

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley

Joseph Dunn

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(Táin Bó Cúalnge)

1. Here Beginneth The Cualnge Cattle–raid

ONCE of a time, that Ailill and Medb had spread their royal bed in Cruachan, the stronghold of Connacht, such was the pillow–talk that befell betwixt them:

Quoth Ailill: "True is the saying, lady, 'She is a well–off woman that is a rich man's wife.'" "Aye, that she is," answered the wife; "but wherefore opin'st thou so?" "For this," Ailill replied, "that thou art this day better off than the day that first I took thee." Then answered Medb: "As well–off was I before I ever saw thee." "It was a wealth, forsooth, we never heard nor knew of," Ailill said; "but a woman's wealth was all thou hadst, and foes from lands next thine were used to carry off the spoil and booty that they took from thee."

"Not so was I," quoth Medb; "the High King of Erin himself was my sire, Eocho Fedlech ('the Enduring') son of Finn, by name, who was son of Findoman, son of Finden, son of Findguin, son of Rogen Ruad ('the Red'), son of Rigen, son of Blathacht, son of Beothacht, son of Enna Agnech, son of Oengus Turbech. Of daughters, had he six: Derbriu, Ethne and Ele, Clothru, Mugain and Medb, myself, that was the noblest and seemliest of them.

'Twas I was the goodliest of them in bounty and gift–giving, in riches and treasures. 'Twas I was best of them in battle and strife and combat. 'Twas I that had fifteen hundred royal mercenaries of the sons of aliens exiled from their own land, and as many more of the sons of freemen of the land. And there were ten men with every one of these hirelings, and nine men with every hireling, and eight men with every hireling, and seven men with every hireling, and six men with every hireling, and five men with every hireling, and four men with every hireling, and three men with every hireling, and two men with every hireling, and one hireling with every hireling. These were as a standing household–guard," continued Medb; "hence hath my father bestowed one of the five provinces of

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Erin upon me, even the province of Cruachan; wherefore 'Medb of Cruachan ' am I called.

Men came from Finn son of Ross Ruad ('the Red'), king of Leinster, to seek me for a wife, and I refused him; and from Carbre Niafer ('the Champion') son of Ross Ruad ('the Red'), king of Temair, to woo me, and I refused him; and they came from Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach ('the Mighty'), king of Ulster, and I refused him in like wise. They came from Eocho Bec ('the Small'), and I went not; for 'tis I that exacted a singular bride–gift, such as no woman before me had ever required of a man of the men of Erin, namely, a husband without avarice, without jealousy, without fear.

For should he be mean, the man with whom I should live, we were ill–matched together, inasmuch as I am great in largess and gift–giving, and it would be a disgrace for my husband if I should be better at spending than he, and for it to be said that I was superior in wealth and treasures to him, while no disgrace would it be were one as great as the other. Were my husband a coward, 'twere as unfit for us to be mated, for I by myself and alone break battles and fights and combats, and 'twould be a reproach for my husband should his wife be more full of life than himself, and no reproach our being equally bold. Should he be jealous, the husband with whom I should live, that too would not suit me, for there never was a time that I had not my paramour.

Howbeit, such a husband have I found, namely in thee thyself, Ailill son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') of Leinster. Thou wast not churlish; thou wast not jealous; thou wast not a sluggard. It was I plighted thee, and gave purchase–price to thee, which of right belongs to the bride— of clothing, namely, the raiment of twelve men, a chariot worth thrice seven bondmaids, the breadth of thy face of red gold, the weight of thy left forearm of silvered bronze. Whoso brings shame and sorrow and madness upon thee, no claim for compensation nor satisfaction hast thou therefor that I myself have not, but it is to me the compensation belongs," said Medb, "for a man dependent upon a woman's maintenance is what thou art."

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

2. The Occasion of the Táin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thereupon the messengers fared forth to the house of Darè son of Fiachna. This was the number wherewith macRoth went, namely, nine couriers. Anon welcome was lavished on macRoth in Darè's house— fitting welcome it was— chief messenger of all was macRoth. Darè asked of macRoth what had brought him upon the journey and why he was come.

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

At these words Darè was well pleased, and he leaped for joy so that the seams of his flock–bed rent in twain beneath him. "By the truth of our conscience," said he; "however the Ulstermen take it, whether ill or well, this time this jewel shall be delivered to Ailill and to Medb, the Brown of Cualnge to wit, into the land of Connacht." Well pleased was macRoth at the words of the son of Fiachna.

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

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

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better than he?" demanded the first runner further. "Aye, there is," answered the second runner; "better is Conchobar whose man he is; and though all the Ulstermen gathered around him, it were no shame for them. Yet, truly good it is of Darè, that what had been a task for four of the grand provinces of Erin to bear away out of the borders of Ulster is handed over even unto us nine footmen." "I would not grudge to see a retch of blood and gore in the mouth whereout that was said; for, were the bull not given willingly, yet should he be taken by force!"

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

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

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

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

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

3. The Rising–Out of the Men of Connacht at Cruachan Ai

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus the four provinces of Erin gathered in Cruachan Ai. They pitched their camp and quarters that night, so that a thick cloud of smoke and fire rose between the four fords of Ai, which are, Ath Moga, Ath Bercna, Ath Slissen and Ath Coltna. And they tarried for the full space of a fortnight in Cruachan, the hostel of Connacht, in wassail and drink and every disport, to the end that their march and muster might be easier.

And their poets and druids would not let them depart from thence till the end of a fortnight while awaiting good omen. And then it was that Medb bade her charioteer to harness her horses for her, that she might go to address herself to her druid, to seek for light and for augury from him.

4. The Foretelling

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

And the druid made answer, "Whoever comes not, thou thyself shalt come." "Wait, then," spake the charioteer, "let me wheel the chariot by the right, that thus the power of a good omen may arise that we return again." Then the charioteer wheeled his chariot round and Medb went back again, when she espied a thing that surprised her: A lone virgin of marriageable age standing on the hindpole of a chariot a little way off drawing nigh her. And thus the maiden appeared:

Weaving lace was she, and in her right hand was a bordering rod of silvered bronze with its seven strips of red gold at the sides. A many-spotted green mantle around her; a bulging, strong-headed pin of gold in the mantle over her bosom; a hooded tunic, with red interweaving, about her. A ruddy, fair-faced countenance she had, narrow below and broad above. She had a blue-grey and laughing eye; each eye had three pupils. Dark and black were her eyebrows; the soft, black lashes threw a shadow to the middle of her cheeks. Red and thin were her lips. Shiny and pearly were her teeth; thou wouldst believe they were showers of white pearls that had rained into her

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head. Like to fresh Parthian crimson were her lips. As sweet as the strings of lutes when long sustained they are played by master players' hands was the melodious sound of her voice and her fair speech. As white as snow in one night fallen was the sheen of her skin and her body that shone outside of her dress. Slender and very white were her feet; rosy, even, sharp–round nails she had; two sandals with golden buckles about them. Fair–yellow, long, golden hair she wore; three braids of hair she wore; two tresses were wound around her head; the other tress from behind threw a shadow down on her calves.

Medb gazed at her. "And what doest thou here now, O maiden?" asked Medb. "I impart to thee thine advantage and good fortune in thy gathering and muster of the four mighty provinces of Erin against the land of Ulster on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge." "Wherefore doest thou this for me?" asked Medb. "Much cause have I. A bondmaid 'mid thy people am I." "Who of my people art thou and what is thy name?" asked Medb. "Not hard, in sooth, to say. The prophetess Fedelm, from the Sid ('the Fairy Mound') of Cruachan, a poetess of Connacht am I."

"Whence comest thou?" asked Medb. "From Alba, after learning prophetic skill," the maiden made answer. "Hast thou the form of divination?" "Verily, have I," the maiden said. "Look, then, for me, how will my undertaking be." The maiden looked. Then spake Medb:—

"Good now,

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

Fedelm answered and spoke:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All your host he'll smite in twain,
Till he works your utter ruin.
All your heads ye'll leave with him.
Fedelm, prophet–maid, hides not!

"Gore shall flow from warriors' wounds;
Long 'twill live in memory.
Bodies hacked and wives in tears,
Through the Smith's Hound whom I see!"

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

5. This is the Route of the Táin

and the Beginning of the Expedition and the Names of the Roads which the hosts of the four of the five grand provinces of Erin took into the land of Ulster. On Monday after Summer's end they set forth and proceeded:

South–east from Cruachan Ai, by Mag Cruimm,
over Tuaim Mona ('the Hill of Turf'),
by Turloch Teora Crich ('the Creek of three Lands'),
by Cul ('the Nook') of Silinne,
by Dubloch ('Black Lough'),
by Fid Dubh ('Black Woods'),
by Badbgna,
by Coltain,
by the Shannon,
by Glune Gabur,

by Mag Trega,

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by Tethba in the north,
by Tethba in the south,
by Cul ('the Nook'),
by Ochain,
northwards by Uatu,
eastwards by Tiarthechta,
by Ord ('the Hammer'),
by Slaiss ('the Strokes'), southwards,
by Indeoin ('the Anvil'),

by Carn,
by Meath,
by Ortrach,
by Findglassa Assail, ('White Stream of Assail'),
by Drong,
by Delt,
by Duelt,
by Delinn,
by Selaig,
by Slabra,

by Slechta, where swords hewed out roads before Medb and Ailill,
by Cul ('the Nook') of Siblinne,
by Dub ('the Blackwater'),
by Ochonn southwards,
by Catha,
by Cromma southwards,
by Tromma,
eastwards by Fodromma,
by Slane,
by Gort Slane,

to the south of Druim Licce,
by Ath Gabla,
by Ardachad ('Highfield'),
northwards by Feorainn,
by Finnabair ('White Plain'),
by Assa southwards,
by Airne,
by Aurthuile,
by Druim Salfind ('Salfind Ridge'),
by Druim Cain,

by Druim Caimthechta,
by Druim macDega,
by the little Eo Dond ('Brown Tree'),
by the great Eo Dond,
by Meide in Togmaill ('Ferret's Neck'),
by Meide in Eoin, ('Bird's Neck'),
by Baille ('the Town'),
by Aile,

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by Dall Scena,
by Ball Scena,

by Ross Mor ('Great Point'),
by Scuap ('the Broom'),
by Inscuap,
by Cenn Ferna,
by Anmag,
by Fid Mor ('Great Wood') in Crannach of Cualnge,
by Colbtha,
by Crond in Cualnge,
by Druim Cain on the road to Midluachar,
from Finnabair of Cualnge.

It is at that point that the hosts of Erin divided over the province in pursuit of the bull. For it was by way of those places they went until they reached Finnabair. Here endeth the Title. The Story begineth in order.

6. The March Of The Host

On the first stage the hosts went from Cruachan, they slept the night at Cul Silinne, where to–day is Cargin's Lough. And in that place was fixed the tent of Ailill son of Ross, and the trappings were arranged, both bedding and bed–clothes. The tent of Fergus macRoig was on his right hand; Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, was beside him; Ith macEtgaith next to that; Fiachu macFiraba, the son of Conchobar's daughter, at its side; Conall Cernach at its side, Gobnenn macLurnig at the side of that. The place of Ailill's tent was on the right on the march, and thirty hundred men of Ulster beside him. And the thirty hundred men of Ulster on his right hand had he to the end that the whispered talk and conversation and the choice supplies of food and of drink might be the nearer to them.

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

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

Then, when she had reviewed the host, were Medb's horses unyoked and her chariots let down, and she took her place beside Ailill macMata. And Ailill asked tidings of Medb: who was eager and who was loath for the warfare. "Futile for all is the emprise but for one troop only, namely the division of the Galian ('of Leinster')," quoth Medb. "Why blamest thou these men?" queried Ailill. "It is not that we blame them," Medb made answer. "What good service then have these done that they are praised above all?" asked Ailill. "There is reason to praise them," said Medb. "Splendid are the warriors. When the others begin making their pens and pitching their camp, these have finished building their bothies and huts. When the rest are building their bothies and huts, these have finished preparing their food and drink. When the rest are preparing their food and drink, these have finished eating and feasting, and their harps are playing for them. When all the others have finished eating and feasting, these are by that time asleep.

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And even as their servants and thralls are distinguished above the servants and thralls of the men of Erin, so shall their heroes and champions be distinguished beyond the heroes and champions of the men of Erin this time on this hosting. It is folly then for these to go, since it is those others will enjoy the victory of the host!" "So much the better, I bow," replied Ailill; "for it is with us they go and it is for us they fight." "They shall not go with us nor shall they fight for us," cried Medb. Let them stay at home then," said Ailill. "Stay they shall not," answered Medb. "They will fall on us in the rear and will seize our land against us." "What shall they do then," Finnabair asked, "if they go not out nor yet remain at home?" "Death and destruction and slaughter is what I desire for them," answered Medb. "For shame then on thy speech," spake Ailill; "'tis a woman's advice, for that they pitch their tents and make their pens so promptly and unwearily."

"By the truth of my conscience," cried Fergus, "not thus shall it happen, for they are allies of us men of Ulster. No one shall do them to death but he that does death to myself along with them!" "Not to me oughtest thou thus to speak, O Fergus," then cried Medb, "for I have hosts enough to slay and slaughter thee with the division of Leinstermen round thee. For there are the seven Mane, that is, my seven sons with their seven divisions, and the sons of Maga with their seven divisions, and Ailill with his division, and I myself with my own body–guard besides. We are strong enough here to kill and slaughter thee with thy cantred of the Leinstermen round thee!"

"It befits thee not thus to speak to me," said Fergus, "for I have with me here in alliance with us Ulstermen, the seven Under–kings of Munster, with their seven cantreds. Here we have what is best of the youths of Ulster, even the division of the Black Banishment. Here we have what is best of the noble youths of Ulster, even the division of the Galian ('of Leinster'). Furthermore, I myself am bond and surety and guarantee for them, since ever they left their own native land. I will give thee battle in the midst of the camp, and to me will they hold steadfast on the day of battle.

More than all that," added Fergus, "these men shall be no subject of dispute. By that I mean I will never forsake them. For the rest, we will care for these warriors, to the end that they get not the upper hand of the host. "The number of our force is seventeen cantreds, besides our rabble and our women–folk— for with each king was his queen in Medb's company— and our striplings; the eighteenth division is namely the cantred of the Galian. This division of Leinstermen I will distribute among all the host of the men of Erin in such wise that no five men of them shall be in any one place." "That pleaseth me well," said Medb: "let them be as they may, if only they be not in the battle–order of the ranks where they now are in such great force." Forthwith Fergus distributed the cantred of the Galian among the men of Erin in such wise that there were not five men of them in any one place.

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

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

So the lead of the way was entrusted to Fergus. Fergus before all fared forth to seek tidings, and a feeling of love and affection for his kindred of the men of Ulster came over him, and he led the troops astray in a great circuit to the north and the south. And he despatched messengers with warnings to the Ulstermen. And he began to detain

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and delay the host.

Medb perceived this and she upbraided him for it, and chanted the lay:—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Medb: "How so dear, this battle–rede,
Comes from thee, Roig's son most bold.
Men and arms have I enough
To attend Cuchulain here!"

Fergus: "Thou shalt need them, Medb of Ai,
Men and arms for battle hard,
With the grey steed's horseman brave,

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All the night and all the day!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

After this lay the men of the four grand provinces of Erin marched on the morrow over Moin Coltna ('the Marsh of Coltain') eastwards that day; and there met them eight score deer in a single herd. The troops spread out and surrounded and killed them so that none of them escaped. But there is one event to add: Although the division of the Galian had been dispersed among the men of Erin, wherever there was a man of the Galian, it was he that got them, except five deer only which was the men of Erin's share thereof, so that one division took all the eight score deer.

It was on that same day, after the coming of the warning from Fergus to the Ulstermen, that Cuchulain son of Sualtaim, and Sualtaim Sidech ('of the Fairy Mound'), his father, when they had received the warning from Fergus, came so near on their watch for the host that their horses grazed in pasture round the pillarstone on Ard Cuillenn ('the Height of Cuillenn'). Sualtaim's horses cropped the grass north of the pillarstone close to the ground; Cuchulain's cropped the grass south of the pillar–stone even to the ground and the bare stones.

"Well, O master Sualtaim," said Cuchulain; "the thought of the host is fixed sharp upon me to–night, so do thou depart for us with warnings to the men of Ulster, that they remain not in the smooth plains but that they betake themselves to the woods and wastes and steep glens of the province, if so they may keep out of the way of the men of Erin." "And thou, lad, what wilt thou do?" "I must go southwards to Temair to keep tryst with the maid of Fedlimid Nocruthach ('of the Nine Forms') Conchobar's daughter, according to my own agreement, till morning." "Alas, that one should go on such a journey," said Sualtaim, "and leave the Ulstermen under the feet of their foes

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and their enemies for the sake of a tryst with a woman!" "For all that, I needs must go. For, an I go not, the troth of men will be held for false and the promises of women held for true."

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

Touching the men of Erin, the account follows here: They came up to the pillar–stone at Ard Cuillenn, which is called Crossa Coil to–day, and they began looking out upon the province that was unknown to them, the province of Ulster. And two of Medb's people went always before them in the van of the host, at every camp and on every march, at every ford and every river and every gap. They were wont to do so that they might save the brooches and cushions and cloaks of the host, so that the dust of the multitude might not soil them and that no stain might come on the princes' raiment in the crowd or the crush of the hosts or the throng: these were the two sons of Nera, who was the son of Nuathar, son of Tacan, two sons of the house–stewards of Cruachan, Err and Innell, to wit. Fraech and Fochnam were the names of their charioteers.

The nobles of Erin arrived at the pillar–stone and they there beheld the signs of the browsing of the horses, cropping around the pillar, and they looked close at the rude hoop which the royal hero had left behind about the pillar–stone. And Ailill took the withy in his hand and placed it in Fergus' hand, and Fergus read the ogam script graven on the plug of the withy, and made known to the men of Erin what was the meaning of the ogam writing that was on it.

When Medb came, she asked, "Why wait ye here?" "Because of yonder withy we wait," Fergus made answer; "there is an ogam writing on its binding and this is what it saith: 'Let no one go past here till a man be found to throw a withy like unto this, using only one hand and made of a single branch, and I except my master Fergus.' Truly," Fergus added, "it was Cuchulain threw it, and it was his steeds that grazed this plain." And he placed the hoop in the hands of the druids, and it is thus he began to recite and he pronounced a lay:—

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

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

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

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

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

"Woes to bring with hundred fights
On four realms of Erin's land;
Naught I know 'less it be this
For what cause the withe was made!"

After that lay: "I pledge you my word," said Fergus, "if so ye set at naught yon withy and the royal hero that made it, and if ye go beyond without passing a night's camp and quarterage here, or until a man of you make a withy of like kind, using but one foot and one eye and one hand, even as he made it, certain it is, whether ye be under the ground or in a tight–shut house, the man that wrote the ogam hereon will bring slaughter and bloodshed upon ye before the hour of rising on the morrow, if ye make light of him!"

"That, surely, would not be pleasing to us," quoth Medb, "that any one should straightway spill our blood or besmirch us red, now that we are come to this unknown province, even to the province of Ulster. More pleasing would it be to us, to spill another's blood and redden him." "Far be it from us to set this withy at naught," said Ailill, "nor shall we make little of the royal hero that wrought it, rather will we resort to the shelter of this great wood, that is, Fidduin, ('the Wood of the Dun') southwards till morning. There will we pitch our camp and quarters."

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

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

A heavy snow fell on them that night, and so great it was that it reached to the shoulders of the men and to the flanks of the horses and to the poles of the chariots, so that all the provinces of Erin were one level plane from the snow. But no huts nor bothies nor tents did they set up that night, nor did they prepare food nor drink, nor made they a meal nor repast. None of the men of Erin wot whether friend or foe was next him until the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.

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

Now, as regards Cuchulain: It was far from being early when he arose from his tryst. And then he ate a meal and took a repast, and he remained until he had washed himself and bathed on that day. He called to his charioteer to lead out the horses and yoke the chariot. The charioteer led out the horses and yoked the chariot, and Cuchulain mounted his chariot. And they came on the track of the army. They found the trail of the men of Erin leading past them from that part into another.

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"Alas, O master Laeg," cried Cuchulain, "by no good luck went we to our tryst with the woman last night. Would that we had not gone thither nor betrayed the Ultonians. This is the least that might be looked for from him that keeps guard on the marches, a cry, or a shout, or an alarm, or to call, 'Who goes the road?' This it fell not unto us to say. The men of Erin have gone past us, without warning, without complaint, into the land of Ulster." "I foretold thee that, O Cuchulain," said Laeg. "Even though thou wentest to thy woman–tryst last night, such a disgrace would come upon thee." "Good now, O Laeg, go thou for us on the trail of the host and make an estimate of them, and discover for us in what number the men of Erin went by us."

Laeg came on the track of the host, and he went to the front of the trail and he came on its sides and he went to the back of it. "Thou art confused in thy counting, O Laeg, my master," quoth Cuchulain. "Confused I must be," Laeg replied. "Come into the chariot then, and I will make a reckoning of them." The charioteer mounted the chariot and Cuchulain went on the trail of the hosts and after a long while he made a reckoning of them. "Even thou, it is not easy for thee. Thou art perplexed in thy counting, my little Cuchulain," quoth Laeg. "Not perplexed," answered Cuchulain; "it is easier for me than for thee. For I know the number wherewith the hosts went past us, namely, eighteen cantreds. Nay more: the eighteenth cantred has been distributed among the entire host of the men of Erin.

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

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

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

Then it was that the same two striplings surprised him, namely, the two sons of Nera son of Nuathar son of Tacan, while engaged in that feat. And they vied which of the twain would be the first to fight and contend with Cuchulain, which of them would inflict the first wound upon him and be the first to behead him. Cuchulain turned on them, and straightway he struck off their four heads from themselves Eirr and Indell and from Foich and Fochlam, their drivers, and he fixed a head of each man of them on each of the prongs of the pole.

And Cuchulain let the horses of the party go back in the direction of the men of Erin, to return by the same road, their reins loose around their ears and their bellies red and the bodies of the warriors dripping their blood down outside on the ribs of the chariots. Thus he did, for he deemed it no honour nor deemed he it fair to take horses or garments or arms from corpses or from the dead. And then the troops saw the horses of the party that had gone out in advance before them, and the headless bodies of the warriors oozing their blood down on the ribs of the chariots (and their crimsoned trappings upon them). The van of the army waited for the rear to come up, and all were thrown into confusion of striking, that is as much as to say, into a tumult of arms.

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Medb and Fergus and the Manè and the sons of Maga drew near. For in this wise was Medb wont to travel, and nine chariots with her alone; two of these chariots before her, and two chariots behind, and two chariots at either side, and her own chariot in the middle between them. This is why Medb did so, that the turves from the horses' hoofs, or the flakes of foam from the bridle–bits, or the dust of the mighty host or of the numerous throng might not reach the queen's diadem of gold which she wore round her head.

"What have we here?" queried Medb. "Not hard to say," each and all made answer; "the horses of the band that went out before us are here and their bodies lacking their heads in their chariots." They held a council and they felt certain it was the sign of a multitude and of the approach of a mighty host, and that it was the Ulstermen that had come and that it was a battle that had taken place before them on the ford. And this was the counsel they took to despatch Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, from them to learn what was at the ford; because, even though the Ulstermen might be there, they would not kill the son of their own king.

Thereupon Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, set forth and this was the complement with which he went, ten hundred in addition to twenty hundred armed men, to ascertain what was at the ford. And when he was come, he saw naught save the fork in the middle of the ford, with four heads upon it dripping their blood down along the stem of the fork into the stream of the river, and a writing in ogam on the side, and the signs of the two horses and the track of a single chariot–driver and the marks of a single warrior leading out of the ford going therefrom to the eastward. By that time, the nobles of Erin had drawn nigh to the ford and they all began to look closely at the fork. They marvelled and wondered who had set up the trophy.

One of their men deciphered the ogam–writing that was on the side of the fork, to wit: 'A single man cast this fork with but a single hand; and go ye not past it till one man of you throw it with one hand, excepting Fergus.'

"What name have ye men of Ulster for this ford till now, Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Ath Grenca," answered Fergus; "and Ath Gabla ('Ford of the Fork') shall now be its name forever from this fork," said Fergus. And he recited the lay:—

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

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

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

(A druid:) "Yon forked pole— with fearful strength—
Which thou seest, Fergus, there,
One man cut, to welcome us,
With one perfect stroke of sword!

"Pointed it and shouldered it—
Though this was no light exploit—
After that he flung it down,

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To uproot for one of you!

"Grenca was its name till now—
All will keep its memory—
Fork–ford be its name for aye,
From the fork that's in the ford!"

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

"Thou art of our hosts, O Fergus," said Medb; "avert this necessity from us, and do thou draw the fork for us from the bed of the ford." "Let a chariot be brought me," cried Fergus, "till I draw it out, that it may be seen that its butt is of one hewing." And a chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus laid hold with a truly mighty grip on the fork, and he made splinters and scraps of the chariot. "Let another chariot be brought me," cried Fergus. Another chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus made a tug at the fork and again made fragments and splinters of the chariot, both its box and its yoke and its wheels. "Again let a chariot be brought me," cried Fergus. And Fergus exerted his strength on the fork, and made pieces and bits of the chariot.

There where the seventeen chariots of the Connachtmen's chariots were, Fergus made pieces and bits of them all, and yet he failed to draw the fork from the bed of the ford. "Come now, let it be, O Fergus," cried Medb; "break our people's chariots no more. For hadst thou not been now engaged on this hosting, by this time should we have come to Ulster, driving divers spoils and cattleherds with us. We wot wherefore thou workest all this, to delay and detain the host till the Ulstermen rise from their 'Pains' and offer us battle, the battle of the Táin."

"Bring me a swift chariot," cried Fergus. And his own chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus gave a tug at the fork, and nor wheel nor floor nor one of the chariot–poles creaked nor cracked. Even though it was with his strength and prowess that the one had driven it down, with his might and doughtiness the other drew it out,— the battle–champion, the gap–breaker of hundreds, the crushing sledge, the stone–of–battle for enemies, the head of retainers, the foe of hosts, the hacking of masses, the flaming torch and the leader of mighty combat.

He drew it up with the tip of one hand till it reached the slope of his shoulder, and he placed the fork in Ailill's hand. Ailill scanned it; he regarded it near. "The fork, meseems, is all the more perfect," quoth Ailill; "for a single stroke I see on it from butt to top." "Aye, all the more perfect," Fergus replied. And Fergus began to sing praise of Cuchulain, and he made a lay thereon:—

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

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

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

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

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

After this lay: "Let us pitch our booths and tents," said Ailill, "and let us make ready food and drink, and let us sing songs and strike up harps, and let us eat and regale ourselves, for, of a truth, never before nor since knew the men of Erin a night of encampment or of entrenchment that held sorer discomfort or distress for them than yesternight. Let us give heed to the manner of folk to whom we go and let us hear somewhat of their deeds and famous tales." They raised their booths and pitched their tents. They got ready their food and drink, and songs were sung and harping intoned by them, and feasting and eating indulged in.

And Ailill inquired of Fergus: "I marvel and wonder who could have come to us to our lands and slain so quickly the four that had gone out before us. Is it likely that Conchobar son of Fachtna Fatach ('the Mighty'), High King of Ulster, has come to us?" "It is never likely that he has," Fergus answered; "for a shame it would be to speak ill of him in his absence. There is nothing he would not stake for the sake of his honour. For if he had come hither to the border of the land, there would have come armies and troops and the pick of the men of Erin that are with him. And even though against him in one and the same place, and in one mass and one march and one camp, and on one and the same hill were the men of Erin and Alba, Britons and Saxons, he would give them battle, before him they would break and it is not he that would be routed."

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

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

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

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"I ask, then: Who would be like to have come to us?" asked Ailill. "I know not," Fergus replied, "unless it be the little lad, my nursling and Conchobar's. Cuchulain ('the Wolf–dog of Culann the Smith') he is called.

He is the one who could have done the deed," answered Fergus. "He it is who could have lopped the tree with one blow from its root, could have killed the four with the quickness wherewith they were killed and could have come to the border with his charioteer."

"Of a truth," spake Ailill, "I heard from ye of this little boy once on a time in Cruachan. What might be the age of this little boy now?" "It is by no means his age that is most formidable in him," answered Fergus. "Because, manful were his deeds, those of that lad, at a time when he was younger than he now is.

In his fifth year he went in quest of warlike deeds among the lads of Emain Macha. In his sixth a year he went to learn skill in arms and feats with Scathac, and he went to woo Emer; in his seventh year he took arms; in his seventeenth year he is at this time."

"How so!" exclaimed Medb. "Is there even now amongst the Ulstermen one his equal in age that is more redoubtable than he?" "We have not found there a man–at–arms that is harder, nor a point that is keener, more terrible nor quicker, nor a more bloodthirsty wolf, nor a raven more flesh–loving, nor a wilder warrior, nor a match of his age that would reach to a third or a fourth the likes of Cuchulain. Thou findest not there," Fergus went on, "a hero his peer, nor a lion that is fiercer, nor a plank of battle, nor a sledge of destruction, nor a gate of combat, nor a doom of hosts, nor a contest of valour that would be of more worth than Cuchulain.

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

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

7. The Youthful Exploits Of Cuchulain

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

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

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"At all hazards, I will essay it," he answered.

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

"He went his way to the mound-seat of Emain, where was the boy-troop. Thrice fifty youths were with Folloman, Conchobar's son, at their games on the fair-green of Emain. "The little lad went on to the play-field into the midst of the boys, and he whipped the ball between his two legs away from them, nor did he suffer it to travel higher up than the top of his knee, nor did he let it lower down than his ankle, and he drove it and held it between his two legs and not one of the boys was able to get a prod nor a stroke nor a blow nor a shot at it, so that he carried it over the brink of the goal away from them.

Then he goes to the youths without binding them to protect him. For no one used to approach them on their play-field without first securing from them a pledge of protection. He was weetless thereof.

"Then they all gazed upon him. They wondered and marvelled. "Come, boys!" cried Folloman, Conchobar's son," the urchin insults us. Throw yourselves all on yon fellow, and his death shall come at my hands; for it is geis among you for any youth to come into your game, without first entrusting his safety to you. And do you all attack him together, for we know that yon wight is some one of the heroes of Ulster; and they shall not make it their wont to break into your sports without first entrusting their safety and protection to you."

"Thereupon they all set upon him together. They cast their thrice fifty hurl-bats at the poll of the boy's head. He raises his single toy-staff and wards off the thrice fifty hurries. Then they throw their thrice fifty balls at the lad. He raises his upper arm and his forearm and the palms of his hands against them and parries the thrice fifty balls. They throw at him the thrice fifty play-spears charred at the end. The boy raises his little lath-shield against them and fends off the thrice fifty play-staffs, and they all remain stuck in his lath-shield.

Thereupon contortions took hold of him. Thou wouldst have weened it was a hammering wherewith each hair was hammered into his head, with such an uprising it rose. Thou wouldst have weened it was a spark of fire that was on every single hair there. He closed one of his eyes so that it was no wider than the eye of a needle. He opened the other wide so that it was as big as the mouth of a mead-cup. He stretched his mouth from his jaw-bones to his ears; he opened his mouth wide to his jaw so that his gullet was seen. The champion's light rose up from his crown.

"It was then he ran in among them. He scattered fifty king's sons of them over the ground underneath him before they got to the gate of Emain. Five of them," Fergus continued, "dashed headlong between me and Conchobar, where we were playing chess, even on Cennchaem ('Fairhead') the chessboard of Conchobar, on the mound-seat of Emain. The little boy pursued them to cut them off.

Conchobar seized the little lad by the wrists. "Hold, little boy. I see 'tis not gently thou dealest with the boy-band." "Good reason I have," quoth the little lad. "I had not a guest's honour at the hands of the boy-troop on my arrival, for all that I came from far-away lands." "How is that? Who art thou, and what is thy name?" asked Conchobar. "Little Setanta am I, son of Sualtaim. Son am I to Dechtire, thine own sister; and not through thee did I expect to be thus aggrieved." "How so, little one?" said Conchobar. "Knewest thou not that it is forbidden among the boy-troop, that it is geis for them for any boy to approach them in their land without first claiming his protection from them?" "I knew it not," said the lad. "Had I known it, I would have been on my guard against

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them." "Good, now, ye boys," Conchobar cried; "take ye upon you the protection of the little lad." "We grant it, indeed," they made answer.

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

"A youngster did that deed," Fergus continued, "at the dose of five years after his birth, when he overthrew the sons of champions and warriors at the very door of their liss and dún. No need is there of wonder or surprise, if he should do great deeds, if he should come to the confines of the land, if he should cut off the four–pronged fork, if he should slay one man or two men or three men or four men, when there are seventeen full years of him now on the Cattle–lifting of Cualnge."

"In sooth, then, we know that youth," spoke out Conall Cernach ('the Victorious'), "and it is all the better we should know him, for he is a fosterling of our own."

7a. The Slaying Of The Smith's Hound By Cuchulain, And The Reason He Is Called Cuchulain

Then it was that Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar spake: "Again that little lad performed a second deed in the following year." "What deed was that?" asked Ailill.

"A goodly smith there was in the land of Ulster, Culann the Smith, by name. He made ready a feast for Conchobar and set out for Emain to invite him. He made known to him that only a few should come with him, that he should bring none but a true guest along, forasmuch as it was not a domain or lands of his own that he had, but the fruit of his two hands, his sledges and anvils, his fists and his tongs. Conchobar replied that only a few would go to him.

"Culann went back to the smithy to prepare and make ready meat and drink in readiness for the king. Conchobar sat in Emain till it was time to set out for the feast, till came the close of the day. The king put his fine, light travelling apparel about him. Conchobar came on to the fair–green, and he saw a thing that astounded him: Thrice fifty boys at one end of the green and a single boy at the other, and the single boy won the victory at the goal and at hurling from the thrice fifty boys. When it was at hole–play they were— a game of hole that used to be played on the fair–green of Emain— and it was their turn to drive and his to keep guard, he would catch the thrice fifty balls just outside of the hole, and not one went by him into the hole. When it was their turn to keep guard and his to drive, he would send the thrice fifty balls into the hole without fail, and the boys were unable to ward them off. When it was at tearing off each other's garments they played, he would strip off them their thrice fifty suits so that they were quite naked, and they were not able all of them to take as much as the brooch from his mantle. When it was at wrestling they were, he would throw those same thrice fifty boys to the ground under him, and they did not succeed all of them around him in lifting him up.

Conchobar looked with wonder at the little lad. "O, ye youths," cried Conchobar. "Hail to the land whence cometh the lad ye see, if the deeds of his manhood shall be such as are those of his boyhood! " "'Tis not just to speak thus," exclaimed Fergus; "e'en as the little lad grows, so will his deeds of manhood grow with him." "The little lad shall be called to us, that he may come with us to enjoy the feast to which we go." The little lad was summoned to

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Conchobar." Good, my lad," said Conchobar." Come thou with us to enjoy the feast whereto we go, for thou art a guest." "Nay, but I will not go," the little boy answered." How so?" asked Conchobar." Forasmuch as the boys have not yet had their fill of games and of sport, and I will not leave them till they have had enough play." "It is too long for us to await thee till then, little boy, and by no means shall we wait." "Go then before us," said the little boy," and I will follow after ye." "Thou knowest naught of the way, little boy," said Conchobar. "I will follow the trail of the company and of the horses and chariots."

"Thereafter Conchobar came to the house of Culann the Smith. The king was waited upon and all were shown honour, as befitted their rank and calling and privileges, nobility and gentle accomplishment. Straw and fresh rushes were spread out under them. They commenced to carouse and make merry. Culann inquired of Conchobar: "Hast thou, O king, appointed any to come after thee this night to this dún?" "No, I appointed no one," replied Conchobar, for he had forgotten the little lad whom he had charged to come after him. "Why so?" asked Conchobar. "An excellent bloodhound have I, that was brought from Spain. When his dog–chain is loosed from him, no one dares approach the same cantred with him to make a course or a circuit, and he knows no one but myself. The power of hundreds is in him for strength."

Then spake Conchobar, "Let the dún be opened for the ban–dog, that he may guard the cantred." The dog–chain is taken off the ban–dog, and he makes a swift round of the cantred. And he comes to the mound whereon he was wont to keep guard of the stead, and there he was, his head couched on his paws, and wild untameable, furious, savage, ferocious, ready for fight was the dog that was there.

"As for the boys: They were in Emain until the time came for them to disperse. Each of them went to the house of his father and mother, of his foster–mother and foster–father. Then the little lad went on the trail of the party, till he reached the house of Culann the Smith. He began to shorten the way as he went with his play–things. When he was nigh to the green of the fort wherein were Culann and Conchobar, he threw all his play–things before him except only the ball.

The watch–dog descried the lad and bayed at him, so that in all the countryside was heard the howl of the watch–hound. And not a division of feasting was what he was inclined to make of him, but to swallow him down at one gulp past the cavity of his chest and the width of his throat and the pipe of his breast. And the lad had not with him any means of defence, but he hurled an unerring cast of the ball, so that it passed through the gullet of the watch–dog's neck and carried the guts within him out through his back door, and he laid hold of the hound by the two legs and dashed him against a pillar–stone that was near him, so that every limb of him sprang apart, so that he broke into bits all over the ground.

Conchobar heard the yelp of the ban–dog. "Alas, O warriors" cried Conchobar; "in no good luck have we come to enjoy this feast." "How so?" asked all. "The little lad who has come to meet me, my sister's son, Setanta son of Sualtaim, is undone through the hound." As one man, arose all the renowned men of Ulster. Though a door of the hostel was thrown wide open, they all rushed in the other direction out over the palings of the fortress. But fast as they all got there, faster than all arrived Fergus, and he lifted the little lad from the ground on the slope of his shoulder and bore him into the presence of Conchobar.

And Culann came out, and he saw his slaughter–hound in many pieces. He felt his heart beating against his breast. Whereupon he went into the dún. "Welcome thy coming, little lad," said Culann, "because of thy mother and father, but not welcome is thy coming for thine own sake. Yet would that I had not made a feast." "What hast thou against the lad?" queried Conchobar. "Not luckily for me hast thou come to quaff my ale and to eat my food; for my substance is now a wealth gone to waste, and my livelihood is a livelihood lost now after my dog. Good was the friend thou hast robbed me of, even my dog, in that he tended my herder and flocks and stock for me.

"Be not angered thereat, O Culann my master," said the little boy." It is no great matter, for I will pass a just judgement upon it." "What judgement thereon wilt thou pass, lad?" Conchobar asked. "If there is a whelp of the

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breed of that dog in Erin, he shall be reared by me till he be fit to do business as was his sire. Till then myself will be the hound to protect his flocks and his cattle and his land and even himself in the meanwhile.

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

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

7b. (The Taking Of Arms By Cuchulain And) The Slaying Of The Three Sons Of Necht Scenè Is Now Told Here

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

"Cathba the druid was with his son, namely Conchobar son of Ness, imparting learning to his pupils in the north–east of Emain, and eight eager pupils in the class of druidic cunning were with him. That is the number that Cathba instructed. One of them questioned his teacher, what fortune and presage might there be for the day they were in, whether it was good or whether it was ill. Then spake Cathba: "The little boy that takes arms— this day shall be splendid and renowned for deeds of arms above the youths of Erin land the tales of his high deeds shall be told forever, but he shall be short–lived and fleeting."

