

Heroic Romances of Ireland — Volume 2 eBook

Heroic Romances of Ireland — Volume 2

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Page 1

INTRODUCTION

The Tain bo Fraich, the Driving of the Cattle of Fraech, has apparently only one version; the different manuscripts which contain it differing in very small points; most of which seem to be due to scribal errors.

Practically the tale consists of two quite separate parts. The first, the longer portion, gives the adventures of Fraech at the court of Ailill and Maev of Connaught, his courtship of their daughter, Finnabar, and closes with a promised betrothal. The second part is an account of an expedition undertaken by Fraech to the Alps "in the north of the land of the Long Beards," to recover stolen cattle, as well as his wife," who is stated by O'Beirne Crowe, on the authority of the "Courtship of Trebland" in the Book of Fermoy, to have been Trebland, a semi-deity, like Fraech himself. Except that Fraech is the chief actor in both parts, and that there is one short reference at the end of the second part to the fact that Fraech did, as he had promised in the first part, join Ailill and Maev upon the War of Cualnge, there is no connection between the two stories. But the difference between the two parts is not only in the subject-matter; the difference in the style is even yet more apparent. The first part has, I think, the most complicated plot of any Irish romance, it abounds in brilliant descriptions, and, although the original is in prose, it is, in feeling, highly poetic. The second part resembles in its simplicity and rapid action the other "fore tales" or preludes to the War of Cualnge contained in this volume, and is of a style represented in English by the narrative ballad.

In spite of the various characters of the two parts, the story seems to have been regarded as one in all the manuscripts which contain it; and the question how these two romances came to be regarded as one story becomes interesting. The natural hypothesis would be that the last part was the original version, which was in its earlier part re-written by a man of genius, possibly drawing his plot from some brief statement that Finnabar was promised to Fraech in return for the help that he and his recovered cattle could give in the Great War; but a difficulty, which prevents us from regarding the second part as an original legend, at once comes in. The second part of the story happens to contain so many references to nations outside Ireland that its date can be pretty well fixed. Fraech and his companions go, over the sea from Ulster, *i.e.* to Scotland; then through "north Saxon-land" to the sea of Icht (*i.e.* the sea of Wight or the English Channel); then to the Alps in the north of the land of the Long-Beards, or Lombards. The Long-Beards do not appear in Italy until the end of the sixth century; the suggestion of North Saxon-Land reaching down to the sea of Wight suggests that there was then a South Saxon-Land, familiar to an Irish writer, dating this part of the story as before the end of the eighth

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century, when both Saxons and Long-Beards were overcome by Charlemagne. The second part of the story is, then, no original legend, but belongs to the seventh or eighth century, or the classical period; and it looks as if there were two writers, one of whom, like the author of the Egerton version of Etain, embellished the love-story part of the original legend, leaving the end alone, while another author wrote an account of the legendary journey of the demi-god Fraech in search for his stolen cattle, adding the geographical and historical knowledge of his time. The whole was then put together, like the two parts of the Etain story; the difference between the two stories in the matter of the wife does not seem to have troubled the compilers.

The oldest manuscript authority for the Tain bo Fraich is the Book of Leinster, written before 1150. There are at least two other manuscript authorities, one; in Egerton, 1782 (published by Professor Kuno Meyer in the *Zeitschrift für Celt. Philologie*, 1902); the other is in *Ms. XL.*, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh (published in the *Revue Celtique*, Vol. XXIV.). Professor Meyer has kindly allowed me to copy his comparison of these manuscripts and his revision of O'Beirne Crowe's translation of the Book of Leinster text. The text of the literal translation given here follows, however, in the main O'Beirne Crowe's translation, which is in the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy for 1870; a few insertions are made from the other MSS.; when so made the insertion is indicated by a note.

For those who may be interested in the subsequent history of Fraech, it may be mentioned that he was one of the first of the Connaught champions to be slain by Cuchulain in the war of Cualnge; see Miss Faraday's translation (*Grimm Library*, page 35).

PERSONS IN THE STORY

MORTALS

Ailill, King of Connaught.

Medb (or Maev), Queen of Connaught.

Findbar (or Finnabar), their daughter.

Froech (or Fraech), (pronounced Fraych); son of a Connaught man and a fairy mother.

Conall Cernach (Conall the Victorious), champion of Ulster.

Two Irish women, in captivity in the Alps, north of Lombardy.



Lothar (or Lothur), a follower of Fraech.

Bicne, a follower of Conall.

IMMORTALS

Befind, Fraech's fairy mother.

Boand (pronounced like "owned"), sister to Befind; Queen of the Fairies.

Three fairy harpers.

TAIN BO FRAICH

THE RAID FOR THE CATTLE OF FRAECH

Now the news of the love of that maid to Fraech, at his home where he dwelt, was brought, And he called his folk, and with all he spoke, and for speech with the maid he sought: And they counselled him thus: "Let a message from thee be sent to thy fairy kin To entreat their aid when we seek that maid; a boon we may chance to win: For the wondrous robes of the fairy land, and for gifts from the fairies plead; And sure thy mother's sister's hand will give to thee all thy need."



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To Mag Breg,[FN#1] where his mother's sister dwelt, to Boand he away hath gone, And she gave to him mantles of dark black-blue, like a beetle's back they shone: Four dark-grey rings in each cloak she gave were sewn, and a brooch shone, bright With the good red gold in each mantle's fold; she gave tunics pale and white, And the tunics were bordered with golden loops, that forms as of beasts displayed; And a fifty she added of well-rimmed shields, that of silver white were made.

[FN#1] Pronounced Maw Brayg.

Then away they rode, in each hero's hand was a torch for a kingly hall, For studs of bronze, and of well-burned gold, shone bright on the spears of all; On carbuncle sockets the spears were set, their points with jewels blazed; And they lit the night, as with fair sunlight, as men on their glory gazed.

By each of the fifty heroes' side was a sword with a hilt of gold; And a soft-grey mare was for each to ride, with a golden curb controlled; At each horse's throat was a silver plate, and in front of that plate was swung, With a tinkling sound to the horse's tread, a bell with a golden tongue. on each steed was a housing of purple hide, with threads of silver laced, And with spiral stitch of the silver threads the heads of beasts were traced, And each housing was buckled with silver and gold: of findruine[FN#2] was made the whip For each rider to hold, with a crook of gold where it came to the horse man's grip.

[FN#2] Pronounced "find-roony," the unknown "white-bronze" metal.

By their sides, seven chase-hounds were springing
At leashes of silver they strained,
And each couple a gold apple, swinging
On the fetter that linked them, sustained:
And their feet with bronze sheaths had been guarded,
As if greaves for defence they had worn,
Every hue man hath seen, or hath fancied,
By those chase-hounds in brilliance was borne.

Seven trumpeters strode on the road before, with colour their cloaks were bright, And their coats, that shone with the gauds they wore, flashed back as they met the light; On trumpets of silver and gold they blew, and sweet was the trumpets' sound, And their hair, soft and yellow, like fairy threads, shone golden their shoulders round.

Three jesters marched in the van, their-crowns were of silver, by gilt concealed, And emblems they. carried of quaint device, engraved on each jester's shield; They had staves which with crests were adorned, and ribs down their edges in red bronze ran; Three harp-players moved by the jesters' sides, and each was a kingly man. All these were the gifts that the fairy gave, and gaily they made their start, And to Croghan's[FN#3] hold, in that guise so brave, away did the host depart.



[FN#3] Pronounced Crow-han.

On the fort stands a watchman to view them,
And thus news down to Croghan he calls:
“From yon plain comes, in fulness of numbers,
A great army to Croghan’s high walls;
And, since Ailill the throne first ascended,
Since the day we hailed Maev as our Queen,
Never army so fair nor so splendid
Yet hath come, nor its like shall be seen.”



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“Tis strange,” said he,” as dipped in wine,
So swims, so reels my head,
As o’er me steals the breath divine
Of perfume from them shed.”

“A fair youth,” said he, “forth with them goeth,
And the grace of such frolicsome play,
And such lightness in leap as he showeth
Have I seen not on earth till to-day:
For his spear a full shot’s length he flingeth,
Yet the spear never reacheth to ground,
For his silver-chained hounds follow after,
In their jaws is the spear ever found!”
The Connaught hosts without the fort
To see that glory rushed:
Sixteen within, of baser sort,
Who gazed, to death were crushed.

To the fort came the youths, from their steeds they leapt, for the steeds and the stabling cared, And they loosed the hounds that in leash they kept, for the hunt were the hounds prepared; Seven deer, seven foxes and hares, they chased to the dun on Croghan’s plain, Seven boars they drave, on the lawn in haste the game by the youths was slain: With a bound they dashed into Bree, whose flood by the lawns of Croghan flows; Seven otters they caught in its stream, and brought to a hill where the gateway rose.

’Twas there that Fraech and the princes sat at the castle-gate to rest, And the steward of Croghan with Fraech would speak, for such was the king’s behest: Of his birth it was asked, and the men he led all truth to the herald spake: “It is Idath’s son who is here,” they said, and they gave him the name of Fraech. To Ailill and Maev went the steward back of the stranger’s name to tell; “Give him welcome,” said they: “Of a noble race is that youth, and I know it well; Let him enter the court of our house,” said the king, the gateway they opened wide; And the fourth of the palace they gave to Fraech, that there might his youths abide.

Fair was the palace that there they found,
Seven great chambers were ranged it round;
Right to the walls of the house they spread,
Facing the hall, where the fire glowed red:
Red yew planks, that had felt the plane,
Dappled the walls with their tangled grain:

Rails of bronze at the side-walls stood,
Plates of bronze had made firm the wood,



Seven brass bolts to the roof-tree good
Firmly the vaulting tied.

All that house had of pine been made,
Planks, as shingles, above were laid;
Sixteen windows the light let pass,
Each in a frame of the shining brass:
High through the roof was the sky seen bright;
Girder of brass made that opening tight,
Under the gap it was stretched, and light
Fell on its gleaming side.

All those chambers in splendour excelling,
The midmost of all in the ring,
Rose a room, set apart as the dwelling
Of Queen Maeve, and of Ailill the king.
Four brass columns the awning supported
For their couch, there was bronze on the wall;
And two rails, formed of silver, and gilded,
In that chamber encircled it all:
In the front, to mid-rafters attaining,
Rose in silver a wand from the floor;
And with rooms was that palace engirdled,
For they stretched from the door to the door.



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'Twas there they went to take repose,
On high their arms were hung;
And down they sank, and welcome rose,
Acclaimed by every tongue.

By the queen and the king they were welcome made, the strangers they turned to greet; And their courtesy graciously Fraech repaid: "'Twas thus we had hoped to meet." "Not for boasting to-day are ye come!" said Maev; the men for the chess she set: And a lord of the court in the chess-man sport by Fraech in a match was met. 'Twas a marvellous board of findruine fair was prepared, when they played that game, Four handles, and edges of gold it had, nor needed they candles' flame; For the jewels that blazed at the chess-board's side, a light, as from lamps, would yield; And of silver and gold were the soldiers made, who engaged on that mimic field.

"Get ye food for the chiefs!" said the king; said Maev, "Not yet, 'tis my will to stay, To sit with the strangers, and here with Fraech in a match at the chess to play!" "Let thy game be played!" said Ailill then, "for it pleaseth me none the less." And Queen Maev and Fraech at the chess-board sate, and they played at the game of chess.

Now his men, as they played, the wild beasts late caught were cooking, they thought to feed; And said Ailill to Fraech, "Shall thy harpmen play?" "Let them play," said Fraech, "indeed:" Now those harpers were wondrous men, by their sides they had sacks of the otter's skin, And about their bodies the sacks were tied, and they carried their harps within, With stitches of silver and golden thread each case for a harp was sewed; And, beneath the embroidery gleaming red, the shimmer of rubies showed!

The skin of a roe about them in the middle, it was as white as snow; black-grey eyes in their centre. Cloaks of linen as white as the tunic of a swan around these ties.[FN#4] Harps of gold and silver and bronze, with figures of serpents and birds, and hounds of gold and silver: as they moved those strings those figures used to run about the men all round.

[FN#4] This is the Egerton version, which is clearly right here. The Book of Leinster gives: "These figures accordingly used to run," &c., leaving out all the first part of the sentence, which is required to make the meaning plain.

They play for them then so that twelve of the people[FN#5] of Ailill and Medb die with weeping and sadness.

[FN#5] The Book of Leinster omits "of Ailill and Medb."

Gentle and melodious were the triad, and they were the Chants of Uaithne[FN#6] (Child-birth). The illustrious triad are three brothers, namely Gol-traiges (Sorrow-strain),



and Gen-traiges (Joy-strain), and Suan-traiges (Sleep-strain). Boand from the fairies is the mother of the triad:

[FN#6] Pronounced something like Yew-ny.

At every one of the harpers' waists was girded the hide of a roe, And black-grey spots in its midst were placed, but the hide was as white as snow; And round each of the three of them waved a cloak, as white as the wild swan's wings: Gold, silver, and bronze were the harps they woke; and still, as they touched the strings, The serpents, the birds, and the hounds on the harps took life at the harps' sweet sound, And those figures of gold round the harpmen rose, and floated in music round.



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Then they played, sweet and sad was the playing,
Twelve of Ailill's men died, as they heard;
It was Boand[FN#7] who foretold them that slaying,
And right well was accomplished her word.

[FN#7] Pronounced with sound of "owned."

'Tis the three Chants of Child-Birth
Give names to those Three;
Of the Harp of the Dagda[FN#8]
The children they be.

[FN#8] The Dagda seems to have been the chief god of the old Celtic mythology.

To those harpers a fairy
Is mother, of yore
To that Harp, men call Child-Birth,
Queen Boand the three bore.

They are three noble brothers,
And well are they known;
They are kindly and gentle,
And tuneful of tone.

One is Joy-Song, one Sorrow's,
One, "Song that gives Sleep,"
And the Harp's strains, their father's,
Remembered they keep.

For when Boand was at bearing,
Came Sorrow the first,
From the Harp, its strings tearing
With cry, Sorrow burst.

Then there came to her pleasure
For birth of a boy;
And a sweet smiling measure
The Harp played, 'twas Joy.

And she swooned in her anguish,
For hard the third birth:
From the Harp, her pains soothing,
Sleep's strain came on earth.



Then from Boand passed her slumber,
And, "Uaithne,"[FN#9] she cried,
Thy three sons, thou sharp Child-Birth,
I take to my side.

[FN#9] Pronounced something like Yew-ny.

Cows and women by Ailill
And Maev shall be slain;
For on these cometh Sorrow,
And Joy, and Sleep's strain:

Yea, and men, who these harpers,
Thy children, shall hear,
By their art to death stricken,
Shall perish in fear."

Then the strains died away in the palace,
The last notes seemed to sink, and to cease:
"It was stately," said Fergus, "that music."
And on all came a silence, and peace.

Said Fraech, "The food divide ye!
Come, bring ye here the meat!"
And down to earth sank Lothar,
On floor he set his feet;

He crouched, on haunches sitting,
The joints with sword he split;
On bones it fell unerring,
No dainty part he hit!

Though long with sword he hewed, and long
Was meat by men supplied,
His hand struck true; for never wrong
Would Lothar meat divide.

Three days at the chess had they played; three nights, as they sat at the game, had gone: And they knew not the night for the sparkling light from the jewels of Fraech that shone; But to Maev turned Fraech, and he joyously cried, "I have conquered thee well at the chess! Yet I claim not the stake at the chess-board's side, lest thy palace's wealth be less."



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“For no lengthier day have I sat in such play,” said Maev, “since I here first came.” “And well may the day have seemed long,” said Fraech, “for three days and three nights was the game!” Then up started Maev, and in shame she blushed that the chiefs she had failed to feed; To her husband, King Ailill, in wrath she rushed: “We have both done a goodly deed! For none from our stores hath a banquet brought for the youths who are strangers here!” And said Ailill, “In truth for the play was thy thought, and to thee was the chess more dear.” “We knew not that darkness had come,” said Maev, “’tis not chess thou should’st thus condemn; Though the day had gone, yet the daylight shone from the heart of each sparkling gem; Though the game we played, all could meal have made, had men brought of the night advice, But the hours sped away, and the night and the day have approached and have fled from us thrice!” “Give command,” said the king, “that those wailing chants, till we give them their food, be stilled.” And food to the hands of each they gave, and all with the meat were filled; And all things merrily went, for long the men with a feast were fed, For, as feasting they sat, thrice rose the day, thrice night above earth was spread.

They brought Fraech, when that banquet was ended,
To the House of Debate, which was near,
And they asked of his errand: “In friendship,
For a visit,” said Fraech, “am I here!”
“And ’twas joy that we felt, when receiving
This your host,” said the king, “ye have brought
Much of pleasure to all, and with grieving,
When ye go, shall your presence be sought!”

“Then,” said Fraech, “for a week we abide here.”
For two weeks in that dun they abode:
And the Connaught men pressed round to view them,
As each eve home from hunting they rode.

Yet Fraech was sad, with Findabar
A word he sought in vain;
Though he in truth from home so far
Had come that word to gain.

Fraech, as night was ending,
Sprang from out his bed;
Sought the brook, intending
There to lave his head.

There King Ailill’s daughter
Stood, and there her maid:
They that hour from water
Sought the cleansing aid.



“Stay,” he cried, and speaking
Caught the maiden’s hand;
“Thee alone as seeking,
I have reached this land:

Here am I who sought thee,
Stay, and hear me woo!”
“Ah! thy speech hath brought me
Joy,” she said, “most true;

Yet, thy side if nearing,
What for thee can I?”
“Maid!” he cried, “art fearing
Hence with me to fly?”

“Flight I hold disloyal,”
Answered she in scorn;
“I from mother royal,
I to king was born;

What should stay our wedding?
None so mean or poor
Thou hast seemed, nor dreading
Kin of mine; be sure:

I will go! ’tis spoken,
Thou beloved shalt be!
Take this ring as token,
Lent by Maev to me!



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'Twas my mother who bid me to save it,
For the ring she in secret would hide;
'Tis as pledge of our love that I gave it,
As its pledge it with thee should abide.

Till that ring we can freely be showing
I will tell them I put it astray!"
And, the love of each other thus knowing,
Fraech and Finnabar went on their way.

"I have fear," said the king, "that with Fraech yon maid to his home as his wife would fly;
Yet her hand he may win, if he rides on the Raid with his kine when the time draws
nigh." Then Fraech to the Hall of Debate returned, and he cried: "Through Some secret
chink Hath a whisper passed?" and the king replied, "Thou would'st fit in that space, I
think!"

"Will ye give me your daughter?" said Fraech: said the king, "In sight of our hosts she
goes; If, as gift to suffice for her marriage price, thy hand what I ask bestows." "I will
give thee what price thou dost name," said Fraech, "and now let its sum be told!" "Then
a sixty steeds do I claim," said the king, "dark-grey, and with bits of gold; And twelve
milch-cows, from their udders shall come the milk in a copious stream, And by each of
the cows a white calf shall run; bright red on its ears shall gleam; And thou, with thy
harpers and men, shalt ride by my side on the Cualgne[FN#10] Raid, And when all thy
kine driven here shall stand, shall the price of her hand be paid!"

[FN#10] Pronounced Kell-ny.

Now I swear by the edge of my sword," said Fraech, "I swear by my arms and shield, I
would give no such pledge, even Maev to take, were it her thou wert fain to yield!" And
he went from the House of Debate, but Maev with Ailill bent low in plot: All around us
our foes," said the king, "shall close, if Finnabar stays here not; Many kings of Erin, who
seek that maid, shall hear of her borne away, And in wrath they will rush on our land;
'twere best that Fraech we devise to slay; Ere that ruin he bring, let us make our spring,
and the ill yet unwrought arrest." "It were pity such deed should be done," said Maev,
"and to slay in our house our guest! 'Twill bring shame on us ever." "No shame to our
house," said King Ailill, "that death shall breed!" (And he spake the words twice)—"but
now hear my advice, how I plan we should do this deed."

All the plot had been planned; to their house at last
King Ailill and Maev through the doorway passed;
And the voice of the king uprose:
"'Tis now that the hounds should their prey pursue,
Come away to the hunt who the hounds would view;
For noon shall that hunting close."



So forth went they all, on the chase intent,
And they followed till strength of the hounds was spent,
And the hunters were warm; and to bathe they went
Where the river of Croghan flows.



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And, "'Tis told me," said Ailill, "that Fraech hath won
A great fame for the feats he in floods hath done:
Wilt thou enter these streams by our side that run?
We are longing to see thee swim!"
And said Fraech: "Is it good then indeed thy stream?
And said Ailill: "Of danger no need to dream,
For many a youth from the Connaught Court
In its current hath bathed, and hath swum it in sport,
Nor of any who tried have we heard report
That ill hath been found by him!"

Then Fraech from his body his garments stripped,
And he sprang down the bank, and he swiftly slipped
In the stream: and the king's glance fell
On a belt, left by Fraech on the bank; the king
Bent low; in the purse saw his daughter's ring,
And the shape of the ring could tell.
"Come hither, O Maev," Ailill softly cried;
And Queen Maev came up close to her husband's side
"Dost thou know of that ring?" in the purse she spied
The ring, and she knew it well.
Then Ailill the ring from the purse withdrew,
And away from the bank the fair gem he threw;
And the ring, flashing bright, through the air far flew,
To be lost in the flood's swift swell.

And Fraech saw the gem as it brightly flashed,
And a salmon rose high, at the light it dashed,
And, as back in the stream with the ring he splashed,
At the fish went Fraech with a spring:
By its jole was the salmon secured, and thrown
To a nook in the bank, that by few was known;
And unnoticed he threw it, to none was it shown
As it fell to the earth, with the ring.

