarthy and huge, in the front of that company; soft, playful eyes in their heads; about them, dark-grey tunics with silver pins set with stones; great, horn-topped swords with sheaths they bore; strong, stout shields they bore; hollow lances with rows of rivets, in their hands; glossy tunics next to their skin." "We know well that company," quoth Fergus; "the household of Conchobar and his vassals are those; their two leaders, Glasne and Menn, two sons of Uthechar."

[a] There is a gap here in both Stowe and H. 1. 13, and consequently the translation is uncertain.

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"There came yet another band to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth; "to wit, a band of a numerous body of henchmen. A black, hasty, swarthy, ..., man in the front rank of that band; seven chains around his neck; seven men at the end of each chain; these seven groups of men he drags along, so that their faces strike against the ground, and they revile him until he desists. Another terrible man is there, and the ponderous stone which powerful men could not raise, he sets on his palm and flings on high to the height a lark flies on a day of fine weather; a club of iron at his belt." "I know those men," quoth Fergus: "Triscoth the strong man of Conchobar's house; it is he that flings the stone on high. Ercenn son of the three stewards, he it is in the chains."

"There came [1]another[1] large, stately company to the mound in Slane of Meath," macRoth went on. "Three, very curly-headed, white-faced youths in the van of that troop; three curly-red kirtles with brooches of silvered bronze was the apparel they wore about them; three [W.5535.] sparkling tunics of silk with golden seams tucked up about them; three studded shields with images of beasts for emblems in silvered bronze upon them and with bosses of red gold; three very keen swords with guards adorned with gold thread along their shoulders; broad-bladed javelin-heads on ashen shafts in their hands." "Who might that be there, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "That I know," answered Fergus: "the three venoms of serpents; three cutting ones; three edges; three watchful ones; three points of combat; three pillars of the borders; three powerful companies of Ulster; three wardens of Erin; three triumph-singers of a mighty host are there," said Fergus, "the three sons of Conchobar, namely Glas and Mane and Conaing."

[1-1] H. 1. 13.

"Yet another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Stately, in beautiful colours, gleaming-bright they came to the mound. Not fewer than an army-division, as a glance might judge them. A bold, fair-cheeked youth in the van of that troop; light-yellow hair has he; though a bag of red-shelled nuts were spilled on his crown, not a nut of them would fall to the ground because of the twisted, curly locks of his head. Bluish-grey as harebell is one of his eyes; as black as beetle's back is the other; the one brow black, the other white; a forked, light-yellow beard has he; a magnificent red-brown mantle about him; a round brooch adorned with gems of precious stones fastening it in his mantle over his right shoulder; a striped tunic of silk with a golden hem next to his skin; an ever-bright shield he bore; a hard-smiting, threatening spear he held over him; a very keen sword with hilt-piece of red gold on his thigh." "Who might that be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "I know, then," replied Fergus: "it is battle against foes; it is the inciting of strife; it is the rage of a monster; it is the madness of a lion; it is the cunning of a snake; it is the rock of the [W.5558.] Badb; it is the sea over dikes; it is the shaking of rocks; it is the stirring of a wild host, namely Conall Cernach ('the Victorious'), the high-glorious son of Amargin, that is come hither." [12]

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[12-12] See note 12, page 331.

“Yet another company came to the same mound in Slane of Meath,” said macRoth. [1]“Very heroic and without number it is; [1] steady and dissimilar to the other companies. [2]Strange garments, unlike the other companies they wore. Famously have they come, both in arms and raiment and dress. A great host and fierce is that company.[2] Some wore red cloaks, others light-blue cloaks, [LL.fo.100a.] others dark blue cloaks, others green cloaks; white and yellow jerkins, beautiful and shiny, were over them. Behold the little, freckled, red-faced lad with purple, [3]fringed[3] mantle [4]folded about him[4] amongst them in their midst. [5]Fairest of the forms of men was his form.[5] A salmon-shaped brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a [6]bright, hooded[6] tunic of royal silk with red trimming of red gold next to his white skin; a bright shield with intricate figures of beasts in red gold upon it; a boss of gold on the shield; an edge of gold around it; a small, gold-hilted sword at his waist; a sharp, light lance cast its shadow over him.” “But, who might he be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Truly, I know not,” Fergus made answer, “that I left behind me in Ulster the like of that company nor of the little lad that is in it. But, one thing I think likely, that they are the men of Temair with [7]the well-favoured, wonderful, noble youth[7] Erc son of Fedilmid Nocruthach, [8]Conchobar’s daughter,[8] and of Carbre Niafer. And if it be they, they are not more friends than their leaders here. Mayhap despite his father [W.5576.] has this lad come to succour his grandfather[a] at this time. And if these they be, a sea that drowneth shall this company be to ye, because it is through this company and the little lad that is in it that the battle shall this time be won against ye.” “How through him?” asked Ailill. “Not hard to tell,” Fergus responded: “for this little lad will know neither fear nor dread when slaying and slaughtering, until at length he comes into the midst of your battalion. Then shall be heard the whirr of Conchobar’s sword like the yelp of a howling war-hound, or like a lion rushing among bears, [1]while the boy will be saved.[1] Then outside around the battle lines will Conchobar pile up huge walls of men’s bodies [2]while he seeks the little lad.[2] In turn the princes of the men of Ulster, filled with love and devotion, will hew the enemy to pieces. Boldly will those powerful bulls, [3]the brave warriors of Ulster,[3] bellow as [4]their grandson,[4] the calf of their [5]cow,[5] is rescued in the battle on the morn of the morrow.”

[1-1] YBL. 49a, 41.

[2-2] YBL. 49a, 42-44.

[3-3] YBL. 49a, 50.

[4-4] YBL. 49a, 50.

[5-5] YBL. 49a, 46-47.

[6-6] YBL. 49a, 52.

[7-7] YBL. 49b, 4-5.

[8-8] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and YBL. 49b, 6.

[a] That is, Conchobar.

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[1-1] YBL. 49b, 17.

[2-2] YBL. 49b, 18.

[3-3] YBL. 49b, 19-20.

[4-4] Stowe; that is, Erc son of Fedlimid, Conchobar's daughter.]

[5-5] 'Of their heart,' YBL. 49b, 13.

[6]"Then came there three huge (?), strong, well-braced, cunningly-built castles; three mighty, wheeled-towers like unto mountains, in this wise placed in position: Three royal castles with their thirty fully armed battalions, swarming with evil-tongued warriors and with thirty round-shielded heroes. A bright, beautiful, glistening shield-guard was on each of the three strong, stout battle-castles, with black, deadly armament of huge, high, blue, sharp pine-lances, such that one's bent knee would fit in the socket of each smooth, polished, even and hard spear-head that is on each huge, terrible, strange shaft of the terrible, awful, heavy, monstrous, indescribable armament [W.5598.] that I saw. A third part of each shaft was contained in the socket of the riveted, very long, securely placed spears; as high as [1]two[1] cubits was each citadel from the ground; as long as a warrior's spear was the height of each battle-hurdle; as sharp as charmed sword was the blade of each sickle on the sides and the flanks of each of [2]Badb's hurdles;[2] on each of the three stout and hard battle-hurdles they are to be found. Four dark, yet gleaming, well-adorned doors were on each battle-wheeled tower of the three royal wheeled-towers which were displayed and spread over the plain, with ivory door-posts, with lintels of cypress, with stately thresholds set of speckled, beautiful, strong pine, with their blue, glass door-leaves, with the glitter of crystal gems around each door-frame, so that its appearance from afar was like that of bright shining stars. As loud as the crash of a mighty wave at the great spring-tide, or of a huge heavy fleet upon the sea when toiling with the oars along the shore, was the similitude of the din and the clamour and the shouts and the tumult of the multitude and the to-and-fro of the thirty champions with their thirty heavy, iron clubs that they bear in their hands. And when the wheeled-towers advance massively and boldly against the line of heroes, these almost leave behind their arms at the fierce charge of the outland battalions. Then spring the three hundred champions with a shout of vengeful anger over the sides and over the front of the huge iron towers on wheels, so that this it was that checked the swift course and the great, hasty onslaught of the well-grounded, swiftly-moving, mighty chariots. The three stout, strong, battle-proof towers on wheels careered over rough places and over obstacles, over rocks and over heights. There coursed the thirty entire chargers, powerful, strong-backed, four abreast, the equal of ninety entire chargers, with [W.5622.] manes more than big, bold[a] and leaping, with sack-like, distended nostrils, high-headed, towering, over-powering,

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wonderful, so that they shook with their ramping the thick shell of the sad-sodded earth. They flecked the plain behind them with the foam dripping from the [1]swift[1] Danish steeds, from the bits and bridles, from the traces and tracks of the huge, maned, mighty[b] steeds, greater than can be told! They excited strife with their din of arms. They plunged headlong in their swift impatience. They aroused great terror at their accoutrement, at their armour, at their cunning, at their power, at their hugeness, at their destructive, terrible, hostile vengeance on the four grand, proud provinces of Erin. Amazing to me was their appearance because of the unwontedness of their trappings both in form and in garb. Three wonderful flights of birds with variety of appearance hovered over them. The first flock was all red, the second flock was white as swans, the third flock as black as ravens. Three red-mouthed, crow-shaped demons of battle sped around them as swift as hares, circling the three wheeled towers, and this is what they prophesied:—

“Sheaves[c] of battle,
Might of quelling,
Ill of war-deeds,
Sating of foul ravens!
Sodden ground, blood-red;
Men low in dust;
Sheaves[c] on sword-blades!”

[6-6] The following passage, to page 342, is taken from Stowe and H. 1. 13; it is not found in LL.

[1-1] H. 1. 13 and Add. 18,748.

[2-2] That is, the movable towers.

[a] Following the emendation *bairnech*, suggested by Windisch.

[1-1] H. 1. 13.

[b] Following the emendation *moradbal*, suggested by Windisch.

[c] That is, the layers of the slain.

“They wheeled about and brought them twelve[d] battle-pillars of thick, huge, iron pillars. As thick as the middle of a warrior’s thigh, as tall as a champion’s spear was each battle-fork of them, and they placed four forks under each [W.5646.] wheeled-tower. And their horses all ran from them and grazed upon the plain. And those forty[a] that had gone in advance descend clad in armour on the plain, and the garrison of the three battle-wheeled towers falls to attacking and harassing them, and is attacked and

harassed in turn by those forty champions, so that there was heard the breaking of shields and the loud blows of hard iron poles on bucklers and battle-helmets, on coats of mail and on the iron plates of smooth, hard, blue-black, sharp-beaked, forked spears. And in the whole camp there is none but is on the watch for their fierceness and their wrath and their cunning and their strangeness, for their fury, their achievements and the excellence of their guard. And in the place where the forty champions are and the thousand armed men contending with them, not one of the thousand had a wounding stroke nor a blow on his opponent because of the might of their skill in arms and the excellence of their defence withal!"