Cuchulain overheard what he said, though far off at his play–feats south–west of Emain; and he threw away all his play–things and hastened to Conchobar's sleep–room to ask for arms. "All good attend thee, O king of the Fene!" cried the little lad. "This greeting is the speech of one soliciting something of some one. What wouldst thou, lad?" said Conchobar. "To take arms," the lad made answer. "Who hath advised thee, little boy?" asked Conchobar. "Cathba the druid," said the lad. "He would not deceive thee, little boy," said Conchobar.

Conchobar gave him two spears and a sword and a shield. The little boy shook and brandished the arms in the middle of the house so that he made small pieces and fragments of them. Conchobar gave him two other spears and a shield and a sword. He shook and brandished, flourished and poised them, so that he shivered them into small pieces and fragments. There were the fourteen a suits of arms which Conchobar had in Emain, in reserve in case of breaking of weapons or for equipping the youths and the boys— to the end that whatever boy assumed arms, it might be Conchobar that gave him the equipment of battle, and the victory of cunning would be his thenceforward— even so, this little boy made splinters and fragments of them all.

"Truly these arms here are not good, O Conchobar my master," the stripling cried. "Herefrom cometh not what is worthy of me." Conchobar gave him his own two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook and he brandished, he bent and he poised them so that tip touched butt, and he broke not the arms and they bore up against him, and he saluted the king whose arms they were. "Truly, these arms are good," said the little boy; "they are suited to me. Hail to the king whose arms and equipment these are. Hail to the land whereout he is come!"

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"Then Cathba the druid chanced to come into the tent, and what he said was, "Hath he yonder taken arms?" Cathba asked. "Aye, then, it must be," Conchobar answered. "Not by his mother's son would I wish them to be taken this day," said Cathba. "How so? Was it not thyself advised him?" Conchobar asked. "Not I, in faith," replied Cathba. "What mean'st thou, bewitched elf-man?" cried Conchobar to Cuchulain. "Is it a lie thou hast told us?" "But be not wroth thereat, O my master Conchobar," said the little boy. "No lie have I told; for yet is it he that advised me, when he taught his other pupils this morning. For his pupil asked him what luck might lie in the day, and he said: The youth that took arms on this day would be illustrious and famous, except that he would be fleeting and short-lived." "That I avow to be true," spake Cathba. "Good indeed is the day, glorious and renowned shalt thou be, the one that taketh arms, yet passing and short lived!" "Noble the gift!" cried Cuchulain. "Little it recks me, though I should be but one day and one night in the world, if only the fame of me and of my deeds live after me!"

"Another day one of them asked of the druids for what that day would be propitious. "The one that mounts a chariot to-day," Cathba answered, "his name will be renowned over Erin for ever."

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

"Where is Ibar son of Riagabair?" asked Conchobar. "Here, in sooth, am I," Ibar answered. "Take with thee mine own two steeds for him yonder, and yoke my chariot." Thereupon the charioteer took the horses and yoked the chariot. Then the little boy mounted the chariot. He shook the chariot about him, and it withstood him, and he broke it not. "Truly this chariot is good," cried the lad, "and this chariot is suited to me."

"Prithee, little boy," said Ibar, "come out of the chariot now and let the horses out on their pasture." "It is yet too soon, O Ibar," the lad answered. "Only let us go on a circuit of Emain to-day and thou shalt have a reward therefor, to-day being my first day of taking arms, to the end that it be a victory of cunning for me."

"Thrice they made the circuit of Emain. "Leave the horses now to their grazing, O little boy," said Ibar. "It is yet too soon, O Ibar," the little lad answered; "let us keep on, that the boys may give me a blessing to-day the first day of my taking arms." They kept their course to the place where the boys were. "Is it arms he yonder has taken?" each one asked. "Of a truth, are they." "May it be for victory, for first wounding and triumph. But we deem it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou departest from us at the game-feats." "By no means will I leave ye, but for luck I took arms this day."

"Now, little boy, leave the horses to their grazing," said Ibar. "It is still too soon for that, O Ibar," the lad answered. "And this great road winding by us, what way leads it?" the lad asked. "What is that to thee?" Ibar answered. "But thou art a pleasant wight, I bow, little lad," quoth Ibar. "I wish, fellow, to inquire about the high-road of the province, what stretch it goes?" "To Ath na Foraire ('the Ford of Watching') in Sliab Fuait it goes," Ibar answered. "Wherefore is it called 'the Ford of Watching,' knowest thou?"

"Yea, I know it well," Ibar made answer. "A stout warrior of Ulster is on watch and on guard there every day, so that there come no strange youths into Ulster to challenge them to battle, and he is a champion to give battle in behalf of the whole province. Likewise if men of song leave the Ulstermen and the province in dudgeon, he is there to soothe them by proffering treasures and valuables, and so to save the honour of the province. Again, if men of song enter the land, he is the man that is their surety that they win the favour of Conchobar, so that songs and lays made for him will be the first to be sung after their arrival in Emain." "Knowest thou who is at the ford to-day?" "Yea, I know," Ibar answered; "Conall Cernach ('the Triumphant'), the heroic, warlike son of Amargin,

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royal champion of Erin," Ibar answered. "Thither guide us, fellow, that so we reach the ford."

"Onwards they drove into sight of the ford where was Conall. "Are those arms he yonder has taken?" asked Conall. "Of a truth, are they," Ibar made answer. "May it be for victory and for triumph and first wounding," said Conall; "but we think it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou art not yet capable of deeds. Were it surety he needed, he that should come hither," he continued, "so wouldst thou furnish a perfect warrant amongst the Ulstermen, and the nobles of the province would rise up to support thee in the contest." "What cost thou here, O Conall my master?" asked the lad. "Watch and ward of the province, lad, I keep here," Conall made answer.

"Do thou go home now, O master Conall," said the lad, "and leave me the watch and guard of the province to keep here." "Say not so, little son," replied Conall; "thou art not yet able to cope with a goodly warrior." "Then, will I keep on to the south," said the little boy, "to Fertas ('the Bank') of Loch Echtrann for a while; champions are wont to take stand there; perchance I may redden my hands on friend or on foe this day." "I will go, little boy," said Conall, "to save thee, that thou go not alone into peril on the border." "Not so," said the lad. "But I will go," said Conall; "for the men of Ulster will blame me for leaving thee to go alone on the border."

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

"As for the little boy, he fared southwards to Fertas Locha Echtrann. He remained there till the end of the day and they found no one there before them. "If we dared tell thee, little boy," spoke Ibar, "it were time for us to return to Emain now; for dealing and carving and dispensing of food is long since begun in Emain, and there is a place assigned for thee there. Every day it is appointed thee to sit between Conchobar's feet, while for me there is naught but to tarry among the hostlers and tumblers of Conchobar's household. For that reason, methinks it is time to have a scramble a among them." "Fetch then the horses for us."

The charioteer fetched the horses and the lad mounted the chariot. "But, O Ibar, what hill is that there now, the hill to the north?" the lad asked. "Now, that is Sliab Moduirn," Ibar answered. "Let us go and get there," siad Cuchulain. Then they go on till they reach it. When they reached the mountain, Cuchulain asked, "And what is that white cairn yonder on the height of the mountain?" "And that is Finncharn ('the White Cairn') of Sliab Moduirn," Ibar answered. "But yonder cairn is beautiful," exclaimed the lad. "It surely is beautiful," Ibar answered. "Lead on, fellow, till we reach yonder cairn." "Well, but thou art both a pleasant and tedious inquisitor, I see," exclaimed Ibar; "but this is my first journey and my first time with thee. It shall be my last time till the very day of doom, if once I get back to Emain."

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

7b. (The Taking Of Arms By Cuchulain And) The Slaying Of The Three Sons Of Necht Scenè Is Now ~~T~~old Here

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Foill and Fandall and Tuachall, their names; Fer Ulli son of Lugaid was their father, and Necht from the mouth of the Scenè was their mother. Now the Ulstermen had slain their father; it was for that reason they were at war with Ulster."

But are those not Necht's sons, that boast that not more of the Ulstermen are alive than have fallen at their hands?" "The same, in sooth," answered the gilla. "On with us to the dún of the macNechta," cried the little boy. "Alas, in truth, that thou sayest so," quoth Ibar; "'tis a peril for us." "Truly, not to avoid it do we go," answered Cuchulain. "We know it is an act of great folly for us to say so, but whoever may go," said Ibar, "it will not be myself." "Living or dead, go there thou shalt," the little boy cried. "'Tis alive I shall go to the south," answered Ibar, "and dead I shall be left at the dún, I know, even at the dún of the macNechta."

"They push on to the dún. And the little boy sprang out of the chariot onto the green. Thus was the green of the dún, with a pillar–stone upon it and an iron band around that, and a band for prowess it was, and there was a writing in ogam at its joint, and this is the writing it bore: 'Whoever should come to the green, if he be a champion, it is geis for him to depart from the green without giving challenge to single combat.' The lad deciphered the writing and put his two arms around the pillar–stone. Just as the pillar–stone was with its ring, he flung it with a cast of his hand into the moat, so that a wave passed over it.

"Methinks," spake Ibar, "it is no better now than to be where it was. And we know thou shalt now get on this green the thing thou desires", even the token of death, yea, of doom and destruction!" "Good, O Ibar, spread the chariot–coverings and its skins for me that I may snatch a little sleep." "Woe is me, that thou sayest so," answered the gilla; "for a foeman's land is this and not a green for diversion." The gilla arranged the chariot–coverings and its skins under Cuchulain, and the lad fell asleep on the green.

"Then came one of the macNechta onto the fair–green, to wit, Foill son of Necht. "Unyoke not the horses, gilla," cried Foill. "I am not fain to, at all," answered Ibar; "the reins and the lines are still in my hand." "Whose horses are those, then?" Foill asked. "Two of Conchobar's horses," answered the gilla; "the two of the dappled heads." "That is the knowledge I have of them. And what hath brought these steeds here to the borders?" "A tender youth that has assumed arms amongst us to–day for luck and good omen," the horseboy answered, "is come to the edges of the marshes to display his comeliness." "May it not be for victory nor for triumph, his first–taking of arms," exclaimed Foill. "If I knew he was fit for deeds, it is dead he should go back northwards to Emain and not alive!" "In good sooth, he is not fit for deeds," Ibar answered; "it is by no means right to say it of him; it is the seventh year since he was taken from the crib. "

"The little lad raised his face from the ground and drew his hand over his face, and he became as one crimson wheelball from his crown to the ground. "Aye, but I am fit for deeds!" the lad cried. "That pleaseth me well," said the champion; "but more like than what thou sayest, meseemeth, thou art not fit for deeds." "Thou wilt know that better if we go to the ford. But, go fetch thy weapons, for I see it is in the guise of a churl thou art come, and I slay nor charioteers nor grooms nor folk without arms."

The man went apace after his arms. "Now thou shouldst have a care for us against yonder man that comes to meet thee, little lad," said Ibar. "And why so?" asked the lad. "Foill son of Necht is the man thou seest. Neither points nor edges of weapons can harm him." "Not before me shouldst thou say that, O Ibar," quoth the lad. "I will put my hand to the lath–trick for him, namely, to the apple of twice–melted iron, and it will light upon the disc of his shield and on the flat of his forehead, and it will carry away the size of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it will make a sieve–hole outside of his head, till the light of the sky will be visible through his head."

"Foill son of Necht came forth. Cuchulain took the lath–trick in hand for him and threw it from him the length of his cast, so that it lighted on the flat of his shield and on the front of his forehead and carried away the bulk of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it made a sieve–hole thereof outside of his head, till the

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light of the sky might be seen through his head. He went to him then and struck off the head from the trunk. Thereafter he bore away his spoils and his head with him.

"Then came the second son out on the green, his name Tuachall ('the Cunning') son of Necht. "Aha, I see thou wouldst boast of this deed," quoth Tuachall. "In the first place I deem it no cause to boast for slaying one champion," said Cuchulain; "thou shalt not boast of it this time, for thou shalt fall by my hand." "Off with thee for thine arms, then, for 'tis not as a warrior thou art come." The man rushed after his arms. "Thou shouldst have a care for us against yon man, lad," said Ibar. "How so?" the lad asked. "Tuachall son of Necht is the man thou beholdest. And he is nowise misnamed, for he falls not by arms at all. Unless thou worstest him with the first blow or with the first shot or with the first touch, thou wilt not worst him ever, because of his craftiness and the skill wherewith he plays round the points of the weapons."

"That should not be said before me, O Ibar," cried the lad. "I will put my hand on Conchobar's well–tempered lance, on the Craisech Neme ('the Venomous Lance'). It will light on the shield over his belly, and it will crush through his ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart in his breast. That would be the smiting cast of an enemy and not the friendliness of a fellow countryman! From me he shall not get sick–nursing or care till the brink of doom."

"Tuachall son of Necht came forth on the green, and the lad laid his hand on Conchobar's lance against him, and it struck the shield above his belly and broke through the ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart within his breast. He struck off his head or ever it reached the ground.

"Then came the youngest of the sons forth on the green, namely, Fandall son of Necht. "Fools were the folk who fought with thee here," cried Fandall. "How, now!" cried the lad. "Come down to the pool, where thy foot findeth not bottom." Fandall rushed on to the pool. "Thou shouldst be wary for us of him, little boy," said Ibar. "Why should I then?" asked the lad. "Fandall son of Necht is the man whom thou seest. For this he bears the name Fandall ('the Swallow'): like a swallow or weasel he courseth the sea; the swimmers of the world cannot reach him."

"Thou shouldst not speak thus before me, O Ibar," said the lad. "Thou knowest the river that is in our land, in Emain, the Callann. When the boys frequent it with their games of sport and when the water is not beneath them, if the surface is not reached by them all, I do carry a boy over it on either of my palms and a boy on either of my shoulders, and I myself do not even wet my ankles under the weight of them."

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

"Thereupon Cuchulain went into the dún and pillaged the place and burned it so that its buildings were no higher than its walls. And they turned on the way to Sliab Fuait and carried the three heads of Necht's sons with them.

"When they came to Sliab Fuait they espied a herd of wild deer before them. "What are those many cattle, O Ibar, those nimble ones yonder?" asked the lad; "are they tame or are they other deer?" "They are real wild deer, indeed," Ibar answered; "herds of wild deer that haunt the wastes of Sliab Fuait." "Ply the goad for us on the horses into the bog, to see can we take some of them." The charioteer drove a goad into the horses. It was beyond the power of the king's overfat steeds to keep up with the deer. The lad got down from the chariot and as the fruit of his run and his race, in the morass which was around him, he caught two of the swift, stout deer. He fastened them to the back poles and the bows and the thongs of the chariot.

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

"Take the birds along with thee, O Ibar," cried the lad to his charioteer. "I am in sore straits," answered Ibar; "I find it not easy to go." "What may it be?" asked the lad. "Great cause have I. The horses have become wild, so that I cannot go by them. If I stir at all from where I am, the chariot's iron wheels will cut me down because of their sharpness and because of the strength and the power and the might of the career of the horses. If I make any move, the horns of the deer will pierce and gore me.

"Ah, no true champion art thou any longer, O Ibar," said the lad; "because of the look I shall give at the horses they will not depart from the straight way; at the look I shall give at the deer they will bend their heads in fear and awe of me; they will not dare move, and it will be safe for thee e'en though thou goest in front of their horns."

"Thereupon they went on till they reached the fair plain of Emain. It was then Lebarcham, the watch in Emain Macha, came forth and discerned them, she, the daughter of Aue ('Ear') and of Adarc ('Horn.')

"A single chariot–fighter is here, coming towards Emain Macha," cried Lebarcham, "and his coming is fearful. The heads of his foes all red in his chariot with him. Beautiful, all–white birds he has hovering around in the chariot. With him are wild, untamed deer, bound and fettered, shackled and pinioned. And I give my word, if he be not attended to this night, brood will flow over Conchobar's province by him and the youths of Ulster will fall by his hand." "We know him, that chariot–fighter," spake Conchobar; "belike it is the little gilla, my sister's son, who went to the edge of the marches at the beginning of the day, who has reddened his hands and is still unsated of combat, and unless he be attended to, all the youths of Emain will fall by his hand."

"And this was the counsel they agreed to follow: to let out the womenfolk to meet the youth, namely, thrice fifty women, even ten and seven–score bold, stark–naked women, at one and the same time, and their chieftainess, Scannlach ('the Wanton') before them, to discover their persons and their shame to him." Thereupon the young women all arose and marched out, and they discovered their nakedness and all their shame to him. The lad hid his face from them and turned his gaze on the chariot, that he might not see the nakedness or the shame of the women.

Then the lad was lifted out of the chariot. He was placed in three vats of cold water to extinguish his wrath; and the first vat into which he was put burst its staves and its hoops like the cracking of nuts around him. The next vat into which he went boiled with bubbles as big as fists therefrom. The third vat into which he went, some men might endure it and others might not. Then the boy's wrath went down. "Thereupon he came out, and his festive garments were put on him.

His comeliness appeared on him and he made a crimson wheel–ball of himself from his crown to the ground. Seven toes he had to each of his two feet, and seven fingers to each of his two hands, and seven pupils to each of his two kingly eyes, and seven gems of the brilliance of the eye was each separate pupil. Four spots of down on either of his two cheeks: a blue spot, a purple spot, a green spot, a yellow spot. Fifty strands of bright–yellow hair from one ear to the other, like to a comb of birch twigs or like to a brooch of pale gold in the face of the sun. A clear, white, shorn spot was upon him, as if a cow had licked it. A fair, laced green mantle about him; a silver pin therein over his white breast. A hooded tunic of thread of gold about him. And the lad was seated between the two

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feet of Conchobar, and that was his couch ever after, and the king began to stroke his close–shorn hair.

"A mere lad accomplished these deeds at the end of seven years after his birth," continued Fiachu son of Fiarba; "for he overcame heroes and battle–champions at whose hands two–thirds of the men of Ulster had fallen, and these had not got the revenge on them until that scion rose up for them. No need then is there of wonder or of surprise, though he came to the border, though he slew one man or two men or three men or four men when now are fulfilled his seventeen years at the time of the Táin Bó Cúalnge."

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

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

The Story proper is this which follows now.

8. The Slaying Of Orlam

The four grand provinces of Erin set forth on the morrow eastwards over Cronn ('the Round'), which is a mountain. Cuchulain had gone out before them, till he came upon the charioteer of Orlam son of Aililla and of Medb. This was at Tamlacht Orlaim ('Orlam's Gravestone') a little to the north of Disert Lochaid ('Lochat's Hermitage'). The charioteer was engaged in cutting chariot–poles from a holly–tree in the wood.

"Behold, O Laeg," cried Cuchulain; How bold are the ways of the Ulstermen, if it be they that cut down the woods in this fashion in the face of the men of Erin. Tarry thou here a little, till I know who cuts down the woods in this manner." Then Cuchulain went on till he came up to Orlam's charioteer, to stop him; he thought he was one of the men of Ulster. "What dost thou here, gilla?" asked Cuchulain; "Indeed, then," answered the gilla, "I cut chariot poles from this holm, because our chariots were broken yesterday in pursuit of that famous wildling, namely Cuchulain. And for thy manhood's sake, young warrior, pray come to my aid, so that that famous Cuchulain come not upon me." "Take thy choice, gilla," said Cuchulain, "to gather or to trim them, either." "I will see to gathering them, for it is easier," the gilla answered.

Cuchulain started to cut the poles and he drew them between the forks of his feet and his hands against their bends and their knots, so that he made them smooth and straight and slippery and trimmed; he polished them so that not even a midge could find footing thereon when he had passed them away from him. Then full sure the gilla gazed upon him. "Far then, meseems, from fitting is the task I put on thee. And for love of thy valour, who art thou, say, O warrior?" the gilla asked, for he was sore affrighted. "That same renowned Cuchulain am I of whom thou spakest a while ago in the morning." "Woe is me then, by reason of this," cried the gilla, "for this am I lost forever."

"Fear nothing; I will not slay thee at all, boy," said Cuchulain; "for I slay nor charioteers nor horseboys nor persons unarmed. But, prithee, where is thy master, gilla?" "Over yonder by the trench, with his back to the pillar–stone," answered the gilla. "Off with thee thither to him and bear him a warning that he be on his guard. For if we meet he shall fall by my hand." Thereupon the charioteer repaired by one way to his master, and Cuchulain went by another, and fast as the gilla sped to Orlam, faster still Cuchulain did reach him and offered him combat and he struck off his head, and raising it aloft displayed it to the men of Erin.

8a. The Slaying Of The Three Macarach

Then came the three macArach on to the ford at Ard Ciannacht to encounter Cuchulain: Lon ('Ousel'), Uala ('Pride'), and Diliu ('Deluge');— Meslir ('Lir's Fosterling'), and Meslaoc ('Hero's Fosterling'), and Meslethain ('Lethan's Fosterling') were the names of their charioteers. This is why they came to engage with Cuchulain, for the deed he had done the day before they deemed past bearing, when the two sons of Nera son of Nuatar, son of Tacan, were slain at Ath Gabla ('Fork–ford'), and Orlam, Ailill's son and Medb's, was slain withal and his head displayed to the men of Erin, so that their desire was to kill Cuchulain in the same manner in revenge for him, and that they should be the ones to rid the host of that pest and bring his head with them to set it aloft.

They went into the wood and cut off three great white–hazelwood–strips (and put them) into the hands of their charioteers, so that the six of them might engage in battle at one and the same time with Cuchulain. Cuchulain turned on them and smote their six heads from them. Thus fell the macArach at the hands of Cuchulain

8b. The Combat Of Lethan And Cuchulain

There came also Lethan ('the Broad') to his ford on the Nith in the land of Conalle Murthemni, to fight with Cuchulain. He came upon him at the ford. Ath Carpait ('Chariot–ford') is the name of the ford where they fought, for their chariots were broken in the combat on the ford.

It is there that Mulcha, Lethan's charioteer, fell on the shoulder of the hill between the two fords. Hence it is called Guala Mulchi ('Mulcha's Shoulder') ever since. It is there, too, that Cuchulain and Lethan met, and Lethan fell at Cuchulain's hands and he smote his head from his neck on the ford and left it therewith, that is, he left the head with the trunk. Wherefore the name of the ford of the Nith was called Ath Lethain ('Lethain's Ford') ever since in the district of Conalle Murthemni.

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

8c. The Killing of The Squirrel And of The Tame Bird

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

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

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

The four grand provinces of Erin moved out on the morrow, and began to harry the plains of Breg and Murthemne. And the sharp, keen–edged anxiety for Cuchulain came over his fosterer Fergus. And he bade the men of Erin be on their guard that night, for that Cuchulain would come upon them. And here again he sang in his

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praise, as we wrote it before, and he uttered the lay:—

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

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

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

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

After this lay, that was the day that Donn ('the Brown Bull') of Cualnge came into the land of Marginè to Sliab Culinn and with him fifty heifers of the heifers of Ulster; and there he was pawing and digging up the earth in that place, in the land of Marginè, in Cualnge; that is, he flung the turf over him with his heels.

It was on the same day that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, the prophetess of the fairy–folk, came in the form of a bird, and she perched on the standing–stone in Temair of Cualnge giving the Brown Bull of Cualnge warning and lamentations before the men of Erin. Then she began to address him and what she said was this: "Good, now, O luckless one, thou Brown Bull of Cualnge," so spake the Morrigan; "take heed; for the men of Erin are on thy track and seeking thee and they will come upon thee, and if thou art taken they will carry thee away to their camp like any ox on a raid, unless thou art on thy guard." And she commenced to give warning to him in this fashion, and she delivered this judgement and spake these words aloud:—

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

When the Brown Bull of Cualnge heard those words he moved on to Glenn na Samaisce ('Heifers' Glen') in Sliab Culinn ('Hollymount'), and fifty of his heifers with him.

This was one of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge: Fifty heifers he would cover every day. These calved before that same hour on the next day and such of them that calved not at the due time burst with the calves, because they could not suffer the begetting of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. One of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge were the fifty grown youths who engaged in games, who on his fine back found room every evening to play. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was the hundred warriors he screened from the heat and the cold under his shadow and shelter.

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Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was that no goblin nor boggart nor sprite of the glen dared come into one and the same cantred with him. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was his musical lowing every evening as he returned to his haggard, his shed and his byre. It was music enough and delight for a man in the north and in the south, in the east and the west, and in the middle of the cantred of Cualnge, the lowing he made at even as he came to his haggard, his shed, and his byre. These, then, are some of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

Thereupon on the morrow the hosts proceeded among the rocks and dunes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. And Medb ordered a canopy of shields to be held over her head in order that Cuchulain might not strike her from the hills or hillocks or heights. Howbeit on that day, no killing nor attack came from Cuchulain upon the men of Erin, in the land of Murthemne among the rocks and dunes of Conalle Murthemni.

8d. The Slaying Of Lochè

The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin bided their time in Rede Lochè in Cualnge and pitched camp and took quarters therein for that night. Medb bade her fair handmaiden from amongst her attendants to go for her to the river for water for drinking and washing. Lochè was the name of the maiden. Thereupon Lochè went, and fifty women in her train and the queen's diadem of gold on her head.

And Cuchulain espied them and he put a stone on his sling and cast a stone from his staff–sling at her, so that he broke the diadem of gold in three pieces and killed the maiden on her plain. Thence is Redè Lochè ('the Plain of Lochè') in Cualnge. For Cuchulain had thought, for want of acquaintance and knowledge, that it was Medb that was there.

8e. The Killing Of Uala

Early on the morrow the hosts continued their way to Glaiiss Cruinn ('Cronn's Stream'). And they attempted the stream and failed to cross it. And Cluain Carpat ('Chariot–meadow') is the name of the first place where they reached it. This is why Cluain Carpat is the name of that place, because of the hundred chariots which the river carried away from them to the sea.

Medb ordered her people that one of the warriors should go try the river. And on the morrow there arose a great, stout, wonderful warrior of the particular people of Medb and Ailill, Uala by name, and he took on his back a massy rock, to the end that Glaiiss Cruinn might not carry him back. And he went to essay the stream, and the stream threw him back dead, lifeless, with his stone on his back and so he was drowned. Medb ordered that he be lifted out of the river and his grave dug and his stone raised over his grave, so that it is thence Lia Ualann ('Uala's Stone') on the road near the stream in the land of Cualnge.

Cuchulain clung close to the hosts that day provoking them to encounter and combat. And he slew a hundred of their armed, kinglike warriors around Roen and Roi, the two chroniclers of the Táin.

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

The hosts kept their way along the river, being unable to cross it, till they reached the place where the river rises out of the mountains, and, had they wished it, they would have gone between the river and the mountain, but Medb would not allow it, so they had to dig and hollow out the mountain before her in order that their trace might remain there forever and that it might be for a shame and reproach to Ulster. And Bernais ('the Gap') of the Foray of Cualnge is another name for the place ever since, for it is through it the drove afterwards passed.

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The warriors of the four grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and took quarters that night at Belat Aileain ('the Island's Crossway'). Belat Aileain was its name up to then, but Glenn Tail ('Glen of Shedding') is henceforth its name because of the abundance of curds and of milk and of new warm milk which the droves of cattle and the flocks yielded there that night for the men of Erin. And Liasa Liac ('Stone Sheds') is another name for it to this day, and it is for this it bears that name, for it is there that the men of Erin raised cattle–stalls and byres for their herds and droves

The four of the five grand provinces of Erin took up the march until they reached the Sechair in the west on the morrow. Sechair was the name of the river hitherto; Glaiss Gatlaig ('Osier–water') is its name henceforward. Now this is the reason it had that name, for it was in osiers and ropes that the men of Erin brought their flocks and droves over across it, and the entire host let the osiers and ropes drift with the stream after crossing. Hence the name, Glaiss Gatlaig.

8f. The Harrying Of Cualnge Followeth Here Below

After every one had come with their spoils and they were all gathered in Finnabair of Cualnge, Medb spake: "Let the camp be divided here," said Medb; "the foray cannot be carried on by a single road. Let Ailill with half his force go by Midluachair. We and Fergus will go by Bernas Bo Ulad ('the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster')." "Not fair is the part that has fallen to us of the force," said Fergus; "the cattle cannot be driven over the mountain without dividing." This then is done. Hence cometh Bernas Bo Ulad ('the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster').

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

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

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

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

Then the Cronn opposes them,
Holds them back from Murthemne

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Till the heroes' work is done
On the mount of Ocaine!

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

Manè son of Ailill and Medb marched in advance of the rest. Cuchulain slew him on the ford and thirty horsemen of his people were drowned. Again Cuchulain laid low twice sixteen warriors of theirs near the stream. The warriors of Erin pitched their tents near the ford. Lugaid son of Nos grandson of Lomarc Allcomach went to parley with Cuchulain. Thirty horsemen were with him. "Welcome to thee, O Lugaid," cried Cuchulain. "Should a flock of birds graze upon the plain of Murthemne, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. Should fish come to the falls or to the bays, thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have the three sprigs, even a sprig of cresses, a sprig of laver, and a sprig of sea–grass; there will be a man to take thy place at the ford."

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

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

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

9. The Proposals

The four grand provinces of Erin proceeded till they pitched camp and took quarters in Druim En ('Birds' Ridge') in the land of Conalle Murthemni, and they slept there that night, and Cuchulain held himself at Ferta Illergaib ('the Burial–mound on the Slopes') hard by them that night, and he, Cuchulain, shook, brandished and flourished his weapons that night, so that one hundred warriors of the host perished of fright and fear and dread of Cuchulain.

Medb called upon Fiachu son of Ferfebè of the Ulstermen to go parley with Cuchulain, to come to some terms with him. "What terms shall be given him?" asked Fiachu son of Ferfebè. "Not hard to answer," Medb replied: "He shall be recompensed for the loss of his lands and estates, for whosoever has been slain of the Ulstermen, so

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that it be paid to him as the men of Erin adjudge. Entertainment shall be his at all times in Cruachan; wine and mead shall be poured out for him. And he shall come into my service and Ailill's, for that is more seemly for him than to be in the service of the lordling with whom he is.

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

Then came Fiachu son of Ferfebè to converse with Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "I regard that welcome as truly meant," said Fiachu. "It is truly meant for thee," replied Cuchulain. "Not for hospitality am I come, but to parley with thee am I come from Medb, and to bring thee terms." "What hast thou brought with thee?"

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

Accordingly, early on the morrow, Cuchulain set forth for Glenn Fochaine. Likewise Medb and Fergus went to meet him. And Medb looked narrowly at Cuchulain, and her spirit chafed her at him that day, for no bigger than the bulk of a stripling did he seem to her. "Is that yonder the renowned Cuchulain thou speakest of, O Fergus?" asked Medb. And Medb began to address Fergus and she made this lay:—

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

F: "Howe'er young the Hound thou seest
That Murthemne's Plain cloth course,
That man hath not stood on earth
Whom he'd crush not with his might!"

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

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

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

M: "Culann's Hound, whom quatrains praise,
Keep thy staff–sling far from us;
Thy fierce, famed fight hath us ruined,

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Hath us broken and confused!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Who shall go with that proposal?" Ailill asked. "Who," answered Medb, "but macRoth the chief runner!" "Nay, but I will not go," said macRoth, "for I am in no way experienced and know not where Cuchulain may be, and even though I should meet him, I should not know him." "Ask Fergus," quoth Medb; "like enough he knows where he is." "Nay, then, I know it not," answered Fergus; "but I trow he is in the snow between Fochain and the sea, taking the wind and the sun after his sleeplessness last night, killing and slaughtering the host single handed."

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And so it truly was.

Then on that errand to Delga macRoth set forth, the messenger of Ailill and Medb. He it is that circles Erin in one day. There it is that Fergus opined that Cuchulain would be, in Delga.

Heavy snow fell that night so that all the five provinces of Erin were a white plane with the snow. And Cuchulain doffed the seven–score waxed, boardlike tunics which were used to be held under cords and strings next his skin, in order that his sense might not be deranged when the fit of his fury came on him. And the snow melted for thirty feet all around him, because of the intensity of the warrior's heat and the warmth of Cuchulain's body. And the gilla remained a good distance from him for he could not endure to remain near him because of the might of his rage and the warrior's fury and the heat of his body.

"A single warrior approacheth, O Cuchulain," cried Laeg to Cuchulain. "What manner of warrior is he?" asked Cuchulain. "A brown, broad–faced, handsome fellow; a splendid, brown, hooded cloak, about him; a fine, bronze pin in his cloak; a leathern three–striped doublet next his skin; two gapped shoes between his two feet and the ground; a white–hazel dog–staff in one of his hands; a single–edged sword with ornaments of walrus–tooth on its hilt in the other. "Good, O gilla," quoth Cuchulain, "these be the tokens of a herald. One of the heralds of Erin is he to bring me message and offer of parley."

Now was macRoth arrived at the place where Laeg was. "How now! What is thy title as vassal, O gilla?" macRoth asked. "Vassal am I to the youth up yonder," the gilla made answer. MacRoth came to the place where Cuchulain was. "How now! What is thy name as vassal, O warrior?" asked macRoth. "Vassal am I to Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach, son of the High King of this province." "Hast not something, a name more special than that?" "'Tis enough for the nonce," answered Cuchulain.

"Haply, thou knowest where I might find that famous Cuchulain of whom the men of Erin clamour now on this foray?" "What wouldst thou say to him that thou wouldst not to me?" asked Cuchulain. "To parley with him am I come on the part of Ailill and Medb, with terms and friendly intercourse for him." "What terms hast thou brought with thee for him?" "The milch–kine and the bondwomen of the booty he shall have, and for him to hold back his staff–sling from the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder–feat he works every evening upon them."

"Even though the one thou seekest were really at hand, he would not accept the proposals thou askest." "For the Ulstermen, in reprisal for injuries and satires and hindrances, will kill for meat in the winter the milch–cows ye have captured, should they happen to have no yeld cattle. And, what is more, they will bring their bondwomen to bed to them, and thus will grow up a base progeny on the side of the mothers in the land of Ulster.

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

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

Thereupon macRoth arose and came to parley with Cuchulain. "To parley with thee am I come this time with other terms, for I wis it is thou art the renowned Cuchulain." "What hast thou brought with thee now?" Cuchulain asked. "What is dry of the kine and what is noblest of the captives shalt thou get, and hold thy staff–sling from the

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men of Erin and suffer the men of Erin to go to sleep, for not pleasant is the thunder–feat thou workest upon them every evening."

"I accept not that offer, because, as amends for their honour, the Ulstermen will kill the dry cattle. For the men of Ulster are honourable men and they would remain wholly without dry kine and milch–kine. They would bring their free women ye have captured to the querns and to the kneading–troughs and into bondage and other serfdom besides. This would be a disgrace. Loath I should be to leave after me this shame in Ulster, that slave–girls and handmaids should be made of the daughters of kings and princes of Ulster."

"Is there any offer at all thou wilt accept this time?" "Aye, but there is," answered Cuchulain. "Then wilt thou tell me the offer?" asked macRoth. "By my word," Cuchulain made answer, "'tis not I that will tell you." "It is a question, then," said macRoth. "If there be among you in the camp," said Cuchulain, "one that knows the terms I demand, let him inform you, and I will abide thereby." "If there be not," said Cuchulain, "let no one come near me any more with offers or with friendly intercourse or concerning aught other injunction, for, whosoever may come, it will be the term of his life! "

MacRoth came back, and Medb asked his tidings. "Didst thou find him?" Medb asked. "In truth, I found him," macRoth replied. "Hath he accepted the terms?" "He hath not accepted," replied macRoth. "Is there an offer he will accept?" "There is one, he said," answered macRoth. "Hath he made known to thee this offer?" "This is his word," said macRoth, "that he himself would not disclose it to ye." "'Tis a question, then," said Medb.

"But" (macRoth continued), "should there be one in our midst that knows his terms, that one would tell it to me." "And if there be not, let no one go seek him any more. But, there is one thing I promise thee," said macRoth; "even though the kingdom of Erin were given me for it, I for one would not go on these same legs to that place to parley with him again."

Therewith Medb looked at Fergus. "What are the terms yonder man demands, O Fergus?" Medb asked. "I know what the man meant to disclose. I see no advantage at all for ye in the terms he demands," Fergus replied. "But what are those terms?" asked Medb. "That a single champion of the men of Erin be sent to fight and contend with him every day. The while he slayeth that man, the army will be permitted to continue its march. Then, when he will have slain that man, another warrior shall be sent to meet him on the ford. Either that, or the men of Erin shall halt and camp there till sunrise's bright hour in the morning. And further, Cuchulain's food and clothing shall be provided by you, so long as he will be on this expedition."

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

"Nevermore!" said Fergus. "Why not?" asked Ailill. "Bonds and covenants, pledges and bail shall be given for abiding by those terms and for their fulfillment towards Cuchulain." "I abide by it," said Medb, and she fast bound Fergus to them in like manner.

10. The Violent Death Of Etarcumul

Fergus' horses were brought and his chariot was hitched and two horses were brought for Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn, a soft youth of the people of Medb and of Ailill. "Whither goest thou?" Fergus demanded. "We go with thee," Etarcumul made answer. "To behold the form and appearance of Cuchulain, and to gaze upon him, for he is unknown to me." "Wilt thou do my bidding," said Fergus, "thou wilt in no wise go thither." "Why shall I not, pray?"

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Thy light–heartedness, thy haughtiness (I know), but (I also know) the fierceness and valour and hostility of the youth against whom thou goest. And methinks ye will have contention before ye part." "Art thou not able to come between us to protect me?" "I am, to be sure," Fergus answered, "provided thou thyself seek not the combat." "I will not seek it," said Etarcumul, "till the very day of doom!"

Then they went their ways to come up to Cuchulain where Cuchulain was between Fochain and the sea. There it is that he was that day, playing draughts with Laeg. And not a living thing entered the entire plain without Laeg perceiving it and, notwithstanding, he continued to win every other game of draughts from Cuchulain. "A lone warrior cometh towards us over the plain, my master Cucuc," spake Laeg. "What manner of warrior?" queried Cuchulain.

"As large as one of the chief mountains that are highest on a great plain appears to me the chariot that is under the warrior; as large as one of the noble trees on a main fort's green meseems the curly, tressed, fair–yellow, all–golden hair hanging loose around the man's head; a purple mantle fringed with thread of gold wrapped around him; a broad and gray–shafted lance, perforated from mimasc to horn, flaming red in his hand; over him, a bossed, plaited shield, curved, with applied ornaments of red gold thereon; a lengthy sword, as long as the oar of a huge currach on a wild, stormy night, resting on the two thighs of the great haughty warrior that is within the chariot."

"Holla! Welcome the coming of this guest to us!" cried Cuchulain. "We know the man; it is my master Fergus that cometh hither." "Yet another single chariot–fighter I see coming towards us. With fulness of skill and beauty and splendour his horses speed." "One of the youths of the men of Erin is he, O my master Laeg," responded Cuchulain. "To scan my appearance and form is that man come, for I am renowned amongst them in the midst of their camp, and they know me not at all."