And now Fraech from the stream would be going:
But, "Come not," said the king, "to us yet:
Bring a branch from yon rowan-tree, showing
Its fair berries, with water-drops wet."

Then Fraech, swimming away through the water,
Broke a branch from the dread rowan-tree,
And a sigh came from Ailill's fair daughter;
"Ah! how lovely he seemeth," said she.



Fair she found him, swimming
Through that pool so black
Brightly gleamed the berries,
Bound athwart his back.

White and smooth his body,
Bright his glorious hair;
Eyes of perfect greyness,
Face of men most fair:

Soft his skin, no blemish,
Fault, nor spot it flawed;
Small his chin, and steady,
Brave his brow, and broad.

Straight he seemed, and stainless;
Twixt his throat and chin
Straying scarlet berries
Touched with red his skin.

Oft, that sight recalling,
Findabar would cry:
"Ne'er was half such beauty,
Naught its third came nigh!"

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To the bank he swam, and to Ailill was thrown, with its berries, the tree's torn limb: "Ah! how heavy and fair have those clusters grown; bring us more," and he turned to swim; The mid-current was reached, but the dragon was roused that was guard to that rowan-tree; And it rose from the river, on Fraech it rushed: "Throw a sword from the bank!" cried he. And no man on the bank gave the sword: they were kept by their fear of the queen and the king; But her clothes from her Finnabar stripped, and she leapt in the river his sword to bring. And the king from above hurled his five-barbed spear; the full length of a shot it sped: At his daughter it flew, and its edge shore through two tresses that crowned her head: And Fraech in his hand caught the spear as it fell, and backward its point he turned. And again to the land was the spear launched well: 'twas a feat from the champions learned. Though the beast bit his side as that spear was cast, yet fiercely the dart was flung, Through the purple robe of the king it passed, through the tunic that next him clung!

Then up sprang the youths of the court, their lord in danger they well might deem, But the strong hand of Fraech had closed firm on the sword, and Finnabar rose from the stream. Now with sword in his hand, at the monster's head hewed Fraech, on its side it sank, And he came from the river with blade stained red, and the monster he dragged to the bank. Twas then Bree's Dub-lind in the Connaught land the Dark Water of Fraech was named, From that fight was it called, but the queen and the king went back to their dun, ashamed!

"It is noble, this deed we have done!" said Maev: "'Tis pitiful," Ailill cried: "For the hurt of the man I repent, but to her, our daughter, shall woe betide! On the morrow her lips shall be pale, and none shall be found to aver that her guilt, When the sword for his succour to Fraech she gave, was the cause why her life was spilt! Now see that a bath of fresh bacon broth be prepared that shall heal this prince, And bid them with adze and with axe the flesh of a heifer full small to mince: Let the meat be all thrown in the bath, and there for healing let Fraech be laid!" And all that he ordered was done with care; the queen his command obeyed.

Then arose from Fraech's trumpets complaining,
As his men travelled back to the dun;
Their soft notes lamentation sustaining,
And a many their deaths from them won;

And he well knew its meaning;
And, "Lift me, my folk,"
He cried, "surely that keening
From Boand's women broke:
My mother, the Fairy, is nigh."

Then they raised him, and bore him
Where wild rose the sound;



To his kin they restored him;
His women pressed round:

And he passed from their sight out of Croghan;
For that night from earth was he freed,
And he dwelt with his kin, the Sid-Dwellers
In the caverns of Croghan's deep Sid.[FN#11]



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[FN#11] Pronounced Sheed; Sid is the fairy mound.

All at nine, next morrow,
Gazed, for back he came,
Round their darling pressing
Many a fairy dame:

Brave he seemed, for healing
All his wounds had got;
None could find a blemish,
None a sear or spot.

Fifty fairies round him,
Like in age and grace;
Like each form and bearing;
Like each lovely face.

All in fairy garments,
All alike were dressed;
None was found unequal;
None surpassed the rest.

And the men who stood round, as they neared them,
Were struck with a marvellous awe;
They were moved at the sight, and they feared them,
And hardly their breath they could draw.

At the Liss all the fairies departed,
But on Fraech, as they vanished, they cried:
And the sound floated in of their wailing,
And it thrilled through the men, and they sighed.

Then first that mournful measure,
“The Ban-Shee[FN#12] Wail,” was heard;
All hearts with grief and pleasure
That air, when harped, hath stirred.

[FN#12] Spelt “Ban Side,” the fairy women.

To the dun came Fraech, and the hosts arose, and welcome by all was shown: For it seemed as if then was his birth among men, from a world to the earth unknown! Up rose for him Maeve and King Ailill, their fault they confessed, and for grace they prayed, And a penance they did, and for all that assault they were pardoned, and peace was made. And now free from all dread, they the banquet spread, the banqueting straight



began: But a thought came to Fraech, and from out of his folk he called to his side a man.

“Now hie thee,” he said, “to the river bank, a salmon thou there shalt find; For nigh to the spot where in stream I sank, it was hurled, and ’twas left behind; To Finnabar take it, and bid her from me that the salmon with skill she broil: In the midst of the fish is the ring: and none but herself at the task must toil; And to-night, as I think, for her ring they call “: then he turned to the feast again, And the wine was drunk, and the revellers sunk, for the fumes of it seized their brain, And music and much of delights they had; but the king had his plans laid deep, “Bring ye all of my jewels,” he cried-on the board they were poured in a dazzling heap. “They are wonderful, wonderful!” cried they all: “Call Finnabar!” said the king; And his daughter obeyed, and her fifty maids stood round in a lovely ring. My daughter,” said Ailill, “a ring last year I gave thee, is’t here with thee yet? Bring it hither to show to the chiefs, and anon in thy hand shall the gem be set.” “That jewel is lost,” said the maid, “nor aught of the fate of the ring I know!” Then find it,” said Ailill, “the ring must be brought, or thy soul from thy limbs must go!”

“Now, nay!” said they all, “it were cruel
That such fate for such fault should be found:
Thou hast many a fair-flashing jewel
In these heaps that lie scattered around!”
And said Fraech: “Of my jewels here glowing
Take thy fill, if the maid be but freed;
'Tis to her that my life I am owing,
For she brought me the sword in my need.”



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“There is none of thy gems that can aid her,”
Said Ailill, “nor aught thou canst give;
There is one thing alone that shall save her;
If the ring be restored, she shall live!

Said Finnabar; “Thy treasure
To yield no power is mine:
Do thou thy cruel pleasure,
For strength, I know, is thine.”

“By the god whom our Connaught land hailleth,
I swear,” answered Ailill the king,
“That the life on thy lips glowing faileth,
If thou place in my hand not the ring!”
And that hard,” he laughed softly, “the winning
Of that jewel shall be, know I well;
They who died since the world had beginning
Shall come back to the spot where they fell
Ere that ring she can find, and can bear it
To my hand from the spot where ’twas tossed,
And as knowing this well, have I dared her
To restore what for aye hath been lost!”

“No ring for treasure thus despised,”
She said, “exchanged should be;
Yet since the king its worth hath prized,
I’ll find the gem for thee!”

Not thus shalt thou fly,” said the king, “to thy maid let the quest of the ring be bid!” And his daughter obeyed, and to one whom she sent she told where the ring was hid:

“But,” Finnabar cried, “by my country’s god I swear that from out this hour, Will I leave this land, and my father’s hand shall no more on my life have power, And no feasting shall tempt me to stay, no draughts of wine my resolve shall shake!” “No reproach would I bring, if as spouse,” said the king, “thou a groom from my stalls would’st take! But that ring must be found ere thou goest! “Then back came her maid, and a dish she bore: And there lay a salmon well broiled, as sauce with honey ’twas garnished o’er: By the daughter of Ailill herself with skill had the honey-sweet sauce been made. And high on the breast of the fish, the ring of gold that they sought was laid. King Ailill and Maev at the ring gazed hard; Fraech looked, in his purse he felt: Now it seemeth,” he said, “’twas to prove my host that I left on the bank my belt,

And Ailill now I challenge
All truth, as king to tell;



What deed his cunning fashioned,
And what that ring befell.”

“There is naught to be hidden,” said Ailill;
“It was mine, in thy purse though it lay
And my daughter I knew as its giver:
So to river I hurled it away.

Now Fraech in turn I challenge
By life and honour’s claim:
Say how from yon dark water
That ring to draw ye came.”

“There is naught to be hidden,” he answered,
“The first day that I came, on the earth,
Near the court round thy house, was that jewel;
And I saw all its beauty and worth:

In my purse then I hid it; thy daughter,
Who had lost it, with care for it sought;
And the day that I went to that water
Was the news of her search to me brought:

And I asked what reward she would give me,
If the gem in her hand should be placed;
And she answered that I, if I found it,
For a year by her love should be graced.



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But not then could the ring be delivered:
For afar in my chamber it lay:
Till she gave me the sword in the river,
We met not again on that day.

'Twas then I saw thee open
My purse, and take the ring:
I watched, and towards the water
That gem I saw thee fling:

I saw the salmon leaping,
The ring it caught, and sank:
I came behind, and seized it;
And brought the fish to bank.

Then I wrapped it up close in my mantle;
And 'twas hid from inquisitive eyes;
And in Finnabar's hand have I placed it:
And now there on the platter it lies!"

Now all who this or that would know
To ask, and praise began:
Said Finnabar, "I'll never throw
My thoughts on other man!"

Now hear her word," her parents cried,
"And plight to her thy troth,
And when for Cualgne's[FN#13] kine we ride
Do thou redeem thine oath.

[FN#13] Pronounced Kell-ny.

And when with kine from out the east
Ye reach our western land;
That night shall be thy marriage feast;
And thine our daughter's hand."

"Now that oath will I take," answered back to them Fraech, "and the task ye have asked will do!" So he tarried that night till the morning's light; and they feasted the whole night through; And then homewards bound, with his comrades round, rode Fraech when the night was spent, And to Ailill and Maev an adieu he gave, and away to their land they went.



TAIN BO FRAICH

Part I

LITERAL TRANSLATION

Fraech, son of Idath of the men of Connaught, a son he to Befind from the Side: a sister she to Boand. He is the hero who is the most beautiful that was of the men of Eriu and of Alba, but he was not long-lived. His mother gave him twelve cows out of the Sid (the fairy mound), they are white-eared. He had a good housekeeping till the end of eight years without the taking of a wife. Fifty sons of kings, this was the number of his household, co-aged, co-similar to him all between form and instruction. Findabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, loves him for the great stories about him. It is declared to him at his house. Eriu and Alba were full of his renown and the stories about him.

To Fraech[FN#14] was Idath[FN#15] father,
A Connaught man was he:
And well we know his mother
Who dwells among the Shee;[FN#16]
Befind they call her, sister
To Boand,[FN#17] the Fairy Queen;
And Alba ne'er, nor Erin,
Such grace as Fraech's hath seen.
Yet wondrous though that hero's grace,
His fairy lineage high,
For years but few his lovely face
Was seen by human eye.

[FN#14] Pronounced Fraych.

[FN#15] Pronounced Eeda.

[FN#16] The Fairies.

[FN#17] Pronounced with the sound of "owned."



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Fraech had twelve of white-eared fairy-cattle,
'Twas his mother those cattle who gave:
For eight years in his home he dwelt wifeless,
And the state of his household was brave;
Fifty princes, whose age, and whose rearing,
And whose forms were as his, with him played;
And his glory filled Alba and Erin
Till it came to the ears of a maid:
For Maev and Ailill's[FN#18] lovely child,
Fair Findabar, 'twas said,
By tales of Fraech to love beguiled,
With Fraech in love would wed.

[FN#18] Pronounced Al-ill.

After this going to a dialogue with the maiden occurred to him; he discussed that matter with his people.

“Let there be a message then sent to thy mother’s sister, so that a portion of wondrous robing and of gifts from the Side (fairy folk) be given thee from her.” He goes accordingly to the sister, that is to Boand, till he was in Mag Breg, and he carried away fifty dark-blue cloaks, and each of them was like the back of a black chafer,[FN#19] and four black-grey, rings on each cloak, and a brooch of red gold on each cloak, and pale white tunics with loop-animals of gold around them. And fifty silver shields with edges, and a candle of a king’s-house in the hand of them (the men), and fifty studs of findruine[FN#20] on each of them (the lances), fifty knobs of thoroughly burned gold on each of them; points (i.e. butt-ends) of carbuncle under them beneath, and their point of precious stones. They used to light the night as if they were the sun’s rays.

[FN#19] The Book of Leinster gives “fifty blue cloaks, each like findruine of art.”

[FN#20] Pronounced “find-roony,” the unknown “white-bronze” metal.

And there were fifty gold-hilted swords with them, and a soft-grey mare under the seat of each man, and bits of gold to them; a plate of silver with a little bell of gold around the neck of each horse. Fifty caparisons[FN#21] of purple with threads of silver out of them, with buckles of gold and silver and with head-animals (i.e. spiral ornaments). Fifty whips of findruine, with a golden hook on the end of each of them. And seven chase-hounds in chains of silver, and an apple of gold between each of them. Greaves of bronze about them, by no means was there any colour which was not on the hounds.

[FN#21] The word for caparisons is “acrann,” the usual word for a shoe. It is suggested that here it may be a caparison of leather: “shoes” seem out of place here. See *Irische Texts*, iii.



Seven trumpeters with them with golden and silver trumpets with many coloured garments, with golden fairy-yellow heads of hair, with shining tunics. There were three jesters before them with silver diadems under gilding. Shields with engraved emblems (or marks of distinction) with each of them; with crested staves, with ribs of bronze (copper-bronze) along their sides. Three harp-players with a king's appearance about each of them opposite to these.[FN#22] They depart for Cruachan with that appearance on them.



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[FN#22] The word for caparisons is “acrann,” the usual word for a shoe. It is suggested that here it may be a caparison of leather: “shoes” seem out of place here. See *Irish Texts*, iii. 2. p. 531.

The watchman sees them from the dun when they had come into the plain of Cruachan. “A multitude I see,” he says, “(come) towards the dun in their numbers. Since Ailill and Maev assumed sovereignty there came not to them before, and there shall not come to them, a multitude, which is more beautiful, or which is more splendid. It is the same with me that it were in a vat of wine my head should be, with the breeze that goes over them.

“The manipulation and play that the young hero who is in it makes—I have not before seen its likeness. He shoots his pole a shot’s discharge from him; before it reaches to earth the seven chase-hounds with their seven silver chains catch it.”

At this the hosts come from the dun of Cruachan to view them. The people in the dun smother one another, so that sixteen men die while viewing them.

They alight in front of the dun. They tent their steeds, and they loose the chase-hounds. They (the hounds) chase the seven deer to Rath-Cruachan, and seven foxes, and seven hares, and seven wild boars, until the youths kill them in the lawn of the dun. After that the chase-hounds dart a leap into Brei; they catch seven otters. They brought them to the elevation in front of the chief rath. They (Fraech and his suite) sit down there.

A message comes from the king for a parley with them. It is asked whence they came, they name themselves according to their true names, “Fraech, son of Idath this,” say they. The steward tells it to the king and queen. “Welcome to them,” say Ailill and Maev; “It is a noble youth who is there,” says Ailill, “let him come into the Liss (outer court).” The fourth of the house is allotted to them. This was the array of the house, a seven fold order in it; seven apartments from fire to side-wall in the house all round. A rail (or front) of bronze to each apartment; a partitioning of red yew under variegated planing all.

Three plates of bronze in the skirting of each apartment. Seven plates of brass from the ceiling (?) to the roof-tree in the house.

Of pine the house was made; it is a covering of shingle it had externally. There were sixteen windows in the house, and a frame of brass, to each of them; a tie of brass across the roof-light. Four beams of brass on the apartment of Ailill and Medb, adorned all with bronze, and it in the exact centre of the house. Two rails of silver around it under gilding. In the front a wand of silver that reached the middle rafters of the house. The house was encircled all round from the door to the other.[FN#23]

[FN#23] It should be noted that it is not certain whether the word “imdai,” translated apartments, really means “apartments” or “benches.” The weight of opinion seems at present to take it as above.



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They hang up their arms in that house, and they sit, and welcome is made to them.

“Welcome to you,” say Ailill and Medb. “It is that we have come for,” says Fraech. “It shall not be a journey for boasting[FN#24] this,” says Medb, and Ailill and Medb arrange the chess-board after that. Fraech then takes to the playing of chess with a man of their (?) people.

[FN#24] This is the rendering in the Yellow Book of Lecan, considered by Meyer to be the true reading. The Book of Leinster text gives “aig-baig,” a word of doubtful meaning. The *Eg. Ms.* has also a doubtful word.

It was a beauty of a chess-board. A board of findruine in it with four ears[FN#25] and edges of gold. A candle of precious stones at illuminating for them. Gold and silver the figures that were upon the table. “Prepare ye food for the warriors,” said Ailill. “Not it is my desire,” said Medb, but to go to the chess yonder against Fraech.” “Get to it, I am pleased,” said Ailill, and they play the chess then, and Fraech.

[FN#25] The “ears” were apparently handles shaped like ears. The same word is used for the rings in the cloaks, line 33 above.

His people were meanwhile at cooking the wild animals. “Let thy harpers play for us,” says Ailill to Fraech. “Let them play indeed!” says Fraech. A harp-bag[FN#26] of the skins of otters about them with their adornment of ruby (or coral), beneath their adornment of gold and silver.

[FN#26] Meyer translates this: “the concave part of the harp.”

It is from the music which Uaithne, the Dagda’s harp, played that the three are named. The time the woman was at the bearing of children it had a cry of sorrow with the soreness of the pangs at first: it was smile and joy it played in the middle for the pleasure of bringing forth the two sons: it was a sleep of soothingness played the last son, on account of the heaviness of the birth, so that it is from him that the third of the music has been named.

Boand awoke afterwards out of the sleep. “I accept,” she says, “thy three sons O Uaithne of full ardour, since there is Suan-traide and Gen-traide, and Gol-traide on cows and women who shall fall by Medb and Ailill, men who shall perish by the hearing of art from them.”

They cease from playing after that in the palace: “It is stately it has come,” says Fergus. “Divide ye to us,” says Fraech to his people, “the food, bring ye it into the house.” Lothur went on the floor of the house: he divides to them the food. On his haunches he used to divide each joint with his sword, and he used not to touch the food part: since he commenced dividing, he never hacked the meat beneath his hand.



They were three days and three nights at the playing of the chess on account of the abundance of the precious stones in the household of Fraech. After that Fraech addressed Medb. "It is well I have played against thee (i.e. have beaten thee)," he says, "I take not away thy stake from the chess-board that there be not a decay of hospitality for thee in it."



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“Since I have been in this dun this is the day which I deem longest in it ever,” says Medb. “This is reasonable,” says Fraech, “they are three days and three nights in it.” At this Medb starts up. It was a shame with her that the warriors were without food. She goes to Ailill: she tells it to him. “A great deed we have done,” said she, “the stranger men who have come to us to be without food.” “Dearer to thee is playing of the chess,” says Ailill. “It hinders not the distribution to his suite throughout the house. They have been three days and three nights in it but that we perceived not the night with the white light of the precious stones in the house.” “Tell them,” says Ailill, “to cease from the lamenting until distribution is made to them.” Distribution is then made to them, and things were pleasing to them, and they stayed three days and three nights in it after that over the feasting.

It is after that Fraech was called into the house of conversation, and it is asked of him what brought him. “A visit with you,” said he, “is pleasing to me.” “Your company is indeed not displeasing with the household,” said Ailill, “your addition is better than your diminution.”

“We shall stay here then,” says Fraech, “another week.” They stay after that till the end of a fortnight in the dun, and they have a hunt every single day towards the dun. The men of Connaught used to come to view them.

It was a trouble with Fraech not to have a conversation with the daughter: for that was the profit that had brought him. A certain day he starts up at the end of night for washing to the stream. It is the time she had gone and her maid for washing. He takes her hand. “Stay for my conversing,” he says; “it is thou I have come for.” “I am delighted truly,” says the daughter; “if I were to come, I could do nothing for thee.” “Query, wouldst thou elope with me?” he says.

“I will not elope,” says she, “for I am the daughter of a king and a queen. There is nothing of thy poverty that you should not get me (i.e. thy poverty is not so great that thou art not able to get me) from my family; and it shall be my choice accordingly to go to thee, it is thou whom I have loved. And take thou with thee this ring,” says the daughter, “and it shall be between us for a token. My mother gave it to me to put by, and I shall say that I put it astray.” Each of them accordingly goes apart after that.

“I fear,” says Ailill, “the eloping of yon daughter with Fraech, though she would be given to him on solemn pledge that he would come towards us with his cattle for aid at the Spoil.” Fraech goes to them to the house of conversation. “Is it a secret (cocur, translated “a whisper” by Crowe) ye have?” says Fraech. “Thou wouldst fit in it,” says Ailill.



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“Will ye give me your daughter?” says Fraech. “The hosts will clearly see she shall be given,” says Ailill, “if thou wouldst give a dowry as shall be named.” “Thou shalt have it,” says Fraech. “Sixty black-grey steeds to me, with their bits of gold to them, and twelve milch cows, so that there be milked liquor of milk from each of them, and an ear-red, white calf with each of them; and thou to come with me with all thy force and with thy musicians for bringing of the cows from Cualgne; and my daughter to be given thee provided thou dost come” (or as soon as^[FN#27] thou shalt come). “I swear by my shield, and by my sword, and by my accoutrement, I would not give that in dowry even of Medb.” He went from them out of the house then. Ailill and Medb hold a conversation. “It shall drive at us several of the kings of Erin around us if he should carry off the daughter. What is good is, let us dash after him, and let us slay him forthwith, before he may inflict destruction upon us.” “It is a pity this,” says Medb, “and it is a decay of hospitality for us.” “It shall not be a decay of hospitality for us, it shall not be a decay of hospitality for us, the way I shall prepare it.”