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[d] That is, a battle-pillar or prop for each of the four wheels of each of the three towers.

[a] This is the first mention of the 'forty.'

"They are hard to contend with for all such as are unfamiliar with them, is the opinion held of them," spake Fergus, "but they are readily to be dealt with for such as do know them. These are three battle-wheeled towers," Fergus continued, "as I perceive from their account. Once I saw their like, namely when as prentice I accompanied Dare to Spain, so that we entered the service, of the king of Spain, Esorb to wit, and we afterwards made an expedition to Soda, that is, to the king of Africa, and we gave battle to the Carthaginians. There came their like upon us against the battle-line wherein we were, an hundred battalions and three score hundred in each battalion. One of the wheeled-towers won victory over us all, for we were not on our guard against them. And this is the way to defeat them: To mine a hole broader than the tower in the ground in the front thereof and cover over the pitfall; [W.5669.] and for the battle-line to be drawn up over against it and not to advance to attack, so that it is the towers that advance and fall into the pit. Lebarcham told me, as I passed over Taltiu, that the Ulstermen brought these towers from Germany, and the towers held a third of the exiles of Ulster among them as their only dwelling; and Cualgae ('a Heap of Spears') is their name, namely battle-penfolds. And herein have ye the sorest of all hardships, for although all the men of Erin are drawn up against them, it is the men of Erin that will be defeated. When they take it upon them to engage in battle they cannot hold out without a combat. Thus will they remain now till morning, every forty men of them contending with the others. And this is my advice to you," said Fergus: "permit me with my division to withstand them, and do ye betake yourselves to the woods and wilds of Erin, and the Ulstermen shall not find ye in any place, and I will proceed as an example, depending on my own men-of-war." "There are men here for ye!" cried Medb. "That will be a force for yourselves," Fergus made answer.[6]

[6-6] See note 6, page 338.

"Yet another company came there to the same height in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Not fewer than a division was in it; wild, dark-red, warrior-bands; [1]bright, clear, blue-purple men;[1] long, fair-yellow heads of hair they wore; handsome, shining countenances they had; clear, kingly eyes; magnificent vesture with beautiful mantles; conspicuous, golden brooches along their bright-coloured sleeves; silken, glossy tunics; blue, glassy spears; yellow shields for striking withal; gold-hilted, inlaid swords set on their thighs; loud-tongued care has beset them; sorrowful are they all, and mournful; sad are the royal leaders; orphaned the brilliant company without [W.5689.] their protecting lord who was wont to guard their

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lands.” “But, who may they be?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Indeed, we know them well,” Fergus made answer. “Furious lions are they; deeds of battle; the division from the field of Murthemne are they. [LL.fo.100b.] It is this that makes them cast-down, sorrowful, joyless [1]as they are,[1] because that their own divisional king himself is not amongst them, even Cuchulain, the restraining, victorious, red-sworded one that triumpheth in battle!” “Good reason, in truth, there is for them to be so,” quoth Medb, “if they are dejected, mournful and joyless. There is no evil we have not worked on them. We have harassed and we have assailed them, [2]their territory and their land,[2] from Monday at the beginning of Samaintide till the beginning of Spring.[a] We have taken their women and their sons and their youths, their steeds and their troops of horses, their herds and their flocks and their droves. We have razed their hills after them till they are become lowlands, so that they are level with the plain. [3]We have brought their lords to bloody stabs and sores, to cuts and many wounds.”[3] “Not so, O Medb!” cried Fergus. “There is naught thou canst boast over them. For thou didst them no hurt nor harm that yon fine company’s leader avenged not on thee. For, every mound and every grave, every stone and every tomb that is from hence to the east of Erin is the mound and the grave, the stone and the tomb of some goodly warrior and goodly youth [4]of thy people,[4] fallen at the hands of the noble chieftain of yonder company. Happy he to whom they hold! Woe to him whom they oppose! It will be enough, e’en as much as half a battle, for the men of Erin, when these defend their lord in the battle on the morning of the morrow.”

[1-1] This seems out of place here; it is not found in Stowe nor in H. 1. 13.

[1-1] Stowe.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[4-4] Stowe.

[a] See notes a and b, page 182.

“I heard a great uproar there, west of the battle or to [W.5711.] its east,” said macRoth. “Say, what noise was it?” asked Ailill of Fergus. “Ah, but we know it well,” Fergus made answer: “Cuchulain it was, straining to go, sick as he is, to battle, wearied at the length of his lying sick on Fert Sciach (‘Thorn-mound’) under hoops and clasps and ropes, and the men of Ulster do not permit him to go because of his sores and his wounds, inasmuch as he is not fit for battle and is powerless for combat after his encounter with Ferdiad.”

True indeed spake Fergus. Cuchulain it was, wearied at the length of his lying supine on Fert Sciach under hoops and clasps and ropes. [1]"But, there is one thing more to tell," said Fergus: "unless he be held back now, he will surely come to the battle!"

Thus far the Companies of the Tain Bo Cualnge[1] [2]mustered by Conchobar and the men of Ulster.[2]

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

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[2-2] H. 1. 13.

Then came two women lampoonists from the camp and quarters of the men of Erin; [3]their names,[3] Fethan and Collach, to wit; and they stood with a feint of weeping and wailing over Cuchulain, telling him of the defeat of Ulster and the death of Conchobar and the fall of Fergus in combat.

[3-3] Stowe.

[4]Now Conchobar proceeded with his troops till he pitched camp nearby his companions. Conchobar asked a truce of Ailill till sunrise on the morrow, and Ailill granted it for the men of Erin and the exiles, and Conchobar granted it for the men of Ulster, and thereupon Conchobar's tents were pitched. In this way the ground was bare between them, and the Ulstermen came thither at sunset.[4]

[4-4] YBL. 50a, 11.

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XXVI

[1]THE DECISION OF THE BATTLE[1]

[W.5727.] It was on that night that the Morrigan,[a] daughter of Ernmas, came, and she was engaged in fomenting strife and sowing dissension between the two camps on either side, and she spoke these words [2]in the twilight between the two encampments[2]:—

“Ravens shall pick The necks of men! Blood shall gush [3]In combat wild![3] Skins shall be hacked; Crazyed with spoils! [4]Men's sides pierced[4] In battle brave, Luibnech near! Warriors' storm; Mien of braves; Cruachan's men! [5]Upon them comes[5] Ruin complete! Lines shall be strewn Under foot; Their race die out! Then Ulster hail: To Erna[b] woe! To Ulster woe: [6]Then Erna hail![6] (This she said in Erna's ear.) Naught inglorious shall they do Who them await!”

[1-1] YBL. 41a, 7.

[a] The Irish goddess of war.

[2-2] YBL. 50a, 18-19.

[3-3] YBL. 50a, 19.

[4-4] YBL. 50a, 21.

[5-5] Translating from YBL. 50a, 23; LL. appears to be corrupt.

[b] The Munstermen in Ailill's army.

[6-6] YBL. 50a, 26.

[1] Now Cuchulain was at Fedain Collna near by. Food was brought to him that night by the purveyors, and they were used to come to converse with him by day. He killed not any of the men of Erin to the left of Ferdiad's Ford.[1] [W.5756.] It was then that Cuchulain spake to Laeg son of Riagabair. "It would surely be unworthy of thee, O Laeg my master," said Cuchulain, "if between the two battle-lines there should happen anything to-day whereof thou hadst no tidings for me." "Whatsoever I shall learn, O Cucucuc," answered Laeg, "will be told thee. But, see yonder a little flock coming forth on the plain from the western camp and station now. [LL.fo.101a.] Behold a band of henchmen after them to check and to stay them. Behold also a company of henchmen emerging from the eastern camp and station to seize them." "Surely, that is so!" exclaimed Cuchulain. "That bodes a mighty

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combat and is the occasion of a grand battle. The little flock will come over the plain and the band of henchmen [2]from the east and the band of henchmen from the west[2] [3]will encounter one another betimes [4]about the little flock[4] on the great field of battle." [3] There, indeed, Cuchulain spoke true. And the little flock came forth upon the plain, and the companies of henchmen met in fray. "Who gives the battle now, O Laeg my master," Cuchulain asked. "The folk of Ulster," Laeg answered: "that is the same as the young warriors [5]of Ulster." [5] "But how fight they?" Cuchulain asked. "Like men they fight," Laeg answered. "There where are the heroes of valour from the east in battle, they force a breach through the ranks to the west. There where are the heroes from the west, they lay a breach through the ranks to the eastward." [6] "It would be a vow for them to fall in rescuing their herds," said Cuchulain; "and [W.5774.] now?" "The beardless youths are fighting now," said the charioteer. "Has a bright cloud come over the sun yet?" Cuchulain asked. "Nay, then," the charioteer answered. [6] "I grieve that I am not yet strong enough to be on my feet amongst them. For, were I able to be on my feet amongst them, my breach would be manifest there to-day like that of another!" "But, this avow, O Cucuc," said Laeg: "it is no reproach to thy valour; it is no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast done bravely in time before now and thou wilt do bravely hereafter."

[1-1] YBL. 50a, 28-31.

[2-2] Stowe and H. 1. 13

[3-3] LL. seems to be defective here.

[4-4] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[5-5] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[6-6] YBL. 50a, 39-43.

[1]About the hour of sunrise: "It is a haughty folk that now fight the battle," quoth the charioteer; "but there are no kings amongst them, for sleep is still upon them." [1] "Come, O my master Laeg!" cried Cuchulain; "rouse the men of Ulster to the battle now, for it is time that they come."

[1-1] YBL. 50a, 45-47.

[2]Then, when the sun arose,[2] [3]Cuchulain saw the kings from the east putting their crowns on their heads and relieving their men-at-arms. Cuchulain told his charioteer to awaken the men of Ulster.[3] Laeg came and roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he uttered these words there:—



“Arise, ye kings of Macha, Valiant in your deeds! Imbel’s kine the Badb doth covet:
[4]Blood of hearts pours out! Goodly heroes’ battle rushes in[4] With deeds of valour!
Hearts all red with gore: Brows turned in flight. Dismay of battle riseth. For there was
never found One like unto Cuchulain, Hound that Macha’s[a] weal doth work! If it is for
Cualnge’s kine, Let them now arise!”

[2-2] YBL. 50a, 48.

[3-3] YBL. 50b, 18-23.

[4-4] YBL 50b, 27-29.

[a] Another name for Badb, the battle-fury.

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XXVII

[1]NOW OF THE BATTLE OF GARECH[1]

[W.5804.] Thereupon arose all the men of Ulster at the one time in the train of their king, and at the word of their prince, and to prepare for the uprising in response to the call of Laeg son of Rianganabair. And in this wise they arose: stark-naked all of them, only their weapons in their hands. Each one whose tent door looked to the east, through the tent westwards he went, for that he deemed it too long to go round about it.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

“How arise the Ulstermen now to [2]the battle,[2] O Laeg my master?” asked Cuchulain. “Manfully they rise,” said Laeg: “stark-naked all of them, [3]except for their arms only.[3] Every man whose tent-door faces the east, through the tent westwards he goes, for he deems it too long to go round about it.” “I pledge my word!” cried Cuchulain: “at a fitting hour have they now in the early day risen around Conchobar!”