Fergus came up to where Cuchulain was and he sprang from the chariot, and Cuchulain bade him a hearty welcome. "Thy welcome I take for true," Fergus responded.

"Verily, it is truly meant for thee," said Cuchulain; "for comes there a brace of birds into the plain, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. If fish rise to the river–mouths, to the stones or waterfalls, thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have a handful of watercress and a handful of sea–grass and a handful of laver. If thou hast a fight or combat with warrior before thee, I myself will go in thy stead to the ford. And I will watch and guard thee as long as thou sleepest."

"Well, then," said Fergus. "We know of what sort is thy hospitality on this occasion, on the Cow–spoil of Cualnge. But, as for this compact which thou hast asked of the men of Erin, single–handed combat with one man, thou shalt have it. It is for that I am come, to bind thee thereto, and do thou take it upon thee." "I pledge myself truly," said Cuchulain, "oh, my master Fergus." And no longer than that did he remain in parley, lest the men of Erin should say they were betrayed or deserted by Fergus for his disciple. Fergus' two horses were brought and his chariot was harnessed and he went back.

Etarcumul tarried behind gazing for a long time at Cuchulain. "At what starest thou, gilla?" asked Cuchulain. "I look at thee," said Etarcumul. "In truth then, thou hast not far to look," said Cuchulain. "There is no need of straining thine eye for that. If thou but knewest how angered is the little creature thou regardest, myself, to wit! And how then do I appear unto thee gazing upon me?" "Thou pleases me as thou art; a comely, shapely, wonderful, beautiful youth thou art, with brilliant, striking, various feats. Yet as for rating thee where goodly warriors are or forward youths or heroes of bravery or sledges of destruction, we count thee not nor consider thee at all.

"Though thou reviles me," said Cuchulain, "it is a surety for thee that thou camest from the camp under the protection of Fergus, as thou well knowest. For the rest, I swear by my gods whom I worship, were it not for the

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honour of Fergus, it would be only bits of thy bones and shreds of thy limbs that would be brought back to the camp!" "But threaten me no longer in this wise, Cuchulain!" cried Etarcumul; "for the wonderful terms thou didst exact of the men of Erin, that fair play and combat with one man should be granted thee, none other of the men of Erin but mine own self will come to–morrow at morn's early hour." "Come out, then," said Cuchulain, "and how so early thou comest, thou wilt find me here. I will not fly before thee. "

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

The charioteer wheeled the chariot again towards the ford. They brought the left board to face the pair in a line with the ford. Laeg marked this and he cried to Cuchulain: ("Wist thou) the last chariot–fighter that was here a while ago, O Cucuc?" "What of him?" asked Cuchulain. "He has brought his left board towards us in the direction of the ford." "It is Etarcumul, O gilla, who seeks me in combat. And unwelcome is his coming, because of the honour of my foster–father Fergus under whom he came forth from the camp, of the men of Erin. But not that I would protect him do I thus. Fetch me my arms, gilla, to the ford. I deem it no honour for myself if the fellow reaches the ford before me." And straightway Cuchulain betook himself to the ford, and he bared his sword over his fair, well–knit spalls and he was ready on the ford to await Etarcumul.

Then, too, came Etarcumul. "What seekest thou, gilla?" demanded Cuchulain. "Battle with thee I seek," replied Etarcumul. "Hadst thou been advised by me," said Cuchulain, "thou wouldst never have come. Because of the honour of Fergus under whom thou camest out of the camp, and not because I would spare thee, do I behave thus."

Thereupon Cuchulain gave him a long–blow whereby he cut away the sod that was under the soles of his feet, so that he was stretched out like a sack on his back, and his limbs in the air and the sod on his belly. Had Cuchulain wished it, it is two pieces he might have made of him. "Hold, fellow. Off with thee now, for I have given thee warning." "I will not go. We will fight on," said Etarcumul.

Cuchulain dealt him a well–aimed edge–stroke. With the edge of his sword he sheared the hair from him from poll to forehead, from one ear to the other, as if it were with a light, keen razor he had been shorn. Not a scratch of his skin gave blood. "Hold, fellow. Get thee home now," said Cuchulain, "for a laughing–stock I have made of thee." "I go not," rejoined Etarcumul. "We will fight to the end, till I take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee, or till thou takest my head and my spoils and boastest over me!" "So let it be, what thou saidst last, that it shall be. I will take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee!"

Cuchulain dealt him a cleaving blow on the crown of the head, so that it drove to his navel. He dealt him a second crosswise stroke, so that at the one time the three portions of his body came to the ground. Thus fell Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn.

And Fergus knew not that the combat had been. For thus was his wont: he never for aught looked back, whether at sitting or at rising or when travelling or walking, in battle or fight or combat, lest some one might say it was out of fear he looked back, but ever he looked at the thing that was before and beside him.

And when Etarcumul's squire came up abreast of Fergus, Fergus asked, "But, where is thy lord, gilla?" "He fell a while since at the ford by the hand of Cuchulain," the gilla made answer. "That indeed was not fair!" exclaimed Fergus, "for that elf–like sprite to wrong me in him that came under my safeguard and protection. Turn the chariot

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for us, gilla," cried Fergus, "that we may go to the ford of fight and combat for a parley with Cuchulain."

Thereupon the driver wheeled the chariot. They fared thither towards the ford. "How darest thou offend me, thou wild, perverse, little elf–man," cried Fergus, "in him that came under my safeguard and protection? "After the nurture and care thou didst bestow on me, which wouldst thou hold better, for him to triumph and boast over me, or for me to triumph and boast over him? And yet more! Ask his own gilla which of us was in fault in respect of the other." Then Etarcul's gilla related to Fergus how it all befel. Fergus replied, "Liefer to me what thou hast done, fosterling," said Fergus, "and a blessing on the hand that smote him."

So then they bound two spancels about the ankle–joints of Etarcul's feet and he was dragged along behind his horses and chariot. At every rock that was rough for him, his lungs and his liver were left on the stones and the rugged places. At every place that was smooth for him, his skilfully severed limbs came together again round the horses. In this wise he was dragged through the camp to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb.

"There's your young warrior for you," cried Fergus, "for 'Every restoration together with its restitution' is what the law saith." Medb came forth to the door of her tent and she raised her quick, splitting, loud voice of a warrior. Quoth Medb: "Truly, methought that great was the heat and the wrath of this young hound on leaving us awhile since at the beginning of the day as he went from the camp. We had thought that the honour under which he went was not the honour of a dastard, even the honour of Fergus!"

"What hath crazed the virago and wench?" cried Fergus. "Good lack, is it fitting for the mongrel to seek the Hound of battle whom the warriors and champions of four of the five grand provinces of Erin dare not approach nor withstand? What, I myself was glad to escape whole from him!" In this manner fell Etarcul and such was the combat of Etarcul with Cuchulain.

11. The Slaying Of Nathcrantail

Then arose a huge warrior of Medb's people, Nathcrantail by name, and he came to attack Cuchulain. He did not deign to bring along arms but thrice nine spits of holly after being sharpened, burnt and hardened in fire. And there before him on the pond was Cuchulain, and there was no shelter whatever.

[And there were nine darts, and none of them was to miss Cuchulain.] And he straightway cast [the first] dart at Cuchulain. Cuchulain sprang from the middle of the ground till he came on the tip of the dart. And again Nathcrantail threw a second dart. Nathcrantail threw a third dart and Cuchulain sprang on the point of the second dart and so on till he was on the point of the last dart.

It was then that the flock of birds which Cuchulain pursued on the plain flew away. Cuchulain chased them even as any bird of the air, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him but that they might leave behind a portion of food for the night. For this is what sustained and served Cuchulain, fish and fowl and game on the Cualnge Cow–spoil.

Something more remains to be told: Nathcrantail deemed full surely that Cuchulain went from him in rout of defeat and flight. And he went his way till he came to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb and he lifted up his loud voice of a warrior: "That famous Cuchulain that ye so talk of ran and fled in defeat before me when he came to me in the morning." "We knew," spake Medb, "it would be even so when able warriors and goodly youths met him, that this beardless imp would not hold out; for when a mighty warrior, Nathcrantail to wit, came upon him, he withstood him not but before him he ran away!"

And Fergus heard that, and Fergus was sore angered that any one should boast that Cuchulain had fled. And Fergus addressed himself to Fiachu, Feraba's son, that he should go to rebuke Cuchulain. "And tell him it is an

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honour for him to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as he does deeds of valour upon them, but that it were fitter for him to hide himself than to fly before any one of their warriors."

Thereupon Fiachu went to address Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "I trow that welcome to be truly meant, but it is for counsel with thee I am come from thy fosterer Fergus. And he has said, 'It would be a glory for thee to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as thou doest valiantly with them; but it would be fitter for thee to hide thyself than to fly before any one of their warriors!'"

"How now, who makes that boast among ye?" Cuchulain asked. "Nathcrantail, of a surety," Fiachu answered. "How may this be? Dost not know, thou and Fergus and the nobles of Ulster, that I slay no charioteers nor heralds nor unarmed people? And he bore no arms but a spit of wood. And I would not slay Nathcrantail until he had arms. And do thou tell him, let him come here early in the morning, and I will not fly before him!"

And it seemed long to Nathcrantail till day with its light came for him to attack Cuchulain. He set out early on the morrow to attack Cuchulain. Cuchulain arose early and came to his place of meeting and his wrath bided with him on that day. And he threw his cloak around him, so that it passed over the pillar–stone near by, and snapped the pillar–stone off from the ground between himself and his cloak. And he was aware of naught because of the measure of anger that had come on and rage in him.

Then, too, came Nathcrantail, and he spake, "Where is this Cuchulain?" shouted Nathcrantail. "Why, over yonder near the pillar–stone before thee," answered Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar. "Not such was the shape wherein he appeared to me yesterday," said Nathcrantail. "Repel yon warrior," quoth Cormac, "and it will be the same for thee as if thou repellst Cuchulain!"

Soon came Nathcrantail to seek Cuchulain and he made a wide sweep with his sword at Cuchulain. The sword encountered the pillar of stone that was between Cuchulain and his cloak, and the sword broke atwain on the pillar–stone. Then Cuchulain sprang from the ground and alighted on the top of the boss of Nathcrantail's shield and dealt him a side stroke over the upper edge of the shield, so that he struck off his head from his trunk. He raised his hand quickly again and gave him another blow on the top of the trunk so that he cleft him in twain down to the ground. Thus fell Nathcrantail slain by Cuchulain. Whereupon Cuchulain spoke the verse:

"Now that Nathcrantail has fallen,
There will be increase of strife!
Would that Medb had battle now
And the third part of the host!"

12. The Finding of The Bull

Thereafter on the morrow Medb proceeded with a third of the host of the men of Erin about her, till she reached Dun Sobairche in the north. And Cuchulain pressed heavily on Medb that day. [Medb went on to Cuib to seek the bull and Cuchulain pursued her.] There it is that Cuchulain slew all those we have mentioned in Cuib. Cuchulain killed Fer Taidle, whence cometh Taidle; and as they went northwards he killed the macBuachalla ('the Herdsman's sons') at their cairn, whence cometh Carn macBuachalla; and he killed Luasce on the slopes, whence Lettre Luasc ('the Watery Slopes of Luasc'); and he slew Bobulge in his marsh, whence Grelloch ('the Trampled Place') of Bubulge; and he slew Murthemne on his hill, whence Delga ('the Points') of Murthemne.

It was afterwards then that Cuchulain turned back from the north to Mag Murthemni, to protect and defend his own borders and land, for dearer to him was his own land and inheritance and belongings than the land and territory and belongings of another.

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It was then too that he came upon the Fir Crandce ('the men of Crannach'); to wit, the two Artinne and the two sons of Lecc, the two sons of Durcride, the two sons of Gabul, and Drucht and Delt and Dathen, Tae and Tualang and Turscur, and Torc Glaisse and Glass and Glassne, which are the same as the twenty men of Fochard. Cuchulain surprised them as they were pitching camp in advance of all other, so that they fell by his hand.

Then it was that Buide ('the Yellow') son of Ban Thai ('the White') from the country of Ailill and Medb, and belonging to the special followers of Medb, met Cuchulain. Four and twenty a warriors [was their strength.] A blue mantle enwrapping each man, the Brown Bull of Cualnge plunging and careering before them after he had been brought from Glenn na Samaisce ('Heifers' Glen') to Sliab Culinn, and fifty of his heifers with him.

"Whence bring ye the drove, ye men?" Cuchulain asks. "From yonder mountain," Buide answers. "What is thine own name?" said Cuchulain. "One that neither loves thee nor fears thee," Buide made answer; "Buide son of Ban Thai am I, from the country of Ailill and Medb." "Lo, here for thee this short spear," said Cuchulain, and he casts the spear at him. It struck the shield over his belly, so that it shattered three ribs in his farther side after piercing his heart in his bosom. And Buide son of Ban Thai fell on the ford. So that thence is Ath Buidi ('Athboy') in Crich Roiss ('the land of Ross').

For as long or as short a space as they were engaged in this work of exchanging their two short spears—for it was not in a moment they had accomplished it—the Brown Bull of Cualnge was carried away in quick course and career to the camp as swiftly as any bull can be brought to a camp. From this accordingly came the greatest shame and grief and madness that was brought on Cuchulain on that hosting.

As regards Medb: every ford whereon she stopped, Ath Medba ('Medb's Ford') is its name. Every place wherein she pitched her tent, Pupall Medba ('Medb's Tent') is its name. Every spot she rested her horselash, Bili Medba ('Medb's Tree') is its name.

On this circuit Medb offered battle one night to Findmor ('the Fair–large') wife of Celtchar at the gate of Dun Sobairche; and she slew Findmor and laid waste Dun Sobairche.

Then came the warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin at the end of a long fortnight to camp and station, together with Medb and Ailill and the company that were bringing the bull.

12a. The Death Of Forgemen

And the bull's cowherd would not allow them to carry off the Brown Bull of Cualnge, so that they urged on the bull, beating shafts on shields, till they drove him into a narrow gap, and the herd trampled the cowherd's body thirty feet into the ground, so that they made fragments and shreds of his body. Forgemen was his name. This then is the Death of Forgemen on the Cattle–prey of Cualnge.

12b. Here Is Narrated The Slaying of Redg The Satirist

When the men of Erin had come together in one place, both Medb and Ailill and the force that was bringing the bull to the camp and enclosure, they all declared Cuchulain would be no more valiant than another, were it not for the wonderful little trick he possessed, the spearlet of Cuchulain. Accordingly the men of Erin despatched from them Redg, Medb's satirist, to demand the spearlet.

So Redg came forward to where Cuchulain was and asked for the spearlet, but Cuchulain did not give him the spearlet at once; he did not deem it good and proper to yield it. Redg declared he would deprive Cuchulain of his honour unless he got the spearlet. Thereupon Cuchulain hurled the spearlet at him, so that it struck him in the nape of the neck and fell out through his mouth on the ground. And the only words Redg uttered were these, "This

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precious gift is readily ours," and his soul separated from his body at the ford. Therefrom that ford is ever since called Ath Solom Shet ('Ford of the Ready Treasure'). And the copper of the spearlet was thrown into the river. Hence is Uman–Sruth ('Copperstream') ever after.

"Let us ask for a sword–truce from Cuchulain," says Ailill. "Let Lugaid go to him," one and all answer. Then Lugaid goes to parley with him. "How now do I stand with the host?" Cuchulain asks. "Disgraceful indeed is the thing thou hast demanded of them," Lugaid answers, "even this, that thou shouldst have thy women and maidens and half of thy kine. But more grievous than all do they hold it that they themselves should be killed and thou provisioned."

Every day there fell a man by Cuchulain till the end of a week. Then faith is broken with Cuchulain. Twenty are despatched at one time to attack him and he destroys them all. "Go to him, O Fergus," says Ailill, "that he may vouchsafe us a change of place." A while after this they proceed to Cronech. These are they that fell in single combat with him in that place, to wit: the two Roth, the two Luan, two women–thieves, ten fools, ten cup–bearers, the ten Fergus, the six Fedelm, the six Fiachu. Now these were all killed by him in single combat.

When their tents were pitched by them in Cronech they discussed what they had best do with Cuchulain. "I know," quoth Medb, "what is best here. Let someone go to him from us for a swordpact from him in respect of the host, and he shall have half the cattle that are here." This message they bring to him. "I will do it," said Cuchulain, "provided the bond is not broken by you tomorrow."

12c. Here Is Told The Meeting of Cuchulain And Finnabair

"Let a message be sent to him," said Ailill, "that Finnabair my daughter will be bestowed on him, and for him to keep away from the hosts." Manè Athramail ('Fatherlike') goes to him. But first he addresses himself to Laeg. "Whose man art thou?" spake Manè. Now Laeg made no answer. Thrice Manè addressed him in this same wise. "Cuchulain's man," Laeg answers, "and provoke me not, lest it happen I strike thy head off thee!" "This man is mad," quoth Manè as he leaves him.

Then he goes to accost Cuchulain. It was there Cuchulain had doffed his tunic, and the deep snow was around him where he sat, up to his belt, and the snow had melted a cubit around him for the greatness of the heat of the hero. And Manè addressed him three times in like manner, whose man he was?" Conchobar's man, and do not provoke me. For if thou provokes me any longer I will strike thy head off thee as one strikes off the head of a blackbird!" "No easy thing," quoth Manè, "to speak to these two." Thereupon Manè leaves them and tells his tale to Ailill and Medb.

"Let Lugaid go to him," said Ailill, "and offer him the girl." Thereupon Lugaid goes and repeats this to Cuchulain. "O master Lugaid," quoth Cuchulain, "it is a snare!" "It is the word of a king; he hath said it," Lugaid answered; "there can be no snare in it." "So be it," said Cuchulain. Forthwith Lugaid leaves him and takes that answer to Ailill and Medb. "Let the fool go forth in my form," said Ailill, "and the king's crown on his head, and let him stand some way off from Cuchulain lest he know him; and let the girl go with him and let the fool promise her to him, and let them depart quickly in this wise. And methinks ye will play a trick on him thus, so that he will not stop you any further till he comes with the Ulstermen to the battle."

Then the fool goes to him and the girl along with him, and from afar he addresses Cuchulain. The Hound comes to meet him. It happened he knew by the man's speech that he was a fool. A clingstone that was in his hand he threw at him so that it entered his head and bore out his brains. He comes up to the maiden, cuts off her two tresses and thrusts a stone through her cloak and her tunic, and plants a standing–stone through the middle of the fool. Their two pillar–stones are there, even the pillar–stone of Finnabair and the pillar–stone of the fool.

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Cuchulain left them in this plight. A party was sent out from Ailill and Medb to search for their people, for it was long they thought they were gone, when they saw them in this wise. This thing was noised abroad by all the host in the camp. Thereafter there was no truce for them with Cuchulain.

12d. Here The Combat of Munremar and Curoi

While the hosts were there in the evening they perceived that one stone fell on them coming from the east and another from the west to meet it. The stones met one another in the air and kept falling between Fergus' camp, the camp of Ailill and the camp of Nera. This sport and play continued from that hour till the same hour on the next day, and the hosts spent the time sitting down, with their shields over their heads to protect them from the blocks of stones, till the plain was full of the boulders, whence cometh Mag Clochair ('the Stony Plain').

Now it happened it was Curoi macDarè did this. He had come to bring help to his people and had taken his stand in Cotal to fight against Munremar son of Gerrcend. The latter had come from Emain Macha to succour Cuchulain and had taken his stand on Ard ('the Height') of Roch. Curoi knew there was not in the host a man to compete with Munremar. These then it was who carried on this sport between them. The army prayed them to cease. Whereupon Munremar and Curoi made peace, and Curoi withdrew to his house and Munremar to Emain Macha and Munremar came not again till the day of the battle. As for Curoi, he came not till the combat of Ferdiad.

"Pray Cuchulain," said Medb and Ailill, "that he suffer us to change our place." This then was granted to them and the change was made.

The 'Pains' of the Ulstermen left them then. When now they awoke from their 'Pains,' bands of them came continually upon the host to restrain it again.

12e. The Slaughter of The Boy–Troop

Now the youths of Ulster discussed the matter among themselves in Emain Macha. "Alas for us," said they, "that our friend Cuchulain has no one to succour him!" "I would ask then," spake Fiachu Fulech ('the Bloody') son of Ferfebè and own brother to Fiachu Fialdana ('the Generous–daring') son of Ferfebè, "shall I have a company from you to go to him with help?"

Thrice fifty youths accompany him with their play–clubs, and that was a third of the boy–troop of Ulster. The army saw them drawing near them over the plain. "A great army approaches us over the plain," spake Ailill. Fergus goes to espy them. "Some of the youths of Ulster are they," said he, "and it is to succour Cuchulain they come." "Let a troop go to meet them," said Ailill, "unknown to Cuchulain; for if they unite with him ye will never overcome them." Thrice fifty warriors went out to meet them. They fell at one another's hands, so that not one of them got off alive of the number of the youths of Lia Toll. Hence is Lia ('the Stone') of Fiachu son of Ferfebè, for it is there that he fell.

"Take counsel," quoth Ailill; "inquire of Cuchulain about letting you go from hence, for ye will not go past him by force, now that his flame of valour has risen." For it was usual with him, when his hero's flame arose in him, that his feet would turn back on him and his buttocks before him, and the knobs of his calves would come on his shins, and one eye would be in his head and the other one out of his head. A man's head would have gone into his mouth. There was not a hair on him that was not as sharp as the thorn of the hew, and a drop of blood was on each single hair. He would recognize neither comrades nor friends. Alike he would strike them before and behind. Therefrom it was that the men of Connacht gave Cuchulain the name Riastartha ('the Contorted One').

12f. The Slaughter of The King's Bodyguard

"Let us ask for a sword–truce from Cuchulain," said Ailill and Medb. Lugaid goes to him and Cuchulain accords the truce. "Put a man for me on the ford to–morrow," said Cuchulain. There happened to be with Medb six royal hirelings, to wit: six princes of the Gans of Deda, the three Dubs ('the Blacks') of Imlech, and the three Dergs ('the Reds') of Sruthair, by name. "Why should it not be for us," quoth they, "to go and attack Cuchulain?" So the next day they went and Cuchulain put an end to the six of them.

13. The Combat Of Cûr With Cuchulain

The men of Erin discussed among themselves who of them would be fit to attack Cuchulain. And what they all said was that Cûr ('the Hero') son of Da Loth should be the one to attack him. For thus it stood with Cûr: No joy was it to be his bedfellow or to live with him. And they said: "Even should it be Cûr that falls, a trouble and care would be removed from the hosts. Should it be Cuchulain, it would be so much the better."

Cûr was summoned to Medb's tent. "For what do they want me?" Cûr asked. "To engage with Cuchulain," replied Medb. "Little ye rate our worth. Nay, but it is wonderful how ye regard it. Too tender is the youth with whom ye compare me. Had I known I was sent against him I would not have come myself. I would have lads enough of his age from amongst my people to go meet him on a ford."

"Indeed, it is easy to talk so," quoth Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar. "It would be well worth while for thyself if by thee fell Cuchulain." "Howbeit," said Cûr, "since on myself it falls, make ye ready a journey for me at morn's early hour on the morrow, for a pleasure I will make of the way to this fight, a–going to meet Cuchulain. It is not this will detain you, namely the killing of yonder wildling, Cuchulain!"

Then early on the morrow morn arose Cûr macDa Loth. A cart–load of arms was taken along with him wherewith to engage with Cuchulain, and he began to ply his weapons, seeking to kill Cuchulain. Now Cuchulain had gone early that day to practice his feats of valour and prowess. These are the names of them all:

the Apple–feat,
and the Edge–feat,
and the Level Shield–feat,
and the Little Dart–feat,
and the Rope–feat,
and the Body–feat,
and the Feat of Catt,
and the Hero's Salmon–leap,
and the Pole–cast,
and the Leap over a Blow (?),
and the Folding of a noble Chariot–fighter,
and the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear')
and the Vantage (?) of Swiftmess,
and the Wheel–feat,
and the Rimfeat,
and the Over–Breath–feat,
and the Breaking of a Sword,
and the Champion's Cry,
and the Measured Stroke,
and the Side Stroke,
and the Running up a Lance and Standing Erect on its Point, and Binding of the Noble Hero (around spear

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points).

Now this is the reason Cuchulain was wont to practice early every morning each of those feats with the agility of a single hand, as best a wild–cat may, in order that they might not depart from him through forgetfulness or lack of remembrance.

And macDa Loth waited beside his shield until the third part of the day, plying his weapons, seeking the chance to kill Cuchulain. It was then Laeg spake to Cuchulain, "Hark! Cucuc. Attend to the warrior that seeks to kill thee."

Then it was that Cuchulain glanced at him and then it was that he raised and threw the eight apples on high and cast the ninth apple a throw's length from him at Cûr macDa Loth, so that it struck on the disk of his shield between the edge and the body of the shield, so that it carried the size of an apple of his brains out through the back of his head. Thus fell Cûr macDa Loth also at the hand of Cuchulain.

"If your engagements and pledges bind you now," said Fergus, "another warrior ye must send to him yonder on the ford; else, do ye keep to your camp and your quarters here till the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow, for Cûr son of Da Loth is fallen." "Considering why we have come," said Medb, "it is the same to us even though we remain in those same tents."

They remained in that camp till Cûr son of Da Loth had fallen, and Loth son of Da Bro and Srub Darè son of Feradach [and Morc] son of Tri Aigneach. These then fell in single combat with Cuchulain. But it is tedious to recount one by one the cunning and valour of each man of them.

14. The Slaying Of Ferbaeth ('The Witless')

Then it was that Cuchulain said to his charioteer, namely to Laeg: "Betake thee thither, O master Laeg," said Cuchulain, "to the camp of the men of Erin, and bear a greeting from me to my comrades and foster–brothers and age–mates. Bear a greeting to Ferdiad son of Daman, and to Ferdet son of Daman, and to Brass son of Ferb, and to Lugaid son of Nos, and to Lugaid son of Solamach, to Ferbaeth son of Baetan, and to Ferbaeth son of Ferbend, and a particular greeting withal to mine own foster–brother, to Lugaid son of Nos, for that he is the one man that still has friendliness and friendship with me now on the hosting. And bear him a blessing. Let it be asked diligently of him that he may tell thee who will come to attack me on the morrow."

Then Laeg went his way to the camp of the men of Erin and brought the aforementioned greetings to the comrades and foster–brothers of Cuchulain. And he also went into the tent of Lugaid son of Nos. Lugaid bade him welcome. "I take that welcome to be truly meant," said Laeg. "'Tis truly meant for thee," replied Lugaid. "To converse with thee am I come from Cuchulain," said Laeg, "and I bring these greetings truly and earnestly from him to the end that thou tell me who comes to fight with Cuchulain to–day."

"The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood and of his friendship and affection be upon that man," said Laeg. "Even his own real foster–brother himself, Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. He was invited into the tent of Medb a while since. The daughter Finnabair was set by his side. It is she who fills up the drinking–horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink that he takes; it is she who serveth the food to him. Not for every one with Medb is the ale that is poured out for Ferbaeth till he is drunk. Only fifty wagon–loads of it have been brought to the camp."

Then Laeg retraced his steps to Cuchulain, with heavy head, sorrowful, downcast, heaving sighs. "With heavy head, sorrowful, downcast and sighing, my master Laeg comes to meet me," said Cuchulain. "It must be that one of my brothers–in–arms comes to attack me." For he regarded as worse a man of the same training in arms as himself than aught other warrior. "Hail now, O Laeg my friend," cried Cuchulain; "who comes to attack me

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to–day?"

"The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood, of his friendship and affection be upon him; even thine own real foster–brother himself, namely Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. A while ago he was summoned into the tent of Medb. The maiden was set by his side; it is she who fills up the drinking–horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink; it is she who serveth his food. Not for every one with Medb is the ale that is poured out for Ferbaeth. Only fifty wagon–loads of it have been brought to the camp."

Ferbaeth by no means waited till morn but he went straightway to the glen that night to recant his friendship with Cuchulain. And Cuchulain called to mind the friendship and fellowship and brotherhood that had been between them; and Ferbaeth would not consent to forego the fight.

Then in anger, Cuchulain left him and drove the sole of his foot against a holly–spit, so that it pierced through flesh and bone and skin. Thereat Cuchulain gave a strong tug and drew the spit out from its roots. And Cuchulain threw the holly–spit over his shoulder after Ferbaeth, and he would care as much that it reached him or that it reached him not. The spit struck Ferbaeth in the nape of the neck, so that it passed out through his mouth in front and fell to the ground, and thus Ferbaeth fell.

"Now that was a good throw, Cucuc!" cried Fiachu son of Ferfebè, who was on the mound between the two camps, for he considered it a good throw to kill that warrior with a spit of holly. Hence it is that Focherd Murthemni ('the good Cast of Murthemne') is the name of the place where they were.

14a. The Combat Of Larinè MacNois

"Good, my master Laeg," said Cuchulain, "go for me to the camp of the men of Erin to hold converse with Lugaid and inquire for me if the cast I made a while ago reached Ferbaeth or did not reach, and if it did reach him, ask who comes to meet me to fight and do battle with me on the morrow."

Laeg proceeds to Lugaid's tent. Lugaid bids him welcome. "I take that welcome as truly meant," Laeg replied. "It is truly meant for thee," quoth Lugaid, "to hold converse with thee am I come from thine own foster–brother, that thou mayest tell me whether Ferbaeth was smitten." "He was," answered Lugaid, "and a blessing on the hand that smote him, for he fell dead in the glen a while ago."

"Tell me who comes to–morrow to combat Cuchulain?" "They are persuading a brother of mine own to go meet him, a foolish, haughty arrogant youth, yet dealing stout blows and stubborn. And it is to this end that he may fall at his hands, so that I myself must then go to avenge him. But I will not go there till the very day of doom. Larinè great–grandson of Blathmac is that brother. And I will go thither to speak with Cuchulain about him," said Lugaid.

Lugaid's two horses were taken and his chariot was yoked to them and he came to his tryst with Cuchulain, so that a parley was had between them. Then it was that Lugaid spake. "They are persuading a brother of mine to come fight thee on the morrow, to–wit, a foolish, dull, uncouth youth, dealing stout blows. And it is for this reason they are to send him to fight thee, that he may fall at thy hands, and to see if I myself will come to avenge him upon thee. But I will not, till the very day of doom. And by the fellowship that is between us. Slay not my brother."

"By my conscience, truly," cried Cuchulain, "the next thing to death will I inflict on him. "I give thee leave," said Lugaid; "it would please me well shouldst thou beat him sorely, for to my dishonour he comes to attack thee." Thereupon Cuchulain went back and Lugaid returned to the camp.

Then on the next day it was that Larinè son of Nos was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Finnabair

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was placed by his side. It was she that filled up the drinking horns for him and gave him a kiss with each draught that he took and served him his food. "Not to every one with Medb is given the drink that is poured out for Ferbaeth or for Larinè," quoth Finnabair; "only the load of fifty wagons of it was brought to the camp."

["Yonder pair rejoiceth my heart," said Medb.] "Whom wouldst thou say?" [asked Ailill.] "The man yonder, in truth," said she. "What of him?" asked Ailill. "It is thy wont to set the mind on that which is far from the purpose (Medb answered). It were more becoming for thee to bestow thy thought on the couple in whom are united the greatest distinction and beauty to be found on any road in Erin, namely Finnabair and Larinè macNois." "I regard them as thou dost," answered Ailill. It was then that Larinè shook and tossed himself with joy, so that the sewings of the flock bed burst under him and the mead of the camp was speckled with its feathers.

Larinè longed for day with its full light to go to attack Cuchulain. At the early day–dawn on the morrow he came, and he brought a wagon–load of arms with him, and he came on to the ford to encounter Cuchulain. The mighty warriors of the camp and station considered it not a goodly enough sight to view the combat of Larinè; only the women and boys and girls went to scoff and to jeer at his battle.

Cuchulain went to meet him at the ford and he deemed it unbecoming to bring along arm, so he came to the encounter unarmed. Cuchulain knocked all of Larinè's weapons out of his hand as one might knock toys out of the hand of an infant. Cuchulain ground and bruised him between his arms, he lashed him and clasped him, he squeezed him and shook him, so that he spilled all the dirt out of him, so that an unclean, filthy wrack of cloud arose in the four airts wherein he was.

Then from the middle of the ford Cuchulain hurled Larinè far from him across through the camp till he fell at the door of the tent of his brother. Howbeit from that time forth he never stood up without a moan and as long as he lived s he never ate a meal without plaint, and never thenceforward was he free from weakness of the loins and oppression of the chest and without cramps and the frequent need which obliged him to go out. Still he is the only man that made escape after combat with Cuchulain on the Cualnge Cattle–raid. Nevertheless that maiming took effect upon him, so that it afterwards brought him his death. Such then is the Combat of Larinè on the Táin Bó Cúalnge.

15. The Slaying of Loch Son of Mofemis

It was then that Loch Mor son of Mofemis was summoned to the pavilion of Ailill and Medb. "What would ye of me?" asked Loch. "To have fight with Cuchulain," replied Medb. "I will not go on that errand, for I esteem it no honour nor becoming to attack a tender, young, smooth–chinned, beardless boy. And not to belittle him do I say it, but I have a doughty brother, the match of himself," said Loch, "a man to confront him, Long macEmonis, to wit, and he will rejoice to accept an offer from you."

Thereupon Long was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Medb promised him great gifts, even livery for twelve men of cloth of every colour, and a chariot worth four a times seven bondmaids, and Finnabair to wife for him alone, and at all times entertainment in Cruachan, and that wine would be poured out for him. Long went to seek Cuchulain, and Cuchulain slew him.

Then Medb called upon her woman–bands to go speak with Cuchulain and to charge him to put a false beard on. The woman–troop went their way to Cuchulain and told him to put a false beard on: "For no brave warrior in the camp thinks it seemly to come fight with thee, and thou beardless," said they. Thereupon Cuchulain bedaubed himself a beard. And he came onto the knoll overlooking the men of Erin and made that beard manifest to them all.

Loch son of Mofemis saw it, and what he said was, "Why, that is a beard on Cuchulain!" "It is what I perceive,"

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Medb answered. Medb promised the same great terms to Loch to put a check to Cuchulain.

"I will go forth and attack him," cried Loch. Loch went to attack Cuchulain; so they met on the ford where Long had fallen. "Let us move to the upper ford," said Loch, "for I will not fight on this ford," since he held it defiled, cursed and unclean, the ford whereon his brother had fallen. Thereafter they fought on the upper ford.

Then it was that the Morrigan daughter of Aed Ernmas came from the fairy dwellings to destroy Cuchulain. For she had threatened on the Cattle–raid of Regomaina that she would come to undo Cuchulain what time he would be in sore distress when engaged in battle and combat with a goodly warrior, with Loch, in the course of the Cattle–spoil of Cualnge. Thither then the Morrigan came in the shape of a white, hornless, red–eared heifer, with fifty heifers about her and a chain of silvered bronze between each two of the heifers. The women came with their strange sorcery, and constrained Cuchulain by geasa and by inviolable bonds to check the heifer for them lest she should escape from him without harm. Cuchulain made an unerring cast from his sling–stick at her, so that he shattered one of the Morrigan's eyes.

Then the Morrigan came thither in the shape of a slippery, black eel down the stream. Then she came on the linn and she coiled around the two feet of Cuchulain. While Cuchulain was busied freeing himself, Loch wounded him crosswise through the breast. [Then at this incitation Cuchulain arose, and with his left heel he smote the eel on the head, so that its ribs broke within it and he destroyed one half of its brains after smashing half of its head.]

The Morrigan next came in the form of a rough, grey–red bitch–wolf [and she bit Cuchulain in the arm and drove the cattle against him westwards, and Cuchulain made a cast of his little javelin at her, strongly, vehemently, so that it shattered one eye in her head.] During this space of time, whether long or short, while Cuchulain was engaged in freeing himself, Loch wounded him through the loins. Thereupon Cuchulain's anger arose within him and he wounded Loch with the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed–spear'), so that it passed through his heart in his breast.

"Grant me a boon now, O Cuchulain," said Loch. "What boon askest thou?" "'Tis no boon of quarter nor a prayer of cowardice that I make of thee," said Loch. "But fall back a step from me and permit me to rise, that it be on my face to the east I fall and not on my back to the west toward the warriors of Erin, to the end that no man of them shall say, if I fall on my back, it was in retreat or in flight I was before thee, for fallen I have by the Gae Bulga!" "That will I do," answered Cuchulain, "for 'tis a true warrior's prayer that thou makest." And Cuchulain stepped back. Hence cometh the name the ford bears ever since, namely Ath Traged ('Foot–ford') in Cenn Tire Moir ('Great Headland').

And deep distress possessed Cuchulain that day more than any other day for his being all alone on the Táin. Thereupon Cuchulain enjoined upon Laeg his charioteer to go to the men of Ulster, that they should come to defend their drove. And weariness of heart and weakness overcame him, and he gave utterance to a lay:—

Rise, O Laeg, arouse the hosts,
Say for me in Emain strong:
I am worn each day in fight,
Full of wounds, and bathed in gore!

My right side and eke my left:
Hard to say which suffers worse;
Fingin's hand hath touched them not,
Stanching blood with strips of wood!

Bring this word to Conchobar dear,
I am weak, with wounded sides.
Greatly has he changed in mien,

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Dechtirè's fond, rich–trooped son!

I alone these cattle guard,
Leave them not, yet hold them not.
Ill my plight, no hope for me,
Thus alone on many fords!

Showers of blood rain on my arms,
Full of hateful wounds am I.
No friend comes to help me here
Save my charioteer alone!

Few make music here for me,
Joy I've none in single horn.
When the mingled trumpets sound,
This is sweetest from the drone!

This old saying, ages old:—
Single log gives forth no flame;
Let there be a two or three,
Up the firebrands all will blaze!

One sole log burns not so well
As when one burns by its side.
Guile can be employed on one;
Single mill–stone doth not grind!

Hast not heard at every time,
One is duped?— 'tis true of me.
That is why I cannot last
These long battles of the hosts!

However small a host may be,
It receives some thought and pains;
Take but this: its daily meat
On one fork is never cooked!

Thus alone I've faced the host
By the ford in broad Cantire;
Many came, both Loch and Badb,
As foretold in 'Regomain!'

Loch has mangled my two thighs;
Me the grey–red wolf hath bit;
Loch my sides has wounded sore
And the eel has dragged me down!

With my spear I kept her off;
I put out the she–wolf's eye;
and I broke her lower leg,
At the outset of the strife!

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Then when Laeg sent Aifè's spear,
Down the stream— like swarm of bees—
That sharp deadly spear I hurled,
Loch, Mobebuis' son, fell there!

Will not Ulster battle give
To Ailill and Eocho's lass,
While I linger here in pain,
Full of wounds and bathed in blood?

Tell the splendid Ulster chiefs
They shall come to guard their drove.
Maga's sons have seized their kine
And have portioned them all out!

Fight on fight— though much I vowed,
I have kept my word in all.
For pure honour's sake I fight;
'Tis too much to fight alone!