[FN#27] This is Thurneysen’s rendering (“Sagen aus dem alten Irland,” p. 121).

Ailill and Medb go into the palace. “Let us go away,” says Ailill, that we may see the chase-hounds at hunting till the middle of the day, and until they are tired.” They all go off afterwards to the river to bathe themselves.

“It is declared to me,” says Ailill, “that thou art good in water. Come into this flood, that we may see thy swimming.” “What is the quality of this flood?” he says. “We know not anything dangerous in it,” says Ailill, “and bathing in it is frequent.” He strips his clothes off him then, and he goes into it, and he leaves his girdle above. Ailill then opens his purse behind him, and the ring was in it. Ailill recognises it then. “Come here, O Medb,” says Ailill. Medb goes then. “Dost thou recognise that?” says Ailill. “I do recognise,” she says. Ailill flings it into the river down.

Fraech perceived that matter. He sees something, the salmon leaped to meet it, and caught it in his mouth. He (Fraech) gives a bound to it, and he catches its jole, and he goes to land, and he brings it to a lonely^[FN#28] spot on the brink of the river. He proceeds to come out of the water then. “Do not come,” says Ailill, “until thou shalt bring me a branch of the rowan-tree yonder, which is on the brink of the river: beautiful I deem its berries.” He then goes away, and breaks a branch off the trees and brings it on his back over the water. The remark of Find-abair was: “Is it not beautiful he looks?” Exceedingly beautiful she thought it to see Fraech over a black pool: the body of great whiteness, and the hair of great loveliness, the face of great beauty, the eye of great greyness; and he a soft youth without fault, without blemish, with a below-narrow, above-broad face; and he straight, blemishless; the branch with the red berries between the throat and the white face. It is what Find-abair used to say, that by no means had she seen anything that could come up to him half or third for beauty.



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[FN#28]"Hidden spot" (Windisch

After that he throws the branches to them out of the water. "The berries are stately and beautiful, bring us an addition of them." He goes off again until he was in the middle of the water. The serpent catches him out of the water. "Let a sword come to me from you," he says; and there was not on the land a man who would dare to give it to him through fear of Ailill and Medb. After that Find-abair strips off her clothes, and gives a leap into the water with the sword. Her father lets fly a five-pronged spear at her from above, a shot's throw, so that it passes through her two tresses, and that Fraech caught the spear in his hand. He shoots the spear into the land up, and the monster in his side. He lets it fly with a charge of the methods of playing of championship, so that it goes through the purple robe and through the tunic (? shirt) that was about Ailill.

At this the youths who were about Ailill rise to him. Find-abair goes out of the water and leaves the sword in Fraech's hand, and he cuts the head off the monster, so that it was on its side, and he brought the monster with him to land. It is from it is Dub-lind Fraech in Brei, in the lands of the men of Connaught. Ailill and Medb go to their dun afterwards.

"A great deed is what we have done," says Medb. "We repent," says Ailill, "of what we have done to the man; the daughter however," he says, "her lips shall perish [common metaphor for death] to-morrow at once, and it shall not be the guilt of bringing of the sword that shall be for her. Let a bath be made by you for this man, namely, broth of fresh bacon and the flesh of a heifer to be minced in it under adze and axe, and he to be brought into the bath." All that thing was done as he said. His trumpeters then before him to the dun. They play then until thirty of the special friends of Ailill die at the long-drawn (or plaintive) music. He goes then into the dun, and he goes into the bath. The female company rise around him at the vat for rubbing, and for washing his head. He was brought out of it then, and a bed was made. They heard something, the lament-cry on Cruachan. There were seen the three times fifty women with crimson tunics, with green head-dresses, with brooches of silver on their wrists.

A messenger is sent to them to learn what they had bewailed. "Fraech, son of Idath," says the woman, "boy-pet of the king of the Side of Erin." At this Fraech heard their lament-cry.

Thirty men whom King Ailill loved dearly
By that music were smitten to die;
And his men carried Fraech, and they laid him
In that bath, for his healing to lie.

Around the vat stood ladies,
They bathed his limbs and head;
From out the bath they raised him,
And soft they made his bed.



Then they heard a strange music;
The wild Croghan "keen";
And of women thrice fifty
On Croghan were seen.



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They had tunics of purple,
With green were they crowned;
On their wrists glistened silver,
Where brooches were bound.

And there neared them a herald
To learn why they wailed;
"Tis for Fraech," was their answer,
"By sickness assailed;

'Tis for Fraech, son of Idath,[FN#29]
Boy-darling is he
Of our lord, who in Erin
Is king of the Shee!"[FN#30]

And Fraech heard the wail in their cry;

[FN#29] Pronounced Eeda.

[FN#30] The Fairies.

"Lift me out of it," he says to his people; "this is the cry of my mother and of the women of Boand." He is lifted out at this, and he is brought to them. The women come around him, and bring him from them to the Sid of Cruachan (i.e. the deep caverns, used for burial at Cruachan).

They saw something, at the ninth hour on the morrow he comes, and fifty women around him, and he quite whole, without stain and without blemish; of equal age (the women), of equal form, of equal beauty, of equal fairness, of equal symmetry, of equal stature, with the dress of women of the fairies about them so that there was no means of knowing of one beyond the other of them. Little but men were suffocated around them. They separate in front of the Liss.[FN#31] They give forth their lament on going from him, so that they troubled[FN#32] the men who were in the Liss excessively. It is from it is the Lament-cry of the Women of the Fairies with the musicians of Erin.

[FN#31] The Liss is the outer court of the palace.

[FN#32] "Oo corastar tar cend," "so that they upset, or put beside themselves." Meyer takes literally, "so that they fell on their backs" (?)

He then goes into the dun. All the hosts rise before him, and bid welcome to him, as if it were from another world he were coming.



Ailill and Medb arise, and do penance to him for the attack they had made at him, and they make peace. Feasting commenced with them then at once. Fraech calls a servant of his suite:

“Go off,” he says, “to the spot at which I went into the water. A salmon I left there—bring it to Find-abair, and let herself take charge over it; and let the salmon be well broiled by her, and the ring is in the centre of the salmon. I expect it will be asked of her to-night.” Inebriety seizes them, and music and amusement delight them. Ailill then said: “Bring ye all my gems to me.” They were brought to him then, so that they were before him. “Wonderful, wonderful,” says every one. “Call ye Find-abair to me,” he says. Find-abair goes to him, and fifty maidens around her. “O daughter,” says Ailill, “the ring I gave to thee last year, does it remain with thee? Bring it to me that the warriors may see it. Thou shalt have it afterwards.” “I do not know,” she says, “what has been done about it.” “Ascertain then,” says Ailill, “it must be sought, or thy soul must depart from thy body.”



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“It is by no means worth,” say the warriors, “there is much of value there, without that.” “There is naught of my jewels that will not go for the maid,” says Fraech, “because she brought me the sword for pledge of my soul.”

“There is not with thee anything of gems that should aid her unless she returns the ring from her,” says Ailill.

“I have by no means the power to give it,” says the daughter, “what thou mayest like do it in regard to me.” “I swear to the god to whom my people swear, thy lips shall be pale (literally, shall perish) unless thou returnest it from thee,” says Ailill. “It is why it is asked of thee, because it is impossible; for I know that until the people who have died from the beginning of the world. Come, it comes not out of the spot in which it was flung.” “It shall not come for a treasure which is not appreciated,”[FN#33] says the daughter, “the ring that is asked for here, I go that I may bring it to thee, since it is keenly it is asked.” “Thou shalt not go,” says Ailill; “but let one go from thee to bring it.”

[FN#33] This is Windisch’s rendering (Irische Texte, I. p. 677: s.v. main).

The daughter sends her maid to bring it.

“I swear to the god to whom my territories swear, if it shall be found, I shall by no means be under thy power any longer though I should be at great drinking continually.” (?)

[FN#34] “I shall by no means prevent you from doing that, namely even if it were to the groom thou shouldst go if the ring is found,” says Ailill. The maid then brought the dish into the palace, and the broiled salmon on it, and it dressed under honey which was well made by the daughter; and the ring of gold was on the salmon from above.

[FN#34] “dian dumroib for sar-ol mogreis.” Meyer gives “if there is any one to protect me.” The above is Crowe’s rendering.

Ailill and Medb view it. After that Fraech looks at it, and looks at his purse. “It seems to me it was for proof that I left my girdle,” says Fraech. “On the truth of the sovereignty,” says Fraech, “say what thou did’st about the ring.” “This shall not be concealed from thee,” says Ailill; “mine is the ring which was in thy purse, and I knew it is Find-abair gave it to thee. It is therefore I flung it into the Dark Pool. On the truth of thine honour and of thy soul, O Fraech, declare thou what way the bringing of it out happened.”

“It shall not be concealed on thee,” says Fraech. “The first day I found the ring in front of the outer court, and I knew it was a lovely gem. It is for that reason I put it up industriously in my purse. I heard, the day I went to the water, the maiden who had lost it a-looking for it. I said to her: ‘What reward shall I have at thy hands for the finding of it?’ She said to me that she would give a year’s love to me.



“It happened I did not leave it about me; I had left it in the house behind me. We met not until we met at the giving of the sword into my hand in the river. After that I saw the time thou open’st the purse and flungest the ring into the water: I saw the salmon which leaped for it, so that it took it into its mouth. I then caught the salmon, took it up in the cloak, put it into the hand of the daughter. It is that salmon accordingly which is on the dish.”



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The criticising and the wondering at these stories begin in the house hold. "I shall not throw my mind on another youth in Erin after thee," says Find-abair. "Bind thyself for that," say Ailill and Medb, "and come thou to us with thy cows to the Spoil of the Cows from Cualnge; and when thou shalt come with thy cows from the East back, ye shall wed here that night at once and Find-abair." "I shall do that thing," says Fraech. They are in it then until the morning. Fraech sets about him self with his suite. He then bids farewell to Ailill and Medb. They depart to their own territories then.

TAIN BO FRAICH

PART II

Unto Fraech it hath chanced, as he roved from his lands
That his cattle were stolen by wandering bands:
And there met him his mother, and cried, "On thy way
Thou hast tarried, and hard for thy slackness shalt pay!
In the Alps of the south, the wild mountains amid,
Have thy children, thy wife, and thy cattle been hid:
And a three of thy kine have the Picts carried forth,
And in Alba they pasture, but far to the north!"

"Now, alack!" answered Fraech, "what is best to be done?"
"Rest at home," said his mother, "nor seek them my son;
For to thee neither cattle, nor children, nor wife
Can avail, if in seeking thou lovest thy life;
And though cattle be lacking, the task shall be mine
To replace what is lost, and to grant thee the kine."

"Nay, not so," answered Fraech, "by my soul I am sworn,
That when cattle from Cualgne by force shall be torn
To King Ailill and Maev on my faith as their guest
I must ride with those cattle for war to the west!"
"Now but vainly," she said, "is this toil on thee cast;
Thou shalt lose what thou seekest", and from him she passed.

Three times nine of his men for that foray were chosen, and marched by his side, And a hawk flew before, and for hunting, was a hound with a hunting-leash tied;

To Ben Barchi they went, for the border of Ulster their faces were set: And there, of its marches the warder, the conquering Conall they met. Fraech hailed him, the conquering Conall, and told him the tale of his spoil; "'Tis ill luck that awaits thee," said Conall, "thy quest shall be followed with toil! "'Twill be long ere the goal thou art reaching, though thy heart in the seeking may be." "Conall Cernach,[FN#35] hear thou



my beseeching said Fraech, "let thine aid be to me; I had hoped for this meeting with Conall, that his aid in the quest might be lent." "I will go with thee truly," said Conall: with Fraech and his comrades he went.

[FN#35] Pronounced Cayr-nach.

Three times nine, Fraech and Conall before them,
Over ocean from Ireland have passed;
Through the Land of North Saxony bore them,
And the South Sea they sighted at last.
And again on the sea billows speeding,
They went south, over Ichtian foam;
And marched on: southward still was their leading:
To the land where the Long-Beards have home:
But when Lombardy's bounds they were nearing
They made stand; for above and around
Were the high peaks of Alpa appearing,
And the goal that they sought had been found.

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On the Alps was a woman seen straying, and herding the flocks of the sheep, "Let our warriors behind be delaying," said Conall, "and south let us keep:

'Twere well we should speak with yon woman, perchance she hath wisdom to teach!"
And with Conall went Fraech at that counsel; they neared her, and held with her speech.

"Whence have come you?" she said: "Out of Ireland are we,"
Answered Conall: "Ill luck shall for Irishmen be
In this country," she cried, "yet thy help I would win;
From thy land was my mother; thou art to me kin!"

"Of this land we know naught, nor where next we should turn,"
Answered Conall.; "its nature from thee we would learn."
"Tis a grim land and hateful," the woman replied,
"And the warriors are restless who forth from it ride;
For full often of captives, of women and herd
Of fair kine by them taken is brought to me word."

"Canst thou say what latest spoil," said Fraech, "they won?"
"Ay," she said, "they harried Fraech, of Idath[FN#36] son
He in Erin dwelleth, near the western sea;
Kine from him they carried, wife, and children three
Here his wife abideth, there where dwells the king,
Turn, and see his cattle, yonder pasturing."

[FN#36] Pronounced Eeda.

Out spoke Conall Cernach;[FN#37] "Aid us thou" he cried:
"Strength I lack," she answered, "I can only guide."
"Here is Fraech," said Conall, "yon his stolen cows":
"Fraech!" she asked him, "tell me, canst thou trust thy spouse?"
"Why," said Fraech, "though trusty, doubtless, when she went;
Now, since here she bideth, truth may well be spent."
"See ye now yon woman?" said she, "with your herd,
Tell to her your errand, let her hear your word;
Trust in her, as Irish-sprung ye well may place;
More if ye would ask me, Ulster reared her race."

[FN#37] Pronounced Cayr-nach.

To that woman they went, nor their names from her hid;
And they greeted her; welcome in kindness she bid:
"What hath moved you," she said, "from your country to go?"
"On this journey," said Conall, "our guide hath been woe:



All the cattle that feed in these pastures are ours,
And from us went the lady that's kept in yon towers."
"Tis ill-luck," said the woman, "that waits on your way,
All the men of this hold doth that lady obey;
Ye shall find, amid dangers, your danger most great
In the serpent who guardeth the Liss at the gate."

"For that lady," said Fraech, "she is none of my
She is fickle, no trust from me yet did she win:
But on thee we rely, thou art trusty, we know;
Never yet to an Ulsterman Ulster was foe."

"Is it men out of Ulster," she said, "I have met?"
"And is Conall," said Fraech, "thus unknown to you yet?
Of all heroes from Ulster the battle who faced
Conall Cernach is foremost." His neck she embraced,
And she cried, with her arms around Conall: "Of old
Of the conquering Conall our prophets have told;
And 'tis ruin and doom to this hold that you bring;
For that Conall shall sack it, all prophecies sing."



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“Hear my rede,” she told him: “When at fall of day
Come the kine for milking, I abroad will stay;
I the castle portal every eve should close:
Ye shall find it opened, free for tread of foes:
I will say the weakling calves awhile I keep;
'Tis for milk, I'll tell them: come then while they sleep;
Come, their castle enter, all its wealth to spoil;
Only rests that serpent, he our plans may foil:
Him it rests to vanquish, he will try you most;
Surely from that serpent swarms a serpent host!”

“Trust us well,” answered Conall, “that raid will we do!
And the castle they sought, and the snake at them flew:
For it darted on Conall, and twined round his waist;
Yet the whole of that castle they plundered in haste,
And the woman was freed, and her sons with her three
And away from her prison she went with them free:
And of all of the jewels amassed in that dun
The most costly and beauteous the conquerors won.

Then the serpent from Conall was loosed, from his belt
It crept safely, no harm from that serpent he felt:
And they travelled back north to the Pictish domains,
And a three of their cattle they found on the plains;
And, where Olla Mae Briuin[FN#38] his hold had of yore,
By Dunolly their cattle they drove to the shore.

[FN#38] Pronounced “Brewin.”

It chanced at Ard Uan Echach,[FN#39] where foam is hurled on high,
That doom on Bicne falling, his death he came to die:
'Twas while the cows were driven that Bicne's life was lost:
By trampling hooves of cattle crushed down to death, or tossed;
To him was Loegaire[FN#40] father, and Conall Cernach chief
And Inver-Bicne's title still marks his comrades' grief.

[FN#39] Pronounced “Ard Oon Ay-ha,”

[FN#40] Pronounced “Leary.”

Across the Stream of Bicne the cows of Fraech have passed,
And near they came to Benchor, and there their horns they cast:
'Tis thence the strand of Bangor for aye is named, 'tis said:
The Strand of Horns men call it; those horns his cattle shed.



To his home travelled Fraech, with his children, and
And his cattle, and there with them lived out his life,
Till the summons of Ailill and Maev he obeyed;
And when Cualgne was harried, he rode on the Raid.

TAIN BO FRAICH

PART II

LITERAL TRANSLATION

It happened that his cows had been in the meanwhile stolen. His mother came to him. "Not active (or "lucky") of journey hast thou gone; it shall cause much of trouble to thee," she says. "Thy cows have been stolen, and thy three sons, and thy wife, so that they are in the mountain of Elpa. Three cows of them are in Alba of the North with the Cruthnechi (the Picts)." "Query, what shall I do?" he says to his mother. "Thou shalt do



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a non-going for seeking them; thou wouldest not give thy life for them," she says. "Thou shalt have cows at my hands besides them." "Not so this," he says: "I have pledged my hospitality and my soul to go to Ailill and to Medb with my cows to the Spoil of the Cows from Cualnge." "What thou seekest shall not be obtained," says his mother. At this she goes off from him then.

He then sets out with three nines, and a wood-cuckoo (hawk), and a hound of tie with them, until he goes to the territory of the Ulstermen, so that he meets with Conall Cernach (Conall the Victorious) at Benna Bairchi (a mountain on the Ulster border).

He tells his quest to him. "What awaits thee," says the latter, "shall not be lucky for thee. Much of trouble awaits thee," he says, "though in it the mind should be." "It will come to me," says Fraech to Connall, "that thou wouldest help me any time we should meet." (?) "I shall go truly," says Conall Cernach. They set of the three (i.e. the three nines) over sea, over Saxony of the North, over the Sea of Icht (the sea between England and France), to the north of the Long-bards (the dwellers of Lombardy), until they reached the mountains of Elpa. They saw a herd-girl at tending of the sheep before them. "Let us go south," says Conall, "O Fraech, that we may address the woman yonder, and let our youths stay here."

They went then to a conversation. She said, "Whence are ye?" "Of the men of Erin," says Conall. "It shall not be lucky for the men of Erin truly, the coming to this country. From the men of Erin too is my mother. Aid thou me on account of relationship."

"Tell us something about our movements. What is the quality of the land we have to come to?" "A grim hateful land with troublesome warriors, who go on every side for carrying off cows and women as captives," she says. "What is the latest thing they have carried off?" says Fraech. "The cows of Fraech, son of Idath, from the west of Erin, and his wife, and his three sons. Here is his wife here in the house of the king, here are his cows in the country in front of you." "Let thy aid come to us," says Conall. Little is my power, save guidance only." "This is Fraech," says Conall, and they are his cows that have been carried off." "Is the woman constant in your estimation?" she says. "Though constant in our estimation when she went, perchance she is not constant after coming." "The woman who frequents the cows, go ye to her; tell ye of your errand; of the men of Ireland her race; of the men of Ulster exactly."

They come to her; they receive her, and they name themselves to her, and she bids welcome to them. "What hath led you forth?" she says. "Trouble hath led us forth," says Conall; "ours are the cows and the woman that is in the Liss."



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“It shall not be lucky for you truly,” she says, “the going up to the multitude of the woman; more troublesome to you than everything,” she says, “is the serpent which is at guarding of the Liss.” “She is not my country-name(?),” says Fraech, “she is not constant in my estimation; thou art constant in my estimation; we know thou wilt not lead us astray, since it is from the men of Ulster thou art.” “Whence are ye from the men of Ulster?” she says. “This is Conall Cernach here, the bravest hero with the men of Ulster,” says Fraech. She flings two hands around the throat of Conall Cernach. “The destruction has come in this expedition,” she says, “since he has come to us; for it is to him the destruction of this dun has been prophesied. I shall go out to my house,”[FN#41] she says, “I shall not be at the milking of the cows. I shall leave the Liss opened; it is I who close it every night.[FN#42] I shall say it is for drink the calves were sucking. Come thou into the dun, when they are sleeping; only trouble. some to you is the serpent which is at the dun; several tribes are let loose from it.”

[FN#41] “To my house” is in the Egerton *Ms.* only.

[FN#42] “Every night” is in the Egerton *Ms.* only.

“We will go truly,” says Conall. They attack the Liss; the serpent darts leap into the girdle of Conall Cernach, and they plunder the dun at once. They save off then the woman and the three sons, and they carry away whatever was the best of the gems of the dun, and Conall lets the serpent out of his girdle, and neither of them did harm to the other. And they came to the territory of the people of the Picts, until they saw three cows of their cows in it. They drove off to the Fort of Ollach mac Briuin (now Dunolly near Oban) with them, until they were at Ard Uan Echach (high-foaming Echach). It is there the gillie of Conall met his death at the driving of the cows, that is Bicne son of Loegaire; it is from this is (the name of) Inver Bicne (the Bicne estuary) at Benchor. They brought their cows over it thither. It is there they flung their horns from them, so that it is thence is (the name of) Tracht Benchoir (the Strand of Horn casting, perhaps the modern Bangor?).