[2-2] H. 1. 13, Add., Stowe, and YBL. 50b, 34.

[3-3] YBL. 50b, 34.

Then spake Conchobar to Sencha son of Ailill: “Come, O Sencha my master,” said Conchobar; “stay the men of Ulster, and let them not go to the battle till there come the strength of a good omen and favourable portent, till the sun mounts to the roof-tree of heaven and sunshine fills the glens and lowlands and hills and watch-towers of Erin.”

[W.5822.] They tarried there till the strength of a good omen came and a favourable portent, till sunshine filled the glens and slopes and heights and watch-towers of the province.

“Come, O Sencha my master,” said Conchobar; “rouse the men of Ulster to battle, for it is time for them to proceed thither.” Sencha roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he spake these words:—

“Now shall Macha’s kings arise, Large-hearted folk! Weapons let them shatter: Let them fight the battle: Let them plow the earth in anger: Let them strike on shields! [1]Wearied all the hands;[1] Herds loud bellowing: Steadfast the resistance: Furious the retainers: Battle-lines shall prostrate fall ’Neath the feet of others! [2]Prince and lord prepare for battle.[2] Perish [LL.fo.101b.] shall their race! [3]Manful contest there shall

be;[3] Their foes they lie in wait for And slay them all to-day! Deep draughts of blood
they drink: Grief fills the hearts of queens: [4]Tender lamentations follow: Till soaked in
blood shall be the grassy sod On which they're slain, To which they come.[4] If for
Cualnge's kine it be, [5]Let Macha's kings![5] Let them arise!"

[1-1] Reading with YBL 50a, 52.

[2-2] From a conjectural emendation of YBL. 50a, 54.

[3-3] YBL. 50b, 1.

[4-4] YBL. 50b, 3.

[5-5] YBL. 50b, 5.

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Not long was Laeg there when he witnessed something: the men of Erin all arising at one time, taking their shields and their spears and their swords and their helmets, and urging the men-of-war before them to the battle. The men of Erin, every single man of them, fell to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the others [W.5859.] for a long space and while. Thereupon Cuchulain asked of his charioteer, of Laeg son of Rianganabair, at the time that a bright cloud came over the sun: [1]"Look for us![1] How fight [2]the Ulstermen[2] the battle now, O my master Laeg?" "Like men they fight," Laeg answered. "Should I mount my chariot, and En, Conall [3]Cernach's ('the Victorious')[3] charioteer, his chariot, and should we go in two chariots from one wing to the other on the points of the weapons, neither hoof nor wheel nor axle-tree nor chariot-pole would touch [4]the ground[4] for the denseness and closeness and firmness with which their arms are held in the hands of the men-at-arms at this time."

[1-1] YBL. 51a, 45.

[2-2] YBL. 51a, 45.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13, Add. and YBL. 51a, 47.

[4-4] Stowe and Add.

"Alas, that I am not yet strong enough to be amongst them [5]now!"[5] cried Cuchulain; "for, were I able, my breach would be manifest there to-day like that of another," spake Cuchulain. "But this avow, O Cucuc," said Laeg: "'tis no reproach to thy valour; 'tis no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast wrought great deeds before now and thou wilt work great deeds hereafter."

[5-5] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

Then began the men of Erin to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the others for a long space and while. Next came to them the nine chariot-fighters of the champions from Norseland, and the three foot-warriors along with them, and no swifter were the nine chariot-men than the three men on foot.

Then came to them also [6]on the ford of hosting[6] the governors of the men of Erin. And this was their sole office [7]with Medb[7] in the battle: to smite to death Conchobar if it were he that suffered defeat, and to rescue Ailill and Medb if it should be they were defeated. And these are the names of the governors:

[6-6] YBL. 51b, 6.

[7-7] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

* * * * *

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XXVIIa

[1]HERE FOLLOWETH THE MUSTER OF THE MEN OF ERIN[1]

[W.5883.] The three Conare from Sliab Mis, the three Lussen from Luachair, the three Niadchorb from Tilach Loiscthe, the three Doelfer from Deill, the three Damaltach from Dergderc, the three Buder from the Buas, the three Baeth from Buagnige, the three Buageltach from Mag Breg, the three Suibne from the Siuir, the three Eochaid from Ane, the three Malleth from Loch Erne, the three Abatruad from Loch Ri, the three macAmra

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from Ess Ruaid, the three Fiacha from Fid Nemain, the three Mane from Muresc, the three Muredach from Mairg, the three Loegaire from Lecc Derg, the three Broduinde from the Berba, the three Bruchnech, from Cenn Abrat, the three Descertach from Druim Fornacht, the three Finn from Finnabair, the three Conall from Collamair, the three Carbre from Cliu, the three Mane from Mossa, the three Scathglan from Scaire, the three Echtach from Erce, the three Trenfer from Taite, the three Fintan from Femen, [LL.fo.102a.] the three Rotanach from Rogne, the three Sarchorach from Suide Lagen, the three Etarscel from Etarbane, the three Aed from Aidne, the three Guare from Gabal.[a]

[1-1] YBL. 50b, 41.

[a] YBL. 50b-51a has more than three times as many names as are enumerated here.

Then said Medb to Fergus. "It were truly a thing to boast of for thee, [2]O Fergus," said she,[2] "werest thou [W.5943.] to use thy mightiness of battle [1]vehemently[1] without stint amongst us to-day, forasmuch as thou hast been driven out of thine own land and out of thine inheritance; amongst us hast thou found land and domain and inheritance, and much good-will hath been shown thee!"

[2-2] Stowe, Add. and H. 1. 13.

[1-1] Stowe, Add., and H. 1. 13.

[2]Thereupon Fergus uttered this oath: "I swear," *et reliqua*, "jaws of men I would break from necks, necks of men with arms, arms of men with elbows, elbows of men with wrists, wrists of men with fists, fists of men with fingers, fingers of men with nails, nails[a] of men with scalps, scalps of men with trunks, trunks of men with thighs, thighs of men with knees, knees of men with calves, calves of men with feet, feet of men with toes, toes of men with nails,[2] so that [3]heads of men over shields[3] would be as numerous [4]with me[4] as bits of ice [5]on the miry stamping-ground[5] [6]between two dry fields[6] that a king's horses would course on. Every limb of the Ulstermen [7]would I send flying through the air[7] before and behind me this day [8]like the flitting of bees on a day of fine weather,[8] if only I had my sword!"

[2-2] I have given preference to the reading of YBL. 51b, 18-30.

[a] A word is omitted here in the MS., presumably for, 'nails.'

[3-3] YBL. 51b, 19-20.

[4-4] YBL. 51b, 19.

[5-5] YBL. 51b, 20.

[6-6] Adopting Windisch's emendation of the text.

[7-7] YBL. 51b, 31.

[8-8] YBL. 51b, 32.

At that Ailill spoke to his own charioteer, Ferloga, to wit: "Fetch me a quick sword that wounds the skin, O gilla," said Ailill. [9]"A year to-day I put that sword in thy hand in the flower of its condition and bloom.[9] I give my word, if its bloom and condition be the worse at thy hands this day than the day I gave it [10]thee[10] on the hillside of Cruachan Ai [11]in the borders of Ulster,[11] though thou hadst the men of Erin and of Alba to rescue thee from me to-day, they would not all save thee!"

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[9-9] Stowe and YBL. 51b, 35.

[10-10] Stowe.

[11-11] YBL. 51b, 36.

[W.5956.] Ferloga went his way, and he brought the sword with him in the flower of its safe-keeping, and fair flaming as a candle. And the sword was placed in Ailill's hand, and Ailill put it in Fergus' hand, and Fergus offered welcome to the sword:[a] "Welcome, O Calad Colg[b] ('Hardblade'), Lete's sword!" said he. "Weary, O champion of Badb! On whom shall I ply this weapon?" Fergus asked. "On the men-of-war around thee," Medb answered. "No one shall find indulgence nor quarter from thee to-day, unless some friend of thy bosom find it!"

[a] Here follows in YBL. 51b, 38-57 a difficult passage in *rosc* which I have omitted in the translation. Only a portion of it has been preserved in LL. and is here translated.

[b] Reading with Stowe, II. 1. 13, Add. and YBL. 51b, 45.

Whereupon, Fergus took his arms and went forward to the battle, [1]and he cleared a gap of an hundred in the battle-ranks with his sword in his two hands.[1] Ailill seized his weapons. Medb seized her weapons and entered the battle. [2]The Mane seized their arms and came to the battle. The macMagach seized their arms and came to the battle,[2] so that thrice the Ulstermen were routed before them from the north, till Cualgae[c] and sword drove them back again. [3]Or it was Cuchulain that drove the men of Erin before him, so that he brought them back into their former line in the battle. [3]

[1-1] YBL. 52a, 6-8.

[2-2] Stowe, and, similarly, Add.

[c] The name of the wheeled towers described above, page 338 fl.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

Conchobar heard that from his place in the line of battle, that the battle had gone against him thrice from the north. Then he addressed his bodyguard, even the inner circle of the Red Branch: "Hold ye here a while, ye men!" cried he; "even in the line [4]of battle[4] where I am, that I may go and learn by whom the battle has been thus forced against us thrice from the north." Then said his household: "We will hold out," said they, [5]"in the place wherein we are:[5] [W.5974.] for the sky is above us and the earth underneath and the sea round about us, [1]and[1] unless the heavens shall fall with their showers of stars on the man-face of the world, or unless the furrowed, blue-

bordered ocean break o'er the tufted brow of the earth, or unless the ground yawns open, will we not move a thumb's breadth backward from here till the very day of doom and of everlasting life, till thou come back to us!"

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 52a, 14.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

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Conchobar went his way to the place where he heard the battle had gone three times [LL.fo.102b.] against him from the north. [2]Then Conchobar made a rush at Fergus,[2] and he lifted shield against shield there, namely against Fergus mac Roig, even Ochain ('the Fair-ear')[a] of Conchobar with its four ears of gold and its four bracings of red gold. Therewith Fergus gave three stout blows of Badb on the Ochain of Conchobar, so that Conchobar's shield cried aloud on him [3]and the three chief waves of Erin gave answer, the Wave of Clidna, the Wave of Rudraige and the Wave of Tuag, to wit.[3] Whenever Conchobar's shield cried out, the shields of all the Ulstermen cried out. However great the strength and power with which Fergus smote Conchobar on the shield, so great also was the might and valour wherewith Conchobar held the shield, so that the ear of the shield did not even touch the ear of Conchobar.

[2-2] YBL. 52a, 16-17.

