

Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster

ONCE upon a time it befell Ailill and Medb that, when their royal bed had been prepared for them in Ráth Crúachain in Connacht, they spoke together as they lay on their pillow. 'In truth, woman' said Ailill, 'she is a well-off woman who is the wife of a nobleman'. 'She is indeed' said the woman. 'Why do you think so?' 'I think so' said Ailill, 'because you are better off today than when I married you'. 'I was well-off before marrying you', said Medb. 'It was wealth that we had not heard of and did not know of', said Ailill, 'but you were a woman of property and foes from lands next to you were carrying off spoils and booty from you'. 'Not so was I', said Medb, 'but my father was in the high-kingship of Ireland, namely Eochu Feidlech mac Find meic Findomain meic Findeoin meic Findguill meic Rotha meic Rigeoin meic Blathachta meic Beothechta meic Enna Agnig meic Óengusa Turbig. He had six daughters: Derbriu, Ethne and Ele, Clothru, Mugain and Medb. I was the noblest and worthiest of them. I was the most generous of them in bounty and the bestowal of gifts. I was best of them in battle and fight and combat. I had fifteen hundred royal mercenaries of the sons of strangers exiled from their own land and as many of the sons of native freemen within the province. And there were ten men for each mercenary of these, and nine men for every mercenary and eight men for every mercenary, and seven for every mercenary, and six for every mercenary, and five for every mercenary, and four for every mercenary and three for every mercenary and two for every mercenary and one mercenary for every mercenary. I had these as my standing household' said Medb, 'and for that reason my father gave me one of the

{line 23-53}provinces of Ireland, namely, the province of Crúachu. Whence I am called Medb Chrúachna. Messengers came from Find mac Rosa Rúaid, the King of Leinster, to sue for me, and from Cairbre Nia Fer mac Rosa, the King of Tara, and they came from Conchobor mac Fachtna, the King of Ulster, and they came from Eochu Bec. But I consented not, for I demanded a strange bride- gift such as no woman before me had asked of a man of the men of Ireland, to wit, a husband without meanness, without jealousy, without fear. If my husband should be mean, it would not be fitting for us to be together, for I am generous in largesse and the bestowal of gifts and it would be a reproach for my husband that I should be better than he in generosity, but it would be no reproach if we were equally generous provided that both of us were generous. If my

husband were timorous, neither would it be fitting for us to be together, for single-handed I am victorious in battles and contests and combats, and it would be a reproach to my husband that his wife should be more courageous than he, but it is no reproach if they are equally courageous provided that both are courageous. If the man with whom I should be were jealous, neither would it be fitting, for I was never without one lover quickly succeeding another

lit. without a man in the shadow of another.

Now such a husband have I got, even you, Ailill mac Rosa Rúaid of Leinster. You are not niggardly, you are not jealous, you are not inactive. I gave you a contract and a bride-price as befits a woman, namely, the raiment of twelve men, a chariot worth thrice seven cumala, the breadth of your face in red gold, the weight of your left arm in white bronze. Whoever brings shame and annoyance and confusion on you, you have no claim for compensation or for honour-price for it except what claim I have' said Medb, 'for you are a man dependent on a woman's marriage-portion'. 'Not so was I' said Ailill, 'but I had two brothers, one of them reigning over Tara, the other over Leinster, namely, Find over Leinster and Cairbre over Tara. I left the rule to them because of their seniority but they were no better in bounty and the bestowal of gifts than I. And I heard of no province in Ireland dependent on a woman except this province alone, so I came and assumed the kingship here in virtue of my mother's rights for Máta Muirisc the daughter of Mága was my mother. And what better queen could I have than you, for you are the daughter of the high-king of Ireland'. 'Nevertheless' said Medb, 'my property is greater than yours'. 'I marvel at that' said Ailill,

{line 54-85}'for there is none who has greater possessions and riches and wealth than I, and I know that there is not'.