Fraech goes away then to his territory after, and his wife, and his sons, and his cows with him, until he goes with Ailill and Medb for the Spoil of the Cows from Cualnge.

THE RAID FOR DARTAID’S CATTLE

INTRODUCTION

This tale is given by Windisch (*Irische Texte*, II. pp. 185-205), from two versions; one, whose translation he gives in full, except for one doubtful passage, is from the manuscript in the British Museum, known as Egerton, 1782 (dated 1414); the other is from the Yellow Book of Lecan (fourteenth century), in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.



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The version in the Yellow Book is sometimes hard to read, which seems to be the reason why Windisch prefers to translate the younger authority, but though in some places the Egerton version is the fuller, the Yellow Book version (Y.B.L.) often adds passages, some of which Windisch has given in notes; some he has left untranslated. In the following prose version as much of Y.B.L. as adds anything to the Egerton text has been translated, with marks of interrogation where the attempted rendering is not certain: variants from the text adopted are placed below the prose version as footnotes. The insertions from Y.B.L. are indicated by brackets; but no note is taken of cases where the Egerton version is fuller than Y.B.L.

The opening of the story (the first five lines in the verse rendering) is in the eleventh century Book of the Dun Cow: the fragment agrees closely with the two later texts, differing in fact from Y.B.L. in one word only. All three texts are given in the original by Windisch.

The story is simple and straightforward, but is a good example of fairy vengeance, the description of the appearance of the troop recalls similar descriptions in the *Tain bo Fraich*, and in the *Courtship of Ferb*. The tale is further noticeable from its connection with the province of Munster: most of the heroic tales are connected with the other three provinces only. Orlam, the hero of the end of the tale, was one of Cuchulain's earliest victims in the *Tain bo Cualgne*.

THE RAID FOR DARTAID'S CATTLE

FROM THE EGERTON MS. 1782 (EARLY FIFTEENTH-CENTURY), AND THE YELLOW BOOK OF LECAN (FOURTEENTH-CENTURY)

Eocho Bec,^[FN#43] the son of Corpre, reigning in the land of Clew,^[FN#44]

Dwelt in Coolny's^[FN#45] fort; and fostered sons of princes not a few:

Forty kine who grazed his pastures gave him milk to rear his wards;

Royal blood his charges boasted, sprung from Munster's noblest lords.

Maev and Ailill sought to meet him: heralds calling him they sent:

"Seven days hence I come" said Eocho; and the heralds from him went.

Now, as Eocho lay in slumber, in the night a vision came;

By a youthful squire attended, rose to view a fairy dame:

"Welcome be my greeting to you!" said the king: "Canst thou discern

Who we are?" the fairy answered, "how didst thou our fashion learn?"

"Surely," said the king, "aforetime near to me hath been thy place!"

"Very near thee have we hovered, yet thou hast not seen my face."

"Where do ye abide?" said Eocho. "Yonder dwell we, with the Shee:^[FN#46]

"In the Fairy Mound of Coolny!" "Wherefore come ye hereto me?"

"We have come," she said, "a counsel as a gift to thee to bring!"



“Speak! and tell me of the counsel ye have brought me,” said the king.
“Noble gifts,” she said, “we offer that renown for thee shall gain
When in foreign lands thou ridest; worship in thine



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own domain;

For a troop shall circle round thee, riding close beside thy hand:

Stately it shall be, with goodly horses from a foreign land!"

"Tell me of that troop," said Eocho, "in what numbers should we ride? "

Fifty horsemen is the number that befits thee," she replied:

[FN#43] Pronounced Yeo-ho Bayc.

[FN#44] Cliu, a district in Munster.

[FN#45] Spelt Cuillne, in Y.B.L. it is Cuille.

[FN#46] The Fairies, spelt Sidh.

"Fifty horses, black in colour; gold and silver reins and bits;

Fifty sets of gay equipment, such as fairies well befits;

These at early dawn to-morrow shall my care for thee provide:

Let thy foster-children with thee on the road thou makest ride!

Rightly do we come to help thee, who so valiantly in fray

Guardest for us soil and country!" And the fairy passed away.

Eocho's folk at dawn have risen; fifty steeds they all behold: Black the horses seemed; the bridles, stiff with silver and with gold, Firmly to the gate were fastened; fifty silver breeches there Heaped together shone, encrusted all with gold the brooches were: There were fifty knightly vestments, bordered fair with golden thread: Fifty horses, white, and glowing on their ears with deepest red, Nigh them stood; of reddish purple were the sweeping tails and manes; Silver were the bits; their pasterns chained in front with brazen chains: And, of fair findruine[FN#47] fashioned, was for every horse a whip, Furnished with a golden handle, wherewithal the goad to grip.

[FN#47] Pronounced "findroony."

Then King Eocho rose, and ready made him; in that fair array

Forth they rode, nor did they tarry till they came to Croghan[FN#48] Ay.

Scarcely could the men of Connaught bear to see that sight, amazed

At the dignity and splendour of the host on which they gazed;

For that troop was great; in serried ranks the fifty riders rode,

Splendid with the state recounted; pride on all their faces glowed.

"Name the man who comes!" said Ailill; "Easy answer!" all replied,

Eocho Bee, in Clew who ruleth, hither to thy court would ride":

Court and royal house were opened; in with welcome came they all;

Three long days and nights they lingered, feasting in King Ailill's



hall.

Then to Ailill, king of Connaught, Eocho spake: "From out my land
{50} Wherefore hast thou called me hither?" "Gifts are needed from thy
hand,"

Ailill said; "a heavy burden is that task upon me laid,
To maintain the men of Ireland when for Cualgne's kine we raid."

[FN#48] Pronounced Crow-han.

Eocho spoke: "What gift requirest thou from me?" "For milking-kine,"

Ailill said, "I ask"; and Eocho, "Few of these indeed are mine!

Forty sons of Munster's princes have I in my halls to rear;

These, my foster-sons, beside me in my troop have journeyed here;

Fifty herdsmen guard the cattle, forty cows my wards to feed,

Seven times twenty graze beside them, to supply my people's need."



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"If, for every man who follows thee as liege, and owns a farm,
Thou a cow wilt yield," said Ailill, "then from foes with power to harm
I will guard thee in the battle!" "Keep then faithfully thy vows,"
Eocho said, "this day as tribute shall to Croghan come the cows."

Thrice the sun hath set and risen while they feasting there abide,
Maev and Ailill's bounty tasting, homeward then they quickly ride:
But the sons of Glaschu met them, who from western Donnan came;
Donnan, from the seas that bound it, Irross Donnan hath for name;
Seven times twenty men attacked them, and to battle they were brought,
At the isle of O'Canàda, fiercely either party fought;
With his foster children round him, Eocho Bec in fight was killed,
All the forty princes perished, with that news the land was filled;
All through Ireland lamentation rose for every youthful chief;
Four times twenty Munster princes, weeping for them, died of grief.

Now a vision came to Ailill, as in sleep he lay awhile, or a youth and dame approached
him, fairer none in Erin's Isle: "Who are ye?" said Ailill; "Conquest," said the fairy, "and
Defeat "Though Defeat I shun," said Ailill, "Conquest joyfully I meet." "Conquest thou
shalt have!" she answered: "Of the future I would ask, Canst thou read my fate?" said
Ailill: "Light indeed for me the task," Said the dame: "the kine of Dartaid, Eocho's
daughter, may be won: Forty cows she owns; to gain them send to her thy princely son,
Orlam, whom that maiden loveth: let thy son to start prepare, Forty youths from
Connaught with him, each of them a prince's heir: Choose thou warriors stout and
stately; I will give them garments bright, Even those that decked the princes who so
lately fell in fight:

Bridles, brooches, all I give thee; ere the morning sun be high
Thou shalt count that fairy treasure: to our country now we fly."

Swiftly to the son of Tassa sped they thence, to Corp the Gray:
On the northern bank of Naymon was his hold, and there he lay;
And before the men of Munster, as their champion did he stand:
He hath wrought-so runs the proverb-evil, longer than his hand.
As to Corp appeared the vision: "Say," he cried, "what names ye boast!"
"Ruin, one is called," they answered; "one, The Gathering of the Host!"
An assembled host I welcome," answered them the gray Corp Lee;
"Ruin I abhor": "And ruin," they replied, "is far from thee;
Thou shalt bring on sons of nobles, and of kings a ruin great":
"Fairy," said Corp Lee, the Gray one, "tell me of that future fate."

"Easy is the task," she answered, "youths of every royal race
That in Connaught's land hath dwelling, come to-morrow to this place;
Munster's kine they hope to harry, for the Munster princes fell



Yesterday with Connaught fighting; and the hour I plainly ten:
At the ninth hour of the morning shall they come: the band is small:
Have thou valiant men to meet them, and upon the raiders fall!
Munster's honour hath been tarnished! clear it by a glorious deed!
Thou shalt purge the shame if only in the foray thou succeed."



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“What should be my force?” he asked her: “Take of heroes seven score For that fight,” she said, “and with them seven times twenty warriors more: Far from thee we now are flying; but shall meet thee with thy power When to-morrow’s sun is shining; at the ninth, the fated hour.”

At the dawn, the time appointed, all those steeds and garments gay
Were in Connaught, and they found them at the gate of Croghan Ay;
All was there the fay had promised, all the gifts of which we told:
All the splendour that had lately decked the princes they behold.
Doubtful were the men of Connaught; some desired the risk to face;
Some to go refused: said Ailill, “It should bring us to disgrace

If we spurned such offered bounty”: Orlam his reproaches felt; Sprang to horse; and towards the country rode, where Eocho’s daughter dwelt: And where flows the Shannon river, near that water’s southern shore, Found her home; for as they halted, moated Clew[FN#49] rose high before.

[FN#49] Spelt Cliu.

Dartaid met them ere they halted, joyful there the prince to see:
All the kine are not assembled, of their count is lacking three!”
“Tarry not for search,” said Orlam, “yet provision must we take
On our steeds, for hostile Munster rings us round. Wilt home forsake,
Maiden? wilt thou ride beside us?” “I will go indeed,” she said.
Then, with all thy gathered cattle, come with us; with me to wed!
So they marched, and in the centre of their troop the kine were set,
And the maiden rode beside them: but Corp Lee, the Gray, they met;
Seven times twenty heroes with him; and to battle they must go,
And the Connaught nobles perished, fighting bravely with the foe:
All the sons of Connaught’s princes, all the warriors with them died:
Orlam’s self escaped the slaughter, he and eight who rode beside:
Yet he drave the cows to Croghan; ay, and fifty heifers too!
But, when first the foe made onset, they the maid in battle slew.
Near a lake, did Eocho’s[FN#50] daughter, Dartaid, in the battle fall,
From that lake, and her who perished, hath been named that region all:
Emly Dartá is that country; Tain bo Dartáe is the tale:
And, as prelude, ’tis recited, till the Cualgne[FN#51] Raid they hail.

[FN#50] Pronounced Yeo-ho.

[FN#51] Pronounced Kell-ny.

THE RAID FOR DARTAID'S CATTLE

LITERAL TRANSLATION

The Passages that occur only in the Yellow Book (Y.B.L.) are indicated by being placed in square brackets.

Eocho Bec, the son of Corpre, king of Cliu, dwelt in the Dun of Cuillne,[FN#52] and with him were forty fosterlings, all sons of the kings of Munster; he had also forty milch-cows for their sustenance. By Ailill and Medb messengers were sent, asking him to come to a conference. “[In a week,]”[FN#53] said Eocho, “I will go to that conference;” and the messengers departed from him.



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[FN#52] The eleventh century *Ms.*, the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, which gives the first four lines of this tale as a fragment, adds here as a note: "this is in the land of the O'Cuanach": apparently the O'Briens of Cuanach.

[FN#53] At Samhuin day (Egerton).

One night Eocho lay there in his sleep, when he saw something approach him; a woman, and a young man in her attendance. "Ye are welcome!" said Eocho. ["Knowest thou us?"] said she, "Where hast thou learned to know us?" "It seems to me as if I had been near to you." "I think that we have been very near to one another, though we have not seen each other face to face!" "In what place do ye dwell?" said Eocho. "Yonder in Sid Cuillne (the fairy mound of Cuillne)," said she. "And, wherefore have ye come?" "In order to give thee counsel," said she. "For what purpose is the counsel," said he, "that thou givest me?"

"Something," she said, "that will bring thee honour and renown on thy journey at home and abroad. A stately troop shall be round thee, and goodly foreign horses shall be under thee." [FN#54] "With how many shall I go?" said Eocho. "Fifty horsemen is the number that is suitable for thee," she answered.

[FN#54] Y.B.L. adds a passage that Windisch does not translate: it seems to run thus: "Unknown to thee is the half of what thou hast met: it seems to us that foreign may be thy splendour" (?)

"To-morrow in the morning fifty black horses, furnished with bridles of gold and silver, shall come to thee from me; and with them fifty sets of equipment of the equipment of the Side; and all of thy foster-children shall go with thee; well it becomes us to help thee, because thou art valiant in the defence of our country and our soil." Then the woman left him.

Early in the morning they arise, there they see something: the fifty black horses, furnished with bridles of gold and silver tied fast to the gate of the castle, also fifty breeches of silver with embellishment of gold; and fifty youths' garments with their edges of spun gold, and fifty white horses with red ears and long tails, purple-red were all their tails and their manes, with silver bits (?) [FN#55] and foot-chains of brass upon each horse; there were also fifty whips of white bronze (*findruine*), with end pieces of gold that thereby they might be taken into hands. [FN#56]

[FN#55] *co m-belgib* (?) Windisch translates "bridles," the same as *cona srianaib* above.

[FN#56] Y.B.L. adds, "Through wizardry was all that thing: it was recited (?) how great a thing had appeared, and he told his dream to his people."



Then King Eocho arises, and prepares himself (for the journey): they depart with this equipment to Cruachan Ai:[FN#57] and the people were well-nigh overcome with their consequence and appearance: their troop was great, goodly, splendid, compact: [fifty heroes, all with that appearance that has just been related.



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“How is that man named?” said Ailill. “Not hard, Eocho Bec, the king of Cliu.” They entered the Liss (outer court), and the royal house; welcome was given to them, he remained there three days and three nights at the feasting.]

[FN#57] Egerton here gives “Ailill and Medb made them welcome;” it omits the long passage in square brackets.

“Wherefore have I have been invited to come?” said Eocho to Ailill: “To learn if I can obtain a gift from thee,” said Ailill; “for a heavy need weighs upon me, even the sustenance of the men of Ireland for the bringing of the cattle from Cualgne.”

“What manner of gift is it that thou desirest?” said Eocho. “Nothing less than a gift of milking-kine,” said Ailill. “There is no superfluity of these in my land,” said Eocho; “I have forty fosterlings, sons of the kings of Munster, to bring them up (to manhood); they are here in my company, there are forty cows to supply the needs of these, to supply my own needs are seven times twenty milch-cows [there are fifty men for this cause watching over them].

“Let me have from thee,” said Ailill, “one cow from each farmer who is under thy lordship as my share; moreover I will yield thee assistance if at any time thou art oppressed by superior might.” “Thus let it be as thou sayest,” said Eocho; “moreover, they shall come to thee this very day.”

For three days and three nights they were hospitably entertained by Ailill and Medb, and then they departed homewards, till they met the sons of Glaschu, who came from Irross Donnan (the peninsula of Donnan, now Mayo); the number of those who met them was seven times twenty men, and they set themselves to attack each other, and to strive with each other in combat, and [at the island of O’Conchada (Inse Ua Conchada)] they fought together. In that place fell the forty sons of kings round Eocho Bec, and that news was spread abroad over all the land of Ireland, so that four times twenty kings’ sons, of the youths of Munster, died, sorrowing for the deaths of these princes.

On another night, as Ailill lay in his sleep, upon his bed, he saw some thing, a young man and a woman, the fairest that could be found in Ireland. “Who are ye?” said Ailill. “Victory and Defeat are our names,” she said. “Victory indeed is welcome to me, but not so Defeat,” said Ailill. “Victory shall be thine in each form!” said she. [“What is the next thing after this that awaits us?” said Ailill. “Not hard to tell thee,” said she] “let men march out from thy palace in the morning, that thou mayest win for thyself the cattle of Dartaid, the daughter of Eocho. Forty is the number of her milch-cows, it is thine own son, Orlam mac Ailill, whom she loves. Let Orlam prepare for his journey with a stately troop of valiant men, also forty sons of those kings who dwell in the land of Connaught; and by me shall be given to them the same equipment that the other youths had who fell in yon fight, bridles and garments and brooches; [early in the morning shall count of the treasure be made, and now we go to our own land,” said she].



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Then they depart from him, and forthwith they go to [Corp[FN#58] Liath (the Gray),] who was the son of Tassach. His castle was on the bank of the river Nemain, upon the northern side, he was a champion of renown for the guarding of the men of Munster; longer than his hand is the evil he hath wrought. To this man also they appeared, and “What are your names?” said he: “Tecmall and Coscrad (Gathering of Hosts, and Destruction),” said they. “Gathering of Hosts is indeed good,” said Corp Liath, “an evil thing is destruction”: “There will be no destruction for thee, and thou shalt destroy the sons of kings and nobles”: “And what,” said Corp Liath, “is the next thing to be done?”

[FN#58] The Egerton *Ms.* gives the name, Corb Cliach.

“That is easy to say,” they said;[FN#59] “each son of a king and a queen, and each heir of a king that is in Connaught, is now coming upon you to bear off cows from your country, for that the sons of your kings and queens have fallen by the hand of the men of Connaught. To-morrow morning, at the ninth hour they will come, and small is their troop; so if valiant warriors go thither to meet them, the honour of Munster shall be preserved; if indeed thine adventure shall meet with success.”

[FN#59] Y.B.L. gives the passage thus: “Assemble with you the sons of kings, and heirs of kings, that you may destroy the sons of kings and heirs of kings.” “Who are they?” said Corp Liath. “A noble youth it is from Connaught: he comes to yon to drive your cows before him, after that your young men were yesterday destroyed by him, at the ninth hour of the morning they will come to take away the cows of Darta, the daughter of Eocho.”

“With what number should I go?” he said. “Seven times twenty heroes thou shouldest take with thee,” she replied, [“and seven times twenty warriors besides”]: “And now” said the woman, “we depart to meet thee to-morrow at the ninth hour.”

At the time (appointed), when morning had come, the men of Connaught saw the horses and the raiment of which we have spoken, at the gate of the fort of Croghan, [even as she (the fairy) had foretold, and as we have told, so that at that gate was all she had promised, and all that had been seen on the sons of kings aforetime], and there was a doubt among the people whether they should go on that quest or not. “It is shame,” said Ailill, “to refuse a thing that is good”; and upon that Orlam departed [till[FN#60] he came to the house of Dartaid, the daughter of Eocho, in Cliu Classach (Cliu the Moated), on the Shannon upon the south (bank).

[FN#60] Egerton Version has only “towards Chu till he came to the home of Dartaid, the daughter of Eocho: the maiden rejoiced,” &c. From this point to the end the version in the Yellow Book is much fuller.

[There they halted], and the maiden rejoiced at their coming: “Three of the kine are missing.” “We cannot wait for these; let the men take provision on their horses, [for



rightly should we be afraid in the midst of Munster. Wilt thou depart with me, O maiden?" said he. "I will indeed go with thee," said she]. "Come then thou," said he, "and with thee all of thy cows."



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[Then the young men go away with the cows in the midst, and the maiden was with them; but Corp Liath, the son of Tassach, met them with seven times twenty warriors to oppose their march. A battle was fought], and in that place fell the sons of the kings of Connaught, together with the warriors who had gone with them, all except Orlam and eight others,[FN#61] who carried away with them the kine, even the forty milch-cows, and fifty heifers, [so that they came into the land of Connaught]; but the maiden fell at the beginning of the fight.

[FN#61] Y.B.L. inserts Dartaid's death at this point: "and Dartaid fell at the beginning of the fight, together with the stately sons of Connaught."

Hence is that place called Imlech Dartaid, (the Lake Shore of Dart), in the land of Cliu, [where Dartaid, the daughter of Eocho, the son of Corpre, fell: and for this reason this story is called the Tain bo Dartae, it is one of the preludes to the Tain bo Cualnge].

THE RAID FOR THE CATTLE OF REGAMON

INTRODUCTION

The two versions of this tale, given by Windisch in the *Irische Texte*, II. pp. 224-238, are from the same manuscripts as the two versions of the Raid of the Cattle of Dartaid; namely the Yellow Book of Lecan, and the Egerton Ms. 1782. In the case of this tale, the Yellow Book version is more legible, and, being not only the older, but a little more full than the other version, Windisch has translated this text alone: the prose version, as given here, follows this manuscript, nearly as given by Windisch, with only one addition from the Egerton Ms.; the omissions in the Egerton Ms. are not mentioned, but one or two changes in words adopted from this Ms. are mentioned in the foot-notes to the prose rendering.

The whole tone of the tale is very unlike the tragic character of those romances, which have been sometimes supposed to represent the general character of old Irish literature: there is not even a hint of the super-natural; the story contains no slaughter; the youthful raiders seem to be regarded as quite irresponsible persons, and the whole is an excellent example of an old Celtic: romance with what is to-day called a "good ending."

THE RAID FOR THE CATTLE OF REGAMON

FROM THE YELLOW BOOK OF LECAN

(A manuscript of the fourteenth century)



When Ailill and Maev in the Connaught land abode, and the lordship held, A chief who many a field possessed in the land of Connaught dwelled: A great, and a fair, and a goodly herd of kine had the chieftain won: And his fame in the fight was in all men's word; his name was Regamon. Now seven daughters had Regamon; they dwelt at home with their sire: Yet the seven sons of King Ailill and Maev their beauty



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with love could fire: All those seven sons were as Mani[FN#62] known; the first was as Morgor hailed, For his love was great: it was Mingar's fate that in filial love he failed: The face was seen of the mother-queen on the third; and his father's face Did the fourth son show: they the fifth who know cannot speak all his strength and grace: The sixth son spoke, from his lips the words like drops of honey fell: And last came one who all gifts possessed that the tongue of a man can tell; For his father's face that Mani had, in him was his mother seen; And in him abode every grace bestowed on the king of the land or the queen.