Vultures joyful at the breach
In Ailill's and in Medb's camp.
Mournful cries of woe are heard;
On Murthemne's plain is grief!

Conchobar comes not out with help;
In the fight, no troops of his.
Should one leave him thus alone,
Hard 'twould be his rage to tell

Men have almost worn me out
In these single–handed fights;
Warrior's deeds I cannot do,
Now that I must fight alone!

This then is the Combat of Loch Mor ('the Great') son of Mofemis against Cuchulain on the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge.

16. The Violation of the Agreement

Then it was that Medb despatched six men at one and the same time to attack Cuchulain, to wit: Traig ('Foot') and Dorn ('Fist') and Dernu ('Palm'), Col ('Sin') and Accuis ('Curse') and Erasè ('Heresy'), three druid–men and three druid–women. Cuchulain attacked them, so that they fell at his hands.

Forasmuch as covenant and terms of single combat had been broken with Cuchulain, Cuchulain took his sling in hand that day and began to shoot at the host from Delga ('the Little Dart') in the south. Though numerous were the men of Erin on that day, not one of them durst turn his face southwards towards Cuchulain, whether dog, or horse, or man.

16a. The Healing Of The Morrigan

Then it was that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, came from the fairy dwellings, in the guise of an old hag, engaged in milking a tawny, three–teated milch cow. And for this reason she came in this fashion, that she might have redress from Cuchulain. For none whom Cuchulain ever wounded recovered there from without himself aided in the healing.

Cuchulain, maddened with thirst, begged her for a milking. She gave him a milking of one of the teats. "May this be a cure in time for me, old crone," quoth Cuchulain, and one of the queen's eyes became whole thereby. He begged the milking of another teat. She milked the cow's second teat and gave it to him and he said, "May she straightway be sound that gave it." [Then her head was healed so that it was whole.] He begged a third drink of the hag. She gave him the milking of the teat. "A blessing on thee of gods and of non–gods, O woman!" [And her leg was made whole thereby.] Now these were their gods, the mighty folk: and these were their non–gods, the folk of husbandry. And the queen was healed forthwith.

Then Medb ordered out the hundred armed warriors of her body–guard at one and the same time to assail Cuchulain. Cuchulain attacked them all, so that they fell by his hand. "It is a dishonour for us that our people are slaughtered in this wise," quoth Medb. "It is not the first destruction that has befallen us from that same man," replied Ailill. Hence Cuilenn Cind Duni ('The Destruction of the Head of the Dûn') is henceforth the name of the place where they were. Hence Ath Cro ('Gory Ford') is the name of the ford where they were. And fittingly, too, because of the abundance of gore and blood that went with the flow of the river.

17. The Great Rout on The Plain of Murthemne

The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and made their station in the place called Breslech Mor ('the Great Rout ') in the Plain of Murthemne. Their portion of cattle and spoils they sent on before them to the south to the cow–stalls of Ulster. Cuchulain took station at Ferta ('the (gravemound)') at Lerga ('the Slopes') hard by them.

Cuchulain saw far away in the distance the fiery glitter of the bright–golden arms over the heads of four of the five grand provinces of Erin, in the setting of the sun in the clouds of evening. Great anger and rage possessed him at their sight, because of the multitude of his foes, because of the number of his enemies.

Then Cuchulain arose and he grasped his two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook his shield and brandished his spears and wielded his sword and sent out the hero's shout from his throat, so that the fiends and goblins and sprites of the glens and demons of the air gave answer for the fearfulness of the shout that he lifted on high, until Nemain, which is Badb, brought confusion on the host. The four provinces of Erin made such a clangour of arms with the points of their spears and their weapons that an hundred warriors of them fell dead that night of fright and of heartbreak in the middle of the camp and quarters.

As Laeg stood there he descried something: A single man coming from the north–eastern quarter athwart the camp of the four grand provinces of Erin making directly for him. "A single man here cometh towards us now, Cucucan," cried Laeg. "But what manner of man is he?" Cuchulain asked. "Not hard to say. A great, well–favoured man, then. Broad, close–shorn hair upon him, and yellow and curly his back hair. A green mantle wrapped around him. A brooch of white silver in the mantle over his breast. A kirtle of silk fit for a king, with red interweaving of ruddy gold he wears trussed up on his fair skin and reaching down to his knees. A black shield with hard rim of silvered bronze thereon. A five–barbed spear in his hand. A pronged bye–spear beside it. Marvellous, in sooth, the feats and the sport and the play that he makes. But him no one heeds, nor gives he heed to any one. No one shows him courtesy nor does he show courtesy to any one, like as if none saw him in the camp of the four grand provinces of Erin."

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"In sooth, O fosterling," answered Cuchulain, "it is one of my friends of fairy kin that comes to take pity upon me, because they know the great distress wherein I am now all alone against the four grand provinces of Erin on the Plunder of the Kine of Cualnge." Now in this, Cuchulain spoke truth. When the young warrior was come up to Cuchulain he bespoke him and condoled with him. "Sleep then awhile, O Cuchulain," said the young warrior, "thy heavy fit of sleep by Ferta in Lerga ('the Gravemound on the Slopes') till the end of three days and three nights and I will oppose the hosts during that time."

Accordingly Cuchulain slept his heavy fit of sleep at 'the Gravemound on the Slopes' till the end of three days and three nights. And well he might sleep. Yet as great as was his sleep, even so great was his weariness. For from the Monday before Samain ('Summer–end') even to the Wednesday after Spring–beginning, Cuchulain slept not for all that space, except for a brief snatch after midday, leaning against his spear, and his head on his fist, and his fist clasping his spear, and his spear on his knee, but hewing and cutting, slaying and destroying four of the five grand provinces of Erin during that time.

Then it was that the warrior from Faery laid plants from the fairy–rath and healing herbs and put a healing charm into the cuts and stabs, into the sores and gaping wounds of Cuchulain, so that Cuchulain recovered during his sleep without ever perceiving it.

17a. The Slaughter of The Youths of Ulster

That was the time the youths came out of the north from Emain Macha. Thrice fifty boys of the sons of the kings of Ulster, accompanying Follomain, Conchobar's son, and three battles they offered to the hosts, so that thrice their number fell and the youths also fell, save Conchobar's son Follomain.

Follomain vowed that never till the very day of doom and of life would he return to Emain unless he should bring Ailill's head with him together with the diadem of gold that was on it. That was no easy thing for him to achieve, for the two sons of Bethè son of Ban— the two sons of Ailill's foster–mother and foster–father— attacked and wounded Follomain, so that he fell by their hands. This then is the Massacre of the youths of Ulster and of Follomain son of Conchobar.

Touching Cuchulain, he remained in his sound, heavy sleep till the end of three days and three nights at the 'Gravemound on the Slopes.' Thereafter Cuchulain arose from his sleep. He passed his hand over his face and he became as a wild wheel–thunder (?) from his crown to the ground, and he felt his courage strengthened, and he would have been able to go into an assembly or on a march or to a tryst with a woman or to an ale–house or into one of the chief assemblies of Erin.

"How long am I asleep now, young warrior?" Cuchulain asked. "Three days and three nights," the young warrior made answer. "Woe is me for that!" quoth Cuchulain. "Why so?" asked the young warrior. "For that the hosts have not been attacked in that time," answered Cuchulain. "Nay, not so were they spared," the young warrior made answer. "I would fain inquire who then attacked them?" Cuchulain asked.

"The youths came hither out of the north from Emain Macha, thrice fifty boys accompanying Follomain, Conchobar's son, and they the sons of the kings of Ulster. And three battles they offered the hosts in the space of the three days and three nights wherein thou wast till now asleep, and thrice their number are fallen at their hands and the youths themselves are fallen except Follomain alone, Conchobar's son.

And Follomain vowed that never till the very day of doom and of life would he return to Emain unless he should bring Ailill's head with him together with the diadem of gold that was on it. That was no easy thing for him to achieve, for the two sons of Bethè son of Ban— the two sons of Ailill's foster–mother and foster–father— attacked and wounded Follomain, so that he fell by their hands.

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"Alas, that I was not there in my strength!" cried Cuchulain; "for had I been in my strength the youths would not have fallen, as now they have, and Follomain would not have perished." "But this avow, O Cucan," said the young warrior; "it is no reproach to thine honour and no disgrace to thy valour."

"Bide here this night with us, young warrior," said Cuchulain, "that together we avenge the youths on the hosts." "Nay then, I may not tarry," answered the young warrior, "for however prodigious the deeds of valour and skill in arms one may perform in thy company, not on him will fall the glory nor the honour nor the fame but on thyself. For this reason will I not tarry with thee, but do thou thyself try thy feats of arms and the strength of thy hands alone on the hosts, for not with them is the power over thy life on this occasion."

Then the young warrior from Faery went from him and they knew not what way he had gone. "Good, O my master Laeg," said Cuchulain; "together we will go to avenge the youths on the hosts." "I will go with thee," Laeg made answer.

"And the scythed chariot, my friend Laeg," said Cuchulain. "Canst thou get it ready? If thou canst get it ready and hast its equipment, make it ready, and if its equipment is not at hand, make it not ready."

17b. The Scythed Chariot

Thereupon the charioteer arose and donned his yeoman's suit for charioteering. Of this yeoman's suit for charioteering, this is what he put on him: His soft kirtle of skin which was light and airy, which was smooth and sparkling, which was stitched and of buckskin, so that it hindered not the movements of his arms outside. Over that he put outside an over–mantle of raven's feathers, which Simon Magus had made as a gift for Darius Nero, king of the Romans. Darius bestowed it upon Conchobar; Conchobar gave it to Cuchulain; Cuchulain presented it to his charioteer.

The same charioteer took the crested, plated, four–bordered battle–cap with variety of every colour and every figure, reaching down over the middle of his shoulders behind. It was an adornment for him and not an encumbrance. With his hand he placed the red–yellow frontlet— like one red–golden strip of glowing gold smelted over the edge of an anvil— on his forehead as a token of charioteering, to distinguish him from his master. He opened the hobbles that fastened his steeds and grasped his gold–mounted goad in his right hand. In his left hand he seized the lines, that is, the bridle–reins of his horses for restraining his steeds before performing his charioteering.

He next threw the iron–sheathed gold–bedecked coats of mail over his horses, so that they covered them from forehead to forehead. The chariot was studded with dartlets, lancelets, spearlets, and hardened spits, so that every portion of the frame bristled with points in that chariot and every corner and end and point and face of that chariot was a passage of laceration.

Then cast he a spell of concealment over his horses and over his fellow, so that they were not visible to any one in the camp, while all in the camp were visible to them. Well indeed was it that he cast that charm, for on that day the charioteer had to perform the three gifts of charioteership, namely leaping over a cleft in the ranks, unerring driving, and the handling of the goad.

Then arose the champion and battle–warrior and the instrument of Badb's corpse–fold among the men of the earth, Cuchulain son of Sualtair, and he donned his war–dress of battle and fight and combat. To that wardress of battle and fight and combat which he put about him belonged seven and twenty waxed, board–like, equally close skin–tunics which were girded by cords and swathings and ropes on his fair skin, to the end that his wit and reason might not become deranged when the violence of his nature came over him.

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Over him he put on the outside his battle–girdle of a champion, of tough, tanned, stout leather cut from the forequarters of seven ox–hides of yearlings, so that it reached from the slender parts of his waist to the stout part under his arm–pits. He was used to wear it to keep off spears and points and irons and lances and arrows. For in like manner they would bound back from it as if from stone or rock or horn they rebounded. Then he took his silken, glossy trews with their band of spotted pale–gold against the soft lower parts of his loins. His brown, well–sewn kilt of brown leather from the shoulders of four ox–hides of yearlings with his battle–girdle of cow–skins, he put underneath over the shining silken trews on the outside.

Then the king–warrior seized his battle–arms of battle and fight and combat. This is what belonged to those warlike weapons of battle: He took his eight little swords together with the bright–faced, tusk–hilted straight–sword; he took his eight little spears besides his five–pronged spear, he took his eight little darts together with his javelin with its walrus–tooth ornaments; he took his eight little shafts along with his play–staff; he took his eight shields for feats together with his dark–red bent–shield, whereon a show–boar could lie in its hollow boss, with its very sharp razor–like, keen–cutting, hard iron rim all around it, so that it would cut a hair against the stream because of its sharpness and fineness and keenness. When the young warrior would perform the edge–feat withal, it was the same whether he cut with his shield or his spear or his sword.

Next he put round his head his crested war–helm of battle and fight and combat, whereout was uttered the cry of an hundred young warriors with the long–drawn wail from each of its angles and corners. For this was the way that the fiends, the goblins and the sprites of the glens and the demons of the air screamed before and above and around him, what time he went forth for the shedding of blood of heroes and champions, exulting in the mighty deeds wrought underneath it.

His veil of concealment was thrown over him then, of raiment from Tir Tairngirè ('the Land of Promise') which had been brought to him as a gift by Manannan son of Ler ('the Sea') from the king of Tir na Sorcha ('the Land of Light.')

Then took place the first twisting–fit and rage of the royal hero Cuchulain, so that he made a terrible, many–shaped, wonderful, unheard of thing of himself. His flesh trembled about him like a pole against the torrent or like a bulrush against the stream, every member and every joint and every point and every knuckle of him from crown to ground. He made a mad whirling–feat of his body within his hide. His feet and his shins and his knees slid so that they came behind him. His heels and his calves and his hams shifted so that they passed to the front. The muscles of his calves moved so that they came to the front of his shins, so that each huge knot was the size of a soldier's balled fist. He stretched the sinews of his head so that they stood out on the nape of his neck, hill–like lumps, huge, incalculable, vast, immeasurable and as large as the head of a month–old child.

He next made a ruddy bowl of his face and his countenance. He gulped down one eye into his head so that it would be hard work if a wild crane succeeded in drawing it out on to the middle of his cheek from the rear of his skull. Its mate sprang forth till it came out on his cheek. His mouth was distorted monstrously. He drew the cheek from the jaw–bone so that the interior of his throat was to be seen. His lungs and his lights stood out so that they fluttered in his mouth and his gullet. He struck a mad lion's blow with the upper jaw on its fellow so that as large as a wether's fleece of a three year old was each red, fiery flake which his teeth forced into his mouth from his gullet.

There was heard the loud clap of his heart against his breast like the yelp of a howling bloodhound or like a lion going among bears. There were seen the torches of the Badb, and the rain clouds of poison, and the sparks of glowing–red fire, blazing and flashing in hazes and mists over his head with the seething of the truly wild wrath that rose up above him. His hair bristled all over his head like branches of a redthorn thrust into a gap in a great hedge. Had a king's apple–tree laden with royal fruit been shaken around him, scarce an apple of them all would have passed over him to the ground, but rather would an apple have stayed stuck on each single hair there, for the twisting of the anger which met it as it rose from his hair above him.

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The Lon Laith ('Champion's Light') stood out of his forehead, so that it was as long and as thick as a warrior's whetstone. As high, as thick, as strong, as steady, as long as the sail–tree of some huge prime ship was the straight spout of dark blood which arose right on high from the very ridge–pole of his crown, so that a black fog of witchery was made thereof like to the smoke from a king's hostel what time the king comes to be ministered to at nightfall of a winter's day.

When now this contortion had been completed in Cuchulain, then it was that the hero of valour sprang into his scythed war–chariot, with its iron sickles, its thin blades, its hooks and its hard spikes, with its hero's fore–prongs, with its opening fixtures, with its stinging nails that were fastened to the poles and thongs and bows and lines of the chariot.

It was then he delivered over his chariot the thunder–feat of a hundred and the thunder–feat of two hundred and the thunder–feat of three hundred and the thunder–feat of four hundred, and he ceased at the thunder–feat of five hundred. For he did not deem it too much that such a great number should fall by his hand at his first onset and first battle–assault on four of the five grand provinces of Erin. In such wise fared he forth for to seek his foes, and he drove his chariot in a wide circuit round about the hosts of the four grand provinces of Erin. And he led his chariot a heavy way.

The chariot's iron wheels sank into the ground so that the earth dug up by the iron wheels might have served for a dún and a fortress, so did the chariot's iron wheels cut into the ground. For in like manner the clods and boulders and rocks and the clumps and the shingle of the earth arose up outside on a height with the iron wheels. It was for this cause he made this circling hedge of the Badb round about the hosts of four of the five grand provinces of Erin, that they might not escape him nor get away before he would come on them to press a reprisal for the boys. And he went into the midst of the ranks and mowed down huge walls of the corpses of his foes and enemies and opponents in a great circle round about the host.

And he made the onslaught of a foe amongst foes upon them, so that they fell sole to sole, neck to neck, such was the closeness of their bodies. Thrice again in this manner he circled them round, so that he left them in beds of six in a great ring around them, even the soles of three to the backs of three men in a circle around the camp. Hence Sessrech Bresligè ('Great sixfold Slaughter') is the name of this event on the Tain, and it is one of the three unreckonable events of the Tain, which were, to wit, Sessrech Bresligè, Immsligè Glennamnach ('the Mutual Slaying at Glennamain') and the battle of Garech and Ilgarech; only that here, hound and horse and man were one to him.

What others say is that Lug son of Ethliu fought on Cuchulain's side at the Sessrech Bresligè.

Their number is not known and it cannot be reckoned how many fell there of the rabble rout, but only their chiefs have been counted. Here below are their names to wit:

The two Crnad, two Calad, two Cir, two Ciar, two Ecell, three Cromm, three Cur, three Combirgè, four Feochar four Furachar, four Cassè, four Fota, five Caur, five Cerman, five Coblach, six Saxan, six Duach, six Darè, [six Dunchadh, six Daimiach,] seven Rochad, seven Ronan, seven Rurthech, eight Rochlad, eight Rochtad, eight Rindach, eight Corpè, eight Malach, nine Daigith, nine Darè, nine Damach, ten Fiach, ten Fiacach, ten Fedlimid.

Ten and six–score kings, leaders and men of the land, Cuchulain laid low in the great slaughter on the Plain of Murthemne, besides a countless horde of dogs and horses and women and boys and children and common folk; for there escaped not a third man of the men of Erin without a lump or without having half his skull or an eye hurt, or without an enduring mark for the course of his life.

17c. The Account Of The Appearance Of Cuchulain

Early the next morning Cuchulain came to observe the host and to display his comely, beautiful form to the matrons and dames and girls and maidens and poets and men of art, for he did not consider it an honour nor becoming, the wild, proud shape of magic which had been manifested to them the night before. It was for that then that he came to exhibit his comely, beautiful form on that day.

Truly fair was the youth that came there to display his form to the hosts, Cuchulain, to wit son of Sualtair. Three heads of hair he wore; brown at the skin, blood-red in the middle, a golden-yellow crown what thatched it. Beautiful was the arrangement of the hair, with three coils of hair wound round the nape of his neck, so that like to a strand of thread of gold was each thread-like, loose-flowing, deep-golden, magnificent, long-tressed, splendid, beautiful-hued hair as it fell down over his shoulders. A hundred bright-purple windings of gold-flaming red gold at his neck.

A hundred salmon-coloured (?) cords strung with carbuncles as a covering round his head. Four spots on either of his two cheeks, even a yellow spot, and a green spot, and a blue spot, and a purple spot. Seven jewels of the eye's brilliance was either of his kingly eyes. Seven toes to either of his two feet. Seven fingers to either of his two hands, with the clutch of hawk's claw, with the grip of hedgehog's talon in every separate one of them.

He also put on him that day his fair-day dress. To this apparel about him belonged, namely, a beautiful, well-fitting, purple, fringed, five-folded mantle. A white brooch of silvered bronze or of white silver incrustated with burnished gold over his fair white breast, as if it were a full-fulgent lantern that eyes of men could not behold for its resplendence and crystal shining. A striped chest-jacket of silk on his skin, fairly adorned with borders and braidings and trimmings of gold and silver and silvered bronze; it reached to the upper hem of his dark, brown-red warlike breeches of royal silk.

A magnificent, brown-purple buckler he bore, with five wheels of gold on it, with a rim of pure white silver around it. A gold-hilted hammered sword at his left side. A long grey-edged spear together with a trenchant bye-spear for defence, with thongs for throwing and with rivets of whitened bronze, alongside him in the chariot. Nine heads he bore in one of his hands and ten in the other, and these he brandished before the hosts in token of his prowess and cunning. Medb hid her face beneath a shelter of shields lest Cuchulain should cast at her that day.

Then it was that the maidens of Connacht besought the men of Erin to lift them up on the flat of the shields above the warriors' shoulders, to behold the aspect of Cuchulain. For they marvelled at the beautiful, comely appearance he showed them that day compared with the low, arrogant shape of magic in which they had seen him the night before.

17d. Dubthach's Jealousy

Then it was that jealousy, ill-will and envy possessed Dubthach Doel ('the Black-tongue') of Ulster because of his wife in regard to Cuchulain; and he counselled the hosts to act treacherously towards Cuchulain and to entrap him, even to lay up an ambush around him on all sides to the end that he might fall by them. And he spake these words:

"If this be the Twisted one,
By him shall men's bodies fall
Shrieks there shall be round the liss;
Deeds to tell of shall be wrought!

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"Stones shall be on graves from him;
Kingly martyrs shall increase.
Not well have ye battle found
On the slopes with this wild Hound!

"Now the Wildman's form I see,
Nine o heads dangling by his side;
Shattered spoils he has, behold;
Ten heads as his treasure great!

"And your women, too, I see,
Raise their heads above the lines
I behold your puissant queen
Makes no move t'engage in fight!

"Were it mine to give advice,
Men would be on every side,
That they soon might end his life
If this be the Twisted one!"

Fergus macRoig heard this and he deemed it an outrage that Dubthach should counsel how to betray Cuchulain to the hosts. And he reached him a strong, sharp kick with his foot away from him, so that Dubthach struck with his mouth against the group outside. And Fergus reproached him for all the wrongs and iniquities and treachery and shameful deeds he had ever done to the Ulstermen of old and anew. And then he spake these words:

"If this 'Black–tongue' Dubthach be,
Let him skulk behind the hosts
No good hath he ever wrought
Since he slew the princesses!

"Base and foul, the deed he wrought:
Fiachu, Conchobar's son, he slow.
No more fair was heard of him:
Carbrè's death, Fedilmid's son!

"Ne'er for Ulster's weal doth aim
Lugaid's son, Casruba's scion
Such is how he acts to men:
Whom he stabs not he incites!

"Ulster's exiles it would grieve
If their beardless boy should fall.
If on you come Ulster's troops
They will make your herds their spoil!

"Strown afar your herds will be
By the rising Ulstermen.
Tales there'll be of mighty deeds
That will tell of far–famed queens!

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"Corpses will be under foot
Food there'll be at ravens rests;
Bucklers lying on the slopes;
Wild and furious deeds increase!

"I behold just now your wives
Raise their heads above the ranks.
I behold your puissant queen
Moves not to engage in war!

"Valour none nor generous deed
Comes from Lugaid's craven son
Nor will kings see lances red,
If this 'Blacktongue' Dubthach be!"

Thus far 'The Scythed Chariot.'

18. The Slaying Of Oengus Son Of Oenlam

Then it was that a very bold young warrior of the Ulstermen came nigh the hosts; his bye–name was Oengus son of Oenlam Gabè ('the One–handed Smith'). And he drove the hosts before him from Moda Loga, which at that time was called Lugmud, to Ath da Fert ('the Ford of the Two Gravemounds') in Sliab Fuait.

What scholars say is: If Oengus son of Oenlam Gabè had fought them in single combat, two–thirds of the host would have fallen before that by him in single battle. Howbeit it was by no means so that they acted, but they attacked him from ambush on every side, till he fell at their hands in unequal fight at Ath da Fert in Sliab Fuait.

18a. The Misthrow At Belach Eoin.

Then came to them Fiacha Fialdana ('the Generous and Intrepid') of the Ulstermen to speak with the son of his mother's sister, namely with Manè Andoè ('the Unslow') of the Connachtmen. And thus he came, and Dubthach Doel ('the Black Tongue') of Ulster with him. It was in this wise that Manè Andoè came, and Dochè son of Maga along with him.

When now Dochè macMagach espied Fiacha Fialdana, he straightway hurled a spear at him, but so that it went through his own friend, through Dubthach Doel of Ulster. Then Fiacha Fialdana hurled a spear at Dochè macMagach, so that it went through his own friend, through Manè Andoè of Connacht. Thereupon said the men of Erin: "A mishap in throwing," they said, "is what hath happened to the men, for each of them to kill his friend and nearest relation."

Hence this is entitled Imroll Belaig Eoin ('the Misthrow at Bird–pass'). And 'the Other Misthrow at Bird–pass' is another name for it.

18b. The Disguising Of Tamon

Then said the men of Erin to Tamon the fool that he should don the garments of Ailill and the king's golden shawl, and go to the ford under their eyes. So he put the garments and golden shawl of Ailill upon him [and he went on to the ford under their eyes.] The men of Erin began to scoff and to shout and jeer at him. "It is a disguising of Tamon ('Stump') for thee, O Tamon the fool" they cried, "with the dress and the golden shawl of Ailill upon thee!"

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When Cuchulain saw him, it seemed to him in his ignorance and lack of knowledge that it was Ailill himself that was there. And he slung a stone from his staff–sling at him so that Tamon the fool was smitten lifeless where he was on the ford. Hence Ath Tamuin ('the Ford of a Stump') is the name of that ford ever since and 'the Disguising of Tamon' is the name of the tale.

19. The Battle Of Fergus And Cuchulain

The hosts of the four grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and entrenched themselves for that night at the pillar–stone in Crich Roiss ('the Borders of Ross'). Then Medb called upon the men of Erin for one of them to contend and do battle with Cuchulain on the morrow. And every one of them spake thus: "It shall not be I! it shall not be I!" cried each from his place. "No victim is owing from my people."

Thereupon Medb summoned Fergus to go forth and contend and fight with Cuchulain, for that the men of Erin had failed. "Ill would it befit me," quoth Fergus, "to fight with a callow young lad without any beard, and mine own disciple." Howbeit Medb murmured sore that Fergus foreswore her combat and battle. They bode the night in that place. Early on the morrow Fergus arose, and he fared forth to the place of combat where Cuchulain was.

Cuchulain saw him coming nigh. "A vain surety is the one wherewith my master Fergus comes to me, for no sword is in the sheath of the great staff he bears." It was true what he said. A year before this tale, Ailill had found Fergus going to a tryst with Medb on the hillside in Cruachan and his sword on a branch near by him. And Ailill had torn the sword from its sheath and put a wooden sword in its stead and vowed he would not restore him the sword till came the day of the great battle.

"It matters not to me, O fosterling," replied Fergus; "for had I a sword in this, it never would cut thee nor be plied on thee. But, by the honour and training I bestowed upon thee and the Ulstermen and Conchobar bestowed, give way before me this day in the presence of the men of Erin!" "Truly I am loath to do that," answered Cuchulain, "to flee before any one man on the Cattle–spoil of Cualnge." "Nay then it is not a thing to be taken amiss by thee," said Fergus; "for I in my turn will retreat before thee when thou wilt be covered with wounds and dripping with gore and pierced with holes in the battle of the Táin. And when I alone shall turn in flight before thee, so will all the men of Erin also flee before thee in like manner."

So zealous was Cuchulain to do whatever made for Ulster's weal that he had his chariot brought to him, and he mounted his chariot and he went in confusion and flight from Fergus in the presence of the men of Erin. The men of Erin saw that. "He is fled from thee! He is fled from thee, O Fergus!" cried all. "Pursue him, pursue him quickly, Fergus," Medb cried, "that he do not escape thee."

"Nay then," said Fergus, "I will pursue him no further. For however little ye may make of the flight I have put him to, none of the men of Erin could have obtained so much as that of him on the Cow–creagh of Cualnge. For this cause, till the men of Erin take turns in single combat, I will not engage again with this same man." Hence here we have the '[White] Battle' of Fergus; [and it is for this cause it is called the 'White Battle,' because no blood on weapons resulted therefrom.]

19a. Here Now Cometh The Head–Place Of Ferchu

Ferchu Longsech (the Exile), although of the Connachtmen, was engaged in battle and plunder with Ailill and Medb. From the day these came to the kingship, there never was a time that he fared to their camp or took part in their expeditions or shared in their straits or their needs or their hardships, but he was ever at their heels, pillaging and plundering their borders and land.

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At that time he sojourned in the eastern part of Mag Ai. Twelve men was his muster. He learned that a single man checked and stopped four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring, slaying a man on the ford every one of those days and a hundred warriors every night. He weighed his plan privily with his people. "What better plan could we devise?" quoth he, "than to go and attack yonder man that checketh and stoppeth four of the five grand provinces of Erin, and bring his head and his weapons with us to Ailill and Medb? However great the injuries and wrongs we have done to Ailill and Medb, we shall obtain our peace therefor, if only that man fall by our hand."

Now this was the resolve they took, and they proceeded to where Cuchulain was. And when they came, it was not fair fight nor combat with one they vouchsafed him, but at one and the same time the twelve men fell upon him. Cuchulain turned on them, and straightway he smote off their twelve heads. And he set up twelve stones in the earth for them, and he put the head of each one of them on its stone and he likewise put Ferchu Longsech's head on its stone. Hence Cinnit Ferchon Longsig is henceforth the name of the place where Ferchu Longsech left his head, to wit, Cenn–aitt Ferchon ('the Head–place of Ferchu').

19b. Mann's Fight

Medb despatched Mann son of Muresc son of Darè, of the Dommandach, to fight with Cuchulain. Own brothers were he and Daman, Ferdiad's father. A man, rough, inordinate in eating and sleeping was this Mann. An ill–tongued foul–mouthed man like Dubthach Doel ('Black–tongue') of Ulster. A man, stout, mighty, with strength of limb like Munremur ('Thick–neck') son of Gercend ('Short–head'). A fiery champion like Triscoth, the strong man of Conchobar's household. "I will go," said he "and unarmed, and I will grind him between my hands, for I consider it no honour nor credit to use arms against a beardless madcap such as he."

Therewith he went to attack Cuchulain. There he was, himself and his charioteer on the ford watching the host. "A lone warrior approacheth us here," cried Laeg to Cuchulain. "What manner of man?" asked Cuchulain. "A dark, black man, strong, bull–like, and he unarmed." "Let him go by thee," said Cuchulain. At that he comes nigh them. "To fight with thee am I come," Mann announced. Therewith they fell to wrestling for a long time, and thrice Mann threw Cuchulain, till the charioteer incited Cuchulain. "Were it the champion's portion thou wast contending for in Emain," spake Laeg, "thou wouldst be all powerful over the young bloods in Emain!" At these words the hero's wrath and warrior's rage returned to Cuchulain, so that he overcame Mann at the pillar–stone and he fell to pieces in morsels. Hence cometh Mandachta ('the Plain of Mann's death').

19c. The Combat of Calatin's Children

Then was it debated by the men of Erin who would be fit to contend and cope with Cuchulain at the morning hour early on the next day. What they all said was, that Calatin Dana ('the Bold') would be the one, with his seven and twenty sons and his grandsons Glass macDelga. Thus were they: Poison was on every man of them and poison on every weapon of their arms; and not one of them missed his throw, and there was no one on whom one of them drew blood that, if he succumbed not on the spot, would not be dead before the end of the ninth day.

Great gifts were promised to them for engaging to do battle and to contend with Cuchulain. And they took the matter in hand, and it should be in the presence of Fergus that the covenant would be made. But Fergus refused to have part therein, for what they all contended was that they would hold it as a single combat, a combat, to wit, of Calatin Dana and his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga; for their contention was that his son was a limb of his limbs and a part of his parts, and that to Calatin Dana belonged all that proceeded from his body.

Fergus betook himself to his tent and to his people and he breathed his sigh of weariness aloud. "Grievous it seems to us, the deed to be done here on the morrow," quoth Fergus. "What deed may that be?" asked his people.

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"The slaying of Cuchulain," answered Fergus. "Alas," said they, "who should kill him?"

"Calatin Dana," he replied, "with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga. For this is their nature: Poison is on every man of them and poison on every weapon of their arms; and there is no one on whom one of them draws blood, that, if he succumb not on the spot, will not be dead before the end of the ninth day. And there is no one of you that would go and learn for me and be witness of the battle and fight and bring me news how Cuchulain died on whom I would not bestow my blessing and armour." "I will go thither," spake Fiachu son of Ferfebè.

They abode so that night. Early on the morrow Calatin Dana arose with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga, and they went forward to where Cuchulain was. And there went also Fiachu son of Ferfebè. And when Calatin arrived at the place where Cuchulain was, they forthwith hurled their nine and twenty spears, and not one of them went past him by a misthrow. Cuchulain played the edge–feat with his shield, so that all the spears sank up to their middles into the shield. But for all that, theirs was no erring cast, not one of the spears was blooded or reddened upon him.

Thereupon Cuchulain drew his sword from the sheath of the Badb, to cut away the weapons and lighten the shield that was on him. While thus engaged, they rushed in upon him and delivered their nine and twenty right fists at the same time on his head. They smote him and curbed him withal, till his face and his countenance and visage met the sand and gravel of the ford. Cuchulain raised his warrior's shout aloud and his cry of unequal combat, so that there was not an Ulsterman alive in the camp of those that were not asleep but heard it.

Then came Fiachu son of Ferfebè after them and he saw what they did and a qualm of love came over him, and he drew his sword from the sheath of the Badb and dealt them a blow, so that he cut off their nine and twenty right fists from them at one stroke, and they all fell backwards from the intensity of the exertion and hold which they had.

Cuchulain raised his head and drew breath and gave a sigh of weariness and perceived who it was that had come to his aid. "A ready relief, O foster–brother, what thou hast done," said Cuchulain. "Although for thee a ready relief," said Fiachu, "yet is it not so for us. Even though we are the best division of three thousand of the Clann Rudraige in the camp and station of the men of Erin, we shall all be brought under the mouth of spear and of sword, however feeble thou mayst deem the blow I struck, if this treason be found in us."

"I give my word," quoth Cuchulain; "so soon as I raise my head and draw breath, and unless thou thyself tellest the tale, not one of these ever will tell it, not a man of them shall reach the camp alive!" With that, Cuchulain turned on them, and he fell to smiting and hewing them, so that he sent them from him in small disjointed pieces and divided quarters eastwards and westwards along the ford. A single man got away from him, trusting to his speed while Cuchulain was busied beheading the rest; it was Glass macDelga. And Cuchulain raced after him like a blast of wind, and Glass ran on round the tent of Ailil and Medb, and all he could pant out was, "Fiach! Fiach!" when Cuchulain fetched him a stroke that cut off his head.

"'Tis quick work was made of that man," quoth Medb. "What debt (fiach) was that he spoke of, O Fergus?" "I know not," Fergus answered, "unless it be some one in the camp and quarters that owed him a debt. It is that which troubled his mind. But be that as it may," continued Fergus, "it is a debt of blood and flesh for him. And upon my word," Fergus added, "now are his debts paid to him for good and all!"

In this wise fell Calatin Dana ('the Bold') at the hands of Cuchulain, together with his seven and twenty sons and his grandson Glass macDelga. So that for evermore in the bed of the ford is still the rock whereabout they had their strife and struggle; and the mark of their sword–hilts is in it and of their knees and their elbows and of their spears. Hence Fuil Iairn ('Blood of Iron') to the west of Ath Firdead ('Ferdiaid's Ford') is the name of the ford. It is for this it is called Fuil Iairn, because of the 'blood over weapons' that was there.

Thus then the Combat of the Clann Calatin.

20. The Combat of Ferdiad and Cuchulain

Then the men of Erin took counsel who would be fit to send to the ford to fight and do battle with Cuchulain, to drive him off from them at the morning hour early on the morrow. With one accord they declared that it should be Ferdiad son of Daman son of Darè, the great and valiant warrior of the men of Dornnann. And fitting it was for him to go thither, for well–matched and alike was their manner of fight and of combat. Under the same instructresses had they done skillful deeds of valour and arms, when learning the art with Scathach ('the Modest') and with Uathach ('the Dreadful') and with Aifè ('the Handsome'). And neither of them overmatched the other, save in the feat of the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear') which Cuchulain possessed. Howbeit, against this, Ferdiad was horn–skinned when fighting and in combat with a warrior on the ford.

Then were messengers and envoys sent to Ferdiad. Ferdiad denied them their will, and sent back the messengers, and he went not with them, for he knew wherefore they would have him, to fight and combat with his friend, with his comrade and foster–brother, Cuchulain. Then did Medb despatch the druids and the poets of the camp, the lampoonists and hard–attackers, for Ferdiad, to the end that they might make three satires to stay him and three scoffing speeches against him, that they might raise three blisters on his face, Blame, Blemish and Disgrace, if he came not with them.

Ferdiad came with them for the sake of his own honour, forasmuch as he deemed it better to fall by the shafts of valour and bravery and skill, than to fall by the shafts of satire, abuse and reproach. And when Ferdiad was come into the camp, he was honoured and waited on, and choice, well–flavoured strong liquor was poured out for him till he became drunken and merry. Great rewards were promised him if he would make the fight and combat, namely a chariot worth four times seven bondmaids, and the apparel of two men and ten men, of cloth of every colour, and the equivalent of the Plain of Murthemne of the rich Plain of Ai, free of tribute, without duress for his son, or for his grandson, or for his great–grandson, till the end of time and existence.

Such were the words of Medb, and she spake them here and Ferdiad responded:

Medb: "Great rewards in arm–rings,
Share of plain and forest
Freedom of thy children
From this day till doom!
Ferdiad son of Daman,
More than thou couldst hope for,
Why shouldst thou refuse it,
That which all would take?"

Ferdiad: "Naught I'll take without bond—
No ill spearman am I—
Hard on me to–morrow:
Great will be the strife!
Hound that's hight of Culann,
How his thrust is grievous!
No soft thing to stand him;
Rude will be the wound!"

Medb: "Champions will be surety,
Thou needst not keep hostings.

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Reins and splendid horses
Shall be given as pledge!
Ferdiad, good, of battle,
For that thou art dauntless,
Thou shalt be my lover,
Past all, free of cain !"

Ferdiad: "Without bond I'll go not
To engage in ford–feats;
It will live till doomsday
In full strength and force.
Ne'er I'll yield— who hears me,
Whoe'er counts upon me—
Without sun– and moon–oath,
Without sea and land!"

Medb: "Why then dost delay it?
Bind it as it please thee,
By kings' hands and princes',
Who will stand for thee!
Lo, I will repay thee,
Thou shalt have thine asking,
For I know thou'lt slaughter
Man that meeteth thee!"

Ferdiad: "Nay, without six sureties—
It shall not be fewer—
Ere I do my exploits
There where hosts will be!
Should my will be granted,
I swear, though unequal,
That I'll meet in combat
Cuchulain the brave!"

Medb: "Domnall, then, or Carbrè,
Niaman famed for slaughter,
Or e'en folk of barddom,
Natheless, thou shalt have.
Bind thyself on Morann,
Wouldst thou its fulfilment
Bind on smooth Man's Carbrè,
And our two sons, bind!"