There were brought to them what was least valuable among their possessions that they might know which of them had more goods and riches and wealth. There were brought to them their wooden cups and their vats and their iron vessels, their cans, their washing-basins and their tubs. There were brought to them their rings and their bracelets and their thumb-rings, their treasures of gold and their garments, as well purple as blue and black and green, yellow and vari-coloured and grey, dun and chequered and striped. Their great flocks of sheep were brought from fields and lawns and open plains. They were counted and reckoned and it was recognised that they were equal, of the same size and of the same number. But among Medb's sheep there was a splendid ram which was the equivalent of a cumalin value, and among Ailill's sheep was a ram corresponding to him. From grazing lands and paddocks were brought their horses and steeds. In Medb's horse-

herd there was a splendid horse which might be valued at a cumal. Ailill had a horse to match him. Then their great herds of swine were brought from woods and sloping glens and solitary places. They were counted and reckoned and recognised. Medb had a special boar and Ailill had another. Then their herds of cows, their cattle and their droves were brought to them from the woods and waste places of the province. They were counted and reckoned and recognised, and they were of equal size and equal number. But among Ailill's cows there was a special bull. He had been a calf of one of Medb's cows, and his name was Findbennach. But he deemed it unworthy of him to be counted as a woman's property, so he went and took his place among the king's cows. It was to Medb as if she owned not a penny of possessions since she had not a bull as great as that among her kine. Then Mac Roth the herald was summoned to Medb and she asked him to find out where in any province of the provinces of Ireland there might be a bull such as he. 'I know indeed' said Mac Roth 'where there is a bull even better and more excellent than he, in the province of Ulster in the cantred of Cúailnge in the house of Dáire mac Fiachna. Donn Cúailnge is his name'. 'Go you there, Mac Roth, and ask of Dáire for me a year's loan of Donn Cúailnge. At the year's end he will get the fee for the bull's loan, namely, fifty heifers, and Donn Cúailnge himself returned. And take another offer with you, Mac Roth: if the people of that land and country object to giving that precious possession, Donn Cúailnge, let Dáire himself come with his bull

{line 86-117}and he shall have the extent of his own lands in the level plain of Mag Aí and a chariot worth thrice seven cumala, and he shall have my own intimate friendship'.

Thereupon the messengers proceeded to the house of Dáire mac Fiachna. The number of Mac Roth's embassy was nine messengers. Then Mac Roth was welcomed in the house of Dáire. That was but right for Mac Roth was the chief herald of all. Dáire asked Mac Roth what was the cause of his journey and why he had come. The herald told why he had come and related the contention between Medb and Ailill. 'And it is to ask for a loan of the Donn Cúailnge to match the Findbennach that I have come' said he, 'and you shall get the fee for his loan, namely, fifty heifers and the return of Donn Cúailnge himself. And there is somewhat besides: come yourself with your bull and you shall get an area equal to your own lands in the level plain of Mag Aí and a chariot worth thrice seven cumala and Medb's intimate friendship to boot'. Dáire was well pleased with that and in his pleasure he shook himself so that the seams of the flock-beds beneath him burst asunder, and he said: 'By the truth of my conscience, even if the Ulstermen object, this precious possession, Donn Cúailnge, will now be taken to Ailill and Medb in the land of Connacht'. Mac Roth was pleased to hear what Mac Fiachna said.

Then they were attended to and straw and fresh rushes were strewn underfoot for them. The choicest food was served to them and a drinking feast provided until they were merry. And a conversation took place between two of the messengers. 'In sooth' said one messenger, 'generous is the man in whose house we are'. 'Generous indeed' said the other. 'Is there among the Ulstermen any who is more generous than he?' said the first messenger. 'There is indeed' said the second. 'More generous is Conchobor whose vassal Dáire is, for though all Ulstermen should rally round Conchobor, it were no shame for them'. 'A great act of generosity it is indeed for Dáire to have given to us nine messengers that which it would have been the work of the four great provinces of Ireland to carry off from the land of Ulster, namely, Donn Cúailnge'. Then a third messenger joined their conversation. 'And what are ye saying?' he asked. 'Yon messenger says that the man in whose house we are is a generous man. He is generous indeed, says another. Is there any among the Ulsterman who is more generous than he?' asks the first messenger. 'There is indeed, says the second. Conchobor, whose vassal Dáire is, is more generous, and if all Ulstermen adhered to him it were indeed no shame for them. It was

{line 118-146}generous of Dáire to give to us nine messengers what only the four great provinces of Ireland could carry off from the land of Ulster'. 'I should like to see a gush of blood and gore from the mouth from which that talk comes, for if the bull were not given willingly, he would be given perforce'.