[FN#62] Pronounced Mah-nee.

Of the daughters of Regamon now we speak: two names those maidens bore: For as Dunnan three ever known shall be; Dunlaith[FN#63] was the name for four: And in Breffny's land is the Ford Dunlaith, and the fame of the four recalls; The three ye know where the Dunnan's flow in western Connaught falls. With Fergus, Ailill and Maev were met: as at council all conferred; "It were well for our folk," thus Ailill spoke, "if the lord of that cattle-herd, That strays in the fields of Regamon, would tribute to us pay: And to gain that end, let us heralds send, to his burg who may make their way, And bear to our court that tribute back; for greatly we soon shall need Such kine when we in the time of war our hosts shall have to feed; And all who share in our counsels know that a burden will soon be mine, When the men must be fed of Ireland, led on the Raid for the Cuailgne[FN#64] Kine!" Thus Ailill spoke; and Queen Maev replied, "The men to perform that task Right well I know; for our sons will go, if we for their aid but ask! The seven daughters of Regamon do the Mani in love now seek: If those maidens' hands they can gain by the deed, they will heed the words we speak." To his side King Ailill has called his sons, his mind to the youth he shows. "Best son," says Maev, "and grateful he, from filial love who goes!" And Morgor said, "For the love that we owe, we go at our sire's behest:" "Yet a greater reward," thus Mingar spake, "must be ours, if we go on this quest! For naught have we of hero-craft; and small shall be found our might; And of valiant breed are the men," said he, "with whom we shall have to fight.

[FN#63] Pronounced Dun-lay.

[FN#64] Pronounced Kell-ny.

As men from the shelter of roof who go, and must rest in the open field, So thy sons shall stand, if they come to a land where a foe might be found concealed! We have dwelt till now in our father's halls, too tenderly cared for far: Nor hath any yet thought, that to us should be taught the arts that belong to war!"



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Queen Maev and Ailill their sons have sped, away on the quest they went, With seven score men for the fight, whom the queen for help of her sons had sent: To the south of the Connaught realm they reached, the burg that they sought was plain For to Ninnus land they had come, and were nigh to the Corcomroe domain. "From our band," said Mani Morgor, "some must go, of that burg to learn How entrance we may attain to win, and back with the news return We must test the strength of the maidens' love!" On Mingar the task was set, And with two beside him, he searched the land, till three of the maids they met: By springs of water they found the maids, drew swords, and against them leapt! "O grant our lives!" was the maiden's cry, "and your lives shall be safely kept!" "For your lives," he said, "will ye grant a boon, set forth in three words of speech?" "At our hands," said she, "shall granted be, whatever thy tongue shall teach; Yet ask not cattle; those kine have we no power to bestow, I fear": "Why, 'tis for the sake of the kine," he said, "that all of us now are here!"

"Who art thou then?" from her faltering broke: "Mani Mingar am I," he replied; I am son to King Ailill and Maev: And to me thou art welcome," the maiden cried; "But why have ye come to this land?" said she: For kine and for brides," he said, Have we come to seek: And 'tis right," said she, such demands in a speech to wed: Yet the boon that you ask will our folk refuse, and hard will your task be found; For a valiant breed shall you meet, I fear, in the men who guard this ground!" "Give your aid," he said, "then as friends: But time," said she, "we must have for thought; For a plan must be made, e'er thy word be obeyed, and the kine to thy hands be brought: Have ye journeyed here with a force of men? how great is the strength of your band?" "Seven score are there here for the fight," he said, "the warriors are near at hand!" "Wait here," said she; "to my sisters four I go of the news to tell: "And with thee we side!" all the maidens cried, "and we trust we shall aid thee well,"

Away from the princes the maidens sped, they came to their sisters four, And thus they spoke: "From the Connaught land come men, who are here at your door; The sons of Ailill and Maev have come; your own true loves are they!" "And why have they come to this land?" they said; "For kine and for brides, they say, Have they come to seek:" "And with zeal their wish would we joyfully now fulfil If but powers to aid were but ours," they said, "which would match with our right good will:

But I fear the youths in this burg who dwell, the plans that we make may foil; or far from the land may chase that band, and drive them away from their spoil!" "Will ye follow us now, with the prince to speak?" They willingly gave consent, And together away to the water-springs the seven maidens went. They greeted Mani; "Now come!" said he, "and bring with you out your herds: And a goodly meed shall reward your deed, if you but obey my words; For our honour with sheltering arms is nigh, and shall all of you safely keep, Ye seven daughters of Regamon!" The cattle, the swine, and sheep Together the maidens drove; none saw them fly, nor to stay them sought, Till safe to the place where the Mani stood, the herd by the maids was brought.



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The maidens greeted the sons of Maev, and each by her lover stood; And then Morgor spoke: "Into twain this herd of kine to divide were good, At the Briuin[FN#65] Ford should the hosts unite; too strait hath the path been made For so vast a herd": and to Morgor's word they gave heed, and his speech obeyed. Now it chanced that Regamon, the king, was far from his home that day, For he to the Corco Baiscinn land had gone, for a while to stay;

[FN#65] Pronounced Brewin.

With the Firbolg[FN#66] clans, in debate, he sat; and a cry as the raiders rode, Was behind him raised: to the king came men, who the news of that plunder showed: Then the king arose, and behind his foes he rode, and o'ertook their flight, And on Mani Morgor his host pressed hard, and they conquered his men in the fight. "To unite our band," thus Morgor cried, "fly hence, and our comrades find! Call the warriors back from the cattle here, and leave the maids behind; Bid the maidens drive to our home the herd as far as the Croghan Fort, And to Ailill and Maev of our perilous plight let the maidens bear report." The maidens went to the Croghan Fort, to Maev with their news they pressed: "Thy sons, O Maev, at the Briuin Ford are pent, and are sore distressed, And they pray thee to aid them with speed": and Maev her host for the war prepared, With Ailill the warriors of Connaught came; and Fergus beside them fared, And the exiles came, who the Ulster name still bore, and towards that Ford All that host made speed, that their friends in need might escape from the vengeful sword.

[FN#66] Pronounced Feer-bol.

Now Ailill's sons, in the pass of that Ford, had hurdles strongly set: And Regamon failed through the ford to win, ere Ailill's troops were met: Of white-thorn and of black-thorn boughs were the hurdles roughly framed, And thence the name of the ford first came, that the Hurdle Ford is named;

For, where the O'Feara[FN#67] Aidne folk now dwell, can ye plainly see
In the land of Beara[FN#68] the Less, that Ford, yet called Ath[FN#69]
Clee Maaree,
In the north doth it stand; and the Connaught land divideth from
Corcomroe;
And thither, with Regamon's troops to fight, did Ailill's army go.

[FN#67] Pronounced O'Fayra Ain-ye.

[FN#68] Pronounced Bayra.

[FN#69] Spelt Ath Cliath Medraidí. Ath is pronounced like Ah.



Then a truce they made; to the youths, that Raid who designed, they gave back their lives; And the maidens fair all pardoned were, who had fled with the youths, as wives, Who had gone with the herd, by the maids conferred on the men who the kine had gained: But the kine, restored to their rightful lord, in Regamon's hands remained; The maiden band in the Connaught land remained with the sons of Maev; And a score of cows to each maiden's spouse the maidens' father gave: As his daughters' dower, did their father's power his right in the cows resign, That the men might be fed of Ireland, led on the Raid for the Cualgne[FN#70] Kine. This tale, as the Tain bo Regamon, is known in the Irish tongue; And this lay they make, when the harp they wake, ere the Cualgne Raid be sung.



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[FN#70] Pronounced Kell-ny.

THE RAID FOR THE CATTLE OF REGAMON

LITERAL TRANSLATION

In the time of Ailill and Medb, a glorious warrior and holder of land dwelt in the land of Connaught, and his name was Regamon. He had many herds of cattle, all of them fair and well-shaped: he had also seven daughters with him. Now the seven sons of Ailill and Medb loved these (daughters): namely the seven Maine, these were Maine Morgor (Maine with great filial love), Maine Mingar (Maine with less filial love), Maine Aithremail (Maine like his father), Maine Mathremail (Maine like his mother), Maine Milbel (Maine with the mouth of honey), [FN#71] Maine Moepert (Maine too great to be described), Maine Condageb-uile (Maine who combined all qualities): now this one had the form both of father and mother, and had all the glory that belonged to both parents.

[FN#71] The name of Maine Annai, making an eighth son, is given in Y.B.L., but not in the Egerton *Ms*.

The seven daughters of Regamon were the three Dunann, and the four Dunlaith; [FN#72] from the names of these is the estuary of Dunann in western Connaught, and the Ford of Dunlaith in Breffny.

[FN#72] So Egerton, which Windisch follows here; the reading of Y.B.L. is Dunmed for the daughters, and Dumed for the corresponding ford.

Now at a certain time, Ailill and Medb and Fergus held counsel together. "Some one from us," said Ailill, "should go to Regamon, that a present of cattle may be brought to us from him; to meet the need that there is on us for feeding the men of Ireland, when the kine are raided from Cualgne." "I know," said Medb, "who would be good to go thither, if we ask it of them; even the Maine; on account of their love for the daughters."

His sons were called to Ailill, and he spoke with them. "Grateful is he, and a better journey does he go," said Maev, "who goes for the sake of his filial love." "Truly it shall be that it is owing to filial love that we go," said Mani Morgor. "But the reward should (also) for this be the better," said Mani Mingar; "it stands ill with our heroism, ill with our strength."

It is like going from a house into the fields, (going) into the domains or the land of foes. Too tenderly have we been brought up; none hath let us learn of wars; moreover the warriors are valiant towards whom we go!"

They took leave of Ailill and Medb, and betook themselves to the quest. They set out, seven times twenty heroes was the number, till they were in the south of Connaught, in



the neighbourhood of the domain of Corcomroe[FN#73] in the land of Ninnus, near to the burg. "Some of you," said Mani Morgor, "should go to find out how to enter into the burg; and to test the love of maidens." Mani Mingar, with two others, went until he came upon three of the maidens at the water-springs, and at once he and his comrades drew their swords against them. "Give life for life!" said the maiden. "Grant to me then my three full words!" said Mani Mingar. "Whatever thy tongue sets forth shall be done," said the maiden, "only let it not be cows,[FN#74] for these have we no power to give thee." "For these indeed," said Mani, "is all that now we do." [FN#75]



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[FN#73] Properly “Coremodruad,” the descendants of Modh Ruadh, third son of Fergus by Maev; now Corcomroe in County Clare.

[FN#74] “Only let it not be cows” is in the Egerton *Ms.* alone.

[FN#75] “That we do” is Egerton *Ms.* (cich indingnem), Y.B.L. has “cechi m-bem.”

“Who art thou?” said she: “Mani Mingar, son of Ailill and Medb,” said he: “Welcome then,” she said, “but what hath brought with you here?” “To take with us cattle and maidens,” he said: “’Tis right,” she said, “to take these together; (but) I fear that what has been demanded will not be granted, the men are valiant to whom you have come.” “Let your entreaties be our aid!” he said. “We would desire,” she said, “that it should be after that counsel hath been taken that we obey you.”

“What is your number?” said she: “Seven times twenty heroes,” he said, “are with us.” “Remain here,” she said, “that we may speak with the other maidens”: “We shall assist you,” said the maidens, “as well as we can.”

They went from them, and came to the other maidens, and they said to them: “Young heroes from the lands of Connaught are come to you, your own true loves, the seven sons of Ailill and Medb.” “Wherefore are they come?” “To take back with them cattle and wives.” “That would we gladly have, if only we could; (but) I fear that the warriors will hinder them or drive them away,” said she. “Go ye out, that ye may speak with the man.” “We will speak with him,” they said. The seven maidens went to the well, and they greeted Mani. “Come ye away,” he said, “and bring your cattle with you. That will be a good deed. We shall assist you with our honour and our protection, O ye daughters of Regamon,” said he.[FN#76] The maidens drove together their cows and their swine, and their sheep, so that none observed them; and they secretly passed on till they came to the camp of their comrades. The maidens greeted the sons of Ailill and Medb, and they remained there standing together. “The herd must be divided in two parts,” said Mani Merger, “also the host must divide, for it is too great to travel by the one way; and we shall meet again at Ath Briuin (the Ford of Briuin).” So it was done.

[FN#76] Windisch conjectures this instead of “said the warriors,” which is in the text of Y.B.L.

King Regamon was not there on that day. He was in the domain of Corco Baiscinn, [FN#77] to hold a conference with the Firbolgs. His people raised a cry behind him, message was brought to Regamon, and he went in pursuit with his army. The whole of the pursuing host overtook Mani Morgor, and brought defeat upon him.

[FN#77] In the south-west of Clare.



“We all,” said Mani, “must go to one place, and some of you shall be sent to the cattle to summon the young men hither, and the maidens shall drive the cattle over the ford to Cruachan, and shall give Ailill and Medb tidings of the plight in which we are here.” The maidens went to Cruachan, and told all the tale. “Thy sons are at Ath Briuin in distress, and have said that help should be brought to them.” The men of Connaught with Ailill, and Medb, and Fergus, and the banished men of Ulster went to Ath Briuin to help their people.



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The sons of Ailill had for the moment made hurdles of white-thorn and black-thorn in the gut[FN#78] of the ford, as defence against Regamon and his people, so that they were unable to pass through the ford ere Ailill and his army came; so thence cometh the name Ath Cliath Medraidí[FN#79] (the Hurdle Ford of Medraide), in the country of Little Bethra in the northern part of the O'Fiachrach Aidne between Connaught and Corcomroe. There they met together with all their hosts.

[FN#78] Literally "mouth."

[FN#79] Ath Cliath oc Medraige, now Maaree, in Ballycourty parish, Co. Galway (Stokes, *Bodleian Dinnshenchus*, 26). It may be mentioned that in the *Dinnshenchus*, the cattle are said to have been taken "from Dartaid, the daughter of Regamon in Munster," thus confusing the Raids of Regamon and Dartaid, which may account for O'Curry's incorrect statement in the preface to *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, p. xv.

A treaty was then made between them on account of the fair young men who had carried off the cattle, and on account of the fair maidens who had gone with them, by whose means the herd escaped. Restitution of the herd was awarded to Regamon, and the maidens abode with the sons of Ailill and Medb; and seven times twenty milch-cows were given up, as a dowry for the maidens, and for the maintenance of the men of Ireland on the occasion of the assembly for the *Tain bo Cualnge*; so that this tale is called the *Tain bo Regamon*, and it is a prelude to the tale of the *Tain bo Cualnge*. Finit, amen.

THE DRIVING OF THE CATTLE OF FLIDAIS

INTRODUCTION

The *Tain bo Flidais*, the *Driving of the Cows of Flidais*, does not, like the other three Preludes to the *Tain bo Cualnge*, occur in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*; but its manuscript age is far the oldest of the four, as it occurs in both the two oldest collections of Old Irish romance, the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* (abbreviated to L.U.), and the *Book of Leinster* (abbreviated to L.L.), besides the fifteenth century *Egerton Ms.*, that contains the other three preludes. The text of all three, together with a translation of the L.U. text, is given by Windisch in *Irische Texte*, II. pp. 206-223; the first part of the story is missing in L.U. and is supplied from the *Book of Leinster* (L.L.) version. The prose translation given here follows Windisch's translation pretty closely, with insertions occasionally from L.L. The *Egerton* version agrees closely with L.L., and adds little to it beyond variations in spelling, which have occasionally been taken in the case of proper names. The *Leabhar na h-Uidhri* version is not only the oldest, but has the most details of the three; a few passages have, however, been supplied from the other manuscripts which agree with L.U. in the main.



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The whole tale is much more like an old Border riding ballad than are the other three Preludes; it resembles the tone of Regamon, but differs from it in having a good deal of slaughter to relate, though it can hardly be called tragic, like Deirdre and Ferb, the killing being taken as a matter of course. There is nothing at all supernatural about the story as contained in the old manuscripts, but a quite different' version of the story given in the Glenn Masain Manuscript, a fifteenth century manuscript now in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, gives another complexion to the tale.

The translation of this manuscript is at present being made in the Celtic Review by Professor Mackinnon; the version it gives of the story is much longer and fuller than that in the Leabhar na h-Uidhri, and its accompanying manuscripts. The translation as printed in the Celtic Review is not as yet (July 1905) completed, but, through Professor Mackinnon's kindness, an abstract of the general features of the end of the story may be given here.

The Glenn Masain version makes Bricriu, who is a subordinate character in the older version, one of the principal actors, and explains many of the allusions which are difficult to understand in the shorter version; but it is not possible to regard the older version as an abridgment of that preserved in the Glenn Masain *Ms.*, for the end of the story in this manuscript is absolutely different from that in the older ones, and the romance appears to be unique in Irish in that it has versions which give two quite different endings, like the two versions of Kipling's *The Light that Failed*.

The Glenn Masain version commences with a feast held at Cruachan, when Fergus and his exiles had joined their forces with Connaught as a result of the murder of the Sons of Usnach, as told in the earlier part of the manuscript. At this feast Bricriu. engages in conversation with Fergus, reproaching him for his broken promises to the Ulstermen who had joined him, and for his dalliance with Queen Maev. Bricriu, who in other romances is a mere buffoon, here appears as a distinguished poet, and a chief ollave; his satire remains bitter, but by no means scurrilous, and the verses put into his mouth, although far beneath the standard of the verses given to Deirdre in the earlier part of the manuscript, show a certain amount of dignity and poetic power. As an example, the following satire on Fergus's inability to keep his promises may be cited:—

Fergus, hear thy friend lamenting!
Blunted is thy lofty mind;
Thou, for hire, to Maev consenting,
Hast thy valour's pride resigned.

Ere another year's arriving,
Should thy comrades, thou didst vow,
Three-score chariots fair be driving,
Shields and weapons have enow!



When thy ladies, bent on pleasure,
Crowd towards the banquet-hall,
Thou of gold a goodly measure
Promised hast to grant to all!



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Ill to-night thy friends are faring,
Naught hath Fergus to bestow;
He a poor man's look is wearing,
Never yet was greater woe!

After the dialogue with Fergus, Bricriu, with the poets that attend him, undertakes a journey to Ailill the Fair, to obtain from him the bounty that Fergus had promised but was unable to grant. He makes a fairly heavy demand upon Ailill's bounty, but is received hospitably, and gets all he had asked for, as well as honour for his poetic talents. He then asks about Ailill's wife Flidais, and is told about her marvellous cow, which was able to supply milk to more than three hundred men at one night's milking. Flidais returns from a journey, is welcomed by Bricriu, who produces a poem in honour of her and her cow, and is suitably recompensed.

A long conversation is then recorded between Flidais and Bricriu in which Bricriu extols the great deeds of Fergus, supplying thereby a commentary on the short statement at the beginning of the older version, that Flidais' love to Fergus was on account of the great deeds which had been told her that he had done. Flidais declares to Bricriu her love for Fergus, and Bricriu, after a vain attempt to dissuade the queen from her purpose, consents to bring a message to Fergus that Flidais and her cow will come to him if he comes to her husband's castle to seek her. He then returns to Connaught laden with gifts.

The story now proceeds somewhat upon the lines of the older version. Bricriu approaches Fergus on his return, and induces him to go in the guise of an ambassador to Ailill the Fair, with the secret intention of carrying off Flidais. Fergus receives the sanction of Maeve and her husband for his errand, and departs, but not as in the older version with a few followers; all the Ulster exiles are with him. Dubtach, by killing a servant of Maeve, embroils Fergus with the queen of Connaught; and the expedition reaches Ailill the Fair's castle. Fergus sends Bricriu, who has most unwillingly accompanied him, to ask for hospitality; he is hospitably received by Ailill, and when under the influence of wine reveals to Ailill the plot. Ailill does not, as in the older version, refuse to receive Fergus, but seats him beside himself at a feast, and after reproaching him with his purpose challenges him to a duel in the morning. The result of the duel, and of the subsequent attack on the castle by Fergus' friends, is much as stated in the older version, but the two stories end quite differently. The L.U. version makes Flidais assist in the War of Cualgne by feeding the army of Ailill each seventh day with the produce of her cows; she dies after the war as wife of Fergus; the Glenn Masain version, in the "Pursuit of the Cattle of Flidais," makes the Gamanrad clan, the hero-clan of the West of Ireland, pursue Maeve and Fergus, and rescue Flidais and her cow; Flidais then returns to the west with Muiretach Menn, the son of her murdered husband, Ailill the Fair.

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The comparison of these two versions, from the literary point of view, is most interesting. The stress laid on the supernatural cow is peculiar to the version in the later manuscript, the only analogy in the eleventh century version is the semi-supernatural feeding of the army of Ireland, but in this it is a herd (buar), not a single animal, that is credited with the feat, and there is really nothing supernatural about the matter; it is only the other version that enables us to see the true bearing of the incident. The version in the Glenn Masain Manuscript looks much more ancient in idea than that in the older texts, and is plainly capable of a mythic interpretation. It is not of course suggested that the Glenn Masain version is ancient as it stands: there are indeed enough obvious allusions in the text to comparatively late works to negative such a supposition, independently of linguistic evidence, but it does look as if the author of the eleventh century text had a super natural tale to work upon, some of whose incidents are preserved in the Glenn Masain version, and that he succeeded in making out of the traditional account a story that practically contains no supernatural element at all, so that it requires a knowledge of the other version to discover the slight trace of the supernatural that he did keep, *viz.* the feeding of the army of Ireland by the herd (not the cow) of Flidais.