[a] The name of Conchobar's shield.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

"Hearken, ye men [4]of Erin!"[4] cried Fergus; "who opposes a shield to me to-day on this day of battle when four of the five grand provinces of Erin come together on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Cattle-raid of Cualnge?" "Why, then, a gilla that is younger and mightier [5]and comelier[5] than thyself is here," [6]Conchobar answered, [6] "and whose mother and father were [W.5995.] better! The man that hath driven thee out of thy borders, thy land and thine inheritance; the man that hath driven thee into the lairs of the deer and the wild hare and the foxes; the man that hath not granted thee to take the breadth [1]of thy foot[1] of thine own domain or land; the man that hath made thee dependent upon the bounty of a woman; the man that of a time disgraced thee by slaying the [2]three bright lights of the valour of the Gael,[2] the three sons of Usnech that were under thy safeguard [3]and protection;[3] the man that will repel thee this day in the presence of the men of Erin; Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige, High King of Ulster and son of the High King of Erin; [4]and though any one should insult thee, there is no satisfaction nor reparation for thee, for thou art in the service of a woman!"[4]

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[1-1] Stowe and H. 1. 13.

[2-2] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

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"Truly hath this happened to me." Fergus responded. And Fergus placed his two hands on Calad Colg ('Hardblade'), and he heaved a blow with it backwards behind him, so that its point touched the ground, and he thought to strike his three fateful blows of Badb on the men of Ulster, so that their dead would be more in number than their living. Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that and he rushed to [5]his foster-father, namely to[5] Fergus, and he closed his two [6]royal hands[6] over him [7]outside his armour.[7] [8]"Ungentle, not heedful is this, Fergus my master! Full of hate, not of friendship is this,[8] O Fergus my master! Let not the Ulstermen be slain and destroyed by thee through thy destructive blows, but take thou thought for their honour to-day on this day of battle!" [W.6013.] "Get thee away from me, boy! [1]Whom then should I strike?"[1] exclaimed Fergus; "for I will not remain alive unless I deliver my three fateful strokes of Badb on the men of Ulster this day, till their dead be more in number than their living." "Then turn thy hand slantwise," said Cormac Conlongas, "and slice off the hill-tops over the heads of the hosts [2]on every side[2] and this will be an appeasing of thine anger." "Tell Conchobar also to fall [3]back again[3] to his place in the battle," [4]said Fergus; "and I will no longer belabour the hosts." [4] [5]Cormac told this to Conchobar:[5] [6]"Go to the other side, O Conchobar," said Cormac to his father, "and this man will not visit his anger any longer here on the men of Ulster." [6] So Conchobar went to his place in the battle. [7]In this manner Fergus and Conchobar parted.[7]

[5-5] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[7-7] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] Following Windisch's emendation of the text. The MSS. are corrupt here.

[1-1] YBL. 52a, 35.

[2-2] YBL. 52a, 36.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] YBL. 52a, 39-41.

[7-7] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8]Fergus turned away. He slew a hundred warriors of Ulster in the first onslaught with the sword. He met Conall Cernach. "Too great is this rage," said Conall, "upon people

and kindred because of the whim of a wanton.” “What would ye have me do, ye warriors?” asked Fergus. “Smite the hills crosswise and the bushes around,” Conall Cernach made answer.[8]

[8-8] YBL. 52a, 41-47.

Thus it was with that sword, which was the sword of Fergus: The sword of Fergus, the sword of Lete from Faery: Whenever he desired to strike with it, it became the size of a rainbow in the air. Thereupon Fergus turned his hand slantwise over the heads of the hosts, so that he smote the three tops of the three hills, so that they are still on the moor in sight of [9]the men of Erin.[9] And these are the three Maels (‘the Balds’) of Meath in that place, [1]which Fergus smote as a reproach and a rebuke to the men of Ulster.[1]

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[9-9] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[W.6027.] Now as regards Cuchulain. He heard the Ochain of Conchobar smitten by Fergus macRoig. "Come, O Laeg my master," cried Cuchulain: "who dares thus smite [2]with those strong blows, mighty and far-away,[2] the Ochain of Conchobar my master, and I alive?" [3]Then Laeg made answer, saying: "The choice of men, Fergus macRoig, the very bold, smites it:—[3]

"Blood he sheds—increase of slaughter—
Splendid the hero, Fergus macRoig!
Hidden had Iain Fairyland's chariot-sword!
Battle now hath reached the shield,
Shield of my master Conchobar!"

[2-2] YBL. 52a, 52.

[3-3] YBL. 52b, 1-2.

[4]"How far have the hosts advanced, O Laeg?" Cuchulain asked. "They have come to Garech," Laeg answered. "I give my word for that," Cuchulain cried; "they will not come as far as Ilgarech, if I catch up with them! [4]Quickly unloose the bands, gilla!" cried Cuchulain. [5]"Blood covers men. Feats of swords shall be done. Men shall be spent therefrom!"[5]

[4-4] Stowe.

[5-5] YBL. 52b, 7-8.

[6]Since Cuchulain's going into battle had been prevented, his twisting fit came upon him, and seven and twenty skin tunics were given to him that used to be about him under strings and cords when going into battle.[6] [LL.fo.103a.] Then Cuchulain gave a mighty spring, so that the bindings of his wounds flew from him to Mag Tuag ('the Plain of the Bows') in Connacht. His bracings went from him to Bacca ('the Props') in Corcomruad [7]in the district of Boirenn,[7] [8]His supports sprang from him to [9]Rath[9] Cinn Bara ('the Rath of Spithead') in Ulster, and likewise his pins flew from him to Rath Clo ('the Rath of the Nails') in the land of the tribe of Conall.[8] The dry wisps that were stuffed in his wounds rose to the roof [W.6040.] of the air and the sky as highest larks fly on a day of sunshine when there is no wind. Thereupon, his bloody wounds got the better of him, so that the ditches and furrows of the earth were full of streams of blood and torrents of gore.

[6-6] YBL. 52b, 17-20.

[7-7] Stowe and Add.

[8-8] Stowe.

[9-9] Add. and H. 1. 13.

[1]Some of the narrators aver that it was the strength of the warrior and champion that hurled these things [2]to the aforementioned places;[2] but it was not that, but his powerful friends, the fairy-folk, that brought them thither, to the end to make famous his history, so that from them these places are named.[1]

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[2-2] Add.

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This was the first exploit of valour that Cuchulain performed on rising [3]out of his weakness:[3] The two women lampoonists that made a feint of weeping and wailing [4]over his head,[4] Fethan and Collach to wit, he smote each of them against the head of the other, so that he[a] was red with their blood and grey with their brains. [5]These women had come from Medb to raise a pretended lamentation over him, to the end that his bloody wounds might burst forth on him, and to tell him that the men of Ulster had met with defeat and that Fergus had fallen in meeting the battle.[5] His arms had not been left near him, except his chariot only. And he took his chariot on his back [6]with its frame and its two axle-trees,[6] and he set out to attack the men of Erin, and he smote them with the chariot, until he reached the place where Fergus macRoig was. "Turn hither, O Fergus my master!" he cried. Fergus did not answer, for he heard not. He spoke again, "Turn hither, [7]turn hither,[7] O Fergus my master!" he cried; "and if thou turn not, [8]I swear to god what the Ulstermen swear,[8] I [W.6052.] will grind thee as a mill grinds fresh grain; I will wash thee as a cup is washed in a tub; I will bind thee as the woodbine binds the trees; I will pounce on thee as hawk pounces on fledglings; [1]I will go over thee as its tail goes over a cat;[1] [2]I will pierce thee as a tool bores through a tree-trunk; I will pound thee as a fish is pounded on the sand!"[2] "Truly this is my lot!" spake Fergus. "Who [3]of the men of Erin[3] dares to address these stiff, vengeful words to me, where now the four grand provinces of Erin are met on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge?" "Thy fosterling is before thee," he replied, "and fosterling of the men of Ulster and of Conchobar as well, Cuchulain son of Sualtaim [4]and sister's son to Conchobar," replied Cuchalain.[4] "And thou didst promise to flee before me what time I should be wounded, in pools of gore and riddled in the battle of the Tain.[a] For, [5]when thou hadst not thy sword with thee, [5] I did flee before thee in thine own combat on the Tain; [6]and do thou avoid me," said he. "Even that did I promise," Fergus answered. "Away with thee, then!" cried Cuchulain. "'Tis well," replied Fergus; "thou didst avoid me; now thou art pierced with wounds." [6]

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[a] 'The ground,' Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.; 'so that each of them was grey with the brains of the other,' YBL. 52b, 13-14.

[5-5] YBL. 52b, 14-17.

[6-6] YBL. 52b, 21.

[7-7] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] YBL. 52b, 24.

[1-1] YBL. 52b, 24-25.

[2-2] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[3-3] YBL. 52b, 27.

[4-4] YBL. 52b, 28.

[a] See page 207.

[5-5] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] YBL. 52b, 29-33.

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Fergus gave ear to that word of Cuchulain, and he turned and made his three great strides of a hero [7]back from Cuchulain and turned in flight from him.[7] And as he turned [8]with his company of three thousand warriors and the Leinstermen following after Fergus—for it is under Fergus' warrant they had come[8]—[9]and the men of Munster,[9] there turned all the men of Erin.

[7-7] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[9-9] YBL. 52b, 33.

[W.6065.] [1]Then[1] the men of Erin broke their ranks westwards over the hill. The battle raged around the men of Connacht, [2]around Ailill and his division and around Medb with hers and around the Mane with theirs and the mac Magach with theirs.[2] At midday Cuchulain came to the battle. At the time of sunset at the ninth hour [3]as the sun entered the tresses of the wood,[3] [4]when man and tree were no more to be known apart, Medb and[4] the last company of the men of Connacht fled in rout westwards over the hill.

[1-1] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[2-2] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[3-3] YBL. 52b, 36.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and Add.

At that time there did not remain in Cuchulain's hand of the chariot but a handful of its spokes around the wheel, and a handbreadth of its poles around the shell, with the slaying and slaughtering of the four grand provinces of Erin during all that time.

Then Medb betook her to a shield-shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Thereafter Medb sent off the Brown Bull of Cualnge along with fifty of his heifers and eight of her runners with him around to Cruachan, to the end that whoso might and whoso might not escape, the Brown Bull of Cualnge should get away safely, even as she had promised.

Then it was that the issue of blood came upon Medb, [5]and she said: "Do thou, Fergus, undertake[5] a shield-shelter in the rear of the men of Erin till I let my water flow from me." "By my troth," replied Fergus, "'tis an ill hour for thee to be taken so." "Howbeit there is no help for me," Medb answered; "for I shall not live if I do not void water!" Fergus accordingly came and raised a shield-shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Medb voided her water, so that it made three large dikes, so that a mill[a] could find room in each dike. Hence the place is known as Fual Medbha ('Medb's Water').

[5-5] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[a] It is not uncommon in folk-tales that lakes, rivers, *etc.* arose from the micturition of a giant or fairy. Reading with Add.