Then Dáire mac Fiachna's butler came into the house with a man carrying liquor and another carrying meat, and he heard what the messengers said. He flew into a passion and laid down the meat and drink for them, and he did not invite them to consume it, neither did he tell them not to consume it. Thereafter he went to the house where Dáire mac Fiachna was and said: 'Was it you who gave that excellent treasure, the Donn Cúailnge, to the messengers?' 'It was I indeed', said Dáire. 'Where he was given may there be no proper rule, for what they say is true, that if you do not give him of your own free will, you will give him by force by reason of the armies of Ailill and Medb and the guidance of Fergus mac Róig'. 'I swear by the gods whom I worship unless they take him thus by force, they shall not take him by fair means'. They spend the night thus until morning. Early on the morrow the messengers arose and went into the house where Dáire was. 'Guide us, noble sir, to the spot where Donn Cúailnge is'. 'Not so indeed' said Dáire, 'but if it were my custom to deal treacherously with messengers or travellers or voyagers not one of you should escape alive'. 'What is this?' said Mac Roth. 'There is great cause for it' said Dáire. 'Ye said that if I did not give the bull willingly, then I should give him under compulsion by reason of the army of Ailill and Medb and the sure guidance of Fergus'.

'Nay' said Mac Roth, 'whatever messengers might say as a result of indulging in your meat and drink, it should not be heeded or noticed nor accounted as a reproach to Ailill and Medb'. 'Yet I shall not give my bull, Mac Roth, on this occasion'.

Thus the messengers went on their way back and reached Ráth Crúachan in Connacht. Medb asked tidings of them. Mac Roth told her that they had not brought back his bull from Dáire. 'What was the cause of that?' asked Medb. Mac Roth told her the reason for it. 'There is no necessity to "smooth the knots", Mac Roth, for it was certain',
lit. it was known

said Medb, 'that he would not be given freely if he were not given by force, and he shall so be given'.

{line 147-220}

Messengers went from Medb to the Maines to bid them come to Crúachu, the seven Maines with their seven divisions of three thousand, namely, Maine Máithremail, Maine Aithremail, Maine Condagaib Uile, Maine Mingor, Maine Mórgor and Maine Conda Mó Epert. Other messengers went to the sons of Mágu, namely Cet mac Mágach, Anlúan mac Mágach, Mac Corb mac Mágach, Baiscell mac Mágach, En mac Mágach, Dóche mac Mágach and Scannal mac Mágach. These arrived, in number three thousand armed men. Other messengers went from them to Cormac Cond Longas mac Conchobuir and to Fergus mac Róig, and they too came, in number three thousand.

The first band of all had shorn heads of hair. Green cloaks about them with silver brooches in them. Next to their skin they wore shirts of gold thread with red insertions of red gold. They carried swords with white grips and handles of silver. 'Is that Cormac yonder?' they all asked. 'It is not indeed' said Medb.

The second band had newly shorn heads of hair. They wore grey cloaks and pure white shirts next to their skins. They carried swords with round guards of gold and silver handles. 'Is that Cormac yonder?' they all asked. 'It is not he indeed' said Medb.

The last band had flowing hair, fair-yellow, golden, streaming manes. They wore purple embroidered cloaks with golden inset brooches over their breasts. They had smooth, long, silken shirts reaching to their insteps. All together they would lift their feet and set them down again. 'Is that Cormac yonder?' they all asked. 'It is he indeed' said Medb.