It is possible that the common origin of the two versions is preserved for us in another place, the Coir Annam, which, though it as it stands is a Middle Irish work, probably keeps ancient tradition better than the more finished romances. In this we find, following Stokes' translation, given in *Irische Texte*, *iii.* P. 295, the following entries:—

“Adammair Flidaise Foltchain, that is Flidais the Queen, one of the tribe of the god-folk (the Tuatha de Danaan), she was wife of Adammair, the son of Fer Cuirp, and from her cometh the name Buar Flidaise, the Cattle of Flidais.

“Nia Segamain, that is seg (deer) are a main (his treasure), for in his time cows and does were milked in the same way every day, so that he had great wealth in these things beyond that of all other kings. The Flidais spoken of above was the mother of Nia Segamain, Adammair's son, for two kinds of cattle, cows and does, were milked in the days of Nia Segamain, and by his mother was that fairy power given to him.”

It seems, then, not impossible that the original legend was much as stated in the Coir Annam, *viz.* that Flidais was a supernatural being, milking wild deer like cows, and that she was taken into the Ulster Cycle and made part of the tale of Fergus.



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This adoption was done by an author who made a text which may be regarded as the common original of the two versions; in his tale the supernatural character of Flidais was retained. The author of the L.U. version cut out the supernatural part, and perhaps the original embassy of Bricriu; it may, however, be noted that the opening of the older version comes from the L.L. text, which is throughout shorter than that in L.U., and the lost opening of L.U. may have been fuller. The author of the Glenn Masain version kept nearer to the old story, adding, however, more modern touches. Where the new character of Bricriu comes from is a moot point; I incline to the belief that the idea of Bricriu as a mere buffoon is a later development. But in neither version is the story, as we have it, a pre-Christian one. The original pre-Christian idea of Flidais was, as in the Coir Annam, that of a being outside the Ulster Cycle altogether.

THE DRIVING OF THE CATTLE OF FLIDAIS

FROM THE LEABHAR NA H-UIDHRI (ELEVENTH-CENTURY MS.), THE BEGINNING AND A FEW ADDITIONS FROM THE BOOK OF LEINSTER (TWELFTH CENTURY)

A land in West Roscommon, as Kerry known of old,
Was ruled by Ailill Fair-haired; of him a tale is told:
How Flidais,[FN#80] Ailill's[FN#81] consort, each week, and near its end,
To Ro's great son, to Fergus, her herald still would send;
'Twas Fergus' love she sought for; the deeds by Fergus done,
In glorious tales recited, had Flidais' fancy won.

[FN#80] Pronounced Flid-das.

[FN#81] Pronounced Al-ill.

When Fergus fled from Ulster, and Connaught's land he sought,
To Ailill, king of Connaught, this tale of love he brought:
"Now give me rede," said Fergus, "how best we here should act,
That Connaught's fame and honour by none may stand attacked;
Say, how can I approach them, and strip thy kingdom bare,
And yet the fame of Ailill, that country's monarch, spare?"
"Tis hard indeed to teach thee," cried Ailill, sore perplexed;
"Let Maev come nigh with counsel what course to follow next!"

"Send thou to Ailill Fair-haired to ask for aid!" said Maev,
"He well may meet a herald, who comes his help to crave
Let Fergus go to crave it: no harm can there be seen;
And better gifts from Ailill shall Fergus win, I ween!"

So forth to Ailill Fair-haired went Fergus, son of Ro;
And thirty, Dubhtach[FN#82] leading, he chose with him to go;



And yet another Fergus his aid to Fergus brought;
Mac Oonlama[FN#83] men called him; his sire one-handed fought.

[FN#82] Pronounced Doov-ta.

[FN#83] Spelt Mac Oenlama, son of the one-handed one.



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Beside the Ford of Fenna, in Kerry's north they came, They neared the hold, and from it rang welcome's loud acclaim: "What quest," said Ailill Fair-haired, "hath brought these warriors here?" "Of Ailill, son of Magach, we stand," they said, "in fear; A feud we hold against him; with thee would fain abide!" "For each of these," said Ailill, "who Fergus march beside, If they were foes to Connaught, for long they here might stay, And ne'er till peace was granted, I'd drive these men away: For Fergus, naught I grant him a tale of him men tell That Fergus 'tis whom Flidais, my wife, doth love too well!"

"It is kine that I ask for," said Fergus, "and hard is the task on me set: For the men who have marched here beside me, the means to win life I must get." "I will give no such present," said Ailill, "thou comest not here as my guest: Men will say, 'twas from fear that I gave it, lest my wife from my arms thou should'st wrest: Yet an ox of my herds, and some bacon, if thou wilt, shall my hand to thee give; That the men who have marched here beside thee on that meat may be stayed, and may live!"

"I eat no bread thus thrown me!" fierce Fergus straight replied:
"I asked a gift of honour; that gift thine hand denied."
"Avoid my house," said Ailill in wrath, "now get thee hence!
"We go indeed," said Fergus; "no siege we now commence:
Yet here," he cried, "for duel beside yon ford I wait,
If thou canst find a champion to meet me at thy gate."

Then up and answered Ailill: "'Tis mine this strife must be
And none shall hurt mine honour, or take this task from me:
None hold me back from battle!"—the ford for fight he sought:
"Now Dubhtach, say," said Fergus, "to whom this war is brought!
Or thou or I must meet him." And Dubhtach said, "I go;
For I am younger, Fergus, and bolder far with foe."

To the ford for the battle with Ailill he hies,
And he thrust at him fiercely, and pierced through his thighs;
But a javelin by Ailill at Dubhtach was cast,
And right through his body the shaft of it passed:
And a shield over Dubhtach, laid low in the dust,
Spread Fergus; and Ailill his spear at him thrust;
And through Fergus' shield had the spear made its way,
When Fergus Mae Oonlama joined in the fray,
And his shield he uplifted, his namesake to guard;
But at Fergus Mac Oonlama Ailill thrust hard,
And he brake through the fence of Mac Oonlama's shield;
And he leaped in his pain; as they lay on the field,
On his comrades he fell: Flidais forth to them flew,
And her cloak on the warriors to shield them she threw.



Then against all the comrades of Fergus turned Ailill the Fair-haired to fight, And he chased them away from his castle, and slew as they scattered in flight; A twenty he reached, and he slew them: they fell, on that field to remain; And but seven there were of that thirty who fled, and their safety could gain: They came to the palace of Croghan, they entered the gates of that hold, And to Maev and to Ailill of Connaught the tale of the slaughter they told.



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Then roused himself King Ailill, of Connaught's land the king,
With Maev to march to battle, their aid to friends to bring:
And forth from Connaught's kingdom went many a lord of worth,
Beside them marched the exiles who gat from Ulster birth:
So forward went that army, and reached to Kerry's land,
And near the Ford of Fenna they came, and there made stand.

While this was done, the wounded three
Within the hold lay still,
And Flidais cared for all, for she
To heal their wounds had skill.

To Ailill Fair-Haired's castle the Connaught host was led,
And toward the foeman's ramparts the Connaught herald sped;
He called on Ailill Fair-haired to come without the gate,
And there to meet King Ailill, and with him hold debate.
"I come to no such meeting," the angry chief replied;
"Yon man is far too haughty: too grossly swells his pride!"

Yet 'twas peaceful meeting,
So the old men say,
Ailill willed; whose greeting
Heralds bore that day.
Fergus, ere he perished,
First he sought to aid
He that thought who cherished
Friendship's claims obeyed:
Then his foe he vainly
Hoped in truce to bind:
Peace, 'tis said, was plainly
Dear to Connaught's mind!

The wounded men, on litters laid,
Without the walls they bore
To friendly hands, with skill to aid,
And fainting health restore.

At the castle of Ailill the Fair-Haired the Connaught-men rushed in attack, And to win it they failed: from his ramparts in defeat were his foes driven back: For long in that contest they struggled, yet naught in the fight they prevailed — For a week were the walls of the castle of Ailill the Fair-Haired assailed, Seven score of the nobles of Connaught, and all of them warriors of might, For the castle of Ailill contended, and fell as they strove in the fight.



“Tis sure that with omen of evil this castle was sought by our folk!” Thus Bricroo, [FN#84] the Poisonous Scoffer, in mockery, jeering them, spoke: “The taunt,” answered Ailill Mae Mata, “is true, and with grief I confess That the fame of the heroes of Ulster hereafter is like to be less, For a three of the Ulstermen’s champions in stress of the fight have been quelled; And the vengeance we wait for from Ulster hath long been by Ulster withheld; As a pillar of warfare each hero, ’twas claimed, could a battle sustain; Yet by none of the three in this battle hath a foeman been conquered, or slain! In the future for all of these champions shall scorn and much mocking befall: One man hath come forth from yon castle; alone he hath wounded them all— Such disgrace for such heroes of valour no times that are past ever saw, For three lords of the battle lie conquered by mannikins, fashioned of straw!”

[FN#84] Spelt Bricriu. The usual epithet of Bricriu, “Bricriu of the Poison Tongue,” is indicated in the verse rendering.

“Ah! woe is me,” said Bricroo, “how long, thus stretched on ground,
The length of Father Fergus hath here by all been found!
But one he sought to conquer; a single fight essayed,
And here he met his victor, and low on land is laid.”



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Then rose the men of Ulster a hardy war to wage,
And forward rushed, though naked, in strong and stubborn rage:
Against the castle gateway in wrathful might they dashed,
And down the shattered portal within the castle crashed.
Then close by Ulster's champions was Connaught's battle formed;
And Connaught's troops with Ulster by might the castle stormed;
But fitly framed for battle were men whom there they met,
Wild war, where none showed pity between the hosts was set:
And well they struck; each hero commenced with mighty blows
To crush and slay, destruction was heaped by foe on foes.

Of the wounding at length and the slaughter all weary the champions had grown, And the men who the castle of Ailill had held were at length over thrown: Of those who were found in that castle, and its walls had defended so well, Seven hundred by warriors of Ulster were smitten to death, and they fell: And there in his castle fell Ailill the Fair-haired, and fighting he died, And a thirty of sons stood about him, and all met their death by his side.

The chief of those who perished, by Ailill's side who stood
Within his hold, were Noodoo;^[FN#85] and Awley^[FN#86] named the Good;
And Feeho^[FN#87] called the Broad-backed; and Corpre Cromm the Bent;
An Ailill, he from Breffny to help of Ailill went;
A three whose name was Angus-fierce was each warrior's face;
Three Eochaid, sea-girt Donnan^[FN#88] had cradled erst their race;
And there fell seven Breslen, from plains of Ay^[FN#89] who came;
And fifty fell beside them who all had Donnell's name.

^[FN#85] Spelt Nuado.

^[FN#86] Spelt Amalgaid.

^[FN#87] Spelt Fiacho.

^[FN#88] Irross Donnan, the promontory of Donnan (now Mayo).

^[FN#89] Mag Ai, a plain in Roscommon.

For to Ailill the Fair-Haired for warfare had marched all the Gamanra^[FN#90] clan, And his friends from the sea-girded Donnan had sent to his aid every man; All these had with Ailill been leaguered, their help to him freely they brought, And that aid from them Ailill took gladly, he knew that his hold would be sought; He knew that the exiles of Ulster his captives from prison would save, And would come, their surrender demanding; that Ailill mac Mata and Maev Would bring all Connaught's troops to the rescue: for Fergus that



aid they would lend, And Fergus the succour of Connaught could claim, and with right,
as a friend.

[FN#90] Spelt Gamanrad.

Hero clans in Erin three of old were found;
One in Irross Donnan, oceans Donnan bound,
Thence came Clan Gamanra; Deda's warlike clan
Nursed in Tara Loochra[FN#91] many a fighting man.
Deda sprang from Munster; far in Ulster's north
Oft from Emain Macha Rury's[FN#92] clan went forth:
Vainly all with Rury strove to fight, the twain
Rury's clan hath vanquished; Rury all hath slain!

[FN#91] Temair Luachra, an ancient palace near Abbeyfeale, on the borders of the
counties of Limerick and Kerry. "Tara," as is well known, is a corruption of Temair, but is
now established.



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[FN#92] Spelt Rudraige.

Then rose up the warriors of Ulster, the hold they had conquered to sack; And the folk of Queen Maev and King Ailill followed close on the Ulstermen's track: And they took with them captives; for Flidais away from her castle they tore; And the women who dwelt in the castle away to captivity bore:

And all things therein that were precious they seized on as booty; the gold And the silver they seized, and the treasures amassed by the men of that hold: The horns, and the goblets for drinking, the vats for the ale, and the keys, The gay robes with all hues that were glowing lay there for the raiders to seize: And much cattle they took; in that castle were one hundred of milk giving kine; And beside them a seven score oxen; three thousand of sheep and of swine.

Then Flidais went with Fergus, his wedded wife to be;
For thus had Maev and Ailill pronounced their high decree:
They bade that when from Cualgne to drive the kine they went,
From those who then were wedded should aid for war be sent.
And thus it fell thereafter: when Ireland went that Raid,
By milk from cows of Flidais, the lives of all were stayed;
Each seventh day she sent it; and thus fulfilled her vows,
And thus the tale is ended, men tell of Flidais' Cows.

Then, all that Raid accomplished, with Fergus Flidais dwell
And he of Ulster's kingdom a part in lordship held:
He ruled in Mag I Murthemne[FN#92], yea, more than that, he won
The land where once was ruler Cuchulain, Sualtam's son:
And by the shore of Bali thereafter Flidais died,
And naught of good for Fergus did Flidais' death betide:
For worse was all his household; if Fergus aught desired,
From Flidais' wealth and bounty came all his soul required.

In the days that followed, when his wife was dead,
Fergus went to Connaught; there his blood was shed:
There with Maev and Ailill he a while would stay;
Men had made a story, he would learn the lay!
There he went to cheer him, hearing converse fair:
Kine beside were promised; home he these would bear:
So he went to Croghan, 'twas a deadly quest,
There he found his slaughter, death within the west:
Slain by jealous Ailill, Fergus low was laid:
Flidais' tale is ended: now comes Cualgne's Raid!

[FN#92] Pronounced Maw Moortemmy



THE DRIVING OF THE CATTLE OF FLIDAIS

LITERAL TRANSLATION

Flidais was the wife of Ailill Finn (the Fair-haired) in the district of Kerry.[FN#93] She loved Fergus the son of Rog on account of the glorious tales about him; and always there went messengers from her to him at the end of each week.

[FN#93] Kerry is the district now called Castlereagh, in the west of the present county of Roscommon.



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So, when he came to Connaught, he brought this matter before[FN#94] Ailill: “What[FN#95] shall I do next in this matter?” said Fergus: “it is hard for me to lay bare your land, without there being loss to thee of honour and renown therewith.” “Yes, what shall we do next in the matter?” said Ailill; “we will consider this in counsel with Maev.” “Let one of us go to Ailill Finn,” (said Maev), “that he may help us, and as this involves a meeting of some one with him, there is no reason why it should not be thyself who goest to him: the gift will be all the better for that!”

[FN#94] *i.e.* Ailill of Connaught.

[FN#95] This sentence to the end is taken from the Egerton version, which seems the clearer; the Book of Leinster gives: “What shall I do next, that there be no loss of honour or renown to thee in the matter?”

Then Fergus set out thereon, in number thirty men; the two Ferguses (*i.e.* Fergus mac Rog, and Fergus mac Oen-lama) and Dubhtach; till they were at the Ford of Fenna in the north of the land of Kerry. They go to the burg, and welcome is brought to them.

[FN#96] “What brings you here?” said Ailill Finn. “We had the intention of staying with you on a visit, for we have a quarrel with Ailill the son of Magach.”

[FN#96] The Book of the Dun Cow (*Leabhar na h-Uidhri*) version begins at this point.

“If it were one of thy people who had the quarrel, he should stay with me until he had made his peace. But thou shalt not stay,” said Ailill Finn, “it has been told me that my wife loves thee!” “We must have a gift of cows then,” said Fergus, “for a great need lies on us, even the sustenance of the troop who have gone with me into exile.” “Thou shalt carry off no such present from me,” he said, “because thou art not remaining with me on a visit. Men will say that it is to keep my wife that I gave thee what thou hast required. I[FN#97] will give to your company one ox and some bacon to help them, if such is your pleasure.” “I will eat not thy bread although offered (*lit. however*),” said Fergus, “because I can get no present of honour from thee!”

[FN#97] L.L. and Egerton make the end of this speech part of the story: “There was given to them one ox with bacon, with as much as they wished of beer, as a feast for them.”

“Out of my house with you all, then!” said Ailill.

“That shall be,” said Fergus; “we shall not begin to lay siege to thee and they betake themselves outside.

“Let a man come at once to fight me beside a ford at the gate of this castle!” said Fergus.



“That[FN#98] will not for the sake of my honour be refused,” said Ailill; “I will not hand it (the strife) over to another: I will go myself,” said he. He went to a ford against him. “Which of us,” said Fergus, “O Dubhtach, shall encounter this man?” “I will go,” said Dubhtach; “I am younger and keener than thou art!” Dubhtach went against Ailill. Dubhtach thrust a spear through Ailill so that it went through his two thighs. He (Ailill) hurled a javelin at Dubhtach, so that he drove the spear right through him, (so that it came out) on the other side.



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[FN#98] The end of the speech is from L.L.: the L.U. text gives the whole speech thus: "For my honour's sake, I could not draw back in this matter."

Fergus threw his shield over Dubhtach. The former (Ailill) thrust his spear at the shield of Fergus so that he even drove the shaft right through it. Fergus mac Oen-laimi comes by. Fergus mac Oen-laimi holds a shield in front of him (the other Fergus). Ailill struck his spear upon this so that it was forced right through it. He leaped so that he lay there on the top of his companions. Flidais comes by from the castle, and throws her cloak over the three.

Fergus' people took to flight; Ailill pursues them. There remain (slain) by him twenty men of them. Seven of them escape to Cruachan Ai, and tell there the whole story to Ailill and Medb.

Then Ailill and Medb arise, and the nobles of Connaught and the exiles from Ulster: they march into the district of Kerry Ai with their troops as far as: the Ford of Fenna.

Meanwhile the wounded men were being cared for by Flidais in the castle, and their healing was undertaken by her.

Then the troops come to the castle. Ailill Finn is summoned to Ailill mac Mata to come to a conference with him outside the castle. "I will not go," he said; "the pride and arrogance of that man there is great."

It was,[FN#99] however, for a peaceful meeting that Ailill mac Mata had come to Ailill the Fair-haired, both that he might save Fergus, as it was right he should, and that he might afterwards make peace with him (Ailill Fair haired), according to the will of the lords of Connaught.

[FN#99] This passage is sometimes considered to be an interpolation by a scribe or narrator whose sympathies were with Connaught. The passage does not occur in the Book of Leinster, nor in the Egerton *Ms*.

Then the wounded men were brought out of the castle, on hand-barrows, that they might be cared for by their own people.

Then the men attack him (Ailill Finn): while they are storming the castle, and they could get no hold on him, a full week long went it thus with them. Seven times twenty heroes from among the nobles of Connaught fell during the time that they (endeavoured) to storm the castle of Ailill the Fair-haired.

"It was with no good omen that with which you went to this castle," said Bricriu. "True indeed is the word that is spoken," said Ailill mac Mata. "The expedition is bad for the honour of the Ulstermen, in that their three heroes fall, and they take not vengeance for them. Each one (of the three) was a pillar of war, yet not a single man has fallen at the



hands of one of the three! Truly these heroes are great to be under such wisps of straw as axe the men of this castle! Most worthy is it of scorn that one man has wounded you three!"

"O woe is me," said Bricriu, "long is the length upon the ground of my Papa Fergus, since one man in single combat laid him low!"



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Then the champions of Ulster arise, naked as they were, and make a strong and obstinate attack in their rage and in the might of their violence, so that they forced in the outer gateway till it was in the midst of the castle, and the men of Connaught go beside them. They storm the castle with great might against the valiant warriors who were there. A wild pitiless battle is fought between them, and each man begins to strike out against the other, and to destroy him.

Then, after they had wearied of wounding and overcoming one another, the people of the castle were overthrown, and the Ulstermen slay seven hundred warriors there in the castle with Ailill the Fair-Haired and thirty of his sons; and Amalgaid the Good;^[FN#100] and Nuado; and Fiacho Muinmethan (Fiacho the Broad-backed); and Corpre Cromm (the Bent or Crooked); and Ailill from Brefne; and the three Oengus Bodbgnai (the Faces of Danger); and the three Eochaid of Irross (i.e. Irross Donnan); and the seven Breslene from Ai; and the fifty Domnall.

^[FN#100] "The Good" is in the Book of Leinster and the Egerton text, not in the Leabhar na h-Uidhri: the two later texts omit Nuado.

For the assembly of the Gamanrad were with Ailill, and each of the men of Domnan who had bidden himself to come to him to aid him: they were in the same place assembled in his castle; for he knew that the exiles from Ulster and Ailill and Medb with their army would come to him to demand the surrender of Fergus, for Fergus was under their protection.

This was the third race of heroes in Ireland, namely the Clan Gamanrad of Irross Donnan (the peninsula of Donnan), and (the other two were) the Clan Dedad in Temair Lochra, and the Clan Rudraige in Emain Macha. But both the other clans were destroyed by the Clan Rudraige.