[W.6085.] Cuchulain came upon her as she was thus engaged, [1]on his way to the battle,[1] and he did not attack her. He would not strike her a blow from behind. [2]He spared her then because it was not his wont to slay women.[2] [3]"Spare me!" cried Medb. "If I should slay thee, it were just for me," Cuchulain answered.[3] [4]"Arise from hence," said he; "for I deem it no honour

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to wound thee from behind with my weapons." [4] "I crave a boon of thee this day, O Cuchulain," spake Medb. "What boon cravest thou [5] of me?" [5] asked Cuchulain. "That this host be under thine honour and thy protection till they pass westwards over Ath Mor ('the Great Ford')." [LL.fo.103b.] "Yea, I promise that," said Cuchulain. [6] Then [6] went Cuchulain around the men of Erin, and he undertook a shield-defence on one side of them, in order to protect the men of Erin. On the other side went the governors of the men of Erin. Medb went to her own place and assumed a shield-defence in the rear of the men of Erin, and in this manner they convoyed the men of Erin over Ath Mor westwards.

[1-1] YBL. 52b, 41.

[2-2] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[3-3] YBL. 52b, 41-42.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] H. 1. 13.

[6-6] H. 1. 13. and Add.

[7] Then Laeg [8] son of Riagabair [8] brought Cuchulain's sword unto him, [9] the 'Hard-headed Steeling' to wit, [9] and Cuchulain took the sword in his hand. [7] Then he [10] stood still and [10] gave a blow to the three bald-topped hills of Ath Luain over against the three Maela ('the Bald Tops') of Meath, so that he struck their three heads off them. [11] And they are in the bog as a witness ever since. Hence these are the Maolain ('the Flat Tops') of Ath Luain. Cuchulain cut them off as a reproach and affront to the men of Connacht, in order that every time men should speak of Meath's three Bald Tops, these in the west should be the answer the 'Three Flat Tops of Ath Luain.' [11]

[7-7] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] Add.

[9-9] YBL. 52b, 43.

[10-10] YBL. 52b. 45.

[11-11] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[W.6099.] Then [1] when the battle had been lost, [1] Fergus [2] began to view [2] the host as it went westwards of Ath Mor. "It was thus indeed it behoved this day to prove, for

following in the lead of a woman," [3]said Fergus.[3] "Faults and feuds have met here to-day," [4]said Medb[4] to Fergus. "Betrayed and sold is this host to-day," [5]Fergus answered.[5] "And even as a brood-mare leads her foals into a land unknown, without a head to advise or give counsel before them, such is the plight of this host to-day [6]in the train of a woman that hath ill counselled them." [6]

[1-1] YBL. 52b, 47-48.

[2-2] Reading with H. 1. 13.

[3-3] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] YBL. 52b, 48.

[5-5] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] YBL. 52b, 52.

[7]Then Cuchulain turned to where Conchobar was with the nobles of Ulster before him. Conchobar bewailed and lamented Cuchulain, and then he uttered this lay:—

"How is this, O Cualnge's Hound,
Hero of the Red Branch, thou:
Great woe, champion, hast thou borne,
Battling in thy land's defence!

"Every morn a hundred slain,
Every eve a hundred more,
While the host purveyed thy fare,
Feeding thee with cooling food!



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"Five-score heroes of the hosts,
These I reckon are in graves.
While their women—fair their hue—
Spend the night bewailing them!"[7]

[7-7] H. 1. 13.

* * * * *

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XXVIII

[1]THE BATTLE OF THE BULLS[1]

[W.6121.] As regards Medb, it is related here: [2]She suffered not the hosts to disperse forthwith,[2] but she gathered the men of Erin and led them forth to Cruachan to behold the battle of the bulls [3]and in what manner they would part from one another. For during the while the battle was being fought, the Brown Bull of Cualnge with fifty heifers in his company had been brought to Cruachan.[3]

[1-1] YBL. 41a, 8.

[2-2] H. 1. 13.

[3-3] H. 1. 13 and Add.

As regards the Brown Bull of Cualnge, it is now recounted in this place: When he saw the beautiful, strange land, he sent forth his three bellowing calls aloud. And Finnbennach Ai ('the Whitehorned of Ai') heard him. Now no male beast durst [4]send forth[4] a low that was louder than a moo in compare with him within the four fords of all Ai, Ath Moga and Ath Coltna, Ath Slissen and Ath Bercha. And [5]the Whitehorned[5] lifted his head with fierce anger [6]at the bellowing of the Brown of Cualnge,[6] and he hastened to Cruachan to look for the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] H. 1. 13 and Add.

It was then the men of Erin debated who would be [7]fitted[7] to witness [8]the fight[8] of the bulls. They all agreed that it should be Bricriu son of Carbad [9]that were fitted for that office.[9] For, a year before this tale of the Cualnge Cattle-raid, Bricriu had gone

from the one province into the other to make a request of Fergus. And Fergus had retained [W.6134.] him with him waiting for his treasures and goods. And a quarrel arose between him and Fergus at a game of chess.[a] And he spake evil words to Fergus. Fergus smote him with his fist and with the chess-man that was in his hand, so that he drave the chess-man into his head and broke a bone in his head. Whilst the men of Erin were on the foray of the Tain, all that time Bricriu was being cured at Cruachan. And the day they returned from the expedition was the day Bricriu rose. [1]He came with the rest to witness the battle of the bulls.[1] [2]And this is why they selected Bricriu,[2] for that Bricriu was no fairer to his friend than to his foe. [3]"Come, ye men of Erin!" cried Bricriu; "permit me to judge the fight of the bulls,[3] [4]for it is I shall most truly recount their tale and their deeds afterwards." [4] And he was brought [5]before the men of Erin[5] to a gap whence to view the bulls.

[7-7] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[9-9] H. 1. 13 and Add.

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[a] The story is told in 'The Adventures of Nera,' published in the *Revue Celtique*, t. x, p. 227.

[1-1] YBL. 53a, 4-5.

[2-2] Stowe.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] H. 1. 13.

[6] So they drove the Brown Bull the morning of the fight till he met the Whitehorned at Tarbga in the plain of Ai: or Tarbguba ('Bull-groan'), or Tarbgleo ('Bull-fight'); Roi Dedond was the first name of that hill. Every one that had lived through the battle cared for naught else than to see the combat of the two bulls.[6]

[6-6] YBL. 52b, 52-53a, 3.

Each of the bulls sighted the other and there was a pawing and digging up of the ground in their frenzy there, and they tossed the earth over them. They threw up the earth over their withers and shoulders, and their eyes blazed red [LL.fo.104a.] in their heads like firm balls of fire, [7] and their sides bent like mighty boars on a hill.[7] Their cheeks and their nostrils swelled like smith's bellows in a forge. And each of them gave a resounding, deadly blow to the other. Each of them began to hole and to gore, to endeavour to slaughter [W.6151.] and demolish the other. Then the Whitehorned of Ai visited his wrath upon the Brown Bull of Cualnge for the evil of his ways and his doings, and he drove a horn into his side and visited his angry rage upon him. Then they directed their headlong course to where Bricriu was, so that the hoofs of the bulls drove him a man's cubit deep into the ground after his destruction. Hence, this is the Tragical Death of Bricriu [1] son of Carbad.[1]

[7-7] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that, [2] and the force of affection arose in him,[2] and he laid hold of a spearshaft that filled his grasp, and gave three blows to the Brown Bull of Cualnge from ear to tail, [3] so that it broke on his thick hide from ear to rump.[3] "No wonderful, lasting treasure was this precious prize for us," said Cormac, "that cannot defend himself against a stirk of his own age!" The Brown Bull of Cualnge heard this—for he had human understanding[a]—and he turned upon the Whitehorned. [4] Thereupon the Brown of Cualnge became infuriated, and he described a very circle of rage around the Whitehorned, and he rushed at him, so that he broke his lower leg



with the shock.[4] And thereafter they continued to strike at each other for a long while and great space of time, [5]and so long as the day lasted they watched the contest of the bulls[5] till night fell on the men of Erin. And when night had fallen, all that the men of Erin could hear was the bellowing and roaring. That night the bulls coursed over [6]the greater part of[6] all Erin. [7]For every spot in Erin wherein is a 'Bulls' Ditch,' or a 'Bulls' Gap,' or a 'Bulls' Fen,' or a 'Bulls' Loch,' or a 'Bulls' Rath,' [8]or a 'Bulls' Back,'[8] it is from them[7] [9]those places are named.[9]

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[2-2] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[a] See note [d], page 28, *supra*.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[7-7] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[8-8] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[9-9] Add.

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XXIX

[1]ACCOUNT OF THE BROWN BULL OF CUALNGE[1]

[2]A journey of a day and a night the Brown Bull carried the remains of the Whitehorned till he came to the loch that is by Cruachan. And he came thereout with the loin and the shoulder-blade and the liver of the other on his horns.[2] [W.6168.] It was not long before the men of Erin, as they were there [3]in the company of Ailill and Medb[3] early on the morrow, saw coming over Cruachan from the west the Brown Bull of Cualnge with the Whitehorned of Ai in torn fragments hanging about his ears and horns. The men of Erin arose, and they knew not which of the bulls it was. "Come, ye men!" cried Fergus; "leave him alone if it be the Whitehorned that is there; and if it be the Brown of Cualnge, leave him his trophy with him!"

[1-1] YBL. 41a, 8.

[2-2] YBL. 53a, 13-16.

[3-3] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4]Then it was that the [5]seven[5] Mane arose to take vengeance on the Brown Bull of Cualnge for his violence and his valour. "Whither go yonder men?" asked Fergus. "They go to kill the Brown of Cualnge," [6]said all,[6] "because of his evil deeds." [4] "I

pledge my word," [7]shouted Fergus:[7] "what has already been done in regard to the bulls is a small thing in compare with that which will [W.6179.] now take place, [1]unless with his spoils and victory ye let the Brown of Cualnge go from you into his own land." [1]

[4-4] Stowe and Add.

[5-5] Add.

[6-6] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[7-7] H. 1. 13, Stowe and Add.

[1-1] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[2]Then the Brown Bull of Cualnge gave forth the three chiefest bellowings of his throat in boast of his triumph, and fear of Fergus held back the men of Erin from attacking the Brown Bull of Cualnge.[2]

[2-2] H. 1. 13.

[3]Then[3] went the Brown Bull of Cualnge [4]to the west of Cruachan.[4] He turned his right[a] side towards Cruachan, and he left there a heap of the liver [5]of the Whitehorned,[5] so that thence is [6]named[6] Cruachan Ai ('Liver-reeks').

[3-3] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[a] As a sign of friendliness.

[5-5] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[6-6] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[7]Next he [8]came to his own land and[8] reached the river Finnglas ('Whitewater'), and, [9]on coming,[9] he drank a draught from the river, and, so long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow by him. Then he raised his head, and the shoulder-blades of the Whitehorned fell from him in that place. Hence, Sruthair Finnlethe ('Stream of the White Shoulder-blade') is the name given to it.[7]

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[7-7] Stowe.