That night they pitched their camp and stronghold and there was a dense mass of smoke and fire from their camp-fires between the four fords of Aí, Áth Moga, Áth m-Bercna, Áth Slissen and Áth Coltna. And they stayed for a full fortnight in Ráth Crúachan of Connacht drinking and feasting and merrymaking so that presently their journey and

hosting should be the lighter for them. And then Medb bade her charioteer harness her horses for her that she might go to speak with her druid to seek foreknowledge and prophecy from him.

When Medb came to where her druid was, she asked foreknowledge and prophecy of him. 'There are many who part here today from comrades and friends' said Medb, 'from land and territory, from father and mother, and if not all return safe and sound, it is on me their grumbles and their curses will fall. Yet none goes forth and none stays here who is any dearer to us than we ourselves. And

{line 181-220}find out for us whether we shall come back or not'. And the druid said: 'Whoever comes or comes not back, you yourself will come'.

The driver turned the chariot and Medb came back. She saw something that she deemed wonderful, namely, a woman coming towards her by the shaft of the chariot. The girl was weaving a fringe, holding a weaver's beam of white bronze in her right hand with seven strips of red gold on its points(?). She wore a spotted, green-speckled cloak, with a round, heavy-headed brooch in the cloak above her breast. She had a crimson, rich-blooded

fair-faced, ST

countenance, a bright, laughing eye, thin, red lips. She had shining pearly teeth; you would have thought they were showers of fair pearls which were displayed in her head. Like new partaing were her lips. The sweet sound of her voice and speech was as melodious as the strings of harps plucked by the hands of masters. As white as snow falling in one night was the lustre of her skin and body shining through her garments. She had long and very white feet with pink, even, round and sharp nails. She had long, fair-yellow, golden hair; three tresses of her hair wound round her head, another tress falling behind which touched the calves of her legs.

Medb gazed at her. 'And what are you doing here now, girl?' said Medb. 'I am promoting your interest and your prosperity, gathering and mustering the four great provinces of Ireland with you to go into Ulster for Táin Bó Cúailnge'. 'Why do you do that for me?' said Medb. 'I have good reason to do so. I am a bondmaid of your people'. 'Who of my people are you?' said Medb. 'That is not hard to tell. I am Feidelm the prophetess from Síd Chrúachna'. 'Well then, Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red on them. I see crimson'.

'Conchobor is suffering in his debility in Emain' said Medb. 'My messengers have gone to him. There is nothing we fear from the Ulstermen. But tell the truth, Feidelm. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red on them. I see crimson'.

'Cuscraid Mend Macha mac Conchobuir is in Inis Cuscraid in his debility. My messengers have gone to him. There is nothing we fear from the Ulstermen. But speak truth, Feidelm. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red upon them. I see crimson'.

'Eogan mac Durthacht is at Ráth Airthir in his debility. My messengers have gone to him. There is nothing we fear from the Ulstermen. But speak truth to us, Feidelm. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red on them. I see crimson'.

'Celtchair mac Cuthechair is in his fortress in his debility. My messengers have reached him. There is nothing we fear from the Ulstermen. But speak truth, Feidelm. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red on them. I see crimson'.

'I care not for your reasoning, for when the men of Ireland gather in one place, among them will be strife and battle and broils and affrays, in dispute as to who shall lead the van or bring up the rear or first cross ford or river or first kill swine or cow or stag or game. But speak truth to us, Feidelm. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our army?' 'I see red on them, I see crimson'.

And Feidelm began to prophesy and foretell Cú Chulainn to the men of Ireland, and she chanted a lay:

Feidelm

1] I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats, with many a wound in his fair flesh. The hero's light is on his brow, his forehead is the meeting-place of many virtues.

2] Seven gems of a hero are in his eyes. His spear heads are unsheathed. He wears a red mantle with clasps.

His face is the fairest. He amazes womenfolk, a young lad of handsome countenance; yet in battle he shows a dragon's form.

3] Like is his prowess to that of Cú Chulainn of Muirtheimne. I know not who is the Cú Chulainn from Murtheimne, but this I know, that this army will be bloodstained from him.