But the men of Ulster arise, and with them the people of Medb and of Ailill; and they laid waste the castle, and take Flidais out of the castle with them, and carry off the women of the castle into captivity; and they take with them all the costly things and the treasures that were there, gold and silver, and horns, and drinking cups, and keys, and vats; and they take what there was of garments of every colour, and they take what there was of kine, even a hundred milch-cows, and a hundred and forty oxen, and thirty hundred of little cattle.

And after these things had been done, Flidais went to Fergus mac Rog according to the decree of Ailill and Medb, that they might thence have sustenance (lit. that their sustenance might be) on the occasion of the Raid of the Cows of Cualgne. As^[FN#101] a result of this, Flidais was accustomed each seventh day from the produce of her cows to support the men of Ireland, in order that during the Raid she might provide them with the means of life. This then was the Herd of Flidais.

[FN#101] L.L. and Egerton give "For him used every seventh day," &c.



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In consequence[FN#102] of all this Flidais went with Fergus to his home, and he received the lordship of a part of Ulster, even Mag Murthemni (the plain of Murthemne), together with that which had been in the hands of Cuchulain, the son of Sualtam. So Flidais died after some time at Trag Bàli (the shore of Bali), and the state of Fergus' household was none the better for that. For she used to supply all Fergus' needs whatsoever they might be (lit. she used to provide for Fergus every outfit that he desired for himself). Fergus died after some time in the land of Connaught, after the death of his wife, after he had gone there to obtain knowledge of a story. For, in order to cheer himself, and to fetch home a grant of cows from Ailill and Medb, he had gone westwards to Cruachan, so that it was in consequence of this journey that he found his death in the west, through the jealousy of Ailill.

[FN#102] L.L. and Egerton give "thereafter," adopted in verse translation.

This, then, is the story of the Tain bo Flidais; it[FN#103] is among the preludes of the Tain bo Cualnge.

[FN#103] This sentence does not occur in the Leabhar na h-Uidhri. It is given as in the Egerton version: the Book of Leinster gives "it is among the preludes of the Tain."

THE APPARITION OF THE GREAT QUEEN TO CUCHULAIN

(TAIN BO REGAMNA)

INTRODUCTION

This tale is given by the same two manuscripts that give the Tain bo Dartada and the Tain bo Regamon; namely the Yellow Book of Lecan, and Egerton 1782. The text of both is given by Windisch, *Irische Texte*, II. pp. 239-254; he gives a translation of the version in the Yellow Book, with a few insertions from the Egerton *Ms.*, where the version in Y.B.L. is apparently corrupt: Miss Hull gives an English translation of Windisch's rendering, in the *Cuchullin Saga*, pages 103 to 107. The prose version given here is a little closer to the Irish than Miss Hull's, and differs very little from that of Windisch. The song sung by the Morrigan to Cuchulain is given in the Irish of both versions by Windisch; he gives no rendering, as it is difficult and corrupt: I can make nothing of it, except that it is a jeering account of the War of Cualgne.

The title Tain bo Regamna is not connected with anything in the tale, as given; Windisch conjectures "Tain bo Morrigna," the Driving of the Cow of the Great Queen (Morrigan); as the woman is called at the end of the Egerton version. The Morrigan, one of the three goddesses of war, was the chief of them: they were Morrigan, Badb, and Macha.



She is also the wife of the Dagda, the chief god of the pagan Irish. The Yellow Book version calls her Badb in this tale, but the account in the *Tain bo Cualnge* (Leabhar na h-Uidhri facsimile, pp. 74 and 77), where the prophecies are fulfilled, agrees with the Egerton version in calling the woman of this tale the Morrigan or the Great Queen.



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THE APPARITION OF THE GREAT QUEEN TO CUCHULAIN

(ALSO CALLED "TAIN BO REGAMNA")

FROM THE YELLOW BOOK OF LECAN (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

At Dun Imrid lay Cuchulain,[FN#104] and slept, when a cry rang out; And in fear he heard from the north-land come ringing that terrible shout: He fell, as he woke from his slumber, with the thud of a weight, to the ground, From his couch on that side of the castle that the rising sun first found. He left his arms in the castle, as the lawns round its walls he sought, But his wife, who followed behind him, apparel and arms to him brought: Then he saw his harnessed chariot, and Laeg,[FN#105] his charioteer, From Ferta Laig who drove it: from the north the car drew near: "What bringeth thee here?" said Cuchulain: said Laeg, "By a cry I was stirred, That across the plain came sounding." "And whence was the cry thou hast heard?" "From the north-west quarter it travelled, it crossed the great Cayll[FN#106] Cooen road!" "Follow on, on that track," said Cuchulain, "till we know what that clamour may bode!"

[FN#104] Pronounced Cu-hoolin.

[FN#105] Pronounced Layg.

[FN#106] Spelt Caill Cuan.

At the ford of the Double Wonder, at Ah[FN#107] Fayrta, the car made stand For a chariot rattled toward them, from the clay-soiled Coolgarry[FN#108] land And before them came that chariot; and strange was the sight they saw: For a one-legged chestnut charger was harnessed the car to draw; And right through the horse's body the pole of the car had passed, To a halter across his forehead was the pole with a wedge made fast: A red woman sat in the chariot, bright red were her eyebrows twain A crimson cloak was round her: the folds of it touched the plain: Two poles were behind her chariot: between them her mantle flowed; And close by the side of that woman a mighty giant strode; On his back was a staff of hazel, two-forked, and the garb he wore Was red, and a cow he goaded, that shambled on before.

[FN#107] Spelt Ath Ferta, or more fully Ath da Ferta, the ford of the two marvels.

[FN#108] Spelt Culgaire.



To that woman and man cried Cuchulain, "Ye who drive that cow do wrong, For against her will do ye drive her!" "Not to thee doth that cow belong," Said the woman; "no byre of thy comrades or thy friends hath that cow yet barred." "The kine of the land of Ulster," said Cuchulain, "are mine to guard!" "Dost thou sit on the seat of judgment?" said the dame, "and a sage decree On this cow would'st thou give, Cuchulain?—too great is that task for thee!" Said the hero, "Why speaketh this woman? hath the man with her never a word?" "'Twas not him you addressed," was her answer, "when first your reproaches we heard." "Nay, to him did I speak," said Cuchulain, "though 'tis thou to reply who would'st claim!" 'Oer-gay-skyeo-loo-ehar-skyeo[FN#109] is the name that he bears," said the dame.



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[FN#109] Spelt Uar-gaeth-sceo-luachair-sceo

“Tis a marvellous name!” said Cuchulain, “if from thee all my answer must come, Let it be as thou wishest; thy comrade, this man, as it seemeth, is dumb. Tell me now of thine own name, O woman.” “Faebor-bayg-byeo-ill,”[FN#110] said the man. “Coom-diewr-folt-skayv-garry-skyeo-ooa is her name, if pronounce it you can!” Then Cuchulain sprang at the chariot: “Would ye make me a fool with your jest?” He cried, as he leapt at the woman; his feet on her shoulders he pressed, And he set on her head his spear-point: “Now cease from thy sharp weapon-play!” Cried the woman. Cuchulain made answer: Thy name to me truth fully say!” “Then remove thyself from me!” she answered: I am skilled in satirical spells; The man is called Darry I mac Feena[FN#111]: in the country of Cualgne[FN#112] he dwells; I of late made a marvellous poem; and as fee for the poem this cow Do I drive to my home.” “Let its verses,” said Cuchulain,” be sung to me now!” “Then away from me stand!” said the woman: “though above me thou shakest thy spear, It will naught avail thee to move me.” Then he left her, but lingered near, Between the poles of her chariot: the woman her song then sang; And the song was a song of insult. Again at the car he sprang, But nothing he found before him: as soon as the car he had neared, The woman, the horse, and the chariot, the cow, and the man disappeared.

[FN#110] Spelt Faebor-begbeoil-cuimdiuir-folt-seenb-gair it-sceo-uath.

[FN#111] Spelt Daire mac Fiachna: he is the owner of the Dun of Cualgne in the Great Tain.

[FN#112] Pronounced Kell-ny.

At a bird on a bough, as they vanished, a glance by Cuchulain was cast, And he knew to that bird's black body the shape of the woman had passed: As a woman of danger I know you,” he cried, “and as powerful in spell!” From to-day and for ever,” she chanted, “this tale in yon clay-land shall dwell!” And her word was accomplished; that region to-day is the Grella Dolloo,[FN#113] The Clay-land of Evil: its name from the deeds of that woman it drew.

[FN#113] Spelt Grellach Dolluid.

“Had I known it was you,” said Cuchulain, “not thus had you passed from my sight!” And she sang, “For thy deed it is fated that evil shall soon be thy plight!” Thou canst. do naught against me,” he answered. “Yea, evil in sooth can I send; Of thy Bringer of Death I am guardian, shall guard it till cometh thine end: From the Under-world Country of Croghan this cow have I driven, to breed By the Dun Bull of Darry[FN#114] Mae Feena, the Bull that in Cualgne doth feed. So long as her calf be a yearling, for that



time thy life shall endure; But, that then shall the Raid have beginning, the dread Raid of Cualgne, be sure.”

[FN#114] Spelt Daire mac Fiachna.

“Nay, clearer my fame shall be ringing,” the hero replied,” for the Raid: All bards, who my deeds shall be singing, must tell of the stand that I made, Each warrior in fight shall be stricken, who dares with my valour to strive: Thou shalt see me, though battle-fields thicken, from the Tain Bo returning alive!”



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“How canst thou that strife be surviving?” the woman replied to his song, “For, when thou with a hero art striving, as fearful as thou, and as strong, Who like thee in his wars is victorious, who all of thy feats can perform, As brave, and as great, and as glorious, as tireless as thou in a storm, Then, in shape of an eel round thee coiling, thy feet at the Ford I will bind, And thou, in such contest when toiling, a battle unequal shalt find.”

“By my god now I swear, by the token that Ulstermen swear by,” he cried; “On a green stone by me shall be broken that eel, to the Ford if it glide: From woe it shall ne’er be escaping, till it loose me, and pass on its way!” And she said: “As a wolf myself shaping, I will spring on thee, eager to slay, I will tear thee; the flesh shall be rended from thy chest by the wolf’s savage bite, Till a strip be torn from thee, extended from the arm on thy left to thy right! With blows that my spear-shaft shall deal thee,” he said, “I will force thee to fly Till thou quit me; my skill shall not heal thee, though bursts from thy head either eye!” I will come then,” she cried, “as a heifer, white-skinned, but with ears that are red, At what time thou in fight shalt endeavour the blood of a hero to shed, Whose skill is full match for thy cunning; by the ford in a lake I will be, And a hundred white cows shall come running, with red ears, in like fashion to me:

As the hooves of the cows on thee trample, thou shalt test ‘truth of men in the fight’: And the proof thou shalt have shall be ample, for from thee thy head they shall smite!” Said Cuchulain: “Aside from thee springing, a stone for a cast will I take, And that stone at thee furiously slinging, thy right or thy left leg will break: Till thou quit me, no help will I grant thee.” Morreegan,[FN#115] the great Battle Queen, With her cow to Rath Croghan departed, and no more by Cuchulain was seen. For she went to her Under-World Country: Cuchulain returned to his place. The tale of the Great Raid of Cualgne this lay, as a prelude, may grace.

[FN#115] Spelt Morrigan.

THE APPARITION OF THE GREAT QUEEN TO CUCHULAIN

LITERAL TRANSLATION

When Cuchulain lay in his sleep at Dun Imrid, there he heard a cry from the north; it came straight towards him; the cry was dire, and most terrifying to him. And he awaked in the midst of his sleep, so that he fell, with the fall of a heavy load, out of his couch, [FN#116] to the ground on the eastern side of his house. He went out thereupon without his weapons, so that he was on the lawns before his house, but his wife brought out, as she followed behind him, his arms and his clothing. Then he saw Laeg in his harnessed chariot, coming from Ferta Laig, from the north; and “What brings thee here?” said Cuchulain. “A cry,” said Laeg, “that I heard sounding over the plains. “On what side was it?” said Cuchulain. “From the north-west it seemed,” said Laeg, “that is,

across the great road of Caill Cuan." [FN#117] "Let us follow after to know of it (lit. after it, to it for us)," said Cuchulain.



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[FN#116] Or “out of his room.” The word is imda, sometimes rendered “bed,” as here by Windisch sometimes also “room,” as in the *Bruidne da Derga* by Whitley Stokes.

[FN#117] Lough Cuan was the old name for Strangford Lough.

They went out thereupon till they came to Ath da Ferta. When they were there, straightway they heard the rattle of a chariot from the quarter of the loamy district of Culgaire. Then they saw the chariot come before them, and one chestnut (lit. red) horse in it. The horse was one footed, and the pole of the chariot passed through the body of the horse, till a wedge went through it, to make it fast on its forehead. A red[FN#118] woman was in the chariot, and a red mantle about her, she had two red eye-brows, and the mantle fell between the two ferta[FN#119] of her chariot behind till it struck upon the ground behind her. A great man was beside her chariot, a red[FN#120] cloak was upon him, and a forked staff of hazel at his back, he drove a cow in front of him.

[FN#118] The above is the Egerton text: the text of Y.B.L. gives “A red woman there, with her two eyebrows red, and her cloak and her raiment: the cloak fell,” &c.

[FN#119] It is not known certainly what the ferta were: Windisch translates “wheels,” but does not give this meaning in his Dictionary: the ferta were behind the car, and could be removed to sound the depth of a ford. It is suggested that they were poles, projecting behind to balance the chariot; and perhaps could be adjusted so as to project less or farther.

[FN#120] This is the Egerton text; the Y.B.L. text gives “a tunic forptha on him the meaning of forptha is unknown.

“That cow is not joyful at being driven by you!” said Cuchulain. “The cow does not belong to you,” said the woman, “she is not the cow of any friend or acquaintance of yours.” “The cows of Ulster,” said Cuchulain, “are my proper (care).” “Dost thou give a decision about the cow?” said the woman; “the task is too great to which thy hand is set, O Cuchulain.” “Why is it the woman who answers me?” said Cuchulain, “why was it not the man?” “It was not the man whom you addressed,” said the woman. “Ay,” said Cuchulain, “(I did address him), though thyself hath answered for him:” “h-Uar-gaeth-sceo-luachair-sceo[FN#121] is his name,” said she.

[FN#121] Cold-wind-and-much-rushes.

“Alas! his name is a wondrous one,” said Cuchulain. “Let it be thyself who answers, [FN#122] since the man answers not. What is thine own name?” said Cuchulain. “The woman to whom thou speakest,” said the man, “is Faebor-begbeoil-cuimdiuir-folt-scenbgairit-sceo-uath.”[FN#123] “Do ye make a fool of me?” cried Cuchulain, and on that Cuchulain sprang into her



chariot: he set his two feet on her two shoulders thereupon, and his spear on the top of her head. "Play not sharp weapons on me!" "Name thyself then by thy true name!" said Cuchulain.



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“Depart then from me!” said she: “I am a female satirist in truth,” she said, “and he is Daire mac Fiachna from Cualnge: I have brought the cow as fee for a master-poem.” “Let me hear the poem then,” said Cuchulain. “Only remove thyself from me,” said the woman; “it is none[FN#124] the better for thee that thou shakest it over my head.” Thereon he left her until he was between the two poles (ferta) of her chariot, and she sang to him[FN#125] Cuchulain threw a spring at her chariot, and he saw not the horse, nor the woman, nor the chariot, nor the man, nor the cow.

[FN#122] Y.B.L. corrupt; Egerton version adopted here.

[FN#123] Little-mouthed-edge-equally-small-hair-short-spl inter-much-clamour.

[FN#124] Not is it better for thee that” is in Egerton alone.

[FN#125] See the introduction for the omission of the poem.

Then he saw that she had become a black bird upon a branch near to him. “A dangerous[FN#126] (or magical) woman thou art,” said Cuchulain: “Henceforward,” said the woman, “this clay-land shall be called dolluid (of evil,)” and it has been the Grellach Dolluid ever since. “If only I had known it was you,” said Cuchulain, “not thus should we have separated.” “What thou hast done,” said she, “shall be evil to thee from it.” “Thou hast no power against me,” said Cuchulain. “I have power indeed,” said the woman; “it is at the guarding of thy death that I am; and I shall be,” said she. “I brought this cow out of the fairy-mound of Cruachan, that she might breed by the Black Bull[FN#127] of Cualnge, that is the Bull of Daire Mae Fiachna. It is up to that time that thou art in life, so long as the calf which is in this cow’s body is a yearling; and it is this that shall lead to the Tain bo Cualnge.” “I shall myself be all the more glorious for that Tain,” said Cuchulain: “I shall slay their warriors: I shall break their great hosts: I shall be survivor of the Tain.”

[FN#126] Windisch is doubtful about the meaning of this word. He gives it as “dangerous” in his translation; it may also mean “magical,” though he thinks not. In a note he says that the meaning “dangerous” is not certain.

[FN#127] In Egerton “the Dun of Cualnge.”

“In what way canst thou do this?” said the woman, “for when thou art in combat against a man of equal strength (to thee), equally rich in victories, thine equal in feats, equally fierce, equally untiring, equally noble, equally brave, equally great with thee, I will be an eel, and I will draw a noose about thy feet in the ford, so that it will be a great unequal war for thee.” “I swear to the god that the Ulstermen swear by,” said Cuchulain, “I will



break thee against a green stone of the ford; and thou shalt have no healing from me, if thou leavest me not.” “I will in truth be a grey wolf against thee,” said she, “and I will strip a stripe[FN#128] from thee, from thy right (hand) till it extends to thy left.”



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[FN#128] This word is left doubtful in Windisch's translation. The word is *breth* in Y.B.L. and *breit* in Egerton. *Breit* may be a strip of woollen material, or a strip of land; so the meaning of a strip of flesh seems possible.

"I will beat thee from me," said he, "with the spear, till thy left or thy right eye bursts from thy head, and thou shalt never have healing from me, if thou leavest me not." "I shall in truth," she said, "be for thee as a white heifer with red ears, and I will go into a lake near to the ford in which thou art in combat against a man who is thine equal in feats, and one hundred white, red-eared cows shall be behind me and 'truth of men' shall on that day be tested; and they shall take thy head from thee." "I will cast at thee with a cast of my sling," said Cuchulain, "so as to break either thy left or thy right leg from under thee; and thou shalt have no help from me if thou leavest me not."

They[FN#129] separated, and Cuchulain went back again to Dun Imrid, and the Morrigan with her cow to the fairy mound of Cruachan; so that this tale is a prelude to the *Tain bo Cualnge*.

[FN#129] All this sentence up to "so that this tale" is from the Egerton version. The Yellow Book of Lecan gives "The Badb thereon went from him, and Cuchulain went to his own house, so that," &c.

TEXT OF LEABHAR NA H-UIDHRI

GIVING THE CONCLUSION OF THE "COURTSHIP OF ETAIN"

INTRODUCTION

The following pages give, with an interlinear word for word[FN#130] translation, the text of *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, page 130 b. line 19 to the end of page 132 a. of the facsimile. The text corresponds to the end of the tale of the Courtship of Etain in vol. i., from page 27, line 21, to the end of the story; it also contains the poem which is in that volume placed on page 26, but occurs in the manuscript at the place where the first line of it is quoted on page 30 of vol. i.

[FN#130] The Irish idiom of putting the adjective after the noun is not always followed in the translation.

It is hoped that the text may be found to be convenient by scholars: special care has been taken to make it accurate, and it has not, with the exception of the poem just referred to, been published before except in the facsimile; the remainder of the text of the L.U. version of the Courtship of Etain, together with the poem, has been given by Windisch in the first volume of the *Irische Texte*.

The immediate object of the publication of this text, with its interlinear translation, is however somewhat different; it was desired to give any who may have become interested in the subject, from the romances contained in the two volumes of this collection, some idea of their exact form in the original, and of the Irish constructions and metres, as no Irish scholarship is needed to follow the text, when supplemented by the interlinear translation. The translation may be relied on, except for a few words indicated by a mark of interrogation.

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The passage is especially well suited to give an idea of the style of Irish composition, as it contains all the three forms used in the romances, rhetoric, regular verse, and prose: the prose also is varied in character, for it includes narrative, rapid dialogue, an antiquarian insertion, and two descriptive passages. The piece of antiquarian information and the resume of the old legend immediately preceding the second rhetoric can be seen to be of a different character to the flowing form of the narrative proper; the inserted passage being full of explanatory words, *conid*, *issairi*, *is aice*, &c., and containing no imagery. The two descriptions, though short, are good examples of two styles of description which occur in some other romances; neither of these styles is universal, nor are they the only styles; the favour shown to one or the other in a romance may be regarded as a characteristic of its author.

The first style, exemplified by the description of Mider's appearance, consists of a succession of images presented in short sentences, sometimes, as in this case, with no verb, sometimes with the verb *batar* or a similar verb repeated in each sentence, but in all cases giving a brilliant word-picture, absolutely clear and definite, of what it is intended to convey. The second style, exemplified here by the description of the horses that Mider offers to Eochaid, consists of a series of epithets or of substantives, and is often imitated in modern Irish. These passages are usually difficult to translate, as many words appear to be coined for the purpose of the descriptions; but, in the best writings, the epithets are by no means arbitrary; they are placed so as to contrast sharply with each other, and in many cases suggest brilliant metaphors; the style being in this respect more like Latin than English. Absolutely literal translations quite fail to bring out the effect of such passages; for not only is the string of adjectives a distinctively Irish feature, but both in English and in Greek such metaphors are generally expressed more definitely and by short sentences. There is also a third style of description which does not appear in the prose of any of the romances in this collection, but appears often in other romances, as in the *Bruidne da Derga*, *Bricriu's Feast*, and the *Great Tain*; it resembles the first style, but the sentences are longer, yet it does not give clear descriptions, only leaving a vague impression. This style is often used for descriptions of the supernatural; it may be regarded as actual reproductions of the oldest pre-Christian work, but it is also possible that it is the result of legends, dimly known to the authors of the tales, and represented by them in the half-understood way in which they were apprehended by them: the Druidic forms may have been much more clear. Such passages are those which describe Cuchulain's distortions; the only passage of the character in this collection is in the verse of

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the Sick-bed, vol. i. page 77. Five of the romances in the present collection have no descriptive passages in the prose; the Combat at the Ford and the Tain bo Fraich show examples of both the first and the second form, but more often the first; the Tain bo Regamna, though a very short piece, also shows one example of each; for the description of the goblins met by Cuchulain is quite clear, and cannot be regarded as belonging to the third form. There is also one case of the second form in the Tain bo Dartada, and two other cases of the first in the Court ship of Etain—one in the Egerton, one in the Leabhar na h-Uidhri version. The best example of the first style is in the Egerton version of Etain (vol. i. page 12); the best example of the second is the description of Cuchulain's horses (vol. i. page 128); a still better example of contrasts in such a description is in the Courtship of Ferb (Nutt, page 23).