[8-8] YBL. 53a, 18.

[9-9] YBL. 53a, 18.

He pursued his way [10]to the river Shannon,[10] to the brink of Ath Mor ('the Great Ford'), [11]and he drank a draught from it, and, as long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow past him. Then he raised his head, so that the two haunches of the Whitehorned fell from him there;[11] and he left behind the loin of the Whitehorned in that place, so that thence cometh Athlone ('Loinford'). He continued eastwards into the land of Meath to Ath Truim. [12]He sent forth his roar at Iraid Cuillinn; he was heard over the entire province. And he drank in Tromma.[12] [13]As long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow past him.[13] And he left behind [W.6192.] there the liver of the Whitehorned. [1]Some [2]learned men[2] say, it is from the liver of the Whitehorned which fell from the Brown of Cualnge, that Ath Truim ('Liverford') is called.[1]

[10-10] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[11-11] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[12-12] YBL. 53a, 22.

[13-13] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[1-1] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[2-2] Add.

He raised his head haughtily and shook the remains of the Whitehorned from him over Erin. He sent its hind leg away from him to Port Large ('Port of the Hind Leg'). He sent its ribs from him to Dublin, which is called Ath Cliath ('Ford of the Ribs' or 'of the Hurdles').

He turned his face northwards then, [3]and went on thence to the summit of Sliab Breg, and he saw the peaks[3] and knew the land of Cualnge, [4]and a great agitation came over him at the sight of his own land and country,[4] and he went his way towards it. In that place were women and youths and children lamenting the Brown Bull of Cualnge. They saw the Brown of Cualnge's forehead approaching them. "The forehead of a bull cometh towards us!" they shouted. Hence is Taul Tairb ('Bull's Brow') ever since. [5]Then he went on the road of Midluachar to Cuib, where he was wont to be with the yeld cow of Dare, and he tore up the earth there. Hence cometh Gort Buraig ('Field of the Trench').[5]

[3-3] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[4-4] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

[5-5] YBL. 53a, 26-28.

[LL.fo.104b.] Then turned the Brown of Cualnge on the women and youths and children of the land of Cualnge, and [6]with the greatness of his fury and rage[6] he effected a great slaughter [7]amongst them.[7] He turned his back to the hill then and his heart broke in his breast, even as a nut breaks, [8]and he belched out his heart like a black stone of dark blood.[8] [9]He went then and died between Ulster and Ui Echach at Druim Tairb. Druim Tairb ('Bull's Back') is the name of that place.[9]

[6-6] H. 1. 13 and Add.

[7-7] Translating from Stowe.

[8-8] Stowe, H. 1. 13 and Add.

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[9-9] YBL. 53a, 28-29.

[1]Such, then, is the account of the Brown Bull of Cualnge, and the end of the Tain by Medb of Cruachan daughter of Eocho Fedlech, and by Ailill son of Maga, and by all the men of Ulster up to this point.[1] [2]Ailill and Medb made peace with the men of Ulster and with Cuchulain. For seven years there was no killing of men amongst them in Erin. Finnabair remained with Cuchulain, and the Connachtmén went to their own land, and the men of Ulster returned to Emain Macha with their great triumph. *Finit. Amen.*[2]

[1-1] Translating from H. 1. 13 and Add.

[2-2] YBL. 53a, 29-33.

* * * * *

[W.6206.] A blessing be upon all such as shall faithfully keep the Tain in memory as it stands here and shall not add any other form to it.[a]

[a] With this the Irish text concludes: What follows is in Latin.

* * * * *

I, however, who have copied this history, or more truly legend, give no credence to various incidents narrated in it. For, some things herein are the feats of jugglery of demons, sundry others poetic figments, a few are probable, others improbable, and even more invented for the delectation of fools.

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INDEX AND PRONUNCIATION OF THE MORE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING PLACE AND PERSONAL-NAMES.

It will simplify matters for the English reader if the following points respecting the pronunciation of proper names in medieval Irish, are borne in mind:

Each *simple* word is accented on the first syllable.

Pronounce:

a (long), as in *aught*; a (short), as in *hot*. c with slender vowels (e, i), as in *king*; never as s. c with broad vowels (a, o, u), as in *car*; never as s. ch with slender vowels (e, i), as in German *Ich*; never as in *church*. ch with broad vowels (a, o, u), as in German *Buch*; never as in *church*. d with slender vowels (e, i), as in French *dieu*. d with broad vowels



(a, o, u), as in *thy*. e (long), as in *ale*; e (short), as in *bet*. g with slender vowels (e, i), as in *give*; never as *j*. g with broad vowels (a, o, u), as in *go*; never as *j*. gh with slender vowels (e, i) is slender ch *voiced*. gh with broad vowels (a, o, u) is broad ch *voiced*. i (long), as in *feel*; i (short), as in *it*. mh and bh intervocalic with slender vowels, as *v*. mh and bh intervocalic with broad vowels, as *w*. o (long), as in *note*; o (short), as in *done*. s with slender vowels (e, i), as in *shine*; never as *z*. s with broad vowels (a, o, u), as *s*. t with slender vowels (e, i), as in *tin*. t with broad vowels (a, o, u), as in *threw*. th, like *h*. u (long), as in *pool*; u (short), as in *full*.

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The remaining consonants are pronounced almost as in English.

Aed: to rime with *Day*

Aed Ernmas: the father of the Morrigan

Ai: see Mag Ai

Aidne: a district comprising the barony of Kiltartan, in the south-west of the County Galway

Aife: one of the three women-teachers of Cuchulain and Ferdiad (pronounced *Eefe*)

Aile: north-east of Baile, on Medb's march from Cruachan into Ulster

Ailill: king-consort of Queen Medb, dwelling in Cruachan Ai (pronounced *Aye/leel*)

Ailill Find Miltenga: one of the chief heroes of Ulster

Ailill macMailchlo: father of Sencha

Aine: see Cnoc Aine

Airne: north-east of Asse

Alba: Scotland

Amargin Iarngiunnach: a leading Ulster hero; father of Conall Cernach and brother of Iliach (pronounced *Avergin*)

Ane: a district in which is Knockaney in the County Limerick

Ardachad: north of Druim Licce

Ard Ciannachta: a place in the barony of Ferrard, in the County Louth

Ard Cuillenn: in Ulster, east of Moin Coltna

Ard Macha: Armagh

Assail: a place in Meath

Asse: north of Finnabair (Fennor), on Medb's march out of Connacht into Ulster

Ath: 'a ford' (pronounced *Ah*)



Ath Aladh Ind: a ford in the Plain of Murthemne

Ath Berchna: in Connacht, north-west of Croohan, near Bellanagare; it may be for Ath Bercha, in East Roscommon, and on or near the Shannon

Ath Buide: the village of Athboy, in the territory of Ross, County Meath

Ath Carpat: a ford on the river Nith (now the Dee), in the County Louth

Ath Ceit Chule: a ford on the river Glais, in Ulster

Ath Cliath: Dublin

Ath Coltna: in Connacht, south-west of Ath Moga and south-east of Cruachan

Ath Cro: a ford in Murthemne

Ath da Fert: a ford in Sliab Fuait, probably in the south of the barony of Upper Fews, County Armagh

Ath Darteisc: a ford in Murthemne

Ath Feidli: a ford in Ulster

Ath Fene: see Ath Irmidi

Ath Firdead: Ardee, a ford and a small town on the river Dee, in the County Louth

Ath Gabla: a ford on the Boyne, north of Knowth, in the County Meath (pronounced *Ah gowla*)

Ath Grenca: the same as Ath Gabla

Ath Irmidi: the older name of Ath Fene, south of Iraird Cuillinn

Ath Lethain: a ford on the Nith, in Conalle Murthemni

Ath Luain: Athlone, on the Shannon, on the borders of Connacht and Meath

Ath Meislir: a ford in Sliab Fuait, in Ulster

Ath Moga: the present Ballymoe, on the river Suck, about ten miles to the south-west of Cruachan, County Galway

Ath Mor: the old name for Ath Luain



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Ath na Foraire: on the road between Emain and Loch Echtrann

Ath Slissen: Bellaslishen Bridge; a ford on the Owenure River, near Elphin, in Connacht

Ath Solomshet: a ford, probably in Ulster

Ath Srethe: a ford in Conalle Murthemni

Ath Tamuin: a ford, somewhere in Ulster

Ath Traged: at the extremity of Tir Mor, in Murthemne

Ath Truim: Trim, on the river Boyne, in the County Meath

Aue: a slave in the household of King Conchobar

Aurthuile: north-east of Airne

Bacca: in Corcumruad

Bacc Draigin: a place in Ulster

Badb: the war-fury, or goddess of war and carnage; she was wont to appear in the form of a carrion-crow. Sometimes she is the sister of the Morrigan, and, as in the *Tain Bo Cualnge*, is even identified with her (pronounced *Bive*)

Badbgna: now Slieve Bawne, a mountainous range, in the barony of Ballintubber, in the east of County Roscommon

Baile: north-east of Meide ind Eoin, on Medb's march from Connacht into Ulster

Baile in Bile: on the way to Ardee

Bairche: Benna Bairche, the Mourne Mountains, north of Dundalk, in Ulster

Ball Scena: north-east of Dall Scena

Banba: an old name for Ireland

Banna: now the Bann, a river in Ulster

Becaltach: grandfather of Cuchulain

Bedg: a river in Murthemne



Belat Aileain: probably between Cualnge and Conalle Murthemni

Belach Caille More: north of Cnogba

Benna Bairche: see Bairche

Berba: the Barrow, a river in Leinster

Bercha: on or near the Shannon, near Bellanagare, in East Roscommon

Berchna: probably for Bercha

Bernas: the pass cut by Medb from Louth into Armagh; probably the “Windy Gap” across the Carlingford Peninsula

Betha: see Sliab Betha

Bir: the name of several rivers; probably Moyola Water, a river flowing into Lough Neagh

Bithslan: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Blai: a rich Ulster noble and hospitaller

Boann: the River Boyne

Bodb: the father of Badb

Boirenn: Burren, in the County Clare

Brane: probably a hill not far from Ardee, in the County Louth

Breslech Mor: a fort in Murthemne

Brecc: a place in Ulster

Brega: the eastern part of Meath

Brenide: a river in Conalle Murthemni, near Strangford Lough

Bricriu: son of Carbad, and the evil adviser of the Ulstermen

Bri Errgi: stronghold of Errge Echbel, in the County Down

Brigantia: Betanzos, in Galicia, on the north coast of Spain

Bri Ross: a hill to the north of Ardee, in the County Louth

Brug Meic ind Oc, or, as it is also called,

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Brug na Boinde: Brugh on the Boyne, near Stackallen Bridge, County Meath, one of the chief burial-places of the pagan Irish