Ferdiad: "Medb, with wealth of cunning,
Whom no spouse can bridle,
Thou it is that herdest
Cruachan of the mounds!
High thy fame and wild power!
Mine the fine pied satin;
Give thy gold and silver,
Which were proffered me!"

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Medb: "To thee, foremost champion,
I will give my ringed brooch.
From this day till Sunday,
Shall thy respite be!
Warrior, mighty, famous,
All the earth's fair treasures
Shall to thee be given;
Everything be thine!

"Finnabair of the champions (?),
Queen of western Erin,
When thou'st slain the Smith's Hound,
Ferdiad, she's thine!"

Then said they, one and all, those gifts were great. "'Tis true, they are great. But though they are," said Ferdiad, "with Medb herself I will leave them, and I will not accept them if it be to do battle or combat with my foster–brother, the man of my alliance and affection, and my equal in skill of arms, namely, with Cuchulain." And he said:

"Greatest toil, this, greatest toil,
Battle with the Hound of gore!
Liefer would I battle twice
With two hundred men of Fal!

"Sad the fight, and sad the fight,
I and Hound of feats shall wage!
We shall hack both flesh and blood;
Skin and body we shall hew!

"Sad, O god, yea, sad, O god,
That a woman should us part!
My heart's half, the blameless Hound;
Half the brave Hound's heart am I!

"By my shield, O by my shield,
If Ath Cliath's brave Hound should fall,
I will drive my slender glaive
Through my heart, my side, my breast!

"By my sword, O by my sword,
If the Hound of Glen Bolg fall!
No man after him I'll slay,
Till I o'er the world's brink spring!

"By my hand, O, by my hand!
Falls the Hound of Glen in Sgail,
Medb with all her host I'll kill
And then no more men of Fal!

"By my spear, O, by my spear!
Should Ath Cro's brave Hound be slain,

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I'll be buried in his grave;
May one grave hide me and him!

"Tell him this, O tell him this,
To the Hound of beauteous hue
Fearless Scathach hath foretold
My fall on a ford through him!

"Woe to Medb, yea, woe to Medb,
Who hath used her guile on us;
She hath set me face to face
'Gainst Cuchulain— hard the toil!"

"Ye men," spake Medb, in the wonted fashion of stirring up disunion and dissension, "true is the word Cuchulain speaks." "What word is that?" asked Ferdiad. "He said, then," replied Medb, "he would not think it too much if thou shouldst fall by his hands in the choicest feat of his skill in arms, in the land whereto he should come." "It was not just for him to speak so," quoth Ferdiad; "for it is not cowardice or lack of boldness that he hath ever seen in me. And I swear by my arms of valour, if it be true that he spoke so, I will be the first man of the men of Erin to contend with him on the morrow!" "A blessing and victory upon thee for that!" said Medb; "it pleaseth me more than for thee to show fear and lack of boldness. For every man loves his own land, and how is it better for him to seek the welfare of Ulster, than for thee to seek the welfare of Connacht?"

Then it was that Medb obtained from Ferdiad the easy surety of a covenant to fight and contend on the morrow with six warriors of the champions of Erin, or to fight and contend with Cuchulain alone, if to him this last seemed lighter. Ferdiad obtained of Medb the easy surety, as he thought, to send the aforesaid six men for the fulfilment of the terms which had been promised him, should Cuchulain fall at his hands.

Then were Fergus' horses fetched for him and his chariot was yoked, and he came forward to the place of combat where Cuchulain was, to inform him of the challenge. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "Welcome is thy coming, O my master Fergus!" cried Cuchulain. "Truly intended, methinks, the welcome, O fosterling," said Fergus. "But, it is for this I am here, to inform thee who comes to fight and contend with thee at the morning hour early on the morrow." "E'en so will we hear it from thee," said Cuchulain. "Thine own friend and comrade and foster–brother, the man thine equal in feats and in skill of arms and in deeds, Ferdiad son of Daman son of Darè, the great and mighty warrior of the men of Domnann."

"As my soul liveth," replied Cuchulain, "it is not to an encounter we wish our friend to come." "It is even for that," answered Fergus, "thou shouldst be on thy guard and prepared. For unlike all to whom it fell to fight and contend with thee on the Cualnge Cattle–raid on this occasion is Ferdiad son of Daman son of Darè." "Truly am I here," said Cuchulain, "checking and staying four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of spring. And in all this time, I have not put foot in retreat before any one man nor before a multitude, and methinks just as little will I turn foot in flight before him."

So spake Fergus, putting him on his guard, and he said these words and Cuchulain responded:

Fergus: "O Cuchulain— splendid deed—
Lo, 'tis time for thee to rise.
Here in rage against thee comes
Ferdiad, red–faced Daman's son!"

Cuchulain: "Here am I— no easy task—
Holding Erin's men at bay;

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Foot I've never turned in flight
In my fight with single foe!"

Fergus: "Dour the man when anger moves,
Owing to his gore–red glaive;
Ferdiad wears a skin of horn,
'Gainst which fight nor might prevails!"

Cuchulain: "Be thou still urge not thy tale,
Fergus of the mighty arms.
On no land and on no ground,
For me is there aught defeat!"

Fergus: "Fierce the man with scores of deeds;
No light thing, him to subdue.
Strong as hundreds— brave his mien—
Point pricks not, edge cuts him not!"

Cuchulain: "If we clash upon the ford,
I and Ferdiad of known skill,
We'll not part without we know:
Fierce will be our weapon fight!"

Fergus: "More I'd wish it than reward,
O Cuchulain of red sword,
Thou shouldst be the one to bring
Eastward haughty Ferdiad's spoils!"

Cuchulain: "Now I give my word and vow,
Though unskilled in strife of words,
It is I will conquer this
Son of Daman macDarè!"

Fergus: It is I brought east the host,
Thus requiting Ulster's wrong.
With me came they from their lands,
With their heroes and their chiefs!"

Cuchulain: "Were not Conchobar in the 'Pains,'
Hard 'twould be to come near us.
Never Medb of Mag in Scail
On more tearful march had come!"

Fergus: "Greatest deed awaits thy hand:
Fight with Ferdiad, Daman's son.
Hard stern arms with stubborn edge,
Shalt thou have, thou Culann's Hound!"

After that, Fergus returned to the camp and halting–place. As for Ferdiad, he betook himself to his tent and to his people, and imparted to them the easy surety which Medb had obtained from him to do combat and battle with six warriors on the morrow, or to do combat and battle with Cuchulain alone, if he thought it a lighter task. He made

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known to them also the fair terms he had obtained from Medb of sending the same six warriors for the fulfilment of the covenant she had made with him, should Cuchulain fall by his hands. The folk of Ferdiad were not joyful, blithe, cheerful or merry that night, but they were sad, sorrowful and downcast, for they knew that where the two champions and the two bulwarks in a gap for a hundred met in combat, one or other of them would fall there or both would fall, and if it should be one of them, they believed it would be their king and their own lord that would fall there, for it was not easy to contend and do battle with Cuchulain on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge.

Ferdiad slept right heavily the first part of the night, but when the end of the night was come, his sleep and his heaviness left him. And the anxiousness of the combat and the battle came upon him. And he charged his charioteer to take his horses and to yoke his chariot. The charioteer sought to dissuade him from that journey. "By our word," said the gilla, "'twould be better for thee to remain than to go thither," said he. And in this manner he spake, and he uttered these words, and the henchman responded:

Ferdiad: "Let's haste to th' encounter,
To battle with this man;
The ford we will come to,
O'er which Badb will shriek!
To meet with Cuchulain,
To wound his slight body,
To thrust the spear through him
So that he may die!"

The Henchman: "To stay it were better;
Your threats are not gentle
Death's sickness will one have,
And sad will ye part!
To meet Ulster's noblest
To meet whence ill cometh;
Long will men speak of it.
Alas, for your course!"

Ferdiad: "Not fair what thou speakest;
No fear hath the warrior;
We owe no one meekness;
We stay not for thee!
Hush, gilla, about us!
The time will bring strong hearts;
More meet strength than weakness;
Let's on to the tryst!"

Ferdiad's horses were now brought forth and his chariot was hitched, and he set out from the camp for the ford of battle when yet day with its full light had not come there for him. "Come, gilla," said Ferdiad, "spread for me the cushions and skins of my chariot under me here, so that I sleep off my heavy fit of sleep and slumber here, for I slept not the last part of the night with the anxiousness of the battle and combat." The gilla unharnessed the horses; he unfastened the chariot under him. He slept off the heavy fit of sleep that was on him.

Now how Cuchulain fared is related here: He arose not till the day with its bright light had come to him, lest the men of Erin might say it was fear or fright of the champion he had, if he should arise early. And when day with its full light had come, he passed his hand over his face and bade his charioteer take his horses and yoke them to his chariot. "Come, gilla," said Cuchulain, "take out our horses for us and harness our chariot, for an early riser is the warrior appointed to meet us, Ferdiad son of Daman son of Darè." "The horses are taken out," said the gilla; "the

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chariot is harnessed. Mount, and be it no shame to thy valour to go thither!"

Then it was that the cutting, feat–performing, battle–winning, red–sworded hero, Cuchulain son of Sualtaim, mounted his chariot, so that there shrieked around him the goblins and fiends and the sprites of the glens and the demons of the air; for the Tuatha De Danann ('the Folk of the Goddess Danu') were wont to set up their cries around him, to the end that the dread and the fear and the fright and the terror of him might be so much the greater in every battle and on every field, in every fight and in every combat wherein he went.

Not long had Ferdiad's charioteer waited when he heard something: A rush and a crash and a hurtling sound, and a din and a thunder, and a clatter and a clash, namely, the shield–cry of feat–shields, and the jangle of javelins, and the deed–striking of swords, and the thud of the helmet, and the ring of spears, and the striking of arms, the fury of feats, the straining of ropes, and the whirr of wheels, and the creaking of the chariot, and the trampling of horses' hoofs, and the deep voice of the hero and battle–warrior on his way to the ford to attack his opponent. The servant came and touched his master with his hand. "Ferdiad, master," said the youth, "rise up! They are here to meet thee at the ford." And the gilla spake these words:

"The roll of a chariot,
Its fair yoke of silver;
A man great and stalwart
O'ertops the strong car!
O'er Bri Ross, o'er Branè
Their swift path they hasten;
Past Old–tree Town's tree–stump,
Victorious they speed!

"A sly Hound that driveth,
A fair chief that urgeth,
A free hawk that speedeth
His steeds towards the south!
Gore–coloured, the Cua,
'Tis sure he will take us
We know— vain to hide it—
He brings us defeat!

Woe him on the hillock,
The brave Hound before him;
Last year I foretold it,
That some time he'd come!
Hound from Emain Macha,
Hound formed of all colours,
The Border–hound War–hound,
I hear what I've heard!"

"Come, gilla," said Ferdiad; "for what reason laudest thou this man ever since I am come from my house? And it is almost a cause for strife with thee that thou hast praised him thus highly. But, Ailill and Medb have prophesied to me that this man will fall by my hand. And since it is for a reward, he shall quickly be torn asunder by me, but it is time to fetch help." And he spake these words, and the henchman responded:

Ferdiad: "'Tis time now to help me;
Be silent! cease praising!
'Twas no deed of friendship,

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No doom o'er the brink(?)
The Champion of Cualnge,
Thou seest 'midst proud feats,
For that it's for guerdon,
Shall quickly be slain!"

The Henchman: "I see Cualnge's hero,
With feats overweening,
Not fleeing he flees us,
But towards us he comes.
He runneth— not slowly—
Though cunning— not sparing—
Like water down high cliff
Or thunderbolt quick!"

Ferdiad: "'Tis cause of a quarrel,
So much thou hast praised him;
And why hast thou chose him,
Since I am from home?
And now they extol him,
They fall to proclaim him;
None come to attack him,
But soft simple men(?)."

Here followeth the Description of Cuchulain's chariot, one of the three chief Chariots of the Tale of the Foray of Cualnge.

It was not long that Ferdiad's charioteer remained there when he saw something: a beautiful, five–pointed chariot, approaching with swiftness, with speed, with perfect skill; with a green shade, with a thin–framed, dry–bodied (?) box surmounted with feats of cunning, straight–poled, as long as a warrior's sword. On this was room for a hero's seven arms, the fair seat for its lord; behind two fleet steeds, large–eared, gaily prancing, with inflated nostrils, broad–chested, quick–hearted, high–flanked, broad–hoofed, slender–limbed, overpowering and resolute. A grey, broad–hipped, small–stepping, long–maned horse was under one of the yokes of the chariot; a black, crisped–maned, swift–moving, broad–backed horse under the other. Like unto a hawk after its prey on a sharp tempestuous day, or to a tearing blast of wind of Spring on a March day over the back of a plain, or unto a startled stag when first roused by the hounds in the first of the chase, were Cuchulain's two horses before the chariot, as if they were on glowing, fiery flags, so that they shook the earth and made it tremble with the fleetness of their course.

And Cuchulain reached the ford. Ferdiad waited on the south side of the ford; Cuchulain stood on the north side. Ferdiad bade welcome to Cuchulain. "Welcome is thy coming, O Cuchulain!" said Ferdiad. "Truly spoken meseemed thy welcome till now," answered Cuchulain; "but to–day I put no more trust in it. And, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain, "it were fitter for me to bid thee welcome than that thou should'st welcome me; for it is thou that art come to the land and province wherein I dwell, and it is not fitting for thee to come to contend and do battle with me but it were fitter for me to go to contend and do battle with thee. For before thee in flight are my women and my boys and my youths, my steeds and my troops of horses, my droves, my flocks and my herds of cattle."

"Good, O Cuchulain," spake Ferdiad; "what has ever brought thee out to contend and do battle with me? For when we were together with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aifè, thou wast my serving–man, even for arming my spear and dressing my bed." "That was indeed true," answered Cuchulain; "because of my youth and my littleness did I so much for thee, but this is by no means my mood this day. For there is not a warrior in the world I would

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not drive off this day."

And then it was that each of them cast sharp–cutting reproaches at the other, renouncing his friendship. And Ferdiad spake these words there, and Cuchulain responded:

Ferdiad: "What led thee, O Cua,
To fight a strong champion?
Thy flesh will be gore–red
O'er smoke of thy steeds!
Alas for thy journey,
A kindling of firebrands;
In sore need of healing,
If home thou shouldst reach!"

Cuchulain: "I'm come before warriors
Around the herd's wild Boar,
Before troops and hundreds,
To drown thee in deep
In anger, to prove thee
In hundred–fold battle,
Till on thee come havoc,
Defending thy head!"

Ferdiad: "Here stands one to crush thee,
'Tis I will destroy thee,
.....
From me there shall come
The flight of their warriors
In presence of Ulster,
That long they'll remember
The loss that was theirs!"

Cuchulain: "How then shall we combat?
For wrongs shall we heave sighs?
Despite all, we'll go there,
To fight on the ford!
Or is it with hard swords,
Or e'en with red spear–points,
Before hosts to slay thee,
If thy hour hath come?"

Ferdiad: "'Fore sunset, 'fore nightfall—
If need be, then guard thee—
I'll fight thee at Bairchè,
Not bloodlessly fight!
The Ulstermen call thee,
'He has him!' Oh, hearken!
The sight will distress them
That through them will pass!"

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Cuchulain: "In danger's gap fallen,
At hand is thy life's term;
On thee plied be weapons,
Not gentle the skill!
One champion will slay thee;
We both will encounter;
No more shalt lead forays,
From this day till Doom!"

Ferdiad: "Avaunt with thy warnings,
Thou world's greatest braggart;
Nor guerdon nor pardon,
Low warrior for thee!
'Tis I that well know thee,
Thou heart of a cageling—
This lad merely tickles—
Without skill or force!"

Cuchulain: "When we were with Scathach,
For wanted arms' training,
Together we'd fare forth,
To seek every fight.
Thou wast my heart's comrade,
My clan and my kinsman;
Ne'er found I one dearer;
Thy loss would be sad!"

Ferdiad: "Thou wager'st thine honour
Unless we do battle;
Before the cock croweth,
Thy head on a spit!
Cuchulain of Cualnge,
Mad frenzy hath seized thee
All ill we'll wreak on thee,
For thine is the sin!"

"Come now, O Ferdiad," cried Cuchulain, "not meet was it for thee to come to contend and do battle with me, because of the instigation and intermeddling of Ailill and Medb. And all that came because of those promises of deceit, neither profit nor success did it bring them, and they have fallen by me. And none the more, Ferdiad, shall it win victory or increase of fame for thee; and, shalt thou too fall by my hand!" Thus he spake, and he further uttered these words and Ferdiad hearkened to him:—

"Come not nigh me, noble chief,
Ferdiad, comrade, Daman's son.
Worse for thee than 'tis for me;
Thou'lt bring sorrow to a host!

"Come not nigh me 'gainst all right;
Thy last bed is made by me.
Why shouldst thou alone escape
From the prowess of my arms?"

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"Shall not great feats thee undo,
Though thou'rt purple, horny–skinned?
And the maid thou boastest of,
Shall not, Daman's son, be thine!

"Finnabair, Medb's daughter fair,
Great her charms though they may be,
Fair as is the damsel's form,
She's for thee not to enjoy!

"Finnabair, the king's own child,
Is the lure, if truth be told;
Many they whom she's deceived
And undone as she has thee!

"Break not, weetless, oath with me;
Break not friendship, break not bond;
Break not promise, break not word;
Come not nigh me, noble chief!

"Fifty chiefs obtained in plight
This same maid, a proffer vain.
Through me went they to their graves;
Spear–right all they had from me!

"Though for brave was held Ferbaeth,
With whom was a warriors' train,
In short space I quelled his rage;
Him I slew with one sole blow!

"Srubdarè— sore sank his might—
Darling of the noblest dames,
Time there was when great his fame—
Gold nor raiment saved him not!

"Were she mine affianced wife,
Smiled on me this fair land's head,
I would not thy body hurt,
Right nor left, in front, behind!"

"Good, O Ferdiad!" cried Cuchulain. "It is not right for thee to come to fight and combat with me; for when we were with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aifè, and it was together we were used to seek out every battle and every battle–field, every combat and every contest, every wood and every desert, every covert and every recess." And thus he spake and he uttered these words:

Cuchulain: "We were heart–companions once;
We were comrades in the woods;
We were men that shared a bed,
When we slept the heavy sleep,
After hard and weary fights.
Into many lands, so strange,

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Side by side we sallied forth,
And we ranged the woodlands through,
When with Scathach we learned arms!"

Ferdiad: "O Cuchulain, rich in feats,
Hard the trade we both have learned;
Treason hath o'ercome our love;
Thy first wounding hath been bought;
Think not of our friendship more,
Cua, it avails thee not!"

"Too long are we now in this way," quoth Ferdiad; "and what arms shall we resort to to–day, O Cuchulain?"
"With thee is thy choice of weapons this day," answered Cuchulain, "for thou art he that first didst reach the ford."
"Rememberest thou at all," asked Ferdiad "the choice deeds of arms we were wont to practise with Scathach and with Uathach and with Aifè?" "Indeed, and I do remember," answered Cuchulain. "If thou rememberest, let us begin with them."

They betook them to their choicest deeds of arms. They took upon them two equally–matched shields for feats, and their eight–edged targes for feats, and their eight small darts, and their eight straightswords with ornaments of walrus–tooth and their eight lesser, ivoried spears which flew from them and to them like bees on a day of fine weather. They cast no weapon that struck not. Each of them was busy casting at the other with those missiles from morning's early twilight till noon at mid–day, the while they overcame their various feats with the bosses and hollows of their feat–shields. However great the excellence of the throwing on either side, equally great was the excellence of the defence, so that during all that time neither of them bled or reddened the other. "Let us cease now from this bout of arms, O Cuchulain," said Ferdiad; "for it is not by such our decision will come." "Yea, surely, let us cease, if the time hath come," answered Cuchulain. Then they ceased. They threw their feat–tackle from them into the hands of their charioteers.

"To what weapons shall we resort next, O Cuchulain?" asked Ferdiad. "Thine is the choice of weapons till nightfall," replied Cuchulain; "for thou art he that didst first reach the ford." "Let us begin, then," said Ferdiad, "with our straight–cut, smooth–hardened throwing–spears, with cords of full–hard flax on them." "Aye, let us begin then," assented Cuchulain. Then they took on them two hard shields, equally strong. They fell to their straight–cut, smooth–hardened spears with cords of full–hard flax on them. Each of them was engaged in casting at the other with the spears from the middle of noon till the hour of evening's sundown. However great the excellence of the defence, equally great was the excellence of the throwing on either side, so that each of them bled and reddened and wounded the other during that time. "Let us leave off from this now, O Cuchulain," said Ferdiad. "Aye, let us leave off, if the time hath come," answered Cuchulain. So they ceased. They threw their arms from them into the hands of their charioteers.

Thereupon each of them went toward the other in the middle of the ford, and each of them put his hand on the other's neck and gave him three kisses. Their horses were in one and the same paddock that night, and their charioteers at one and the same fire; and their charioteers made ready a litter–bed of fresh rushes for them with pillows for wounded men on them. Then came healing and curing folk to heal and to cure them, and they laid healing herbs and grasses and a curing charm on their cuts and stabs, their gashes and many wounds. Of every healing herb and grass and curing charm that was brought and was applied to the cuts and stabs, to the gashes and many wounds of Cuchulain, a like portion thereof he sent across the ford westward to Ferdiad, so that the men of Erin should not have it to say, should Ferdiad fall at his hands, it was more than his share of care had been given to him.

Of every food and of every savoury, soothing and strong drink that was brought by the men of Erin to Ferdiad, a like portion thereof he sent over the ford northwards to Cuchulain; for the purveyors of Ferdiad were more

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numerous than the purveyors of Cuchulain. All the men of Erin were purveyors to Ferdiad, to the end that he might keep Cuchulain off from them. But only the inhabitants of Mag Breg ('the Plain of Breg') were purveyors to Cuchulain. They were wont to come daily, that is, every night, to converse with him.

They bided there that night. Early on the morrow they arose and went their ways to the ford of combat. "To what weapons shall we resort on this day, O Ferdiad?" asked Cuchulain. "Thine is the choosing of weapons," Ferdiad made answer, "because it was I had my choice of weapons on the day aforegone." "Let us take, then," said Cuchulain, "to our great, well–tempered lances to–day, for we think that the thrusting will bring nearer the decisive battle to–day than did the casting of yesterday. Let our horses be brought to us and our chariots yoked, to the end that we engage in combat over our horses and chariots on this day." "Aye, let us go so," Ferdiad assented.

Thereupon they girded two full–firm broadshields on them for that day. They took to their great, well–tempered lances on that day. Either of them began to pierce and to drive, to throw and to press down the other, from early morning's twilight till the hour of evening's close. If it were the wont for birds in flight to fly through the bodies of men, they could have passed through their bodies on that day and carried away pieces of blood and flesh through their wounds and their sores into the clouds and the air all around. And when the hour of evening's close was come, their horses were spent and their drivers were wearied, and they themselves, the heroes and warriors of valour, were exhausted. "Let us give over now, O Ferdiad," said Cuchulain, "for our horses are spent and our drivers tired, and when they are exhausted, why should we too not be exhausted?" And in this wise he spake, and he uttered these words at that place:

"We need not our chariots break—
This, a struggle fit for giants.
Place the hobbles on the steeds,
Now that din of arms is o'er!"

"Yea, we will cease, if the time hath come," replied Ferdiad. They ceased then. They threw their arms away from them into the hands of their charioteers. Each of them came towards his fellow. Each laid his hand on the other's neck and gave him three kisses. Their horses were in the one pen that night, and their charioteers at the one fire. Their charioteers prepared two litter–beds of fresh rushes for them with pillows for wounded men on them. The curing and healing men came to attend and watch and mark them that night; for naught else could they do, because of the direfulness of their cuts and their stabs, their gashes and their numerous wounds, but apply to them philtres and spells and charms, to staunch their blood and their bleeding and their deadly pains. Of every magic potion and every spell and every charm that was applied to the cuts and stabs of Cuchulain, their like share he sent over the ford westwards to Ferdiad. Of every food and every savoury, soothing and strong drink that was brought by the men of Erin to Ferdiad, an equal portion he sent over the ford northwards to Cuchulain, for the victuallers of Ferdiad were more numerous than the victuallers of Cuchulain. For all the men of Erin were Ferdiad's nourishers, to the end that he might ward off Cuchulain from them. But the indwellers of the Plain of Breg alone were Cuchulain's nourishers. They were wont to come daily, that is, every night, to converse with him.

They abode there that night. Early on the morrow they arose and repaired to the ford of combat. Cuchulain marked an evil mien and a dark mood that day on Ferdiad. "It is evil thou appearest to–day, O Ferdiad," spake Cuchulain; "thy hair has become dark to–day, and thine eye has grown drowsy, and thine upright form and thy features and thy gait have gone from thee!" "Truly not for fear nor for dread of thee is that happened to me to–day," answered Ferdiad; "for there is not in Erin this day a warrior I could not repel!" And Cuchulain lamented and moaned, and he spake these words and Ferdiad responded:

Cuchulain: "Ferdiad, ah, if it be thou,
Well I know thou'rt doomed to die!
To have gone at woman's hest,
Forced to fight thy comrade sworn!"

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Ferdiad: "O Cuchulain— wise decree—
Loyal champion, hero true,
Each man is constrained to go
'Neath the sod that hides his grave!"

Cuchulain: "Finnabair, Medb's daughter fair,
Stately maiden though she be,
Not for love they'll give to thee,
But to prove thy kingly might!"

Ferdiad: "Provèd was my might long since,
Cu of gentle spirit thou.
Of one braver I've not heard;
Till to–day I have not found!"

Cuchulain: "Thou art he provoked this fight,
Son of Daman, Darè's son,
To have gone at woman's word,
Swords to cross with thine old friend!"

Ferdiad: "Should we then unfought depart,
Brothers though we are, bold Hound,
Ill would be my word and fame
With Ailill and Cruachan's Medb!"

Cuchulain: "Food has not yet passed his lips,
Nay nor has he yet been born,
Son of king or blameless queen,
For whom I would work thee harm!"

Ferdiad: "Culann's Hound, with floods of deeds,
Medb, not thou, hath us betrayed;
Fame and victory thou shalt have;
Not on thee we lay our fault!"

Cuchulain: "Clotted gore is my brave heart,
Near I'm parted from my soul;
Wrongful 'tis— with hosts of deeds—
Ferdiad, dear, to fight with thee!"

"How much soever thou findest fault with me to–day," said Ferdiad, "it will be as an offset to my prowess." And he said, "To what weapons shall we resort to–day?" "With thyself is the choice of weapons to–day," replied Cuchulain, "for it is I that chose on the day gone by." "Let us resort, then," said Ferdiad, "to our heavy, hard–smiting swords this day, for we trow that the smiting each other will bring us nearer to the decision of battle to–day than was our piercing each other on yesterday." "Let us go then, by all means," responded Cuchulain.

Then they took two full–great long–shields upon them for that day. They turned to their heavy, hard–smiting swords. Each of them fell to strike and to hew, to lay low and cut down, to slay and undo his fellow, till as large as the head of a month–old child was each lump and each cut, that each of them took from the shoulders and thighs and shoulder–blades of the other.

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Each of them was engaged in smiting the other in this way from the twilight of early morning till the hour of evening's close. "Let us leave off from this now, O Cuchulain!" cried Ferdiad. "Aye, let us leave off, if the hour has come," said Cuchulain. They parted then, and threw their arms away from them into the hands of their charioteers. Though it had been the meeting of two happy, blithe, cheerful, joyful men, their parting that night was of two that were sad, sorrowful and full of suffering. Their horses were not in the same paddock that night. Their charioteers were not at the same fire.

They passed there that night. It was then that Ferdiad arose early on the morrow and went alone to the ford of combat. For he knew that that would be the decisive day of the battle and combat; and he knew that one or other of them would fall there that day, or that they both would fall. It was then he donned his battle–weed of battle and fight and combat, or ever Cuchulain came to meet him. And thus was the manner of this harness of battle and fight and combat: He put his silken, glossy trews with its border of speckled gold, next to his white skin. Over this, outside, he put his brown–leathern, well–sewed kilt. Outside of this he put a huge, goodly flag, the size of a millstone. He put his solid, very deep, iron kilt of twice molten iron over the huge, goodly flag as large as a millstone, through fear and dread of the Gae Bulga on that day.

About his head he put his crested war–cap of battle and fight and combat, whereon were forty carbuncle–gems beautifully adorning it and studded with red–enamel and crystal and rubies and with shining stones of the Eastern world. His angry, fierce–striking spear he seized in his right hand. On his left side he hung his curved battle–falchion, with its golden pommel and its rounded hilt of red gold. On the arch–slope of his back he slung his massive, fine–buffalo shield of a warrior, whereon were fifty bosses, wherein a boar could be shown in each of its bosses, apart from the great central boss of red gold. Ferdiad performed diverse, brilliant, manifold, marvellous feats on high that day, unlearned from any one before, neither from foster–mother nor from foster–father, neither from Scathach nor from Uathach nor from Aifè, but he found them of himself that day in the face of Cuchulain.

Cuchulain likewise came to the ford, and he beheld the various, brilliant, manifold, wonderful feats that Ferdiad performed on high. "Thou seest yonder, O Laeg my master, the divers, bright, numerous, marvellous feats that Ferdiad performs on high, and I shall receive yon feats one after the other. And, therefore, if defeat be my lot this day, do thou prick me on and taunt me and speak evil to me, so that the more my spirit and anger shall rise in me. If, however, before me his defeat takes place, say thou so to me and praise me and speak me fair, to the end that the greater may be my courage!" "It shall surely be done so, if need be, O Cucuc," Laeg answered.

Then Cuchulain, too, girded his war–harness of battle and fight and combat about him, and performed all kinds of splendid, manifold, marvellous feats on high that day which he had not learned from any one before, neither with Scathach nor with Uathach nor with Aifè.

Ferdiad observed those feats, and he knew they would be plied against him in turn. "To what weapons shall we resort to–day, Ferdiad?" asked Cuchulain. "With thee is thy choice of weapons," Ferdiad responded. "Let us go to the 'Feat of the Ford,' then," said Cuchulain. "Aye, let us do so," answered Ferdiad. Albeit Ferdiad spoke that, he deemed it the most grievous thing whereto he could go, for he knew that in that sort Cuchulain used to destroy every hero and every battle–soldier who fought with him in the 'Feat of the Ford.'

Great indeed was the deed that was done on the ford that day. The two heroes, the two champions, the two chariot–fighters of the west of Europe, the two bright torches of valour of the Gael, the two hands of dispensing favour and of giving rewards in the west of the northern world, the two veterans of skill and the two keys of bravery of the Gael, to be brought together in encounter as from afar, through the sowing of dissension and the incitement of Ailill and Medb. Each of them was busy hurling at the other in those deeds of arms from early morning's gloaming till the middle of noon. When mid–day came, the rage of the men became wild, and each drew nearer to the other.

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Thereupon Cuchulain gave one spring once from the bank of the ford till he stood upon the boss of Ferdiad macDaman's shield, seeking to reach his head and to strike it from above over the rim of the shield. Straightway Ferdiad gave the shield a blow with his left elbow, so that Cuchulain went from him like a bird onto the brink of the ford. Again Cuchulain sprang from the brink of the ford, so that he alighted upon the boss of Ferdiad macDaman's shield, that he might reach his head and strike it over the rim of the shield from above. Ferdiad gave the shield a thrust with his left knee, so that Cuchulain went from him like an infant onto the bank of the ford.

Laeg espied that. "Woe then, Cuchulain!" cried Laeg; "meseems the battle–warrior that is against thee hath shaken thee as a fond woman shakes her child. He hath washed thee as a cup is washed in a tub. He hath ground thee as a mill grinds soft malt. He hath pierced thee as a tool bores through an oak. He hath bound thee as the bindweed binds the trees. He hath pounced on thee as a hawk pounces on little birds, so that no more hast thou right or title or claim to valour or skill in arms till the very day of doom and of life, thou little imp of an elf–man!" cried Laeg.

Thereat for the third time, Cuchulain arose with the speed of the wind, and the swiftness of a swallow, and the dash of a dragon, and the strength (of a lion) into the clouds of the air, til he alighted on the boss of the shield of Ferdiad son of Daman, so as to reach his head that he might strike it from above over the rim of his shield. Then it was that the battle–warrior gave the shield a violent and powerful shake, so that Cuchulain flew from it into the middle of the ford, the same as if he had not sprung at all.

It was then the first twisting–fit of Cuchulain took place, so that a swelling and inflation filled him like breath in a bladder, until he made a dreadful, terrible, many–coloured, wonderful bow of himself, so that as big as a giant or a man of the sea was the hugely–brave warrior towering directly over Ferdiad.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their heads encountered above and their feet below and their hands in the middle over the rims and bosses of the shields. Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their shields burst and split from their rims to their centres. Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that their spears bent and turned and shivered from their tips to their rivets.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that the boccanach and the bananach and the sprites of the glens and the eldritch beings of the air screamed from the rims of their shields and from the guards of their swords and from the tips of their spears.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that they forced the river out of its bed and out of its course, so that there might have been a reclining place for a king or a queen in the middle of the ford, and not a drop of water was in it but what fell there with the trampling and slipping which the two heroes and the two battle–warriors made in the middle of the ford.

Such was the closeness of the combat they made, that the steeds of the Gael broke loose affrighted and plunging with madness and fury, so that their chains and their shackles, their traces and tethers snapped, and the women and children and pygmy–folk, the weak and the madmen among the men of Erin broke out through the camp southwestward.

At that time they were at the edge–feat of swords. It was then Ferdiad caught Cuchulain in an unguarded moment, and he gave him a thrust with his tusk–hilted blade, so that he buried it in his breast, and his blood fell into his belt, till the ford became crimsoned with the clotted blood from the battle–warrior's body. Cuchulain endured it not under Ferdiad's attack, with his death–bringing, heavy blows, and his long strokes and his mighty, middle slashes at him.

Then Cuchulain bethought him of his friends from the Faery land and of his mighty folk who would come to defend him and of his scholars to protect him, what time he would be hard pressed in the combat. It was then that

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Dolb and Indolb arrived to help and to succour their friend, namely Cuchulain. Then it was that Ferdiad felt the onset of the three together smiting his shield against him, and he gave all his care and attention thereto, and thence he called to mind that, when they were with Scathach and with Uathach [learning together, Dolb and Indolb used to come to help Cuchulain out of every stress wherein he was.]

Ferdiad spake: "Not alike are our foster–brotherhood and our comradeship O Cuchulain," quoth he. "How so, then?" asked Cuchulain. "Thy friends of the Fairy–folk have succoured thee, and thou didst not disclose them to me before," said Ferdiad. "Not easy for me were that," answered Cuchulain; "for if the magic veil be once revealed to one of the sons of Mile, none of the Tuatha De Danann will have power to practise concealment or magic. And why complainest thou here, Ferdiad?" said Cuchulain. "Thou hast a horn skin whereby to multiply feats and deeds of arms on me, and thou hast not shown me how it is closed or how it is opened." Then it was they displayed all their skill and secret cunning to one another, so that there was not a secret of either of them kept from the other except the Gae Bulga, which was Cuchulain's.

Howbeit, when the Fairy friends found Cuchulain had been wounded, each of them inflicted three great, heavy wounds on him, on Ferdiad, to wit. It was then that Ferdiad made a cast to the right, so that he slew Dolb with that goodly cast. Then followed the two woundings and the two throws that overcame him, till Ferdiad made a second throw towards Cuchulain's left, and with that throw he stretched low and killed Indolb dead on the floor of the ford. Hence it is that the story–teller sang the rann:

"Why is this called Ferdiad's Ford,
E'en though three men on it fell?
None the less it washed their spoils—
It is Dolb's and Indolb's Ford!"

When the devoted equally great sires and champions, and the hard, battle–victorious wild beasts that fought for Cuchulain had fallen, it greatly strengthened the courage of Ferdiad, so that he gave two blows for every blow of Cuchulain's. When Laeg son of Rianganabair saw his lord being overcome by the crushing blows of the champion who oppressed him, Laeg began to stir up and rebuke Cuchulain, in such a way that a swelling and an inflation filled Cuchulain from top to ground, as the wind fills a spread, open banner, so that he made a dreadful, wonderful bow of himself like a skybow in a shower of rain, and he made for Ferdiad with the violence of a dragon or the strength of a blood–hound.

And Cuchulain called for the Gae Bulga from Laeg son of Rianganabair. This was its nature: With the stream it was made ready, and from between the fork of the foot it was cast; the wound of a single spear it gave when entering the body, and thirty barbs had it when it opened and it could not be drawn out of a man's flesh till the flesh had been cut about it.

Thereupon Laeg came forward to the brink of the river and to the place where the fresh water was dammed, and the Gae Bulga was sharpened and set in position. He filled the pool and stopped the stream and checked the tide of the ford. Ferdiad's charioteer watched the work, for Ferdiad had said to him early in the morning: "Now gilla, do thou hold back Laeg from me to–day, and I will hold back Cuchulain from thee." "This is a pity," quoth the henchman; "no match for him am I; for a man to combat a hundred is he, and that am I not. Still; however slight his help, it shall not come to his lord past me."

He was then watching his brother thus making the dam till he filled the pools and went to set the Gae Bulga downwards. It was then that Id went up and released the stream and opened the dam and undid the fixing of the Gae Bulga. Cuchulain became deep purple and red all over when he saw the setting undone on the Gae Bulga. He sprang from the top of the ground so that he alighted light and quick on the rim of Ferdiad's shield. Ferdiad gave a strong shake to the shield, so that he hurled Cuchulain the measure of nine paces out to the westward over the ford.

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Then Cuchulain called and shouted to Laeg to set about preparing the Gae Bulga for him. Laeg hastened to the pool and began the work. Id ran and opened the dam and released it before the stream. Laeg sprang at his brother and they grappled on the spot. Laeg threw Id and handled him sorely, for he was loath to use weapons upon him. Ferdiad pursued Cuchulain westwards over the ford. Cuchulain sprang on the rim of the shield. Ferdiad shook the shield, so that he sent Cuchulain the space of nine paces eastwards over the ford.

Cuchulain called and shouted to Laeg. Laeg attempted to come, but Ferdiad's charioteer let him not, so that Laeg turned on him and left him on the sedgy bottom of the ford. He gave him many a heavy blow with clenched fist on the face and countenance, so that he broke his mouth and his nose and put out his eyes and his sight. And forthwith Laeg left him and filled the pool and checked the stream and stilled the noise of the river's voice, and set in position the Gae Bulga. After some time Ferdiad's charioteer arose from his death–cloud, and set his hand on his face and countenance, and he looked away towards the ford of combat and saw Laeg fixing the Gae Bulga. He ran again to the pool and made a breach in the dike quickly and speedily, so that the river burst out in its booming, bounding, bellying, bank–breaking billows making its own wild course. Cuchulain became purple and red all over when he saw the setting of the Gae Bulga had been disturbed, and for the third time he sprang from the top of the ground and alighted on the edge of Ferdiad's shield, so as to strike him over the shield from above. Ferdiad gave a blow with his left knee against the leather of the bare shield, so that Cuchulain was thrown into the waves of the ford.