The piece of regular verse contained in the extract should give a fair idea of the style of this form of composition. Description is common in the verse, and it is in this case a prominent feature. It may be noted that lines 8, 16, 23, 26 will not scan unless the present diphthongs are divided, also that the poem has fewer internal rhymes than is usual in this regular verse.

The two passages in rhetoric, for so I take them to be, are good examples of the style. An attempt has been made to divide them into lines, but this division is open to criticism, especially as some lines in one of the two passages cannot be translated, and the translation of some other lines is doubtful: the division suggested does, however, appear to me to give a rough metre and occasional rhymes. It is possible that, if attention is called to those lines which are at present untranslatable, something may be done for them. The verse translations given in vol. i. pages 27 and 29, give the meaning that I take the Irish to bear where I can get any meaning at all.

As to the text, the usual abbreviation for *n* has in general not been italicized, nor has that for *fri*; all other abbreviations, including *acht*, final *n* in the symbol for *con*, and that for *or* in the recognized symbol for *for*, have been italicized. In the rhetorics, owing to their difficulty, the abbreviation for *n* has been italicized throughout; the symbol for *ocus* is not italicised. A few conjectures have been inserted, the text being given as a footnote; a conjectured letter supposed to be missing has been inserted in brackets, and a restoration by Professor Strachan of a few letters where the *Ms.* is torn are similarly placed in brackets. The rest of the text is carefully copied from the facsimile, including the glosses, which are inserted above the words in the same places that they occupy in the manuscript.

TEXT WITH INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

Fecht n-aile asraracht Eochaid Airem ri Temrach la n-alaind



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Another time arose Eochaid Airem. king of Tara on a beautiful day
 i n-amsir samrata frisocaib[FN#131] for sosta na Temrach do imcaisiu maigi Breg,
 in time of summer, mounted on heights of Tara for viewing of plain of Breg,
 [FN#131] A conjecture: *Ms. fosrocaib= fo-s-ro-od-gaib, an unknown compound.*
 boi fo a li ocus fo bluth cach datha. Am-imracacha inti
 was good its colour, and good blossom of every hue. When looked about the aforesaid

Eochaid imbi, co acca inn oclaeach n-ingnad for sin sossad[FN#132] inna

Eoebaid around him, he saw the young warrior unknown on the height beside
 [FN#132] A conjecture: *Ms. tossad.*
 chomairi. Fuan corcair imbi, ocus mong or-budi fair co brainni
 him. Tunic purple about him, and hair gold-yellow on him to edges
 a da imdae. Rosc cainlech glas ina chind. Sleg coicrind ina laim.
 of his two shoulders. Eye lustrous gray in his head. Spear five-pointed in his hand.

Sciath taulgel ina laim con gemaib oir forri. Sochtais Eochaid, ar ni

Shield white-bossed in his hand with gems of gold on it. Was silent Eochaid, for not
 fitir a bith isin Temraig inn aidehi riam, ocus ni orslaiethe ind lis
 he knew of his being in the Tara the night before, and not was opened the Liss
 in trath sin. Tolluid ar inchaib Eochoda iarsain asbert Eochaid iarom,
 at that hour. He came under protection of Eochaid thereon; said Eochaid then,
 fochen dond laech nad athgenmar. Is ed doroehtmar or in
 welcome to the hero whom we know not. It is for that we have come, said the



t-oclaech. Ni tathgenmar or Eochaid. Atotgensa chetus ol in
(young) warrior. We know thee not, said Eochaid. I know thee indeed, said the
t-oclaech. Cia th'ainm seo? ol Eochaid. Ni airdairc son, ol se,
warrior. What (is) thy own name? said Eochaid. Not illustrious that, said he,

Mider Breg Leith. Cid dotroacht ol Eochaid. Do imbert fidcille

Mider of Bri Leith. What brought thee? said Eochaid. To play at chess
frit-su ol se. Am maith se em, ol Eochaid for fithchill. A fromad
with thee, said he. I am good myself truly, said Eochaid, at chess-play. Its essaying
dun ol Mider. Ata ol Eochaid, ind rigan ina cotlud, is le in tech
to us! said Mider. Is, said Eochaid, the queen in her sleep, it is hers the house
ata ind fithchell. Ata sund chenaë, ol Mider, fidchell nad
where is the chessboard. There is here yet, said Mider, a chessboard which is not
messo. Ba fir on, clar n-argit ocus fir oir, ocus fursunnud cacha



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worse. Was true that, a board of silver and men of gold, and shining in every
hairidi for sin clar di liic logmair, ocus fer-bolg di figi rond credumae.
direction on that board of costly stones, and a men-bag of woven chains of brass.

Ecraid Mider in fidchill iarsin. Imbir ol Mider. Ni immer acht

Set out Mider the chessboard thereupon. Play! said Mider. Not will I play, except
di giull ol Eochaid. Cid gell bias and? ol Mider. Cumma lim ol
for a stake, said Eochaid. What stake shall be here? said Mider. Equal to me, said
Eochaid. Rot-bia lim-sa ol Mider mad tu beras mo thochell,
Eochaid. Thou shalt have from me, said Mider, if thou carry off my stake,

L. gabur n-dub-glas ite cend-brecca, croderga, biruich,

50 horses of dark-gray, and they with dappled heads, blood-red, with ears pricked high,
bruin-lethain, bolg(s)roin, coss choela, comrassa, faeborda,[FN#133] femendae,
[FN#133]
chests broad, nostrils distended, feet thin, strong, keen, ? vehement,
aurarda, aignecha, so-(a)staidi,[FN#133] so
very high, spirited, easily stopped,

[FN#133] See *Bruidne da Derga* (Stokes), 50, 51, faeborda, lit. with an edge on them; femendae? = Lat. vehemens; soaistidi is the form adopted by Stokes in his edition of the *Bruidne*; Egerton *Ms.* gives soastaide.

There is a gap here, a complete column being torn from the manuscript. The lost part obviously describes the issue of the chess game or games, and the penalties demanded by Bochaid: what these penalties were is plain from the succeeding story. The work of Mider and his folk in paying these penalties must also have been described: the next column (*Leabhar na h- Uidhri*, 131 b. of the facsimile) opens thus:

iarsin doberar uir ocus grian ocus clocha for sin monai. Fri etna



thereupon is, placed earth and gravel and stones on the bog. Over foreheads
dam dano-batar fedmand la firu h-Erind cosind n-aidchi sin, co
of oxen then were yokes among men of Ireland till that very night, when
n-aicces la lucht in t-side for a formnaib. Dognith
it was seen (tbLat they were) among people of the Mounds on their shoulders. It was
done
sam laid la Eochaid, conid de ata do som. Echaid Airem, ar
so by Eochaid, so that hence is to himself (the name of) Echaid Airem, for
is aice toisech tucad cuing for muinelaib dam do ferand h-Erind. Is
it is by him first was put yoke on necks of oxen for land of Ireland. This
ed dino and food ro boi im belaib in t-sluaig oc denam in tocuir:
is then there word which was on lips of the host at making of the causeway:
Rhetoric—



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Cuire illaim,

Put into hand

tochra illaim,

place (it) into hand

aurdaire damrad trathaib iar fuin

noble (are) oxen for hours after sunset

for from ailges

very heavy request

ni fes cuich les

it is not known to whom (is) gain

cuich amles de thochur dar moin Lamraige.

to whom harm from the causeway over moor of Lamrach.

Ni biad isin bith tochur bad ferr mani bethe oca

There would not be in the world a causeway which is better, if not (men) had been at

n-descin Forracbad de bochtae and iartain. Iarsin dolluid

the seeing them. Was left on that account a breach there thenceforth. Thereupon came

in rechtaire co Echaid ocus adfet scela in mor fedma, atconnaire

the steward to Echaid, and made known tales of the great serving band, that he saw

fiadai, ocus asbert nad rabi for fertas in betha cumachta

before him, and said that there was not on the chariot pole of life a power

dodrosce de. Am batar for a m-briathraib co n-accatar Mider

that excelled it. When they were at their talking they saw Mider (come)



chucu. Ard chustal ocus droch gne fair. Atrigestar Eochaid,

to them. High ? girt (he was), and evil face (was) on him.? Rose ?[FN#134] Eochaid,

[FN#134] This is a possible rendering, taking the word as a deponent form of atregaim. It would be more natural to take the word as from adagur; being equivalent to ad-d-raigestar, and to mean “feared him,” but this does not agree with Eoebaid’s general attitude.

ocus ferais faelti fri. Is ed dorochtmar ol Mider. Is toreda ocus is

and gave welcome to him. It is for that we have come, said Mider. It is cruel and is

di-cheill no tai frim, mor decrai ocus mor aingcessa do thabairt form

senseless thou art to me, great hardship and great suffering thy bestowing on me

adethaind ni bad maith lat chena acht is bairnech mo menma frit.

I used to get what seemed good to thee still but is angry my mind against thee.

Ni bara fri bure dait-siu on do-gignestar do menma for Eochaid.

Not anger against anger: to thyself the thing that shall choose thy mind, said Eochaid.

Gebthar dano, ol Mider. Inn imberam fidchill? for Mider. Cid gell

It shall be done then, said Mider. Shall we play at chess? said Mider.

What stake

bias and? for Eochaid. Gell adcobra cechtar da lina for

shall be there? said Eochaid. The stake that wishes each of the two parties, said

Mider. Berar tochell n-Echdach alla sin. Rucais mo



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Mider. Is carried off stake of Echaid in that very place. Thou hast carried off my thocell, for Eebaid. Mad ail dam no-beraind o chianaib, stake, said Echaid. If wish to me (had been) I could have carried it off long since, for Mider. Cacht cid adcobrai form-sa? for Echaid. Di laim im said Mider. Question what wishest thou from myself? said Echaid. Two arms about etain, ocus poc di ol Mider. Sochtais Echaid la, sodain, ocus asbert, Etain, and a kiss from her, said Mider. Was silent Echaid thereon, and said, tis dia mis on diu, doberthar dait ani sin. In thou shalt come in a month from to-day, (and) shall be given to thee that very thing. The bliadain ria tuidecht do Mider co Echaid do imbirt na fidehille boi oc year before the coming of Mider to Echaid for playing of the chess was he at tochmarc etaine, ocus nis n-etad leis. Is ed ainm dobered Mider wooing of Etain, and nothing was found by him. This is the name used to give Mider di: befind conide asbert: to her: fair-haired lady, so that thence he said: a be find in raga lim O fair-haired lady, wilt thou come with me i tir n-ingnad hi fil rind into a land marvellous, that is music?

Is barr sobarche folt and

(thus) is the top of the head, of primrose the hair there,
is dath snechta corp co ind:
is colour of snow the body to the head:



Is and nad bi mui na tai,
It is there not will be 'mine' or 'thine,'
gela det and, dubai brai,
white teeth there, black eyebrows,
Is li sula lin ar sluag,[FN#135]
is colour of eyes number of our hosts,

[FN#135] A conjecture by Windisch. Text gives sluag the genitive singular, which does not rhyme.

[FN#136]no is brece is dath sion and cech graduad:

or is many-coloured is hue of foxglove there each cheek:

[FN#136] The three glosses are interesting. It may be noted that the last two certainly follow the word (above the line in which it occurs) that they seem to gloss: it is therefore probable that the first does so too; the two lines of a couplet are on the same line in the manuscript. It {footnote p. 156} seems then possible that the gloss "it is many-coloured" refers, not to the foxglove, but to the preceding line, "the colour of eyes is number of our hosts," and that the writer of this gloss gave the same meaning to the rather hard description of the colour of the eyes as is given in the verse translation (vol. i. p. 26), *i.e.* that the eyes had changing lights and shapes. We must hope, for the credit of his taste, that he did not think of the cheeks as many-coloured or freckled, but his gloss of lossa does not seem happy. The meaning "growth" is taken from O'Reilly's Dictionary.



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no lossa Is corcair maige cach muin,[FN#137]

or growth? is purple of a plain each neck,

[FN#137] A conjecture (Str.), main, treasure, is in the text: this does not rhyme, nor give good sense; note, however, that muin has no accent-the text gives one.

no is dath is li sula ugai luin:

or is hue is colour of eyes (that of) eggs of a blackbird:

cid cain deicsiu maigi Fail

though pleasant (is) seeing plains of Fal (isle of Destiny)

annam iar gnais maige mair.

a wilderness[FN#138] after knowledge of the Great Plain.

[FN#138] This meaning for annam is doubtful; the sense of “seldom” is established for the word; the line possibly means “it will seldom be so after,” &c.

Cid mesc lib coirm inse Fail,

Though intoxicating to you (is) ale of the island Fal,

is mescu coirm tire mair,

is more intoxicating the ale of the country great,

amra tire tir asbiur,

a wonder of a land the land I mention,

ni theit oac and re siun.

not goes a young man there before an old man.

Srotha teith millsí tar tír,

Streams warm (and) sweet through the land,

rogu de mid ocus fin,

choice of mead and wine,



doini delgnaidi, cen on,
 men ? handsome, without blemish,
 combart cen pecead, cen col.
 conception without sin without crime.
 Atchiam cach for each leth,
 We see all on every side,
 ocus ni-conn acci nech;
 and yet not sees us anyone
 temel imorbais adaim
 the cloud of the sin of Adam
 do-don-archeil[FN#139] ar araim
 encompasses us from reckoning
 [FN#139] From tairchellaim.
 A ben dia ris mo thuaith tind,
 O woman, if thou wilt come to my people strong,
 is barr oir bias fort chind,
 it is top of head of gold shall be on thy head,
 inue ur, laith, lemnacht la lind
 pork unsalted, ale, new milk for drink
 rot bia lim and, a be find, a be find.
 shall be to thee with me there, O woman fair-haired.
 [a gap, 9 letters lost] i atumchotaise om aithech tige rag-sa, [a gap,
 thou obtainest me from my master of the house I will go,
 [9 letters lost] fetai, ni rag. Is iarsin dolluid Mider (L.U. 130 a.) co
 canst, not will I go. It is thereon came Mider to



Echaid, agus damair a thochell fochetoir co m-beth fôlo acai

Echaid, and yields his stake immediately that may be (cause) of reproach for him
do Echaid, is airi roic na comada mora, agus issairi is
to Echaid, it is therefore he paid the great stakes, and on that account it is (that)
fo anfis con atig a gell. Conid iarsin giull adrubrad in tan tra



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under ignorance that he asked his wager. So that after that wager it was said when now

ro boi Mider cona muinte oc ic comad na aidehi, i. in tochor, ocus

was Mider and his folk at paying the stake of the night, that is, the causeway, and

di-chlochad Midi, ocus luachair Tetbai, ocus fid dar Breg: isse[FN#140] seo

clearing stones off Meath, and rushes of Tethba and forest over Breg: it is he this

[FN#140] Grammar not clear: perhaps the Irish is corrupt (Str.).

an no foclad boi oca muinte amal atbert lebor drom snechta:

what used to say was with his folk as says Book of Drom-snechta:

Rhetoric—

Cuirthe illand:

Put on the field:

tochre illand:

Put close on the field

airderg dararad:

very red oxen:

trom in choibden:

heavy the troop

clunithar fir ferdi.

Which hears ?really-manly

buidni balc-thruim crand-chuir

troops for strong heavy setting of trees

forderg saire fedar

of very red ?oaks[FN#141] are led



[FN#141] Reading daire for saire.

sechuib slimprib snithib

past them on twisted wattles:

scitha lama:

weary are hands,

ind rosc cloina:

the eye ?slants aside?

fobith oen mna

because of one woman

Duib in digail:

To you the revenge,

duib in trom-daim:[FN#142]

to you the heavy ?oxen

[FN#142] A conjecture. Ms. gives trom-daim.

tairthim flatho fer ban:

splendour of sovereignty over white men:

fomnis, fomnis, in fer m-braine cerpae fomnis diad dergæ

???

fer arfeid solaig

?

fri aiss esslind

?

fer bron for-ti

? sorrow shall, come on the man?

i. more ertechta inde



?

lamnado luachair

rushes

for di Thethbi

over?two Tethbas

di-chlochad[FN#143] Midi

clearing stones from Meath

[FN#143] A conjecture. Ms. gives dilecad (Str.)

indracht

?

coich les, coich amles to whom the benefit, to whom the harm

thocur dar clochach? moin.[FN#144]

causeway over stony moor.

[FN#144] The last line in the Ms. is t d c m.

Dalis Mider dia mis Fochiallastar (i. rotinoil). Echaid formna

Mider appointed a meeting for the end of a month. Echaid assembled (i.e. collected)troops.

laech la-erend com batar hi Temrach, ocus an ro po dech do fiannaib

of heroes of Ireland so that they were in Tara, and what was best of champions



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h-Erind, cach cuaird imm araille im Temrach immedon ocus a nechtair,
of Ireland, each ring about another, around Tara im the middle, and outside it
ocus is-tig. Ocus in ri ocus in rigan immedon in taigi, ocus ind lis
and within. And the king and the queen in the middle of the house, and its Liss
iatai fo glassaib, ar ro fetatar do t-icfad fer in mar cumacht. Etain
shut under locks, for they knew that would comie of insen the great might. Etain
boi ocon dail ind aidehi sin forsna flathi, ar ba sain dana disi dal.
was dispensing that night to the princes, for it was meet then for her pouring (of the
wine)

Am batar iarom fora. m-briathraib, co accatar Mider chucu for

When they were thereon at their talking they saw Mider (come) to them on
lar ind righthige. Ba cain som dogres ba caini dana inn aidehi sin.
the floor of the royal palace. He was fair always, was fairer then on that night.

Tosbert im mod na slûag ateonnairc. Sochsit uli iarom ocus

He brought to amazement the hosts that he saw.[FN#145] Were silent all thereon, and
[FN#145] Reading atcondairc (Str.).

ferais in ri faelti fris. Is ed dorochtmar ol Mider. An ro gella
the king gave welcome to him. It is this we have come for, said Mider.
What was promised
dam-sa or se, tucthar dam. Is fiach ma gelltar, an ro gellad
to myself, said he, let it be given to me. It is a debt if a promise is given,
tucus dait-siu. Ni imrordusa for Echaid, ani sin co se.



I have given to thee. Not have I thought on, said Echaid, that very thing up to now.

Atrugell etain fein dam-sa, ol Mider, ticht uait-siu.

Thou hast promised Etain herself to me, said Mider, message (lit. a coming) from you.

Imdergthar im Etain la, sodain. Na imdergthar imut for Mider, ni

There was a blush on Etain thereupon. Let there be no blush on thee, said Mider, not

droch banas duit-siu. Atu-sa, ol si, bliadain oc do chuingid com

evil marriage-feast to thee. I am myself, said he, a year at seeking thee with

mainib ocus setaib at aildem in ere, ocus ni tucus-sa

treasures and jewels that are the most beautiful in Ireland and not I took thee

comad chomarlecud do Echaid. Ni -la-deoas damsa ce

till there should be permission of Echaid. Not by good-will to me any

dotchotaind. Atrubart-sa frit-su ol si, conom rire Echaid,

getting thee. I myself said to thyself, said she, until Echaid gives me up

nit rius. Atometha lat ar mo chuit fein, dia nom rire Echaid.

not will I come to thee. Take me with thee for my own part, if me Echaid will give up.



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Nit ririub immorro, for Echaid, acht tabrad a di laim

Not thee will I give up however, said Echaid, but (I give) a placing of his two hands
imut for lar in tige, amal ro gabais. Dogentar for Mider.

about thee on floor of the house, as thou art. It shall be done! said Mider.

i. mider Atetha a gaisced ina laim cli, ocus gabais in mnai fo a leth-oxail dess,

that is, Mider He took his weapons in his hand left, and took the woman under his
shoulder right,

ocus focois-le for forles in tige. Conerget in-t-sluaig imon rig

and carried her off over skylight of the house. Pose up the hosts, about the king

iar melacht forro, co n-accatar in da ela timchell na Temra. Is ed

after a disgrace on them, they saw the two swans around Tara. It is this,

ro gabsat do sid ar Femun. Ocus luid Echaid co fomno

they took (the road) to elfmound about about Femun. And went Echaid with a troop

fer n-Erend imbi do sith ar Femun i. sid ban-find.

of men of Ireland about him to elf mound about Femun *i.e.* elfmound of the fair-haired
women.

B (a si com)[FN#146] arli fer n-Erend, fochlaid each sid [a gap, 12 letters lost]

That was the counsel of the men of Ireland, he dug up each elf-mound.

[FN#146] The letters in parentheses are a conjecture by Strachan, to fill up a gap in the
manuscript.

tised a ben. do uadib, Focce [a gap of 13 letters, rest of the version lost.]

should come his wife to him from them.

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