Buagnech: probably in Leinster and near the river Liffey

Buan: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Buas: the river Bush, in the County Antrim

Burach: a place in Ulster

Callann: the Callan, a river near Emain Macha

Canann Gall: a place in Ulster

Carn: north of Inneoin; probably Carn Fiachach, in the parish of Conry, barony of Rathconrath, Westmeath

Carn macBuachalla, at Dunseverick, in Ulster

Carbre: stepson of Conchobar and brother of Ailill

Carrloeg: a place in Ulster

Casruba: father of Lugaid and grandfather of Dubthach

Cathba: north-east of Ochoonn, in Meath; or a river flowing into the Boyne, some distance to the west of Slane

Cathba: a druid of Conchobar's court; according to some accounts, the natural father of King Conchobar (pronounced *Cahvah*)

Celtchar: son of Uthechar, an Ulster warrior

Cenannas na rig: Kells, in the County Meath

Cenn Abrat: a range of hills on the borders of the Counties Cork and Limerick

Cet macMagach: a Connacht warrior

Cinn Tire: a place in Ulster

Clann Dedad: one of the three warrior-clans of Erin: a sept occupying the territory around Castleisland, County Kerry



Clann Rudraige: the warriors of King Conchobar: one of the three heroic tribes of Ireland

Clartha: Clara, near the present town of Mullingar, in the County Westmeath

Cletech: a residence of the kings of Ireland in Mag Breg, near Stackallan Bridge, on the banks of the Boyne

Clidna: *see sub* Tonn

Clithar Bo Ulad: probably in the centre of the County Louth

Cliu: an extensive territory in the county Limerick

Clothru: sister of Medb: Medb slew her while her son, Firbaide, was still unborn

Cluain Cain: now Clonkeen, in the west of County Louth

Cluain Carpat: a meadow at the river Cruinn in Cualnge

Cluain maccuNois: Clonmacnoise, on the Shannon, about nine miles below Athlone

Cnoc Aine: Knockany, a hill and plain in the County Limerick

Cnogba: Knowth, on the Boyne, near Drogheda, a couple of miles east of Slane, in the County Meath

Colbtha: the mouth of the Boyne at Drogheda, or some place near the Boyne

Collamair: between Gormanstown and Turvey, in the County Dublin

Coltain: south of Cruachan Ai

Conall: probably Tyrconnel, in the County Donegal

Conall Cernach: one of the chief warriors of Ulster: foster-brother of Cuchulain and next to him in point of prowess

Conalle Murthemni: a level plain in the County Louth, extending from the Cooley Mountains, or Carlingford, to the Boyne



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Conchobar: son of Cathba the druid, and of Ness, and foster-son of Fachtna Fatach (variously pronounced *Cruhoor*, *Connahoor*)

Conlaech: son of Cuchulain and Aife

Corcumruad: the present barony of Corcomroe, in the County Clare

Cormac Conlongas: King Conchobar's eldest son; called "the Intelligent Exile," because of the part he took as surety for the safety of the exiled sons of Usnech

Coronn: the barony of Corran, in the County Sligo

Corp Cliath: a place in Ulster

Craeb ruad: ordinarily Englished "Red Branch"; better, perhaps, "Nobles' Branch;" King Conchobar's banqueting-hall, at Emain Macha

Crannach: at Faughart, north-east of Fid Mor

Cromma: a river flowing into the Boyne not far from Slane

Cronn hi Cualngi: probably a hill or river of this name near Cualnge

Cruachan Ai: the ancient seat and royal burial-place of the kings of Connacht, ten miles north-east of the modern Rathcroghan, near Belanagare, in the County Roscommon (pronounced *Croohan*)

Cruinn: a river in Cualnge: probably the stream now called the Piedmont River, emptying into Dundalk Bay

Cruthnech: the land of the Irish Picts; the northern part of the County Down and the southern part of the County Antrim

Cu, Cucuc, Cuacain, Cucucan, Cucucuc: diminutives of the name Cuchulain

Cualnge: Cooley, a mountainous district between Dundalk Bay and Drogheda, in the barony of Lower Dundalk, in the County Louth. It originally extended to the County Down, and the name is now applied to the southern side of the Carlingford Mountains (pronounced *Cooln'ya*)

Cualu: a district in the County Wicklow

Cuchulain: the usual name of the hero Setanta; son of the god Lug and of Dechtire, and foster-son of Sualtaim (pronounced *Cuhoolin*)

Cuib: on the road to Midluachair



Cuilenn: the Cully Waters flowing southward from County Armagh into County Louth

Cul Sibliinne: now Kells in East Meath

Cul Silinne: Kilcooley, a few miles to the south-east of Cruachan, in the County Roscommon

Culenn: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Cuillenn: see Ard Cuillenn

Cuillenn Cinn Duni: a hill in Ulster

Cuince: a mountain in Cualnge

Cumung: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Curoi: son of Dare and king of South Munster

Cuscraid Menn Macha: son of Conchobar

Dall Scena: a place north of Aile

Dalraida: now “the Route,” a territory north of Slieve Mish, in the north of the County Antrim

Dare: chieftain of the cantred of Cualnge and owner of the Brown Bull of Cualnge

Dechtire: sister of King Conchobar and mother of Cuchulain



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Delga: see Dun Delga

Delga Murthemni: Dundalk

Delinn: a place or river near Kells between Duelt and Selaig, on Medb's march from Cruachan into Ulster

Delt: a place north of Drong, on Medb's march from Cruachan into Ulster

Delt: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Dergderc: Lough Derg, an expansion of the Shannon near Killaloe

Dichaem: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Domnann: see Irrus Domnann

Drong: a river in the land of the men of Assail, in Meath

Druim Caimthechta: north-east of Druim Cain

Druim Cain: possibly an older name for Temair (Tara)

Druim En: in South Armagh; probably a wooded height, near Ballymascanlan, in the County Louth

Druim Fornoct: near Newry, in the County Down

Druim Licce: north-east of Gort Slane, on Medb's march from Connacht into Ulster

Druim Salfinn: now Drumshallon, a townland in the County Louth, six miles north of Drogheda

Dub: the Blackwater, on the confines of Ulster and Connacht; or the confluence of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater at Navan

Dubh Sithleann (or Sainglenn): the name of one of Cuchulain's two horses

Dubloch: a lake between Kilcooley and Slieve Bawne, in the County Roscommon, on Medb's march from Cruachan into Ulster

Dubthach Doel Ulad: the Ulster noble who shares with Bricriu the place as prime mover of evil among the Ulstermen (pronounced *Duffach*)



Duelt: north or north-west of Delt, on Medb's march from Cruachan into Ulster

Dun da Benn: Mount Sandle, on the Bann, near Coleraine in the County Derry

Dun Delga: Dundalk, or the moat of Castletown, on the east coast near Dundalk; Cuchulain's home town

Dun macNechtain Scene: a fort in Mag Breg, at the place where the Mattock falls into the Boyne, about three miles above Drogheda

Dun Sobairche: Dunseverick, about three miles from the Giants' Causeway, in the County Antrim

Elg: an old name for Ireland

Ellne: probably east of the River Bann, near Coleraine

Ellonn: a place in Ulster

Emain Macha: the Navan Fort, or Hill, two miles west of Armagh; King Conchobar's capital and the chief town of Ulster (pronounced *Evvin Maha*)

Emer Foltchain: wife of Cuchulain (pronounced *Evver*)

Enna Agnech: according to the Annals of the Four Masters, he was High King of Ireland from 312 to 293 B.C.

Eo Donn Mor: north-east of Eo Donn Bec, in the County Louth

Echo Fedlech: father of Medb; according to the Four Masters, he reigned as monarch of Ireland from 142 to 131 B.C. (pronounced *Yokh-ho*)

Echo Salbuide: King of Ulster and father of Cethern's wife, Inna

Eogan macDurthachta: a chief warrior of Ulster and Prince of Fernmag

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Erc macFedilmithi: an Ulster hero, son of Fedlimid and grandson of Conchobar

Erna: a sept of Munstermen who later settled about Lough Erne, in Connacht

Ess Ruaid: Assaroe; a cataract on the River Erne near Ballyshannon, in the south of the County Donegal. It constituted part of the old boundary between Ulster and Connacht

Etarbane: one of the “seats” of the king of Cashel, in Tipperary

Ethliu: father of Lug

Ethne: sister of Medb (pronounced *Ehnna*)

Fachtna Fathach: king of Ulster and later of all Ireland; adoptive father of Conchobar and husband of Ness, Conchobar’s mother

Fal (or Inisfail): one of the bardic names for Ireland; Medb is called “of Fal,” as daughter of the High King of Ireland (pronounced *Fawl*)

Fan na Coba: a territory in the baronies of Upper and Lower Iveagh, in the County Down

Fedain Cualngi: a place in Ulster

Fedlimid Nocruthach: daughter of King Conchobar, wife of Loegaire Buadach, mother of Fiachna and cousin-german of Cuchulain (pronounced *Falemid*)

Femen: a territory at Slieve-na-man, extending perhaps from Cashel to Clonmel, in the southern part of the County Tipperary

Fene: the old tribal name of the Gaels; the “King of the Fene” is Conchobar, King of Ulster

Feorainn: a place near Ardachad, on Medb’s march into Ulster

Fercerdne: chief poet of the men of Ulster

Ferdiad: (pronounced *Fair-dee-ah*)

Fergus macRoig: one time king of Ulster; in voluntary exile in Connacht after the treacherous putting to death of the sons of Usnech by Conchobar. He became the chief director of the Tain under Medb

Ferloga: Ailill’s charioteer

Fernmag: Farney, a barony in the County Monaghan

Ferta Fingin: at Sliab Fuait

Fiachu macFiraba: one of the exiles of Ulster in the camp of Medb

Fian: the warrior-class

Fid Dub: a wood, north of Cul Silinne, on Medb's march into Ulster

Fid Mor: a wood, north of Dundalk and between it and Sliab Fuait

Fingabair: probably in the Fews Mountains

Finnabair: daughter to Ailill and Medb (pronounced *Fin-nuh-hur*)

Finnabair: Fennor, on the banks of the Boyne, near Slane, in Meath

Finnabair Slebe: near Imlech Glendamrach

Finncharn Slebe Moduirn: a height in the Mourne Mountains

Finnglas: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Finnglassa Asail: a river south-east of Cruachan

Fir Assail: a district containing the barony of Farbill, in Westmeath

Flidais Foltchain: wife of Ailill Finn, a Connacht chieftain; after her husband's violent death she became the wife of Fergus, and accompanied him on the Tain

Fochain: near Cuchulain's abode

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Fochard Murthemni: Faughart, two miles north-west of Dundalk, in the County Louth

Fodromma: a river flowing into the Boyne near Slane

Fuil lairn: the name of a ford west of Ardee

Gabal: the Feeguile, a river in the King's County

nGabar: a place near Donaghmore, perhaps to, the west of Lough Neagh in the County Tyrone