Thereupon Ferdiad gave three severe woundings to Cuchulain. Cuchulain cried and shouted loudly to Laeg to make ready the Gae Bulga for him. Laeg attempted to get near it, but Ferdiad's charioteer prevented him. Then Laeg grew very wroth at his brother and he made a spring at him, and he closed his long, full–valiant hands over him, so that he quickly threw him to the ground and straightway bound him. And then he went from him quickly and courageously, so that he filled the pool and stayed the stream and set the Gae Bulga. And he cried out to Cuchulain that it was served, for it was not to be discharged without a quick word of warning before it. Hence it is that Laeg cried out:—

"Ware! beware the Gae Bulga,
Battle–winning Culann's hound!" [et reliqua]

Then it was that Cuchulain let fly the white Gae Bulga from the fork of his irresistible right foot. Ferdiad prepared for the feat according to the testimony thereof. He lowered his shield, so that the spear went over its edge into the watery, water–cold river. And he looked at Cuchulain, and he saw all his various, venomous feats made ready, and he knew not to which of them he should first give answer, whether to the 'Fist's breast–spear,' or to the 'Wild shield's broad–spear,' or to the 'Short spear from the middle of the palm,' or to the white Gae Bulga over the fair, watery river.

Ferdiad heard the Gae Bulga called for. He thrust his shield down to protect the lower part of his body. Cuchulain gripped the short spear, cast it off the palm of his hand over the rim of the shield and over the edge of the corselet and horn–skin, so that its farther half was visible after piercing his heart in his bosom. Ferdiad gave a thrust of his shield upwards to protect the upper part of his body, though it was help that came too late. The gilla set the Gae Bulga down the stream, and Cuchulain caught it in the fork of his foot, and threw the Gae Bulga as far as he could cast underneath at Ferdiad, so that it passed through the strong, thick, iron apron of wrought iron, and broke in three parts the huge, goodly stone the size of a millstone, so that it cut its way through the body's protection into him, till every joint and every limb was filled with its barbs.

"Ah, that now sufficeth," sighed Ferdiad: "I am fallen of that! But, yet one thing more: mightily didst thou drive with thy right foot. And 'twas not fair of thee for me to fall by thy hand." And he yet spake and uttered these words:

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"O Cu of grand feats,
Unfairly I'm slain!
Thy guilt clings to me;
My blood falls on thee!

"No meed for the wretch
Who treads treason's gap.
Now weak is my voice;
Ah, gone is my bloom!

"My ribs' armour bursts,
My heart is all gore;
I battled not well;
I'm smitten, O Cu!

Thereupon Cuchulain hastened towards Ferdiad and clasped his two arms about him, and bore him with all his arms and his armour and his dress northwards over the ford, that so it should be with his face to the north of the ford the triumph took place and not to the south of the ford with the men of Erin. Cuchulain laid Ferdiad there on the ground, and a cloud and a faint and a swoon came over Cuchulain there by the head of Ferdiad. Laeg espied it, and the men of Erin all arose for the attack upon him. "Come, O Cucuc," cried Laeg; "arise now from thy trance, for the men of Erin will come to attack us, and it is not single combat they will allow us, now that Ferdiad son of Daman son of Darè is fallen by thee." "What availeth it me to arise, O gilla," moaned Cuchulain, "now that this one is fallen by my hand?" In this wise the gilla spake and he uttered these words and Cuchulain responded:

Laeg: "Now arise, O Emain's Hound;
Now most fits thee courage high.
Ferdiaid hast thou thrown— of hosts—
God's fate! How thy fight was hard!"

Cuchulain: What avails me courage now?
I'm oppressed with rage and grief,
For the deed that I have don
On his body sworded sore!"

Laeg: It becomes thee not to weep;
Fitter for thee to exult!
Yon red–speared one thee hath left
Plaintful, wounded, steeped in gore!"

Cuchulain: "Even had he cleaved my leg,
And one hand had severed too;
Woe, that Ferdiad— who rode steeds—
Shall not ever be in life!"

Laeg: "Liefer far what's come to pass,
To the maidens of Red Branch;
He to die, thou to remain;
They grudge not that ye should part!"

Cuchulain: "From the day I Cualnge left,
Seeking high and splendid Medb,

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Carnage has she had— with fame—
Of her warriors whom I've slain!"

Laeg: "Thou hast had no sleep in peace,
In pursuit of thy great Táin;
Though thy troop was few and small,
Oft thou wouldst rise at early morn!"

Cuchulain began to lament and bemoan Ferdiad, and he spake the words:

"Alas, O Ferdiad," spake he, "'twas thine ill fortune thou didst not take counsel with any of those that knew my real deeds of valour and arms, before we met in clash of battle! Unhappy for thee that Laeg son of Riagabair did not make thee blush in regard to our comradeship! Unhappy for thee that the truly faithful warning of Fergus thou didst not take! Unhappy for thee that dear, trophied, triumphant, battle–victorious Conall counselled thee not in regard to our comradeship! For those men would not have spoken in obedience to the messages or desires or orders or false words of promise of the fair–haired women of Connacht. For well do those men know that there will not be born a being that will perform deeds so tremendous and so great among the Connachtmen as I, till the very day of doom and of everlasting life, whether at plying of spear and sword, at playing at draughts and chess, at driving of steeds and chariots."

"There shall not be found the hand of a hero that will wound warrior's flesh, like cloud–coloured Ferdiad! There shall not be heard from the gap the cry of red–mouthed Badb to the winged, shade–speckled flocks! There shall not be one that will contend for Cruachan that will obtain covenants equal to thine, till the very day of doom and of life henceforward, O red–cheeked son of Daman!" said Cuchulain. Then it was that Cuchulain arose and stood over Ferdiad: "Ah, Ferdiad," spake Cuchulain, "greatly have the men of Erin deceived and abandoned thee, to bring thee to contend and do battle with me. For no easy thing is it to contend and do battle with me on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge! Thus he spake, and he uttered these words:

"Ah, Ferdiad, betrayed to death.
Our last meeting, oh, how sad!
Thou to die I to remain.
Ever sad our long farewell!

"When we over yonder dwelt
With our Scathach, steadfast, true,
This we thought till end of time,
That our friendship ne'er would end!

"Dear to me thy noble blush;
Dear thy comely, perfect form;
Dear thine eye, blue–grey and clear;
Dear thy wisdom and thy speech!

"Never strode to rending fight,
Never wrath and manhood held,
Nor slung shield across broad back,
One like thee, Daman's red son!

Never have I met till now,
Since I Oenfer Aifè slew,
One thy peer in deeds of arms,

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Never have I found, Ferdiad!

Finnabair, Medb's daughter fair,
Beauteous, lovely though she be,
As a gad round sand or stones,
She was shown to thee, Ferdiad!"

Then Cuchulain turned to gaze on Ferdiad. "Ah, my master Laeg," cried Cuchulain, "now strip Ferdiad and take his armour and garments off him, that I may see the brooch for the sake of which he entered on the combat and fight with me." Laeg came up and stripped Ferdiad. He took his armour and garments off him and he saw the brooch and he began to lament and complain over Ferdiad, and he spake these words:

"Alas, golden brooch;
Ferdiad of the hosts,
O good smiter, strong,
Victorious thy hand!

"Thy hair blond and curled,
A wealth fair and grand.
Thy soft, leaf–shaped belt
Around thee till death!

"Our comradeship dear;
Thy noble eye's gleam;
Thy golden–rimmed shield;
Thy sword, treasures worth!

"Thy white–silver torque
Thy noble arm binds.
Thy chess–board worth wealth;
Thy fair, ruddy cheek!

"To fall by my hand,
I own was not just!
'Twas no noble fight.
Alas, golden brooch!

"Come, O Laeg my master," cried Cuchulain; "now cut open Ferdiad and take the Gae Bulga out, because I may not be without my weapons." Laeg came and cut open Ferdiad and he took the Gae Bulga out of him. And Cuchulain saw his weapons bloody and red–stained by the side of Ferdiad, and he uttered these words:—

"O Ferdiad, in gloom we meet.
Thee I see both red and pale.
I myself with unwashed arms;
Thou liest in thy bed of gore!

"Were we yonder in the East,
Scathach and our Uathach near,
There would not be pallid lips
Twixt us two, and arms of strife!

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"Thus spake Scathach trenchantly (?),
Words of warning, strong and stern.
'Go ye all to furious fight;
German, blue–eyed, fierce will come!'

"Unto Ferdiad then I spake,
And to Lugaid generous,
To the son of fair Baetan,
German we would go to meet!

"We came to the battle–rock,
Over Lake Linn Formait's shore.
And four hundred men we brought
From the Isles of the Athissech!

"As I stood and Ferdiad brave
At the gate of German's fort,
I slew Rinn the son of Nel;
He slew Ruad son of Fornel!

Ferdiad slew upon the slope
Blath, of Colba 'Red–sword' son.
Lugaid, fierce and swift, then slew
Mugairne of the Tyrrhene Sea!

"I slew, after going in,
Four times fifty grim, wild men.
Ferdiad killed— a furious horde—
Dam Dremenn and Dam Dilenn!

"We laid waste shrewd German's fort
O'er the broad, bespangled sea.
German we brought home alive
To our Scathach of broad shield!

"Then our famous nurse made fast
Our blood–pact of amity,
That our angers should not rise
'Mongst the tribes of noble Elg!

"Sad the morn, a day in March,
Which struck down weak Daman's son.
Woe is me, the friend is fall'n
Whom I pledged in red blood's draught!

"Were it there I saw thy death,
Midst the great Greeks' warrior–bands,
I'd not live on after thee,
But together we would die!

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"Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach's fosterlings,
Me sore wounded, red with blood,
Thee no more to drive thy car!

"Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach's fosterlings,
Me sore wounded, stiff with gore,
Thee to die the death for aye!

"Woe, what us befel therefrom,
Us, dear Scathach's fosterlings,
Thee in death, me, strong, alive.
Valour is an angry strife!"

"Good, O Cucuc," spake Laeg, "let us leave this ford now; too long are we here!" "Aye, let us leave it, O my master Laeg," replied Cuchulain. "But every combat and battle I have fought seems a game and a sport to me compared with the combat and battle of Ferdiad." Thus he spake, and he uttered these words:

All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
One task for both of us,
Equal our reward.
Our kind, gentle nurse
Chose him over all!

All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
One our life, one our fear,
One our skill in arms.
Shields gave Scathach twain
To Ferdiad and me!

All was play, all was sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Dear the shaft of gold
I smote on the ford.
Bull–chief of the tribes,
Braver he than all!

Only games and only sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Lion furious, flaming, fierce;
Swollen wave that wrecks like doom!

Only games and only sport,
Till came Ferdiad to the ford!
Loved Ferdiad seemed to me
After me would live for aye!
Yesterday, a mountain's size—
He is but a shade to–day!

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Three things countless on the Táin
Which have fallen by my hand:
Hosts of cattle, men and steeds
I have slaughtered on all sides!

Though the hosts were e'er so great,
That came out of Cruachan wild,
More than third and less than half,
Slew I in my direful sport!

Never trod in battle's ring;
Banba nursed not on her breast;
Never sprang from sea or land,
King's son that had larger fame!"

Thus far the Death of Ferdiad.

21. Cuchulain and the Rivers

Then came certain men of the Ulstermen thither to help and succour Cuchulain. Before all, Senoll Uathach and the two sons of Gegè: Muridach and Cotreb, to wit. And they bore him to the streams and rivers of Conalle Murthemni, to rub and to wash his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his many wounds in the face of these streams and rivers. For the Tuatha De Danann were wont to put herbs and plants of healing and a curing charm in the waters and rivers of the territory of Conalle Murthemni, to help and to succour Cuchulain, so that the streams were speckled and green–topped therewith.

Accordingly these are the names of the healing rivers of Cuchulain:

Sas, Buan, Buas, Bithslan, Findglas ('Whitewater'), Gleoir, Glenamain, Bedg, Tadg, Telameit, Rind, Bir, Brenidè, Dichaem, Muach, Miliuc, Cumung, Cuilind, Gainemain, Drong, Delt, Dubglas ('Blackwater').

22. Cethern's Strait Fight

Then said the men of Erin to macRoth the chief runner, to go watch and keep guard for them at Sliab Fuait, to the end that the Ulstermen might not come upon them without warning and unobserved. Thereupon macRoth went southwards as far as Sliab Fuait. MacRoth was not long there when he saw something: a lone chariot on Sliab Fuait making from the north straight towards him. A fierce man, stark–naked, in that chariot coming towards him, without arms, without armour at all save an iron spit in his hand. In equal manner he goaded his driver and his horses. And it seemed to him that he would never in his life come up to the hosts.

And macRoth hastened to tell this news at the fort where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were and the nobles of the men of Erin. Ailill asked tidings of him on his arrival. "Aye, macRoth," inquired Ailill; "hast thou seen any of the Ulstermen on the track of the host this day?" "That, truly, I know not," answered macRoth; "but I saw something: a lone chariot coming over Sliab Fuait straight towards us. A wild, stark–naked man in the chariot, without arms or armour at all, except for an iron spit in his hand. In equal manner he prodded his driver and his steeds. It seemed to him he would never in his life come up to the host."

"Who, thinkest thou, might it be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Meseems," Fergus answered, "it is Cethern son of Fintan that came there. Fergus indeed spoke true, that it was Fintan's son Cethern that was come there. And so Cethern son of Fintan came on them, and the camp and the garrison were confounded and he wounded all around

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him in every direction and on all sides and they wounded him in every direction and on all sides.

And then he left them, and his entrails and vitals were outside of him. He came to the place where was Cuchulain, to be healed and cured, and he demanded a physician of Cuchulain to heal and to cure him. "Come, master Laeg!" cried Cuchulain. "Arise, away with thee to the garrison and camp of the men of Erin and summon the physicians to come out to cure Cethern macFintain. I give my word, e'en though it be under the ground or in a well–shut house they are, I myself will bring death and destruction and slaughter upon them before this hour to–morrow, if they come not to minister to Cethern."

Laeg went his way to the quarters and camp of the men of Erin, and he called upon the physicians of the men of Erin to go forth to cure Cethern son of Fintan. Truth to tell, the physicians of the men of Erin were unwilling to go cure their adversary, their enemy and their stranger–foe. But they feared Cuchulain would work death and destruction and slaughter upon them if they went not. And so they went. As one man of them after the other came to him, Cethern son of Fintan showed him his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his bloody wounds. Each man of them that said he would not live and could not be healed, Cethern son of Fintan struck him a blow with his right fist in the front of his forehead, so that he drove the brains out through the windows of his ears and the seams of his skull. Howbeit Cethern son of Fintan killed them till there had come fifteen physicians of the physicians of the men of Erin.

The historian hath declared in proof thereof:

"These the physicians of the Táin,
Who by Cethern—bane—did fall.
No light thing, in floods of tribes,
That their names are known to me:

"Littè, Luaidren, known o'er sea,
Lot and Luaimnech, 'White–hand' Lonn,
Latheirne skilful, also Lonn,
Laisrè, Slanoll 'That cures all.'

"Dubthach, Fintan's blameless son
Fintan, master Firfial, too,
Mainè, Boethan 'Gives not pain,'
Eke his pupil, Boethan's son.

"These the physicians, five and ten,
Struck to death by Cethern, true;
I recall them in my day;
They are in the physicians' roll!"

Yea, even the fifteenth physician, it was but the tip of a blow that reached him. Yet he fell lifeless of the great stun between the bodies of the other physicians and lay there for a long space and time. Ithall, physician of Ailill and Medb, was his name.

Thereafter Cethern son of Fintan asked another physician of Cuchulain to heal and to cure him. "Come, master Laeg," quoth Cuchulain, "go for me to Fingin the seer–physician, at 'Fingin's Grave–mound' at Leccan ('the Brow') of Sliab Fuait, him that is physician to Conchobar. Bid him come to heal Cethern son of Fintan."

Laeg hastened to Fingin the seer–physician at 'Fingin's Grave–mound' at Leccan of Sliab Fuait, to the physician of Conchobar. And he told him to go cure Cethern son of Fintan. Thereupon Fingin the prophet–physician came.

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As soon as he was come, Cethern son of Fintan showed him his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his bloody wounds.

22a. Cethern's Bloody Wounds

["Look at this bloody wound for me, O Fingin," said Cethern.] Fingin looked at the bloody wound. "Why, it is a slight, unwillingly given wound we behold here," said the physician. "A lone man came upon me there; bushy hair on him; a blue mantle wrapped around him; a silver brooch in the mantle over his breast; an oval shield with plaited rim he bore; a five–pointed spear in his hand; a pronged spare spear at his side. He gave this bloody wound. He bore away a slight wound from me too." "Why, we know that man!" cried Cuchulain; "'twas Illann Ilarchless ('Illann of many feats') son of Fergus macRoig. And he would not wish that thou shouldst fall by his hand, but he gave thee this mock–blow that the men of Erin might not have it to say it was to betray them or to forsake them if he gave it not."

"Now look at this bloody wound for me, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. Fingin looked closely into the bloody wound. "Why, 'tis a woman's wanton deed of arms we behold here," said the physician. "Aye, that is true then," quoth Cethern; "a woman came upon me there by herself. A woman, beautiful, fair–faced, long–cheeked, tall; a golden–yellow head of hair, down to the top of her two shoulder–blades she wore; a smock of royal sammet next to her white skin; two birds of gold on her shoulders; a purple cloak without other colour she had around her; a brooch of gold in the cloak over her bosom; a straight, ridged spear, red–flaming in her hand. She it was that gave me this bloody wound. She bore away a slight wound from me too." "Ah, but we know that woman," cried Cuchulain; "Medb daughter of Eocho Fedlech, daughter of the High King of Erin; it is she that came unto us in that dress. A victory and triumph and trophy she had considered it hadst thou fallen at her hands."

"Look at this bloody wound for me too, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. Fingin looked at the bloody wound. "Why, the feat of arms of two warriors is this," said the physician. "Yea, that is true," answered Cethern. "There came two men–at–arms upon me in that place; two, with bushy hair on them; two blue cloaks wrapped around them; brooches of silver in the cloaks over their breasts; a necklace of all–white silver around the neck of each of them." "Indeed we know that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "Oll and Othinè they, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb; they never go to a hosting, to battle or combat, but when the wounding of a man is certain. They would have held it for victory and triumph and a boast hadst thou fallen at their hands."

"Look on this bloody wound also for me, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. Fingin looked closely at the bloody wound. "There came upon me a pair of young warriors of the Fian," said Cethern; "a splendid, manly appearance they had. Each of them cast a spear at me. I crave this spear through the one of them." Fingin looked into the bloody wound. "Why, this blood is all black," quoth the physician; "through thy heart those spears passed so that they formed a cross of themselves through thy heart; and I prophesy no cure here, but I would get thee some healing plants and curing charms that they destroy thee not forthwith." "Ah, but we know them, that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "Bun and Meconn ('Stump' and 'Root') are they, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb. It was their hope that thou shouldst fall at their hands."

"Look at this bloody wound for me, too, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. Fingin examined the bloody wound. "Why, it is the red rush of the two sons of Ri Cailè ('the King of the Woods') that is here," said the physician. "Aye 'tis so," replied Cethern; "there attacked me there two fair–faced, dark–browed youths, huge, with diadems of gold on their heads. Two green mantles folded about them; two pins of bright silver on the mantles over their breasts; two five–pronged spears in their hands." "Why, near each other are the bloody wounds they gave thee," said the physician; "into thy gullet they went, so that the points of the spears struck one another within thee, and none the easier is it to work thy cure here." "We know that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "noble youths of Medb's great household, Broen and Brudni, are they, two sons of Ri teora Soillse ('the King of the three Lights'), that is, the two sons of the King of the Woods. It had been victory and triumph and a boast for them, hadst thou fallen at their

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hands."

"Look at this bloody wound for me, too, my good Fingin," said Cethern. Fingin looked into the bloody wound. "The joint deed of two brothers is here," said the physician. "'Tis indeed true," replied Cethern. "There came upon me two leading, king's warriors. Yellow hair upon them; dark–grey mantles with fringes, wrapped around them; leaf–shaped brooches of silvered bronze in the mantles over their breasts; broad, grey lances in their hands." "Ah, but we know that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "Cormac Colomon rig ('King's pillar') is the one, and Cormac son of Mael Foga, of the bodyguard of Ailill and Medb (the other). What they sought was that thou shouldst fall at their hands."

"Look at this bloody wound for me too, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. Fingin looked into that bloody wound. "The assault of two brothers is here," said the physician. "Aye then, 'tis true," answered Cethern. "There came upon me two tender youths there; very much alike were they; curly dark hair on the one of them; curly yellow hair on the other; two green cloaks wrapped around them; two bright–silver brooches in the cloaks over their breasts; two tunics of smooth yellow silk next their skin; two white–hilted swords at their belts; two bright shields having the likenesses of beasts in white silver they bore; two five–pronged spears with veins of all–white silver in their hands." "Ah, but we know that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "Manè 'Like to his mother' and Manè 'Like to his father,' two sons of Ailill and Medb; and it would be matter of victory, triumph and boasting to them, hadst thou fallen at their hands."

"Look at this bloody wound for me, too, O Fingin my master," said Cethern. "There came upon me a pair of young warriors there. A brilliant appearance, stately–tall and manlike, they had; wonderful garments from far–away countries upon them. Each of them thrust the spear he had at me. Then I thrust this spear through each of them." Fingin looked into the bloody wound. "Cunning are the bloody wounds they inflicted upon thee," said the physician; "they have severed the strings of thy heart within thee, so that thy heart rolls about in thy breast like an apple in motion or like a ball of yarn in an empty bag, and there is no string at all to support it, and no healing can I effect here." "Ah, but we know those twain," quoth Cuchulain; "a pair of champions from Norway who have been sent particularly by Ailill and Medb to slay thee; for not often does one ever issue alive from their combats, and it would be their will that thou shouldst fall at their hands."

"Look upon this bloody wound for me too, my good Fingin," said Cethern. Fingin looked at that bloody wound. "Why, the alternate woundings of a son and his father we behold here," answered the physician. "Yea it is so," quoth Cethern; "two tall men, red as torches, came upon me there, with diadems of burnished gold upon them; kingly garments they wore; gold–hilted, hammered swords at their girdles, with scabbards of pure–white silver, with supports of mottled gold outside upon them." "Ah but we know that pair," quoth Cuchulain; "Ailill and his son are they, Manè 'That embraces the traits of them all.' They would deem it victory and triumph and a boast shouldst thou fall at their hands."

Thus far the "Bloody Wounds" of the Táin.

"Speak, O Fingin prophetic physician," spake Cethern son of Fintan; "what verdict and what counsel givest me now?" "This verily is what I say to thee," replied Fingin the prophetic physician: "Count not on thy big cows for yearlings this year; for if thou dost, it is not thou that will enjoy them, and no profit will they bring thee." "This is the judgement and counsel the other surgeons did give me, and certain it is it brought them neither advantage nor profit, and they fell at my hands; and none the more will it bring thee advantage or profit, and thou shalt fall at my hands!" And he gave Fingin a strong, stiff kick with his foot, and sent him between the chariot's two wheels. "Oh, but vicious is the kick from the old warrior," cried Cuchulain. Hence, from this saying, is the name Uachtar Lua ('the Height of the Kick') in the land of Ross from then until this day.

Nevertheless Fingin the prophet–physician gave his choice to Cethern son of Fintan: A long illness for him and afterwards to obtain help and succour, or a red healing for the space of three days and three nights, so that he

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might then employ his strength on his enemies. What Cethern son of Fintan chose was a red healing for the space of three days and three nights, to the end that he might then vent his anger and strength on his enemies. For what he said was that there would not be found after him any one he would rather have vindicate or avenge him than himself.

Thereupon Fingin the prophetic physician asked of Cuchulain a vat of marrow wherewith to heal and to cure Cethern son of Fintan. Cuchulain proceeded to the camp and entrenchment of the men of Erin, and whatsoever he found of herds and flocks and droves there he took away with him. And he made a marrow–mesh of their flesh and their bones and their skins; and Cethern son of Fintan was placed in the marrow–bath till the end of three days and three nights. And his flesh began to drink in the marrow–bath about him and the marrow–bath entered in within his stabs and his cuts, his sores and his many wounds. Thereafter he arose from the marrow–bath at the end of three days and three nights. It was thus Cethern arose, with a slab of the chariot pressed to his belly so that his entrails and bowels would not drop out of him.

That was the time when his wife came from the north, from Dún da Benn ('Fort of the two Gables'), and she brought his sword with her, even Finna daughter of Eocho. Cethern son of Fintan seized his arms and proceeded to attack the men of Erin. But this is to be added: They sent a warning before him; Ithall, physician of Ailill and Medb, had remained as one dead of the great stun from the blow of Cethern among the bodies of the other physicians for a long space and time [and he, the physician that had alone escaped from Cethern, brought the alarm to the camp.]

"Hark, ye men of Erin," shouted the physician; "Cethern son of Fintan comes to attack you, now that he has been healed and cured by Fingin the prophetic physician, and take ye heed of him!" Thereat the men of Erin in fear put Ailill's dress and his golden shawl and his regal diadem on the pillar–stone in Crich Ross, that it might be thereon that Cethern son of Fintan should first give vent to his anger on his arrival.

Soon Cethern saw those things, namely Ailill's dress and his golden shawl around the standing–stone in Crich Ross, and he, being unaware and witless, conceived it to be Ailill himself that was in it. And he made a rush at it like a blast of wind and crave the sword through the stone pillar till it went up to its pommel. "Deceit is here," cried Cethern son of Fintan, "and on me have ye worked this deceit. And I swear an oath, till there be found among ye of the men of Erin one that will put yon royal dress about him and the golden shawl, I will not stay my hand from them, slaughtering and destroying withal!"

Manè Andoe son of Ailill and Medb heard that, and he put his father's royal raiment about him and the golden shawl and the diadem on his head, and he dashed off through the midst of the men of Erin. Cethern son of Fintan pursued him closely and hurled his shield, so that the chiselled rim of the shield crave him to the ground, with chariot, driver, and horses. When the men of Erin saw that, they surrounded Cethern on every side, so that he fell at their hands in the strait wherein he was. Wherefore 'Cethern's Strait–Fight and the Bloody Wounds of Cethern' is the name of this tale.

His wife, Finna daughter of Eocho Salbuidê ('Yellow–heel') stood over him and she was in great sorrow, and she made the funeral–song below:

"I care for naught, care for naught;
Ne'er more man's hand 'neath my head,
Since was dug the earthy bed,
Cethern's bold, of Dun da Benn!

"Kingly Cethern, Fintan's son;
Few were with him on the ford.
Connacht's men with all their host,

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For nine hours he left them not!

"Arms he bore not—this an art—
But a red, two–headed pike;
With it slaughtered he the host,
While his anger still was fresh!

"Felled by double–headed pike,
Cethern's hand held, with their crimes,
Seven times fifty of the hosts,
Fintan's son brought to their graves!

"Willa–loo, oh, witla–loo!
Woman's d wandering through the mist.
Worse it is for him that's dead.
She that lives may find a man!

"Never I shall take a man
Of the hosts of this good world;
Never shall I sleep with man;
Never shall my man with wife!

Dear the homestead, 'Horse–head's Dûn,'
Where our hosts were wont to go.
Dear the water, soft and sweet;
Dear the isle, 'Isle of the Red!'

Sad the care, oh, sad the care,
Cualnge's Cow–raid brought on me:
Cethern, Fintan's son, to keen.
Oh that he had shunned his woe!

Great the doings, these, oh, great,
And the deed that here was done:
I bewailing him till death,
Him that has been smitten down!

Finna, Eocho's daughter, I,
Found a fight of circling spears.
Had my champion had his arms:
By his side a slaughtered heap!"

23. Here Followeth the Tooth–Fight of Fintan

Fintan, himself the son of Niall Niamglonnach ('of the brilliant Exploits') from Dûn da Benn, was father of Cethern son of Fintan. And he came to save the honour of Ulster and to avenge his son upon the hosts. Thrice fifty was his number. And thus it was they came, and two spear–heads on each shaft with them, a spear–head on the top and a spear–head at the butt, so that it made no difference whether they wounded the hosts with the points or with the butts. They offered three battles to the hosts. And thrice their own number fell at their hands, and there fell also the people of Fintan son of Niall, all excepting Fintan's son Crimthann alone. This one was saved under a

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canopy of shields by Ailill and Medb.

Then said the men of Erin, it would be no disgrace for Fintan son of Niall to withdraw from the camp and quarters, and they would give up Crimthann son of Fintan to him, and then the hosts would fall back a day's march to the north again; and that he should cease from his deeds of arms against the hosts till he would come to encounter them on the day of the great battle at the place where the four grand provinces of Erin would clash at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Cattle–reaving of Cualnge, as was foretold by the druids of the men of Erin. Fintan son of Niall consented to that, and they gave over his son to him. He withdrew from the camp and station, and the host marched a day's journey back to the north again, to stop and cease their advance.

In this manner they found each man of the people of Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach and each man of the men of Erin, with the lips and the nose of each of them in the teeth and tusks of the other. The men of Erin gave thought to that: "This is a tooth–fight for us," said they; "the tooth–fight of Fintan's people and of Fintan himself." So this is the 'Tooth–fight' of Fintan.

23a. The Red–Shame of Menn Followeth Here

It was then came to them great Menn son of Salcholga, he from Renna ('the Waterways') of the Boyne in the north. Twelve men with many–pointed weapons, that was his number. It was thus they came, and two spearheads on each shaft with them, a spear–head on the top and a spearhead at the butt, so that it made no difference whether they wounded the hosts with the points or with the butts.

They offered three attacks upon the hosts. Three times their own number fell at their hands and there fell twelve men of the people of Menn. But Menn himself was sorely wounded in the strait, so that blood ran crimson on him. Then said the men of Erin: "Red is this shame," said they, "for Menn son of Salcholga, that his people, should be slain and destroyed and he himself wounded till blood ran crimson red upon him." Hence here is the 'Reddening Shame of Menn.'

Then said the men of Erin, it would be no dishonour for Menn son of Salcholga to leave the camp and quarters, and that the hosts would go a day's journey back to the north again, and that Menn should cease his weapon–feats on the hosts till Conchobar arose out of his 'Pains' and battle would be offered them at Garech and Ilgarech, as the druids and soothsayers and the knowers of the men of Erin had foretold it.

Menn son of Salcholga agreed to that, to leave the camp and halting–place. And the hosts fell back a day's march for to rest and wait, and Menn went his way to his own land.

23b. Here Followeth the Accoutrement of the Charioteers

Then came the charioteers of the Ulstermen to them. Thrice fifty was their number. They offered three battles to the hosts. Thrice their number fell at their hands, and the charioteers themselves fell on the field whereon they stood. Hence this here is called the 'Accoutrement of the Charioteers [with stones.]'

23c. The White–Fight of Rochad Now Followeth

Rochad Rigderg ('Red–king') son of Fathemon, was of Ulster. Thrice fifty warriors was his number, and he took possession of a hill fronting the hosts. Finnabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, perceived that and she went to speak to her mother thereof, even to Medb. "Truly have I loved yonder warrior for a long time," said she; "and it is he is my sweetheart, and mine own choice one in wooing." "An thou hast so loved him, daughter," quoth Ailill and Medb, "sleep with him this night and crave for us a truce of him for the hosts, until he encounters us on the day of the great battle when four of the grand provinces of Erin will meet at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of

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the Foray of Cualnge." Rochad son of Fathemon accepted the offer and that night the damsel slept with him.

An Under–king of Munster that was in the camp heard the tale. He went to his people to speak of it. "Yonder maiden was plighted to me on fifteen hostages once long ago," said he; "and it is for this I have now come on this hosting." Now wherever it happened that the seven Under–kings of Munster were, what they all said was that it was for this they were come. "Why," said they, "should we not go to avenge our wife and our honour on the Manè, who are watching and guarding the rear of the army at Imlech in Glendamrach ('Kettle–glen's navel')?"

This was the course they resolved upon. And with their seven divisions of thirty hundreds they arose. Ailill arose with thirty hundred after them. Medb arose with her thirty hundred. The sons of Maga with theirs and the Leinstermen and the Munstermen and the people of Tara. And a mediation was made between them so that each of them sat down near the other and hard by his arms.

Howbeit before the intervention took place, eight hundred very valiant warriors of them had fallen. Finnabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, had tidings that so great a number of the men of Erin had fallen for her sake and on account of her. And her heart broke in her breast even as a nut, through shame and disgrace, so that Finnabair Slebe ('Finnabair of the Mount') is the name of the place where she fell, died and was buried.

Then said the men of Erin, "White is this battle," said they, "for Rochad son of Fathemon, in that eight hundred exceeding brave warriors fell for his sake and on his account and he himself goes safe and whole to his country and land without blood–shedding or reddening on him." Hence this is the 'White–fight' of Rochad.

23d. Here Followeth Iliach's Clump–Fight

Then came to them Iliach son of Cass son of Bacc son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige. It was told him that the four grand provinces of Erin even then laid waste and invaded the lands of Ulster and of the Picts and of Cualnge from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring. He then conceived a plan in his mind and he made perfect his plan privily with his people. "What counsel were better for me to make than to go and attack the men of Erin and to have my victory over them, and thus avenge the honour of Ulster. And I care not though I should fall myself there thereafter."

And this is the counsel he followed. His two withered, mangy, sorrel nags that were upon the strand hard by the fort were led to him. Thus he mounted his chariot, without either covers or cushions. His big, rough, pale–grey shield of iron he carried upon him, with its rim of hard silver around it. He wore his rough, grey–hilted, huge smiting sword at his left side. He placed his two rickety–headed, nicked, blunt, rusted spears by his side in the chariot. His folk furnished his chariot around him with cobbles and boulders and huge clumps.

In such wise he fared forth to assail the men of Erin. And thus he came, and the spittle from his gaping mouth trickling down through the chariot under him. "Truly it would be well for us," said the men of Erin, "if this were the manner in which all the Ulstermen came to us on the plain."

Dochè son of Maga met him and bade him welcome. "Welcome is thy coming, O Iliach," spake Dochè son of Maga. "Truly spoken I esteem that welcome," answered Iliach; "but do thou for the sake of that welcome come to me when now, alas, my deeds of arms will be over and my warlike vigour will have vanished, so that thou be the one to cut off my head and none other of the men of Erin. However, my sword shall remain with thee for thine own friend, even for Loegaire Buadach!

He assailed the men of Erin with his weapons till he had made an end of them. And when weapons failed he assailed the men of Erin with cobbles and boulders and huge clumps of earth. And when these weapons failed him he spent his rage on the man that was nearest him of the men of Erin, and bruised him grievously between his

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fore–arms and his sides and the palms of his hands, till he made a marrow–mass of him, of flesh and bones and sinews and skin.

Hence in memory thereof, these two masses of marrow still live on side by side, the marrow–mass that Cuchulain made of the bones of the Ulstermen's cattle for the healing of Cethern son of Fintan, and the marrow–mass that Iliach made of the bones of the men of Erin. Wherefore this was one of the three innumerable things of the Tain, the number of them that fell at the hands of Iliach. So that this is the 'Clumpfight' of Iliach. It is for this reason it is called the 'Clump–fight' of Iliach, because with cobbles and boulders and messy clumps he made his fight.

Thereafter Dochè son of Maga met him. "Is not this Iliach?" asked Dochè son of Maga. "It is truly I," Iliach gave answer; "and come to me now and cut off my head and let my sword remain with thee for thy friend, for Loegaire Buadach ('the Victorious')." Dochè came near him and gave him a blow with the sword so that he severed his head. Thus to this point, the 'Clump–fight' of Iliach.

23e. Here Now The Deer–Stalking of Amargin in Taltiu

This Amargin was the son of Cass who was son of Bacc who was son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') who was son of Rudraige. He came upon the warriors going over Taltiu westward, and he made them turn before him over Taltiu northwards. And he put his left elbow under him in Taltiu. And his people furnished him with rocks and boulders and great clumps of earth, and he began to pelt the men of Erin till the end of three days and three nights.

The adventures of Curoi son of Darè follow now.

He was told that a single man was checking and stopping four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring. And he felt it unworthy of himself and he deemed it too long that his people were without him. And it was then he set out to the host to fight and contend with Cuchulain. And when he was come to the place where Cuchulain was, he saw Cuchulain there moaning, full of wounds and pierced through with holes, and he felt it would not be honourable nor fair to fight and contend with him after the combat with Ferdiad. Because it would be said it was not that Cuchulain died of the sores and wounds which he would give him so much as of the wounds which Ferdiad had inflicted on him in the conflict before. Be that as it might, Cuchulain offered to engage with him in battle and combat.

Thereupon Curoi set forth for to seek the men of Erin and, when he was near at hand, he espied Amargin there and his left elbow under him to the west of Taltiu. Curoi reached the men of Erin from the north. His people equipped him with rocks and boulders and great clumps, and he began to hurl them right over against Amargin, so that Badb's battle–stones collided in the clouds and in the air high above them, and every rock of them was shattered into an hundred stones.

"By the truth of thy valour, O Curoi," cried Medb, "desist from thy throwing, for no real succour nor help comes to us therefrom, but ill is the succour and help that thence come to us." "I pledge my word," cried Curoi, "I will not cease till the very day of doom and of life, till first Amargin cease!" "I will cease," said Amargin; "and do thou engage that thou wilt no more come to succour or give aid to the men of Erin." Curoi consented to that and went his way to return to his land and people.

About this time the hosts went past Taltiu westwards. "It is not this was enjoined upon me," quoth Amargin: "never again to cast at the hosts." And he went to the west of them and he turned them before him north–eastwards past Taltiu. And he began to pelt them for a long while and time.

Then it was also that the men of Erin said it would be no disgrace for Amargin to leave the camp and quarters, and that the hosts would retire a day's march back to the north again, there to stop and stay, and for him to quit his

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feats of arms upon the hosts until such time as he would meet them on the day of the great battle when the four grand provinces of Erin would encounter at Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge. Amargin accepted that offer, and the hosts proceeded a day's march back to the northwards again. Wherefore the 'Deer–stalking' of Amargin in Taltiu the name of this tale.

24. The Repeated Warning of Sualtaim

Now while the deeds we have told here were being done, Sualtaim ('Goodly fosterer') son of Becaltach ('of Small belongings') son of Moraltach ('of Great belongings'), the same the father of Cuchulain macSualtaim, was told of the distress of his son contending in unequal combat on the Cualnge Cattle–spoil, even against Calatin Dana ('the Bold') with his seven and twenty sons, and against Glass son of Delga, his grandson.

"Whate'er it be, this that I hear from afar," quoth Sualtaim, "it is the sky that bursts or the sea that ebbs or the earth that quakes, or is it the distress of my son overmatched in the strife on the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge?" In that, indeed, Sualtaim spoke true. And he went to learn all after a while, without hastening on his way. And when Sualtaim was come to where his son Cuchulain was, Sualtaim began to moan and lament for Cuchulain.