Galian: a name the Leinstermen bore. They were Ailill's countrymen

Gainemain: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Garech: the name of the hill where the final battle of the Tain was fought, some distance south-east of Athlone and near Mullingar, in Westmeath

Gegg: a woman's name

Genonn Gruadsolus: a druid and poet of Ulster; son of Cathba

Glaiss Colptha: the river Boyne

Glaiss Gatlaig: a river in Ulster

Glenamain: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Glenn Fochain: probably a valley east of Bellurgan Station

Glenn Gatt: a valley in Ulster

Glennamain: in Murthemne

Glenn in Scail: a place in Dalaraide, East Ulster

Glenn na Samaisce: in Slieve Gullion, in the County Armagh

Glenn Tail: another name for Belat Aileain

Gleoir: the Gloire, a river in Conalle Murthemni

Gluine Gabur: east of the Shannon, in the County Longford



Gort Slane: north of Slane and south-west of Druim Licce

Grellach Bobulge: at Dunseverick, in Ulster

Grellach Dolar (or Dolluid): Girley, near Kells, in the County Meath

Gualu Mulchi: the town-land of Drumgoolestown on the river Dee, in the County Louth

Ialla Ilgremma: near Sliab Betha and Mag Dula

Ibar macRiangabra: Conchobar's charioteer

Id macRiangabra: Ferdiad's charioteer, brother to Laeg

Ilgarech: a hill near Garech, *q.v.*

Iliach: grandfather to Conall Cernach

Illann Ilarchless: an Ulster warrior, son to Fergus

Imchad: son to Fiachna

Imchlar: near Donaghmore, west of Dungannon, in the County Tyrone

Immail: a place in the Mourne Mountains, in Ulster

Imrinn: a druid, son to Cathba

Inis Cuscraid: Inch, near Downpatrick

Inis Clothrann: Inishcloghran in Loch Ree, County Longford

Innbir Scene: the mouth of Waterford Harbour near Tramore; or the mouth of Kenmare Bay, in the County Kerry

Inncoin: the Dungolman, a river into which the Inny flows and which divides the barony of Kilkenny West from Rathconrath, in the County Westmeath

Iraird Cuillinn: a height south of Emain Macha, in Ulster

Irrus Domnann: the barony of Erris, in County Mayo: the clan which bore this name and to which Ferdiad belonged was one of the three heroic races of ancient Ireland

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Laeg: son of Rianganabair and Cuchulain's faithful charioteer (pronounced *Lay*)

Latharne: Larne, in the County Antrim

Lebarcham: a sorceress

Leire: in the territory of the Fir Roiss, in the south of the County Antrim

Ler: the Irish sea-god

Lethglas: Dun Lethglaisse, now Downpatrick, in Ulster

Lettre Luasce: between Cualnge and Conalle

Lia Mor: in Conalle Murthemni

Liath Mache: 'the Roan,' one of Cuchulain's two horses.

Lia Ualann: in Cualnge

Line (or Mag Line): Moylinne, in the County Antrim

Loch Ce: Lough Key, in the County Roscommon

Loch Echtrann: Muckno Lake, south of Sliab Fuait, in the County Monaghan

Loch Erne: Lough Erne, in the County Fermanagh

Loch Ri: Lough Ree, on the Shannon, in the County Galway

Loegaire Buadach: son to Connad Buide and husband of Fedlimid Nocruthach; one of the chief warriors of Ulster (pronounced *Layeray*)

Lothor: a place in Ulster

Luachair: probably Slieve Lougher, or the plain in which lay Temair

Luachra, a fort somewhere near the town of Castleisland, in the County Kerry

Lug: the divine father of Cuchulain

Lugaid: father of Dubthach

Lugmud: Louth, in the County of that name

Luibnech: possibly a place now called Limerick, in the County Wexford



MacMagach: relatives of Ailill

MacRoth: Medb's chief messenger

Mag: 'a plain' (pronounced *moy*)

Mag Ai: the great plain in the County Roscommon, extending from Ballymore to Elphin, and from Bellanagare to Strokestown (pronounced *Moy wee*)

Mag Breg: the plain along and south of the lower Boyne, comprising the east of County Meath and the north of County Dublin (pronounced *Moy bray*)

Mag Cruimm: south-east of Cruachan, in Connacht

Mag Dea: a plain in Ulster

Mag Dula: a plain through which the Do flows by Castledawson into Lough Neagh

Mag Eola: a plain in Ulster

Mag Inis: the plain comprising the baronies of Lecale and Upper Castlereagh, in the County Down

Mag Line: Moylinne, a plain to the north-east of Lough Neagh, in the barony of Upper Antrim

Mag Mucceda: a plain near Emain Macha

Mag Trega: Moytra, in the County Longford

Mag Tuaga: a plain in Mayo

Maic Miled: the Milesians

Mairg: a district in which is Slievemargie, in the Queen's County and the County Kilkenny

Manannan: son of Ler, a fairy god

Margine: a place in Cualnge

Mas na Righna: Massareene, in the County Antrim

Mata Murisc: mother of Ailill

Medb: queen of Connacht and wife of Ailill (pronounced *Mave*; in modern Connacht Irish *Mow* to rhyme with *cow*)

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Meide ind Eoin, and Meide in Togmail: places in or near the Boyne, in the County Louth

Midluachair: Slige Midluachra, the name of the highroad east of Armagh, leading north from Tara to Emain and into the north of Ireland

Mil: the legendary progenitor of the Milesians (See Maic Miled)

Miliuc: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Moduirn: see Sliab Moduirn

Moin Coltna: a bog between Slieve Bawne and the Shannon

Moraltach: great grandfather of Cuchulain

Morann: a famous judge

Morrigan: the war-goddess of the ancient Irish, "*monstrum in feminae figura*" (pronounced *More-reegan*)

Mossa: a territory, the southern part of which must have been in the barony of Eliogarty, not far from Cashel, in the County Tipperary

Muach: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Muresc: the land of Ailill's mother; Murreusk Hamlet, between Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick, in the County Mayo

Murthemne: a great plain along the northern coast of the County Louth between the river Boyne and the Cooley Mountains; now belonging to Leinster, but, at the time of the Tain, to Ulster (pronounced *Muhr-hev-ny*)

Nemain: the Badb

Ness: mother of King Conchobar by Cathba; she afterwards married Fachtna Fathach and subsequently Fergus macRoig

Nith: the river Dee which flows by Ardee, in the County Louth

Ochain: the name of Conchan bar's shield

Ochonn Midi: a place near the Blackwater at Navan



Ochtrach: near Finnglassa Asail, in Meath

Oenfer Aife: another name for Conlaech

Oengus Turbech: according to the Annals of Ireland, he reigned as High King from 384 to 326 B.C.

Ord: south-east of Cruachan and north of Tiarthechta

Partraige beca: Partry in Slechta south-west of Kells, in Meath

Port Large: Waterford

Rath Airthir: a place in Connacht

Rath Cruachan: Rathcroghan, between Belanagare and Elphin, in the County Roscommon

Rede Loche: a place in Cualnge

Renna: the mouth of the Boyne

Riangabair: father of the charioteers, Laeg and Id

Rigdonn: a place in the north

Rinn: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Rogne: a territory between the rivers Suir and Barrow, in the barony of Kells, the County Kildare or Kilkenny

Ross: a district in the south of the County Monaghan

Ross Mor: probably Ross na Rig, near Ball Scena

Sas: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Scathach: the Amazon dwelling in Alba who taught Cuchulain and Ferdiad their warlike feats (pronounced *Scaw-ha*)

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Selaig: Sheelagh, a townland in the barony of Upper Dundalk

Semne: Island Magee, north-east of Carrickfergus, in the County Antrim

Senbothae: Templeshanbo, at the foot of Mount Leinster, in the County Wexford

Sencha macAilella: the wise counsellor and judge of the Ulstermen

Sered: a plain in the north of the barony of Tirhugh, County Donegal

Setanta: the real name of Cuchulain

Sid: the terrene gods (pronounced *She*)

Sil: in Lecale, in the County Down

Sinann: the river Shannon

Siuir: the Suir, a river in Munster, forming the northern boundary of the County Waterford

Slabra: a place north of Selaig, near Kells, in Meath

Slaiss: south-east of Cruachan, between Ord and Inneoin

Slane: a town on the Boyne, in Meath

Slechta: south-west of Kells, in Meath

Slemain Mide: "Slane of Meath," Slewen, three miles to the west of Mullingar, in Westmeath

Sliab Betha: Slieve Beagh, a mountain whereon the Counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Monaghan meet

Sliab Culinn: Slieve Gullion, in the County Armagh

Sliab Fuait: the Fews Mountains, near Newtown-Hamilton, to the west and north-west of Slieve Gullion; in the southern part of the County Armagh

Sliab Mis: Slieve Mish, a mountain in the County Kerry, extending eastwards from Tralee

Sliab Moduirn: the Mourne Range, in the County Monaghan, partly in Cavan and partly in Meath



Sruthair Finnlethe: a river west of Athlone

Sualtaim (or, Sualtach) Sidech: the human father of Cuchulain

Suide Lagen: Mount Leinster, in the County Wexford

Tadg: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Taidle: near Cuib

Taltiu: Teltown, in the County Meath, on or near the Blackwater, between Navan and Kells; one of the chief places of assembly and burial of the Ulstermen

Taul Tairb: in Cualnge

Telamet: a river in Conalle Murthemni

Temair: Tara, the seat of the High King of Ireland, near Navan, in the County Meath (pronounced *Tavvir*)

Tethba descirt: South Teffia, a territory about and south of the river Inny, in the County Longford

Tethba tuascirt: south-east of Cruachan, in Teffia, County Longford

Tir Mor: in Murthemne

Tir na Sorcha: a fabled land, ruled over by Manannan

Tir Tairngire: “the Land of Promise”

Tonn Clidna: a loud surge in the Bay of Glandore

Tonn Rudraige: a huge wave in the Bay of Dundrum, in the County Cork

Tonn Tuage Inbir: “the Tuns,” near the mouth of the river Bann on the north coast of Antrim

Tor Breogain: “Bregon’s Tower,” in Spain

Tromma: south-east of Cruachan; also the name of a river flowing into the Boyne near Slane

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Tuaim Mona: Tumona, a townland in the parish of Ogulla, near Tulsk, south of Cruachan Ai, County Roscommon

Tuatha Bressi: a name for the people of Connacht

Tuatha De Danann: "the Tribes divine of Danu," the gods of the Irish Olympus

Turloch teora Crich: north of Tuaim Mona

Uachtur Lua: in the land of Ross

Uarba: a place in Ulster

Uathach: one of the three women-teachers of Cuchulain and Ferdiad

Uathu: north of Ochain

Ui Echach: the barony of Iveagh, in the County Down

Umansruth: a stream in Murthemne

Usnech: father of Noisi, Annle and Ardan

Uthechar: father of Celtchar and of Menn

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