Forsooth Cuchulain deemed it neither an honour nor glory that Sualtaim should bemoan and lament him, for Cuchulain knew that, wounded and injured though he was, Sualtaim would not be the man to avenge his wrong. For such was Sualtaim: He was no mean warrior and he was no mighty warrior, but only a good, worthy man was he. "Come, my father Sualtaim," said Cuchulain, "do thou go to Emain Macha to the men of Ulster and tell them to come now to have a care for their droves, for no longer am I able to protect them in the gaps and passes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. All alone am I against four of the five grand provinces of Erin from Monday at Summer's end till the beginning of Spring, every day slaying a man on a ford and a hundred warriors every night. Fair fight is not granted me nor single combat, and no one comes to aid me nor to succour. Spancel–hoops hold my cloak over me. Dry tufts of grass are stuffed in my wounds. There is not a single hair on my body from my crown to my sole whereon the point of a needle could stand, without a drop of deep–red blood on the top of each hair, save the left hand alone which is holding my shield, and even there thrice fifty bloody wounds are upon it. And let them straightway give battle to the warriors, and unless they avenge this anon, they will never avenge it till the very day of doom and of life!"

Sualtaim set out on Liath ('the Roan') of Macha as his only horse, with warning to the men of Ulster. And when he was come alongside of Emain, he shouted these words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" cried Sualtaim.

He had not the answer that served him from the Ulstermen, and forasmuch as he had it not he went on further to the rampart of Emain. And he cried out the same words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" cried Sualtaim.

Again he had not the response that served him from the men of Ulster. Thus stood it among the Ulstermen: It was geis for the Ulstermen to speak before their king, geis for the king to speak before his druids. Thereafter Sualtaim drove on to the 'Flag–stone of the hostages' in Emain Macha. He shouted the same words there: "Men are slain, women stolen, cows carried off!"

"But who has slain them, and who has stolen them, and who has carried them off?" asked Cathba the druid. "Ailill and Medb have overwhelmed you," said Sualtaim. "Your wives and your sons and your children, your steeds and your stock of horses, your herds and your flocks and your droves of cattle have been carried away. Cuchulain all alone is checking and staying the hosts of the four great provinces of Erin at the gaps and passes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. Fair fight is refused him, nor is he granted single combat, nor comes any one to succour or aid him. The youth is wounded, his limbs are out of joint. Spancel–hoops hold his cloak over him. There is not a

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hair from his crown to his sole whereon the point of a needle could stand, without a drop of deep–red blood on the top of each hair, except his left hand alone which is holding his shield, and even there thrice fifty bloody wounds are upon it. And unless ye avenge this betimes, ye will never avenge it till the end of time and of life."

"Fitter is death and doom and destruction for the man that so incites the king!" quoth Cathba the druid. "In good sooth, it is true!" said the Ulstermen all together. Thereupon Sualtaim went his way from them, indignant and angry because from the men of Ulster he had not had the answer that served him.

Then reared Liath ('the Roan') of Macha under Sualtaim and dashed on to the ramparts of Emain. Thereat Sualtaim fell under his own shield, so that the edge of the shield severed Sualtaim's head. The horse himself turned back again to Emain, and the shield on the horse and the head on the shield. And Sualtaim's head uttered the same words: "Men are slain women stolen, cattle lifted, ye men of Ulster!" spake the head of Sualtaim.

"Some deal too great is that cry," quoth Conchobar; "for yet is the sky above us, the earth underneath and the sea round about us. And unless the heavens shall fall with their showers of stars on the man–like face of the world, or unless the ground burst open in quakes beneath our feet, or unless the furrowed, blue–bordered ocean break o'er the tufted brow of the earth, will I restore to her byre and her stall, to her abode and her dwelling–place, each and every cow and woman of them with victory of battle and contest and combat!"

Thereupon a runner of his people was summoned to Conchobar, Findchad Ferbenduma ('he of the copper Horn') to wit, son of Fraech Lethan ('the Broad'), and he bade him go assemble and muster the men of Ulster. And in like manner, Conchobar enumerated to him their quick and their dead, in the drunkenness of sleep and of his 'Pains,' and he uttered these words: The Order of the men of Ulster.

"Arise, O Findchad!
I Thee I send forth:
A negligence not to be wished (?);
Proclaim it to the chiefs of Ulster!

24a. The Order of the Men of Ulster

"Arise, O Findchad!" [said Conchobar,]
I Thee I send forth:
A negligence not to be wished (?);
Proclaim it to the chiefs of Ulster!

Go thou forward to Derg, to Deda at his bay, to Lemain, to Follach, to Illann son of Fergus at Gabar, to Dornail Feic at Imchlar, to Derg Imdirg, to Fedilmid son of Ilar Cetach of Cualnge at Ellonn, to Reochad son of Fathemon at Rigdonn, to Lug, to Lugaid, to Cathba at his bay, to Carfre at Ellne, to Laeg at his causeway, to Gemen in his valley, to Senoll Uathach at Diabul Ard, to Cethern son of Fintan at Carrloig, to Cethern at Eillne, to Tarothor, to Mulach at his fort, to the royal poet Amargin, to Uathach Bodba, to the Morrigan at Dún Sobairche, to Eit, to Roth, to Fiachna at his mound, to Dam drend, to Andiaraid, to Manè Macbriathrach, to Dam Derg, to Mod, to Mothus, to Iarmothus at Corp Cliath, to Gabarlaig in Linè, to Eocho Semnech in Semne, to Eochaid Laithrech at Latharne, to Celtchar son of Uthecar in Lethglas, to Errgè Echbel at Bri Errgi, to Uma son of Remarfessach at Fedain in Cualnge, to Munremur son of Gercend at Moduirn, to Senlabair at Canann Gall, to Fallomain, to Lugaid, king of the Fir Bolg, to Lugaid of Linè, to Buadgalach, to Abach, to Fergna at Barrene, to Anè, to Aniach, to Abra, to Loegaire Milbel, at his fire (?), to the three sons of Trosгал at Bacc Draigin, to Drend, to Drenda, to Drendus, to Cimb, to Cimbil, to Cimbin at Fan na Coba, to Fachtna son of Sencha at his rash, to Sencha, to Senchainte, to Bricriu, to Briccirne son of Bricriu, to Brecc, to Buan, to Barach, to Oengus of the Fir Bolg, to Oengus son of Letè, to Fergus son of Letè, to . . . (?), to Bruachar, to Slangè, to Conall Cernach son of Amargin at

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Midluachar, to Cuchulain son of Sualtaim at Murthemne, to Menn son of Salcholga at Rena, to the three sons of Fiachna, Ross, Darè and Imchad at Cualnge, to Connud macMorna at the Callann, to Condra son of Amargin at his rash, to Amargin at Ess Ruaid, to Laeg at Leirè, to Oengus Ferbenduma, to Ogma Grianainech at Brecc, to Eo macFornè, to Tollcend, to Sudè at Mag Eol in Mag Dea, to Conla Saeb at Uarba, to Loegaire Buadach at Immail, to Amargin Iarngiunnach at Taltiu, to Furbaide Ferbenn son–of Conchobar at Sil in Mag Inis, to Cuscraid Menn of Macha son of Conchobar at Macha, to Fingin at Fingabair, to Blae 'the Hospitaller of a score,' to Blae 'the Hospitaller of six men,' to Eogan son of Durthacht at Fernmag, to Ord at Mag Sered, to Oblan, to Obail at Culenn, to Curethar, to Liana at Ethbenna, to Fernel, to Finnchad of Sliab Betha, to Talgoba at Bernas, to Menn son of the Fir Cualann at Mag Dula, to Iroll at Blarinè, to Tobraidè son of Ailcoth, to Ialla Ilgremma, to Ross son of Ulchrothach at Mag Dobra, to Ailill Finn, to Fethen Bec, to Fethan Mor, to Fergus son of Finnchoem at Burach, to Olchar, to Ebadchar, to Uathchar, to Etatchar, to Oengus son of Oenlam Gabè, to Ruadri at Mag Tail, to Manè son of Crom, to Nindech son of Cronn, to . . . (?), to Mal macRochraidi, to Beothach, to Briathrach at his rash, to Narithla at Lothor, to the two sons of Feic, Muridach and Cotreb, to Fintan son of Niamglonnach at Dun da Benn, to Feradach Finn Fechnach at Nemed of Sliab Fuait, to Amargin son of Ecetsalach at the Buas, to Bunnè son of Munremar, to Fidach son of Dorarè, to Muirnè Menn.

It was nowise a heavy task for Finnchad to gather this assembly and muster which Conchobar had enjoined upon him. For all there were of Ulstermen to the east of Emain and to the west of Emain and to the north of Emain set out at once for the field of Emain in the service of their king, and at the word of their lord, and to await the recovery of Conchobar. Such as were from the south of Emain waited not for Conchobar, but set out directly on the trail of the host and on the hoof–prints of the Táin.

The first stage the men of Ulster marched under Conchobar was from Emain to the green in Iraird Cuillinn that night. "Why now delay we, ye men?" Conchobar asked. "We await thy sons," they answered; "Fiacha and Fiachna who have gone with a division from us to Tara to fetch Erc son of thy daughter Fedlimid Nocruthach ('Nine–shaped'), son also of Carbre Niafer king of Tara, to the end that he should come with the number of his muster and his troops, his levy and his forces to our host at this time." "By my word," exclaimed Conchobar; "I will delay here no longer for them, lest the men of Erin hear of my rising from the weakness and 'Pains' wherein I was. For the men of Erin know not even if I am still alive!"

Thereupon Conchobar and Celtchar proceeded with thirty hundred spear–bristling chariot–fighters to Ath Irmidi ('the Ford of Spear–points'). And there met them eight–score huge men of the body–guard of Ailill and Medb, with eight–score women as their spoils. Thus was their portion of the plunder of Ulster: A woman–captive in the hand of each man of them. Conchobar and Celtchar struck off their eight–score heads and released their eight–score captive–women. Ath Irmidi ('the Ford of Spear–points') was the name of the place till that time; Ath Fenè is its name ever since. It is for this it is called Ath Fenè, because the warriors of the Fenè from the east and the warriors of the Fenè from the west encountered one another in battle and contest man for man on the brink of the ford.

Conchobar and Celtchar returned that night to the green in Iraird Cuillinn hard by the men of Ulster. Thereupon Celtchar aroused the men of Ulster.

24b. The Agitation of Celtchar

It was then that Celtchar in his sleep uttered these words in the midst of the men of Ulster in Iraird Cuillinn that night:

"Thirty hundred chariot–men;
An hundred horse–companions stout;
An hundred with an hundred druids!

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To lead us will not fail
The hero of the land,
Conchobar with hosts around him!
Let the battle line be formed!
Gather now, ye warriors!
Battle shall be fought
At Garech and Ilgarech
On aftermorrow's morn!"

On that same night Cormac Conlongas, Conchobar's son, spake these words to the men of Erin at Slemain Mide that night:

"A wonder of a morning,
A wondrous I time!
When hosts will be confused,
Kings turned back in flight!
Necks will be broken,
The sand made red,
When forth breaks the battle, the seven chieftains before,
Of Ulster's host round Conchobar!
Their women will they defend,
For their herds will they fight
At Garech and Ilgarech,
On the morning after the morrow! "

On that same night, Dubthach Doel ('the Scorpion') of Ulster uttered these words in his sleep among the men of Erin at Slemain Mide that night:

"Great be the morn,
The morn of Meath!
Great be the truce
The truce of Culenn!

"Great be the fight,
The fight Of Clartha!
Great, too, the steeds,
The steeds of Assal!

"Great be the plague,
The plague of Tuath–Bressi!
Great be the storm,
Ulster's battle–storm round Conchobar!

"Their women will they defend,
For their herds will they fight
At Garech and Ilgarech,
On the morning after the morrow!"

Dubthach was awakened from his sleep, so that Nemain brought confusion on the host and they fell trembling in their arms under the points of their spears and weapons, so that an hundred warriors of them fell dead in the midst of their camp and quarters at the fearfulness of the shout they heard on high. Be that as it would, that night was

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not the calmest for the men of Erin that they passed before or since, because of the forebodings and predictions and because of the spectres and visions that were revealed to them.

25. Here Followeth The Array of The Host

Said Ailill: "Truly have I succeeded," said he, "in laying waste Ulster and the land of the Picts from Monday at Summer's end till Spring's beginning. We have taken their women and the sons and their children, their steeds and their troops of horses, their herds and their flocks and their droves. We have laid level their hills after them, so that they have become lowlands and are all one height. For this cause, will I await them no longer here, but let them offer me battle on Mag Ai, if so it please them. But, say here what we will, some one shall go forth from us to watch the great, wide plain of Meath, to know if the men of Ulster come hither. And, should the men of Ulster come hither, I will in no wise be the first to retreat till battle be given them, for it was never the wont of a good king to retreat." "Who should fitly go thither?" asked all. "Who but macRoth our chief runner yonder?"

MacRoth went his way to survey the great wide–spreading plain of Meath. Not long was macRoth there when he heard something: A rush and a crash and a clatter and a clash. Not slight the thing he judged it to be, but as though it was the firmament itself that fell on the man–like face of the world, or as though it was the furrowed, blue–bordered ocean that broke o'er the tufted brow of the earth, or as though the ground had gone asunder in quakes, or as though the forest fell, each of the trees in the crotches and forks and branches of the other. But why give further accounts! The wood's wild beasts were hunted out on the plain, so that beneath them the grassy forelocks of the plain of Meath were not to be seen.

MacRoth hastened to tell this tale at the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Erin. MacRoth related the whole matter to them.

"What was that there, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Not hard to say," said Fergus. "It was the rush and tramp and clatter that he heard," said Fergus, "the din and thunder, the tumult and turmoil of the Ulstermen, who have come into the woods, the throng of champions and battle–heroes cutting down with their swords the woods in the way of their chariots. This it was that hath put the wild animals to flight on the plain, so that the grassy forelocks of the field of Meath are hidden beneath them!"

Another time macRoth surveyed the plain and he saw something: a heavy, grey mist that filled the space between the heavens and earth. It seemed to him that the hills were islands in lakes that he saw rising up out of the sloping valleys of mist. It seemed to him they were wide–yawning caverns that he saw there leading into that mist. It seemed to him it was all–white, flaxy sheets of linen, or sifted snow a–falling that he saw there through a rift in the mist. It seemed to him it was a flight of many, varied, wonderful, numerous birds, or the constant sparkling of shining stars on a bright, clear night of hoar–frost, or sparks of red–flaming fire. He heard something: A rush and a din and a hurtling sound, a noise and a thunder, a tumult and a turmoil. He hastened on to impart these tidings at the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Erin. He reported the matter to them.

"But what was that, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "Not hard to say," Fergus made answer. "This was the great, grey mist that he saw which filled the space between the heavens and earth, namely, the streaming breath both of horses and men, the smoke of the earth and the dust of the roads as it rose over them with the driving of the wind, so that it made a heavy, deep–grey misty vapour thereof in the clouds and the air.

"These were the islands over lakes that he saw there, and the tops of hills and of heights over the sloping valleys of mist, even the heads of the champions and battle–heroes over the chariots and the chariots withal. These were the wide–yawning caverns that he saw there leading into that mist, even the mouths and the nostrils of the horses and champions exhaling and inhaling the sun and the wind with the speed of the host.

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These were the all–white, flax–like cloths that he saw there or the streaming snow a–falling, to wit the foam and the froth that the bridles of the reins flung from the bits of strong, stout steeds with the stress, with the swiftness and strength and speed of the host.

"These were the flights of many, various, wonderful, numerous birds that he saw there, even the dust of the ground and the top of the earth and the sods which the horses flung from their feet and their hoofs and arose over the heads of the host with the driving of the wind.

"This was the rush and the crash and the hurtling sound, the din and the thunder, the clatter and clash that he heard there, to wit the shield–shock of shields and the jangle of javelins and the hard–smiting of swords and the ring of helmets, the clangour of breast–plates and the rattle of arms and the fury of feats, the straining of ropes and the whirr of wheels and the trampling of horses' hoofs and the creaking of chariots, and the deep voices of heroes and battle–warriors coming hither towards us.

"This was the constant sparkling of shining stars on a bright, clear night that he saw there and the sparks of red–flaming fire, even the bloodthirsty, terrible eyes of the champions and battle–warriors from under beautiful, well–shaped, finely–adorned battle–helmets; eyes full of the fury and rage they brought with them, against the which neither before nor since has equal combat nor overwhelming force of battle prevailed, and against which it will never prevail till the very day of doom and of life!"

"We make not much of that," quoth Medb. "For there are goodly warriors and goodly fighting–men with us to cope with them." "Thou shalt have need of them," answered Fergus. "Truly, I count not on that, O Medb. For I give my word, thou shalt find no host in all Erin, nor in Alba, to cope with the men of Ulster when once their anger comes on them!"

Then did the four grand provinces of Erin pitch camp and make lodgment at Clartha for that night. They sent forth folk to keep watch and guard against Ulster, to the end that the Ulstermen might not come upon them without warning, without notice.

Then it was that Conchobar and Celtchar with thirty hundred bristling chariot–fighters set forth, till they halted at Slemain Mide ('Slane of Meath') in the rear of the host. But, though 'halted' we have said, a very brief halt made they there, but proceeded for a favourable sign to the quarters of Ailill and Medb, so they might be the first of all to redden their hands.

It was not long macRoth had been there when he saw something: An incomparable, immense troop of horsemen in Slane of Meath coming straight from the northeast. He hastened forward to where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the chiefs of the men of Erin. Ailill asked tidings of him on his arrival: "Say, mac Roth," queried Ailill; "sawest thou aught of the men of Ulster on the trail of the host this day?" "Truly I know not," answered macRoth; "but I saw an incomparable, immense troop of horsemen in Slane of Meath coming straight from the north–east." "But how many numbered the horse–troop?" asked Ailill. "Not fewer, meseemed, than thirty hundred fully armed chariot–fighters were they, even ten hundred and twenty hundred fully armed chariot–fighters," macRoth made answer.

"So, O Fergus," quoth Ailill. "How thinkest thou to terrify us till now with the smoke and dust and the breath of a mighty host, while all the battle–force thou hast is that we see yonder!" "A little too soon belittles thou them," Fergus retorted; "for mayhap the bands are more numerous than is said they are."

"Let us take good, swift counsel on the matter," said Medb; "for yon huge, most fierce, most furious man will attack us we ween, Conchobar, to wit, son of Fachtna Fathach ('the Giant') son of Ross Ruad ('the Red') son of Rudraige, himself High King of Ulster and son of the High King of Erin. Let there be a hollow array of the men of Erin before Conchobar and a force of thirty hundred ready to close in from behind, and the men shall be taken and

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in no wise wounded; for, no more than is a caitiff's lot is this whereto they are come!" Wherefore this is the third most derisive word that was spoken on the Cattle–lifting of Cualnge, even to take Conchobar prisoner without wounding, and to inflict a caitiff's lot on the ten hundred and twenty hundred who accompanied the kings of Ulster.

And Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar heard that, and he knew that unless he took vengeance at once upon Medb for her great boast, he would not avenge it till the very day of doom and of life.

It was then that Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar arose with his troop of thirty hundred to inflict the revenge of battle and prowess upon Ailill and Medb. Ailill arose with his thirty hundred to meet him. Medb arose with her thirty hundred. The Manè arose with their thirty hundred. The sons of Maga arose with their thirty hundred. The Leinstermen and the Munstermen and the people of Temair arose and made interposition between them, so that on both sides each warrior sat down near to the other and near by his arms.

Meanwhile a hollow array of men was made by Medb to face Conchobar and a warlike band of thirty hundred ready to close in from behind. Conchobar proceeded to attack the circle of men. And he was far from seeking any particular breach, but he worked a small gap, broad enough for a man–at–arms, right in front over against him in the circle of combatants, and effected a breach of an hundred on his right side, and a breach of an hundred on his left, and he turned in on them, and mingled among them on their ground, and there fell of them eight hundred fully brave warriors at his hands. And thereafter he left them without blood or bleeding from himself and took his station in Slane of Meath at the head of the men of Ulster.

"Come, ye men of Erin!" cried Ailill. "Let some one go hence to scan the wide–stretching plain of Meath, to know in what guise the men of Ulster come to the height in Slane of Meath, to bring us an account of their arms and the gear and their trappings, their kings and their royal readers, their champions and battle–warriors and gapbreakers of hundreds and their yeomen, to which to listen will shorten the time for us." "Who should go thither?" asked all. "Who but macRoth the chief runner," Ailill made answer.

MacRoth went his way till he took his station in Slane of Meath, awaiting the men of Ulster. The Ulstermen were busied in marching to that hill from gloaming of early morn till sunset hour in the evening. In such manner the earth was never left naked under them during all that time, every division of them under its king, and every band under its leader, and every king and every leader and every lord with the number of his force and his muster, his gathering and his levy apart. Howbeit, by sunset hour in the evening all the men of Ulster had taken position on that height in Slane of Meath.

MacRoth came forward with the account of their first company to the place where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were and the nobles of the men of Erin. Ailill and Medb asked tidings of him when he arrived. "Come, macRoth," quoth Ailill, "tell us in what manner of array do the Ulstermen advance to the hill of Slane in Meath?"

"Truly, I know not," answered macRoth, "except this alone: There came a fiery, powerful, most well–favoured company upon the hill of Slane in Meath," said macRoth. "It seemed, on scanning and spying, that a thrice thirty hundred warriors were in it. Anon they all doffed their garments and threw up a turfy mound for their leader to sit on. A youth, slender, long, exceeding great of stature, fair to behold, proud of mien, in the van of the troop. Fairest of the princes of the world was he in the midst of his warriors, as well in fearsomeness and in awe, in courage and command; fair–yellow hair, curled, delicately arranged in ridges and bushy had he; a comely, clear–rosy countenance he had; a deep–blue–gray, angry eye, devouring and fear–inspiring, in his head; a two–forked beard, yellow, fairly curled, on his chin; a purple mantle with fringes and five–folded wrapped around him; a brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a shining–white, hooded shirt under red interweaving of red gold he wore next his white skin; a bright–white shield with figures of beasts of red gold thereon; a gold–hilted, hammered sword in one of his hands; a broad and gray–green lance in the other. That warrior took his station on the top of the mound, so that each one came up to him and his company took their places around him.

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"There came also another company to the same height in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Second of the two divisions of thirty hundred it was. A well–favoured warrior was there likewise at the head of that company; fair–yellow hair he wore; a bright, curly beard about his chin; a green mantle wrapped around him; a bright–silvern pin in the mantle at his breast; a brown–red, soldier's tunic under red interweaving of red gold trussed up against his fair skin down to his knees; a candle of a king's house in his hand, with windings of silver and bands of gold; wonderful the feats and games performed with the spear in the hand of the youth; the windings of silver ran round it by the side of the bands of gold, now from the butt to the socket, while at other times it was the bands of gold that circled by the side of the windings of silver from socket to spear–end; a smiting shield with plaited edge he bore; a sword with hilt–pieces of ivory, and ornamented with thread of gold on his left side. This warrior took his station on the left of the leader of the first company who had come to the mound, and his followers got them seated around him. But, though we have said they sat, they did not verily seat themselves at once, but they sat thus, with their knees on the ground and the rims of their shields against their chins, so long it seemed to them till they should be let at us. But, one thing yet: Meseemed that the great, fierce youth who led the troop stammered grievously in his speech.

"Still another battalion there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Second to its fellow in number and followers and apparel. A handsome, broad–headed warrior at the head of that troop; dark–yellow hair in tresses he wore; an eager, dark–blue eye rolling restlessly in his head; a bright, curled beard, forked and tapering, at his chin; a dark–grey cloak with fringes, folded around him; a leaf–shaped brooch of silvered bronze in the mantle over his breast; a white–hooded shirt reaching to his knees was girded next to his skin; a bright shield with raised devices of beasts thereon he bore; a sword with white silver hilt in battle–scabbard at his waist; the pillar of a king's palace he bore on his back. This warrior took his station on the hill of turf facing the warrior who first came to the hill, and his company took their places around him. But sweet as the tone of lutes in masters' hands when long sustained, so seemed to me the melodious sound of the voice and the speech of the youth conversing with the warrior who first came to the hill and offering him every counsel."

"But who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Truly, we know him well," Fergus made answer. "This, to wit, is the first hero for whom they threw up the mound of turf on the height of the hill and whom all approached, namely, Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige, High King of Ulster, and son of the High King of Erin. This, to wit, is the stammering, great warrior who took station on his father Conchobar's left, namely, Cuscraid Menn ('the Stammerer') of Macha, Conchobar's son, with the sons of the king of Ulster and the sons of the princes of the men of Erin close by him. This is the spear he saw in his hand, even the 'Torch of Cuscraid,' with its windings of silver and bands of gold. It is the wont of that spear that neither before nor after, but only on the eve of a triumph, do the silver windings run round it by the side of the bands of gold. Belike, it is almost before a triumph they course round it now.

"The well–favoured, broad–headed warrior who seated himself on the hill in the presence of the youth who first came on the mound, namely is Sencha son of Ailill son of Maelcho 'the Eloquent' of Ulster, he that is wont to appease the hosts of the men of Erin. But, yet a word more I say: It is not the counsel of cowardice nor of fear that he gives his lord this day on the day of strife, but counsel to act with valour and courage and wisdom and cunning. But, again one word further I say," added Fergus: "It is a goodly people for performing great deeds that has risen there early this day around Conchobar!" "We make not much of them," quoth Medb; "we have goodly warriors and stout youths to deal with them." "I count not that for much," answered Fergus again; "but I say this word: Thou wilt not find in Erin nor in Alba a host to be a match for the men of Ulster when once their anger comes upon them."

"Yet another company there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "A fair, tall, great warrior in the van of that battalion, and he of fiery spirit, with noble countenance. Brown, dark–coloured hair he wore, smooth and thin on his forehead; a dull–grey cloak girt around him; a silver pin in the cloak over his breast; a bright, sleeved tunic next to his skin; a curved shield with sharp, plaited rim he bore; a five–pronged spear in his hand; a straightsword with ornaments of walrus–tooth in its place." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of

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Fergus. "In very sooth, we know him," Fergus made answer. "The putting of hands on strife is he; a battle-warrior for combat and destruction on foes is the one who is come there, even Eogan son of Durthacht, king of the Fernmag in the north, is the one yonder."

"Another battalion there came thither to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "It is surely no false word that boldly they took the hill. Deep the terror, great the fear they brought with them. Their raiment all thrown back behind them. A great-headed, warlike warrior in the forefront of the company, and he eager for blood, dreadful to look upon. Spare, grizzly hair had he; huge, yellow eyes in his head; a yellow, close-napped (?) cloak around him; a pin of yellow gold in the cloak over his breast; a yellow tunic with lace next his skin; in his hand a nailed, broad-plated, long-shafted spear with a drop of blood on its edge." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "In truth then, we know him, that warrior," Fergus gave answer. "Neither battle nor battlefield nor combat nor contest shuns he, the one who is come thither. Loegaire Buadach ('the Victorious') son of Connad Buide ('the Yellow') son of Iliach, from Immail in the north, is the one yonder."

"Another company there came there too to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A thick-necked, burly warrior at the head of that troop; black, bushy hair he had; a scarred, crimsoned face he had; a deep-blue-gray, blazing eye in his head; a spear set with eyes of glass, casting shadows over him; a black shield with a hard rim of silvered bronze upon him, a dun-coloured cloak of curly wool about him; a brooch of pale gold in the cloak over his breast; a three-striped tunic of silk next to his skin; a sword with ivory hilt and with ornamentation of thread of gold over his dress on the outside." "But, who might that man be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "We know him full well," Fergus made answer. "He is the putting of hand on strife; a wave of the high sea that drowneth; he is the man of three shouts; the sea over walls; the man who comes thither. Muremur ('Thick-neck') son of Gercend ('Short-head') from Moduirn in the north is the one yonder."

"Still another company there came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A broad-headed, stout warrior, pleasantly found of limb, in the front of that troop; he is dried and sallow; he is wild and bull-like; a dun, round eye, proud in his head; yellow, very curly is his hair; a red, round shield with hardsilver rim about it he bore; a broad-plated, long-shafted spear in his hand; a streaked-gray cloak around him; a brooch of copper in the cloak over his breast; a hooded kirtle girded around him reaching down to his calves; a straight sword with ornaments of walrus-tooth on his left thigh." "But who might he be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "I know him indeed," Fergus made answer. "He is the prop of battle; he is the triumph of every combat; he is the tool that pierces, is the man who comes thither. Connud macMorna, from the Callann in the north, is the man yonder."

"There came still another company to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "It is indeed no lying word, it is with might and storm they gained the hill, so that with the clash of arms they made at the approach of that company they startled the hosts that had arrived there before them. A man, comely and noble, in advance of that band; most well-favoured to see of the men of the world, whether in shape or form or frame; whether in arms or apparel; whether in size or worth or beauty; whether in figure or valour or conduct." "Then it is surely no lying word," Fergus said: "A fitting saying is this, 'No fool 'mongst the naked is he who comes thither.' He is the foe of all others; he is a power irresistible; the storm-wave that drowneth, the glitter of ice is that well-favoured man. Fedilmid son of Ilar Cetach of Cualnge, from Ellonn in the north, is he yonder."

"Still another battalion came thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath," macRoth proceeded. "Not often is a warrior seen more handsome than the warrior that is in the front rank of that company. Bushy, red-yellow hair he wore; his face slender below, broad above; a deep-blue-gray, beaming eye, and it flashing and laughing in his head; a well-set, shapely man, tall, slender below and broad above; red, thin lips he had; teeth shining and pearl-like; a white-skinned body; a purple cloak wrapped around him; a brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a hooded tunic of royal silk with a red hem of red gold he wore next to his white skin; a bright, curved shield with figures of beasts in red gold thereon; a gold-hilted, inlaid sword at his left side; a long, gray-edged spear along with a cutting bye-spear of attack, with thongs for throwing, with fastenings of silvered bronze, in his hand." "But who might that man be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "We know him full well," Fergus made answer. "He

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is half of a battle; he is the dividing of combat; he is the wild rage of a watchhound, the man who is come thither; Rochad son of Fatheman, from Rigdonn in the north, is he yonder."

"Another battalion there came to the same hill in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A stalwart, thick-calved warrior at the head of that company; little but every limb of him as stout as a man. Verily it is no lying word, he is a man down to the ground," said he. "Brown, bushy hair upon his head; a ruddy countenance covered with scars he had; a flashing, proud eye in his head; a splendid, dexterous man was there, in this wise: Accompanied by black-haired, black-eyed youths; with a red, flaming banner; with wilful rashness, so that they seek to rout overwhelming numbers outside of equal combat, with the violence of assault upon them, without having aught assistance from Conchobar." "But, who might he be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Aye then we know him," Fergus made answer. "A thirst for valour and prowess is he that came thither; a thirst for madness and fury. The welding of hosts and of arms; the point of battle and of slaughter of the men of the north of Erin, mine own real foster-brother himself, Fergus son of Lete, the king from Line in the north, is the man yonder!"

"Still another company came to the same hill in Slane of Meath," macRoth continued, "steadfast, without equal. A handsome, untiring warrior in the van of this company. A blue, narrow-bordered cloth next to his skin, with strong, woven and twisted hoops of silvered bronze, with becoming, sharp-fashioned buttons of red gold on its slashes and breastborders; a green mantle, pieced together with the choicest of all colours, folded about him; five circles of gold, that is, his shield, he bore on him; a tough, obdurate, straight-bladed sword for a hero's handling hung high on his left side. A straight, fluted spear, flaming red and venomous in his hand." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Truly, we know him well," Fergus made answer. "The choice flower of royal poets is he. He is the rush on the rash; he is the way to the goal, fierce is his valour, the man that came thither; Amargin son of the smith Ecetsalach ('the Grimy'), the noble poet from the Buas in the north, is he."

"There came yet another company there to the same hill in Slane of Meath, continued macRoth. "A yellow-haired hero in the front rank of that band. Fair was the man, both in hair and eye and beard and eyebrows and apparel; a rimmed shield he bore; a gold-hilted, overlaid sword on his left side; a five-pointed spear that reflected its glare over the entire host in his hand." "But who was that man?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "In sooth, we know him well, Fergus made answer. "Cherished, in truth, is that warrior by the people, he that to us is come thither; cherished, the stout-brow-dealing beast; cherished, the bear of great deeds against foes, with the violence of his attack. Feradach Finn Fectnach ('the Fair and Righteous') from Nemed ('the Grove') in Sliab Fuait in the north, is the one that is come there."

"Another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "Three bold, high-spirited youths of noble countenance in the front rank of that company. Three cloaks of the one colour they wore folded upon them; three shields wholly alike they bore; three five-pointed, spears in their hands." "Who were those men there, Fergus?" Ailill asked. "I know," Fergus answered; "the three princes of Ilath, the three champions of Colph, the three of Midluachair great in achievements, three seasoned warriors of the east of Erin, to wit, the three sons of Fiachna in quest of their bull are there, even Ros and Darè and Imchad, for theirs was the possession of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. Even had they come alone, they would have offered you battle in defence of their bull and their drove, even though before them the enemy should not be routed."

"Yet another company there came thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Two fair, tender, young warriors at the head of that company; two green cloaks wrapped about them; two bright-silver brooches in the cloaks over the breasts; two tunics of smooth yellow silk next to their skin; bright-hilted swords on the belts; two five-pronged spears with windings of pure bright silver in the hands. Moreover, their years were nigh the same." "But, who might they be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Well do we know them," Fergus made answer. "Two single, strong-necked champions are they; two united flames; two united torches; two champions; two heroes; two ridge-poles of hosts; two dragons; two thunderbolts; two destroyers (?); two boars; two bold ones; two mad ones; the two loved ones of Ulster around the king; namely Fiacha and Fiachna have come thither, two sons of Conchobar son of Fachtna son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige."

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"There came also another company to that same mound," said macRoth. "'Tis the engulfing of the sea for size; red-flaming fire for splendour; a legion for number; a rock for strength; annihilation for battle; thunder for might. A wrathful, terrible, ill-favoured one at the head of that band, and he was big-nosed, large-eared, apple-eyed. Coarse, grizzly hair he wore; a streaked-gray cloak about him; a skewer of iron in the cloak over his breast, so that it reached from one of his shoulders to the other; a rough, three-striped tunic next to his skin; a sword of seven charges of remelted iron he bore on his rump; a brown hillock he bore, namely his shield; a great, grey spear with thirty nails driven through its socket he had in his hand. The lines and battalions were thrown into disorder at the sight of that warrior, as he came surrounded by his company to the hill, in Slane of Meath." "But who might that man be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Ah, but we know him well," Fergus made answer. "He is the half of the battle; he is the head of strife; he is the head of combat in valour; he is the sea overbounds, the man that is come thither; the mighty Celtchar son of Uthechar, from Lethglass in the north, is the man there!

"There came yet another company thither to the same hill in Slane of Meath," said macRoth; "one that is firm and furious; one that is ugly and fearful. A great-bellied, big-mouthed champion in the van of that troop; with but one clear eye, and half-brained, long-handed. Brown, very curly hair he wore; a black, flowing mantle around him; a wheel-shaped brooch of tin in the mantle over his breast; a cunningly wrought tunic next to his skin; a great long sword under his waist; a well-tempered lance in his right hand; a grey buckler he bore on him, that is, his shield." "Pray, who might that man be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Indeed, but we know him," Fergus made answer; "the wild, red-handed, rendng lion; the fierce, fearful bear that overcometh valour. Errge Echbel ('Horse-mouth'), from Bri Errgi ('Errge's Mound') in the north, is the one there."

"Yet another company there came to the same hill in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "A large, fiery man at the head of that company; foxy-red hair he had; huge, crimson-red eyes in his head; bulging as far as the bend of a warrior's finger is either of the very large crimson, kingly eyes he had; a many-coloured cloak about him; a grey shield he bore; a slender, blue lance above him; a blood-smear, becrimsoned company around him; himself covered with wounds and blood in their midst." "Now who might he be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Well do we know him," Fergus made answer. "He is the bold, the ruthless, the swift-moving eagle; the eager lance; the goring beast; the torrent of the Colbtha; the triumphant hero from Bailer he is the shaft(?); he is the bellowing hero from Bernas ('the Gap'); the furious bull; Menn son of Salcholga, from Rena ('the Waterways') of the Boyne."

"Yet another company came thither to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A long-jawed, sallow-faced warrior at the head of that company; black hair on his head; long limbs are his legs; a cloak of red curly wool about him; a brooch of white silver in the cloak over his breast; a linen shirt next to his skin; a gory-red shield with a boss of gold he bore; a sword with hilt of white silver on his left side; a sharp-cornered, gold-socketed spear he held over him." "But, who might he be?" Ailill asked of Fergus. "Truly, we know him," Fergus made answer. The man of three stout blows has come; the man of three highways is he; the man of three roads, the man of three paths, the man of three ways; the man of three triumphs; Fergna son of Findchoem, king of Burach, from Ulster in the north, has come thither."

"Even another company came there to the same mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A large, well-favoured man in the van of that company. Like to Ailill yonder, with his pointed weapons, the restrainer, both in features and noble bearing and fairness, both in arms and apparel, in valour and bravery and fame and deeds. A blue shield with boss of gold was upon him. A gold-hilted sword on his left side; a five-pronged spear with gold, in his hand; a golden crown on his head." "But, who might that be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Ah, but we know him well," Fergus made answer. "The root of all manhood; the assault of overwhelming power; the annihilation of men is he that is come thither. Furbaide Ferbenn son of Conchobar, from Sil in Mag Inis in the north, is there."

"Yet another company came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A sharp, proud folk; a stately, royal company, with their apparel of many colours, as well white and blue and black and purple, so that to a king could be likened each spirited, chosen man in the noble, most wonderful troop. A feast for the eyes of a

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host, to gaze on their comeliness and their garb, as if it was going forth to some great surpassing assembly was each single man of that company. A trine of noble, distinguished men were in the front rank of that company. The first man of them with a dark-grey mantle fringed with gold thread about him; a brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast, a tunic of rare silk next to his skin; sandals of lamb's skin he wore. Not many men in the world are better-favoured than is he. A light-yellow head of hair he has; a bright-faced sword with ivory hilt and with coils of gold thread, in his right hand. He flings on high the tooth-hilted sword, so that it falls on the head of the middle man but it simply grazes it. He catches it up in the air again, so that it falls on the head of the other man, and the first man catches it in his hand, and it divided not a ringlet nor the skin of the head of either of them, and these two men did not perceive it.

Two brown, rich-hued, bright-faced youths; reddish-gray mantles around them; white-silver brooches in their mantles over their breasts; a bright-hilted sword under their waists; purple sandals they wore; as sweet as strings of lutes when long sustained in players' hands was the voice and song of one of the men, so that enough of delight it was to the host to listen to the sound of his voice. Worthy of a king or of a prince was each man in that company as regards apparel and appearance; thou wouldst think, at the sight of them, they were all kings. Neither spears nor swords do they bear, but their servants bear them."

"An over-proud body is that," quoth Ailill; "and who may they be, O Fergus?" he asked. "I know full well," replied Fergus; "the poets of Ulster are they, with Fercerdne. The fair, much-gifted, whom thou sawest, even the learned master of Ulster, Fercerdne. 'Tis before him that the lakes and rivers sink when he upbraids, and they swell up high when he applauds. The two others thou sawest are Athirne the chief poet, whom none can deny, and Ailill Miltenga ('Honey-tongue') son of Carba; and he is called Ailill 'Honey-tongue' for that as sweet as honey are the words of wisdom that fall from him."

"There came yet another company to the mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "A most terrible, dreadful sight to behold them. Blue and pied and green, purple, grey and white and black mantles; a kingly, white-gray, broad-eyed hero in the van of that company; wavy, grizzled hair upon him; a blue-purple cloak about him; a leaf-shaped brooch with ornamentation of gold in the cloak over his breast; a shield, stoutly braced with buckles of red copper; yellow sandals he wore; a large, strange-fashioned sword along his shoulder. Two curly-haired, white-faced youths close by him, wearing green cloaks and purple sandals and blue tunics, and with brown shields fitted with hooks, in their hands; white-hilted swords with silvered bronze ornaments they bore; a broad, somewhat light countenance had one of them. One of these cunning men raises his glance to heaven and scans the clouds of the sky and bears their answer to the marvellous troop that is with him. They all lift their eyes on high and watch the clouds and work their spells against the elements, so that the elements fall to warring with each other, till they discharge rain-clouds of fire downwards on the camp and entrenchments of the men of Erin."

"Who might that be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "I know him," replied Fergus; "the foundation of knowledge; the master of the elements; the heaven-soaring one; he that blindeth the eyes; that depriveth his foe of his strength through incantations of druids, namely Cathba the friendly druid, with the druids of Ulster about him. And to this end he makes augury when judging the elements, in order to ascertain therefrom how the great battle on Garech and Ilgarech will end. The two youths that are about him, they are his own two sons, to wit Imrim son of Cathba and Genonn Gruadsolus ('Bright-cheek') son of Cathba, he that has the somewhat light countenance. Howbeit it will be hard for the men of Erin to withstand the spells of the druids."

"Yet another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A numberless, bright-faced band; unwonted garments they wore; a little bag at the waist of each man of them. A white-haired, bull-faced man in the front of that company; an eager, dragon-like eye in his head; a black, flowing robe with edges of purple around him; a many coloured, leaf-shaped brooch with gems, in the robe over his breast; a ribbed tunic of thread of gold around him; a short sword, keen and hard, with plates of gold, in his hand; they all came to show him their stabs and their sores, their wounds and their ills, and he told each one his sickness, and he gave each a cure, and what at last happened to each was even the ill he foretold him." "He is the power of leechcraft; he

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is the healing of wounds; he is the thwarting of death; he is the absence of every weakness, is that man," said Fergus, "namely Fingin the prophet mediciner, the physician of Conchobar, with the physicians of Ulster around him. It is he that knoweth the sickness of a man by the smoke of the house wherein he lies, or by hearing his groans. Their medicine bags are the sacks which thou sawest with them."

"Another company came to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth. "A powerful, heavy, turbulent company; they caused uproar in their deeds of arms for the accomplishment of brilliant feats; they tore up the sad–sodded earth with the strength of their bitter rage, for the mighty princes of the proud province of Conchobar would not allow them to proceed to the great camp till all should be arrived. Two youths, swarthy and huge, in the front of that company; soft, playful eyes in their heads; about them, dark–grey tunics with silver pins set with stones; great, horn–topped swords with sheaths they bore; strong, stout shields they bore; lances with rows of rivets, in their hands; glossy tunics next to their skin." "We know well that company," quoth Fergus; "the household of Conchobar and his vassals are those; their two leaders, Glasne and Menn, two sons of Uthechar."

"There came yet another band to the mound in Slane of Meath," continued macRoth; "to wit, a band of a numerous body of henchmen. A black, hasty, swarthy, ——— man in the front rank of that band; seven chains around his neck; seven men at the end of each chain; he drags along these seven groups of men, so that their faces strike against the ground, and they revile him until he desists. Another terrible man is there, and the ponderous stone which powerful men could not raise, he sets on his palm and flings on high to the height a lark flies on a day of fine weather; a club of iron at his belt." "I know those men," quoth Fergus: "Triscoth the strong man of Conchobar's house; it is he that flings the stone on high. Ercenn son of the three stewards, he it is in the chains."

"There came another large, stately company to the mound in Slane of Meath," macRoth went on. "Three, very curly–headed, white–faced youths in the van of that troop; three curly–red kirtles with brooches of silvered bronze was the apparel they wore about them; three sparkling tunics of silk with golden seams tucked up about them; three studded shields with images of beasts for emblems in silvered bronze upon them and with bosses of red gold; three very keen swords with guards adorned with gold thread along their shoulders; broad–bladed javelin–heads on ashen shafts in their hands." "Who might that be there, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "That I know," answered Fergus: "the three venoms of serpents; three cutting ones; three edges; three watchful ones; three points of combat; three pillars of the borders; three powerful companies of Ulster; three wardens of Erin; three triumph–singers of a mighty host are there," said Fergus, "the three sons of Conchobar, namely Glas and Manè and Conaing."

"Yet another company there came to the mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Stately, in beautiful colours, gleaming–bright they came to the mound. Not fewer than an army–division, as a glance might judge them A bold, fair–cheeked youth in the van of that troop; light–yellow hair has he; though a bag of red–shelled nuts were spilled on his crown, not a nut of them would fall to the ground because of the twisted, curly locks of his head. Bluish–grey as harebell is one of his eyes; as black as beetle's back is the other; the one brow black, the other white; a forked, light–yellow beard has he; a magnificent red–brown mantle about him; a round brooch adorned with gems of precious stones fastening it in his mantle over his right shoulder; a striped tunic of silk with a golden hem next to his skin; an ever–bright shield he bore; a hard–smiting, threatening spear he held over him; a very keen sword with hilt–piece of red gold on his thigh." "Who might that be, O Fergus?" asked Ailill. "I know, then," replied Fergus: "it is battle against foes; it is the inciting of strife; it is the rage of a monster; it is the madness of a lion; it is the cunning of a snake; it is the rock of the Badb; it is the sea over dikes; it is the shaking of rocks; it is the stirring of a wild host, namely Conall Cernach ('the Victorious'), the high–glorious son of Amargin, that is come hither."

"Yet another company came to the same mound in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Steady and dissimilar to the other companies. Some wore red cloaks, others light–blue cloaks, others dark blue cloaks, others green cloaks, white and yellow jerking, beautiful and shiny, were over them. Behold the little, red–faced lad with purple mantle about him in their midst. A brooch of gold in the mantle over his breast; a tunic of royal silk with red trimming of

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red gold next to his white skin, a bright shield with intricate figures of beasts in red gold upon it; a boss of gold on the shield; an edge of gold around it; a small, gold-hilted sword at his waist; a sharp, light lance cast its shadow over him."

"But, who might he be?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Truly, I know not," Fergus made answer, "that I left behind me in Ulster the like of that company nor of the little lad that is in it. But, one thing I think likely, that they are the men of Temair with Erc son of Fedilmid Nocruthach and of Carbre Niafer. And if it be they, they are not more friends than their leaders here. Mayhap despite his father has this lad come to succour his grandfather at this time. And if these they be, a sea that drowneth shall this company be to ye, and the little lad that is in it that the battle shall this time be won against ye." "How through him?" asked Ailill. "Not hard to tell," Fergus responded: "for this little lad will know neither fear nor dread when slaying and slaughtering, until at length he comes into the midst of your battalion. Then shall be heard the whirr of Conchobar's sword like the yelp of a howling war-hound, or like a lion rushing among bears, while the boy will be saved. Then outside around the battle lines will [Conchobar] pile up huge walls of men's bodies. In turn, filled with love and devotion, the princes of the men of Ulster will hew the enemy to pieces. Boldly will those powerful bulls bellow as the calf of their cow is rescued in the battle on the morn of the morrow."

"Then came there three huge (?), strong, well-braced, cunningly-built castles; three mighty, wheeled-towers like unto mountains, in this wise placed in position: Three royal castles with their thirty fully armed battalions, swarming with evil-tongued warriors and with thirty round-shielded heroes. A bright, beautiful, glistening shield-guard was on each of the three strong, stout battle castles, with black, deadly armament of huge, high, blue, sharp pine-lances, such that one's bent knee would fit in the socket of each smooth, polished, even and hard spearhead that is on each huge, terrible, strange shaft of the terrible, awful, heavy, monstrous, indescribable armament that I saw. A third part of each shaft was contained in the socket of the riveted, very long, securely placed spears; as high as two cubits was each citadel from the ground; as long as a warrior's spear was the height of each battle hurdle; as sharp as charmed sword was the blade of each sickle on the sides and the flanks of each of Badb's hurdles; on each of the three stout and hard battle-hurdles they are to be found. Four dark, yet gleaming, well-adorned doors were on each battle-wheeled tower of the three royal wheeled-towers which were displayed and spread over the plain, with ivory door-posts, with lintels of cypress, with stately thresholds set of speckled, beautiful, strong pine, with their blue, glass door-leaves, with the glitter of crystal gems around each door-frame, so that its appearance from afar was like that of bright shining stars.

"As loud as the crash of a mighty wave at the great spring-tide, or of a huge heavy fleet upon the sea when toiling with the oars along the shore, was the similitude of the din and the clamour and the shouts and the tumult of the multitude and the to-and-fro of the thirty champions with their thirty heavy, iron clubs that they bear in their hands. And when the wheeled-towers advance massively and boldly against the line of heroes, these almost leave behind their arms at the fierce charge of the outland battalions. Then spring the three hundred champions with a shout of vengeful anger over the sides and over the front of the huge iron towers on wheels, so that this it was that checked the swift course and the great, hasty onslaught of the well-grounded, swiftly-moving, mighty chariots. The three stout, strong, battle-proof towers on wheels careered over rough places and over obstacles, over rocks and over heights.

"There coursed the thirty entire chargers, powerful, four abreast, the equal of ninety entire chargers, with manes more than big, bold and leaping, with sack-like, distended nostrils, high-headed, towering, over-powering, wonderful, so that they shook with their ramping the thick shell of the sad-sodded earth. They flecked the plain behind them with the foam dripping from the swift Danish steeds, from the bits and bridles, from the traces and tracks of the huge, maned, mighty steeds, greater than can be told! They excited strife with their din of arms. They plunged headlong in their swift impatience. They aroused great terror at their accoutrement, at their armour, at their cunning, at their power, at their hugeness, at their destructive, terrible, hostile vengeance on the four grand, proud provinces of Erin. Amazing to me was their appearance because of the unwontedness of their trappings both in form and in garb. Three wonderful flights of birds with variety of appearance hovered over them. The first

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flock was all red, the second flock was white as swans, the third flock as black as ravens. Three red–mouthed demons sped around them as swift as hares, circling the three wheeled towers, and this is what they prophesied:

"Sheaves of battle,
Might of quelling,
Ill of war–deeds,
Sating of foul ravens!
Sodden ground, blood–red;
Men low in dust;
Sheaves on sword–blades!"

"They wheeled about and brought them twelve battle–pillars of thick, huge, iron pillars. As thick as the middle of a warrior's thigh, as tall as a champion's spear was each battle–fork of them, and they placed four forks under each wheeled–tower. And their horses all ran from them and grazed upon the plain. And those forty that had gone in advance descend clad in armour on the plain, and the garrison of the three battle–wheeled towers falls to attacking and harassing them, and is attacked and harassed in turn by those forty champions, so that there was heard the breaking of shields and the loud blows of hard iron poles on bucklers and battle–helmets, on coats of mail and on the iron plates of smooth, hard, blue–black, sharp–beaked, forked spears. And in the whole camp there is none but is on the watch for their fierceness and their wrath and their cunning and their strangeness, for their fury, their achievements and the excellence of the guard. And in the place where the forty champions are and the thousand armed men contending with them, not one of the thousand had a wounding stroke nor a blow on his opponent because of the might of their skill in arms and the excellence of their defence withal!"

"They are hard to contend with for all such as are unfamiliar with them, is the opinion held of them," spake Fergus, "but they are readily to be dealt with for such as do know them. These are three battle–wheeled towers," Fergus continued, "as I perceive from their account. Once I saw their like, namely when as prentice I accompanied Darè to Spain, so that we entered the service of the king of Spain, Esorb to wit, and we afterwards made an expedition to Soda, that is, to the king of Africa, and we gave battle to the Carthaginians. There came their like upon us against the battle–line wherein we were, an hundred battalions and three score hundred in each battalion. One of the wheeled–towers won victory over us all, for we were not on our guard against them. And this is the way to defeat them: To mine a hole broader than the tower in the ground in the front thereof and cover over the pitfall; and for the battle–line to be drawn up over against it and not to advance to attack, so that it is the towers that advance and fall into the pit.

"Lebarcham told me, as I passed over Taltiu, that the Ulstermen brought these towers from Germany, and the towers held a third of the exiles of Ulster among them as their only dwelling; and Cualgae ('a Heap of Spears') is their name, namely battle–penfolds. And herein have ye the sorest of all hardships, for although all the men of Erin are drawn up against them, it is the men of Erin that will be defeated. When they take it upon them to engage in battle they cannot hold out without a combat. Thus will they remain now till morning, every forty men of them contending with the others. And this is my advice to you," said Fergus: "permit me with my division to withstand them, and do ye betake yourselves to the woods and wilds of Erin, and the Ulstermen shall not find ye in any place, and I will proceed as an example, depending on my own men–of–war." "There are men here for ye!" cried Medb. "That will be a force for yourselves," Fergus made answer.

"Yet another company came there to the same height in Slane of Meath," said macRoth. "Not fewer than a division was in it; wild, dark–red, warrior–bands; bright, clear, blue–purple men; long, fair–yellow heads of hair they wore; handsome, shining countenances they had; clear, kingly eyes; magnificent vesture with beautiful mantles; conspicuous, golden brooches along their bright–coloured sleeves; silken, glossy tunics; blue, glassy spears; yellow shields for striking withal; gold–hilted, inlaid swords set on their thighs; loud–tongued care has beset them; sorrowful are they all, and mournful; sad are the royal leaders; orphaned the brilliant company without their protecting lord who was wont to guard their lands." "But, who may they be?" asked Ailill of Fergus.

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"Indeed, we know them well," Fergus made answer. "Furious lions are they; deeds of battle; the division from the field of Murthemne are they. It is this that makes them cast–down, sorrowful, joyless as they are, because that their own divisional king himself is not amongst them, even Cuchulain, the restraining, victorious, red–sworded one that triumpheth in battle!"

"Good reason, in truth, there is for them to be so," quoth Medb, "if they are dejected, mournful and joyless. There is no evil we have not worked on them. We have harassed and we have assailed them, their territory and their land, from Monday at the beginning of Samaintide till the beginning of Spring. We have taken their women and their sons and their youths, their steeds and the troops of horses, their herds and their flocks and their droves. We have razed their hills after them till they are become lowlands, so that they are level with the plain."

"There is naught thou canst boast over them, O Medb!" cried Fergus. For thou didst them no hurt nor harm that yon fine company's leader avenged not on thee. For every mound and every grave, every stone and every tomb that is from hence to the east of Erin is the mound and the grave, the stone and the tomb of some goodly warrior and goodly youth, fallen at the hands of the noble chieftain of yonder company. Happy he to whom they hold! Woe to him whom they oppose! It will be enough, even as much as half a battle, for the men of Erin, when these defend their lord in the battle on the morning of the morrow."

"I heard a great uproar there, west of the battle or to its east," said macRoth. "Say, what noise was it?" asked Ailill of Fergus. "Ah, but we know it well," Fergus made answer: "Cuchulain it was, straining to go to battle, wearied at the length of his lying sick on Fert Sciach ('Thorn–mound') under hoops and clasps and ropes, and the men of Ulster do not permit him to go because of his sores and his wounds, inasmuch as he is not fit for battle and is powerless for combat after his encounter with Ferdiad."

True indeed spake Fergus. Cuchulain it was, wearied at the length of his lying supine on Fert Sciach under hoops and clasps and ropes.

Then came two women lampoonists from the camp and quarters of the men of Erin; their names, Fethan and Collach, to wit; and they stood with a feint of weeping and wailing over Cuchulain, telling him of the defeat of Ulster and the death of Conchobar and the fall of Fergus in combat.

26. The Decision of the Battle

It was on that night that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, came, and she was engaged in fomenting strife and sowing dissension between the two camps on either side, and she spoke these words:

"Ravens shall pick
The necks of men!
Blood shall gush
In combat wild!
Skins shall be hacked
Crazed with spoils!
Men's sides pierced
In battle brave,
Luibnech near!
Warriors' storm;
Mien of braves;
Cruachan's men!
Upon them comes
Ruin complete!

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Lines shall be strewn
Under foot;
Their race die out!
Then Ulster hail:
To Erna woe!
To Ulster woe:
Then Erna hail!
(This she said in Erna's ear.)
Naught inglorious shall they do
Who them await!"

It was then that Cuchulain spake to Laeg son of Rianganabair. "It would surely be unworthy of thee, O Laeg my master," said Cuchulain, "if between the two battle–lines there should happen anything to–day whereof thou hadst no tidings for me." "Whatsoever I shall learn, O Cucucuc," answered Laeg, "will be told thee. But, see yonder a little flock coming forth on the plain from the western camp and station now. Behold a band of henchmen after them to check and to stay them. Behold also a company of henchmen emerging from the eastern camp and station to seize them." "Surely, that is so!" exclaimed Cuchulain. "That bodes a mighty combat and is the occasion of a grand battle. The little flock will come over the plain and the bands of henchmen will encounter the little flock on the great field of battle." There, indeed, Cuchulain spoke true. And the little flock came forth upon the plain, and the companies of henchmen met in fray.

"Who gives the battle now, O Laeg my master," Cuchulain asked. "The folk of Ulster," Laeg answered: "that is the same as the young warriors of Ulster." "But how fight they?" Cuchulain asked. "Like men they fight," Laeg answered. "There where are the heroes of valour from the east in battle, they force a breach through the ranks to the west. There where are the heroes from the west, they lay a breach through the ranks to the eastward."

"I grieve that I am not yet strong enough to be on my feet amongst them. For, were I able to be on my feet amongst them, my breach would be manifest there to–day like that of another!" "But, this avow, O Cucuc," said Laeg: "it is no reproach to thy valour; it is no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast done bravely in time before now and thou wilt do bravely hereafter."

"Come, O my master Laeg!" cried Cuchulain; "rouse the men of Ulster to the battle now, for it is time that they come." Laeg came and roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he uttered these words there:

"Arise, ye kings of Macha,
Valiant in your deeds!
The Badb doth covet
Imbel's kine.
Blood of hearts pours out!
Goodly heroes' battle rushes in
With deeds of valour!
Hearts all red with gore:
Brows turned in flight.
Dismay of battle riseth.
For there was never found
One like unto Cuchulain,
Hound that Macha's weal doth work!
Quickly,
If it is for Cualnge's kine,
Let them now arise!

27. Now of The Battle of Garech

Thereupon arose all the men of Ulster at the one time in the train of their king, and at the word of their prince, and to prepare for the uprising in response to the call of Laeg son of Rianganabair. And in this wise they arose: stark–naked all of them, only their weapons in their hands. Each one whose tent door looked to the east, through the tent westwards he went, for that he deemed it too long to go round about it.

"How arise the Ulstermen now to the battle, Laeg my master?" asked Cuchulain. "Manfully they rise," said Laeg: "stark–naked all of them. Every man whose tent–door faces the east, through the tent westwards he goes, for he deems it too long to go round about it." "I pledge my word!" cried Cuchulain: "at a fitting hour have they now in the early day risen around Conchobar!"

Then spake Conchobar to Sencha son of Ailill: "Come, O Sencha my master," said Conchobar; "stay the men of Ulster, and let them not go to the battle til there come the strength of a good omen and favourable portent, till the sun mounts to the roof–tree of heaven and sunshine fills the glens and lowlands and hills and watch–towers of Erin." They tarried there till the strength of a good omen came and a favourable portent, till sunshine filled the glens and slopes and heights and watch–towers of the province.

"Come, O Sencha my master," said Conchobar; "rouse the men of Ulster to battle, for it is time for them to proceed thither." Sencha roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he spake these words:

"Now shall Macha's kings arise,
Large–hearted folk!
Weapons let them shatter:
Let them fight the battle:
Let them plow the earth in anger:
Let them strike on shields!
Wearied all the hands;
Herds loud bellowing:
Steadfast the resistance:
Furious the retainers:
Battle–lines shall prostrate fall
'Neath the feet of others!
Prince and lord prepare for battle.
Perish shall their race!
Manful contest there shall be;
Their foes they lie in wait for
And slay them all to–day!
Deep draughts of blood they drink:
Grief fills the hearts of queens:
Tender lamentations follow:
Till soaked in blood shall be the grassy sod
On which they're slain,
To which they come.
If for Cualnge's kine it be,
Let Macha's kings! Let them arise!

Not long was Laeg there when he witnessed something: the men of Erin all arising at one time, taking their shields and their spears and their swords and their helmets, and urging the men–of–war before them to the battle. The men of Erin, every single man of them, fell to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the

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others for a long space and while.

Thereupon Cuchulain asked of his charioteer, of Laeg son of Rianganabair, at the time that a bright cloud came over the sun: "Look for us! How fight the Ulstermen the battle now, O my master Laeg?" "Like men they fight," Laeg answered. "Should I mount my chariot, and En, Conal Cernach's ('the Victorious') charioteer, his chariot, and should we go in two chariots from one wing to the other on the points of the weapons, neither hoof nor wheel nor axle–tree nor chariot–pole would touch the ground for the denseness and closeness and firmness with which their arms are held in the hands of the men–at–arms at this time."

"Alas, that I am not yet strong enough to be amongst them now!" cried Cuchulain; "for, were I able, my breach would be manifest there to–day like that of another," spake Cuchulain. "But this avow, O Cucuc," said Laeg: "'tis no reproach to thy valour; 'tis no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast wrought great deeds before now and thou wilt work great deeds hereafter."

Then began the men of Erin to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the others for a long space and while. Next came to them the nine chariot–fighters of the champions from Norseland, and the three foot–warriors along with them, and no swifter were the nine chariot–men than the three men on foot.

Then came to them also the governors of the men of Erin. And this was their sole office with Medb in the battle: to smite to death Conchobar if it were he that suffered defeat, and to rescue Ailil and Medb if it should be they were defeated. And these are the names of the governors:

28. The Battle of The Bulls

As regards Medb, it is related here: She gathered the men of Erin and led them forth to Cruachan to behold the battle of the bulls. As regards the Brown Bull of Cualnge, it is now recounted in this place: When he saw the beautiful, strange land, he sent forth his three bellowing calls aloud. And Finnbennach Ai ('the Whitehorned of Ai') heard him. Now no male beast durst send forth a low that was louder than a moo in compare with him within the four fords of all Ai, Ath Moga and Ath Coltna, Ath Slissen and Ath Bercha. And he lifted his head and he hastened to Cruachan to look for the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

It was then the men of Erin debated who would be fitted to witness the fight of the bulls. They all agreed that it should be Bricriu son of Carbad that were fitted for that office. For, a year before this tale of the Cualnge Cattle–raid, Bricriu had gone from the one province into the other to make a request of Fergus. And Fergus had retained him with him waiting for his treasures and goods. And a quarrel arose between him and Fergus at a game of chess. And he spake evil words to Fergus. Fergus smote him with his fist and with the chessman that was in his hand, so that he craved the chessman into his head and broke a bone in his head. Whilst the men of Erin were on the foray of the Tain, all that time Bricriu was being cured at Cruachan. And the day they returned from the expedition was the day Bricriu rose. And this is why they selected Bricriu, for that Bricriu was no fairer to his friend than to his foe. And he was brought before the men of Erin to a gap whence to view the bulls.

Each of the bulls sighted the other and there was a pawing and digging up of the ground in their frenzy there, and they tossed the earth over them. They threw up the earth over their withers and shoulders, and their eyes blazed red in their heads like firm balls of fire. Their cheeks and their nostrils swelled like smith's bellows in a forge. And each of them gave a resounding, deadly blow to the other. Each of them began to hole and to gore, to endeavour to slaughter and demolish the other. Then the Whitehorned of Ai visited his wrath upon the Brown Bull of Cualnge for the evil of his ways and his doings, and he craved a horn into his side and visited his angry rage upon him. Then they directed their headlong course to where Bricriu was, so that the hoofs of the bulls drove him a man's cubit deep into the ground after his destruction. Hence, this is the Tragical Death of Bricriu son of Carbad.

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Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that, and he laid hold of a spearshaft that filled his grasp, and gave three blows to the Brown Bull of Cualnge from ear to tail, so that it broke on his thick hide from ear to rump. "No wonderful, lasting treasure was this precious prize for us," said Cormac, "that cannot defend himself against a stirk of his own age!" The Brown Bull of Cualnge heard this— for he had human understanding— and he turned upon the Whitehorned. Thereupon he he rushed at him, so that they continued to strike at each other for a long while and great space of time, till night fell on the men of Erin. And when night had fallen, all that the men of Erin could hear was the bellowing and roaring. That night the bulls coursed over the greater part of all Erin.

29. The Account of The Brown Bull of Cualnge

It was not long before the men of Erin, as they were there early on the morrow, saw coming over Cruachan from the west the Brown Bull of Cualnge with the Whitehorned of Ai in torn fragments hanging about his ears and horns. The men of Erin arose, and they knew not which of the bulls it was. "Come, ye men!" cried Fergus "leave him alone if it be the Whitehorned that is there and if it be the Brown of Cualnge, leave him his trophy with him!"

Then it was that the seven Manè arose to take vengeance on the Brown Bull of Cualnge for his violence and his valour. "Whither go yonder men?" asked Fergus. "They go to kill the Brown of Cualnge," said all, "because of his evil deeds." "I pledge my word," shouted Fergus: "what has already been done in regard to the bulls is a small thing in compare with that which will now take place."

Then the Brown Bull of Cualnge gave forth the three chiefest bellowings of his throat in boast of his triumph and fear of Fergus held back the men of Erin from attacking the Brown Bull of Cualuge.

Then went the Brown Bull of Cualnge. He turned his right side towards Cruachan, and he left there a heap (crúach) of the liver of the Whitehorned, so that thence is named Cruachan Ai.

Next he came to the river Finnglas ('Whitewater'), and he drank a draught from the river, and, so long as he drank the draught he let not one drop of the river flow by him. Then he raised his head, and the shoulder–blades (lethe) of the Whitehorned fell from him in that place. Hence, Sruthair Finnlethe is the name given to it.

He pursued his way to the brink of Ath Mor ('the Great Ford'); and he left behind the loin (lúan) of the Whitehorned in that place, so that thence cometh Athione.

He continued eastwards into the land of Meath to Ath Truim. And he left behind there the liver (tromm) of the Whitehorned.

He raised his head haughtily and shook the remains of the Whitehorned from him over Erin. He sent its hind leg (lárac) away from him to Port Large. He sent its ribs (clíathac) from him to Dublin, which is called Ath Cliath.

He turned his face northwards then, and he knew the land of Cualnge, and he went his way towards it. In that place were women and youths and children lamenting the Brown Bull of Cualnge. They saw the Brown of Cualnge's forehead approaching them. "The forehead (taul) of a bull cometh towards us!" they shouted. Hence is Taul Tairb ever since.

Then turned the Brown of Cualnge on the women and youths and children of the land of Cualnge, and he effected a great slaughter amongst them. He turned his back to the hill then and his heart broke in his breast, even as a nut breaks. Such, then, is the account and the fate of the Brown Bull of Cualnge and the end of the Tain.

27a. Here Followeth The Muster of The Men of Erin

The three Conarè from Sliab Mis, the three Lussen from Luachair, the three Niadchorb from Tilach Loiscthe, the three Doelfer from Deill, the three Damaltach from Dergderc, the three Buder from the Buas, the three Baeth from Buagnige, the three Buageltach from Mag Breg, the three Suibnè from the Siuir, the three Eochaid from Anè, the three Malleth from Loch Erne, the three Abatruad from Loch Ri, the three macAmra from Ess Ruaid, the three Fiacha from Fid Nemain, the three Manè from Muresc, the three Muredach from Mairg, the three Loegaire from Lecc Derg, the three Broduinde from the Berba, the three Bruchnech, from Cenn Abrat, the three Descertach from Druim Fornacht, the three Finn from Finnabair, the three Conall from Collamair, the three Carbre from Cliu, the three Manè from Mossa, the three Scathglan from Sclairè, the three Echtath from Ercè, the three Trenfer from Taitè, the three Fintan from Femen, the three Rotanach from Rognè, the three Sarchorach from Suidè Lagen, the three Etarscel from Etarbane, the three Aed from Aidnè, the three Guarè from Gabal.

Then said Medb to Fergus: "It were truly a thing to boast of for thee, werest thou to use thy mightiness of battle without stint amongst us to–day, forasmuch as thou hast been driven out of thine own land and out of thine inheritance; amongst us hast thou found land and domain and inheritance, and much good–will hath been shown thee!"

Thereupon Fergus uttered this oath: "I swear," [et reliqua.] "necks of men I would break from necks of men, arms of men from arms of men, scalps of men from scalps of men, so that heads of men over shields would be as numerous with me as bits of ice on the miry stamping–ground between two dry fields that a king's horses would course on. Every limb of the Ulstermen would I send flying through the air before and behind me this day, if only I had my sword!"

At that Ailill spoke to his own charioteer, Ferloga, to wit: "Fetch me a quick sword that wounds the skin, O gilla," said Ailill. "I give my word, if its bloom and condition be the worse at thy hands this day than the day I gave it thee on the hillside of Cruachan Ai, though thou hadst the men of Erin and of Alba to rescue thee from me to–day, they would not all save thee!"

Ferloga went his way, and he brought the sword with him in the flower of its safe–keeping, and fair flaming as a candle. And the sword was placed in Ailill's hand, and Ailill put it in Fergus' hand, and Fergus offered welcome to the sword: "Welcome, O Calad Colg ('Hardblade') Letè's sword!" said he. "Weary, O champion of Badb! On whom shall I ply this weapon?" Fergus asked. "On the men–of–war around thee," Medb answered. "No one shall find indulgence nor quarter from thee to–day, unless some friend of thy bosom find it!"

Whereupon, Fergus took his arms and went forward to the battle. Ailill seized his weapons. Medb seized her weapons and entered the battle, so that thrice the Ulstermen were routed before them from the north, till Cualgae and sword drove them back again.

Conchobar heard that from his place in the line of battle, that the battle had gone against him thrice from the north. Then he addressed his bodyguard, even the inner circle of the Red Branch: "Hold ye here a while, ye men!" cried he; "even in the line of battle where I am, that I may go and learn by whom the battle has been thus forced against us thrice from the north." Then said his household: "We will hold out," said they, "for the sky is above us and the earth underneath and the sea round about us, and unless the heavens shall fall with their showers of stars on the man–face of the world, or unless the furrowed, blue–bordered ocean break o'er the tufted brow of the earth, or unless the ground yawns open, will we not move a thumb's breadth backward from here till the very day of doom and of everlasting life, till thou come back to us!"

Conchobar went his way to the place where he heard the battle had gone three times against him from the north, and he lifted shield against shield there, namely against Fergus mac Roig, even Ochain ('the Fair–ear') of

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Conchobar with its four ears of gold and its four bracings of red gold. Therewith Fergus gave three stout blows of Badb on the Ochain of Conchobar, so that Conchobar's shield cried aloud. Whenever Conchobar's shield cried out, the shields of all the Ulstermen cried out. However great the strength and power with which Fergus smote Conchobar on the shield, so great also was the might and valour wherewith Conchobar held the shield, so that the ear of the shield did not even touch the ear of Conchobar.

"Hearken, ye men of Erin!" cried Fergus; "who opposes a shield to me to–day on this day of battle when four of the five grand provinces of Erin come together on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Cattle–raid of Cualnge?" "A gilla that is younger and mightier than thyself is here," [Conchobar answered,] "and whose mother and father were better! The man that hath driven thee out of thy borders, thy land and thine inheritance; the man that hath driven thee into the lairs of the deer and the wild hare and the foxes; the man that hath not granted thee to take the breadth of thy foot of thine own domain or land; the man that hath made thee dependent upon the bounty of a woman; the man that of a time disgraced thee by slaying the three sons of Usnech that were under thy safeguard; the man that will repel thee this day in the presence of the men of Erin; Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige, High King of Ulster and son of the High King of Erin!"

"Truly hath this happened to me," Fergus responded. And Fergus placed his two hands on Calad Colg, and he heaved a blow with it backwards behind him, so that its point touched the ground, and he thought to strike his three fateful blows of Badb on the men of Ulster, so that their dead would be more in number than their living. Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that and he rushed to Fergus and he closed his two royal hands over him. "Full of hate, not of friendship is this, O Fergus my master! Ungentle, not heedful is this, O Fergus my master! Let not the Ulstermen be slain and destroyed by thee through thy destructive blows, but take thou thought for their honour to–day on this day of battle!" "Get thee away from me, boy!" exclaimed Fergus; "for I will not remain alive unless I deliver my three fateful strokes of Badb on the men of Ulster this day, till their dead be more in number than their living."

"Then turn thy hand slantwise," said Cormac Conlongas, "and slice off the hill–tops over the heads of the hosts on every side and this will be an appeasing of thine anger." "Tell Conchobar also to fall back again to his place in the battle," [said Fergus.] So Conchobar went to his place in the battle.

Thus it was with that sword, which was the sword of Fergus: The sword of Fergus, the sword of Letè from Faery: Whenever he desired to strike with it, it became the size of a rainbow in the air. Thereupon Fergus turned his hand slantwise over the heads of the hosts, so that he smote the three tops of the three hills, so that they are still visible on the moor, and these are the three Maels ('the Balds') of Meath.

Now as regards Cuchulain. He heard the Ochain of Conchobar smitten by Fergus macRoig. "Come, O Laeg my master," cried Cuchulain: "who dares thus smite with those strong blows, mighty and far–away, the Ochain of Conchobar, and I alive?" [Then Laeg made answer, saying: "The choice of men, Fergus macRoig, the very bold, smites it:]

"Blood he sheds, increase of slaughter," said Laeg;
"Splendid the hero, Fergus macRoig!
Hidden had lain Fairyland's chariot–sword!
Battle now hath reached the shield,
Shield of my master Conchobar!"

"Quickly unloose the bands, gilla!" cried Cuchulain. Then Cuchulain gave a mighty spring, so that the bindings of his wounds flew from him to Mag Tuag ('the Plain of the Bows') in Connacht. His bracings went from him to Bacca ('the Props') in Corcomruad. The dry wisps that were stuffed in his wounds rose to the roof of the air and the sky as highest larks fly on a day of sunshine when there is no wind. Thereupon, his bloody wounds got the better of him, so that the ditches and furrows of the earth were full of streams of blood and torrents of gore.

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This was the first exploit of valour that Cuchulain performed on rising out of his weakness: The two women lampoonists that made a feint of weeping and wailing over his head, Fethan and Collach to wit, he smote each of them against the head of the other, so that he was red with their blood and grey with their brains. His arms had not been left near him, except his chariot only. And he took his chariot on his back, and he set out to attack the men of Erin, and he smote them with the chariot, until he reached the place where Fergus macRoig was.

"Turn hither, O Fergus my master!" he cried. Fergus did not answer, for he heard not. He spoke again, "Turn hither, Fergus my master!" he cried; "and if thou turn not, I will grind thee as a mill grinds fresh grain; I will wash thee as a cup is washed in a tub; I will bind thee as the woodbine binds the trees; I will pounce on thee as hawk pounces on fledglings!" "Truly this is my lot!" spake Fergus. "Who of the men of Erin dares to address these stiff, vengeful words to me, where now the four grand provinces of Erin are met on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge?"

"Thy fosterling is before thee," he replied, "and fosterling of the men of Ulster and of Conchobar as well, Cuchulain son of Sualtaim. And thou didst promise to flee before me what time I should be wounded, in pools of gore and riddled in the battle of the Tain. For, I did flee before thee in thine own combat on the Tain."

Fergus gave ear to that, and he turned and made his three great strides of a hero back. And as he turned, there turned all the men of Erin. Then the men of Erin broke their ranks westwards over the hill. The battle raged around the men of Connacht. At midday Cuchulain came to the battle. At the time of sunset at the ninth hour, the last company of the men of Connacht fled in rout westwards over the hill. At that time there did not remain in Cuchulain's hand of the chariot but a handful of its spokes around the wheel, and a handbreadth of its poles around the shell, with the slaying and slaughtering of the four grand provinces of Erin during all that time.

Then Medb betook her to a shield–shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Thereafter Medb sent off the Brown Bull of Cualnge along with fifty of his heifers and eight of her runners with him around to Cruachan, to the end that whoso might and whoso might not escape, the Brown Bull of Cualnge should get away safely, even as she had promised.

Then it was that the issue of blood came upon Medb, [and she said: "Do thou, Fergus, undertake] a shield–shelter in the rear of the men of Erin till I let my water flow from me." "By my troth," replied Fergus, "'tis an ill hour for thee to be taken so." "Howbeit there is no help for me," Medb answered; "for I shall not live if I do not void water!" Fergus accordingly came and raised a shield–shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Medb voided her water, so that it made three large dikes, so that a [mill] could find room in each dike. Hence the place is known as Fual Medbha ('Medb's Water').

Cuchulain came upon her as she was thus engaged, on his way to the battle, and he did not attack her. He would not strike her a blow from behind. "I crave a boon of thee this day, O Cuchulain," spake Medb. "What boon cravest thou of me?" asked Cuchulain. "That this host be under thine honour and thy protection till they pass westwards over Ath Mor ('the Great Ford')." "Yea, I promise that," said Cuchulain. Then went Cuchulain around the men of Erin, and he undertook a shield–defence on one side of them, in order to protect the men of Erin. On the other side went the governors of the men of Erin. Medb went to her own place and assumed a shield–defence in the rear of the men of Erin, and in this manner they convoyed the men of Erin over Ath Mor westwards.

Then Cuchulain took his sword in his hand and gave a blow to the three bald–topped hills of Ath Luain over against the three Maela ('the Bald Tops') of Meath, so that he struck their three heads off them.

Then Fergus began to view the host as it went westwards of Ath Mor. "It was thus indeed it behoved this day to prove, for following in the lead of a woman." "Faults and feuds have met here to–day," said Medb to Fergus. "Betrayed and sold is this host to–day," [Fergus answered.] "And even as a brood–mare leads her foals into a land unknown, without a head to advise or give counsel before them, such is the plight of this host to–day."

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Then Cuchulain turned to where Conchobar was with the nobles of Ulster before him. Conchobar bewailed and lamented Cuchulain, and then he uttered this lay:

"How is this, O Cualnge's Hound
Hero of the Red Branch, thou:
Great woe, champion, hast thou borne
Battling in thy land's defence!

"Every morn a hundred slain,
Every eve a hundred more
While the host purveyed thy fare
Feeding thee with cooling food!

"Five–score heroes of the hosts,
These I reckon are in graves.
While their women— fair their hue—
Spend the night bewailing them!"