4] Four sword lets of wonderful feats he has in each hand. He will manage to ply them on the host. Each weapon has its own special use.

5] When he carries his ga bulga as well as his sword and spear, this man wrapped in a red mantle sets his foot on every battle-field.

6] His two spears across the wheel-rim of his battle chariot. High above valour (?) is the distorted one. So he has hitherto appeared to me, but I am sure that he would change his appearance.

7] He has moved forward to the battle. If he is not warded off, there will be

destruction. It is he who seeks you in combat. Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim.

8] He will lay low your entire army, and he will slaughter you in dense crowds. Ye shall leave with him all your heads. The prophetess Feidelm conceals it not.

9] Blood will flow from heroes' bodies. Long will it be remembered. Men's bodies will be hacked, women will lament, through the Hound of the Smith that I see.

Thus far the prophecy and augury, and the prelude to the tale, the basis of its invention and composition, and the pillow-talk held by Ailill and Medb in Crúachu.

This is the route of the Táin and the beginning of the hosting together with the names of the roads on which the men of the four great provinces of Ireland travelled into the land of Ulster:

To Mag Cruinn, by way of Tuaim Móna, by Turloch Teóra Crích, by Cúl Sílinne, by Dubfid, by Badbna, by Coltan, across the river Shannon, by Glúine Gabur, by Mag Trega, by northern Tethba, by southern Tethba, by Cúil, by Ochain, by Uata northwards, by Tiarthechta eastwards, by Ord, by Slass, across the river Inneoin, by Carn, across Meath, by Ortrach, by Findglassa Asail, by Drong, by Delt, by Duelt, by Deland, by Selach, by Slabra, by Slechta which was cleared by swords for Medb and Ailill's passage, by cuil Siblinne, by Dub, by Ochan, by Catha, by Cromma, by Tromma, by Fodromma, by Sláine by Gort Sláine, by Druimm Licci, by Áth n-Gabla, by Ardachad, by Feoraind, by Findabair, by Aisse, by Airne, by Aurthaile, by Druimm Salaind, by Druimm Caín, by Druimm Caimthechta, by Druimm mac n-Dega, by Eódond Bec, by Eódond Mór, by Meide in Togmaill, by Meide ind Eoin, by Baile, by Aile, by Dall Scena, by Ball Scena, by Ros Mór, by Scúap, by Timscúap, by Cend Ferna, by Ammag, by Fid Mór in Crannach Cúailnge, by Druimm Caín to Slige Midlúachra.

After the first day's march on which the hosts went, they spent that night in Cúil Silinne and Ailill mac Rosa's tent was pitched for him. The tent of Fergus mac Róich was on his right hand. Cormac Cond Longas mac Conchobuir was beside Fergus. Íth mac Etgaíth

{line 301-334}was next, then Fiachu mac Fir Aba, then Goibnend mac Lurgnig. Such was the placing of Ailill's tent on his right during that hosting, and thus were the thirty hundred men of Ulster at his right hand so that the confidential talk and discourse and the choicest portions of food and drink might be nearer to them. Medb Chrúachan was on Ailill's left with Findabair beside her. Then came Flidais Fholtchaín, the wife of Ailill Find, who had slept with Fergus on Táin Bó Cúailnge, and it was she who every seventh night on that hosting quenched with milk the thirst of all the men of Ireland, king and queen and prince, poet and learner. Medb was the last of the hosts that day for she had been seeking

foreknowledge and prophecy and tidings, that she might learn who was loath and who was eager to go on the expedition. Medb did not permit her chariot to be let down or her horses to be unyoked until she had made a circuit of the encampment.

Then Medb's horses were unyoked and her chariots were let down and she sat beside Ailill mac Mágach. And Ailill asked Medb to find out who was eager and who reluctant or loath to go on the hosting. 'It is useless for any to set out on it except for the one band namely, the division of the Gailioin' said Medb. 'What good service do they do that they are praised above all others?' said Ailill. 'There is reason to praise them' said Medb. 'When the others began to pitch their camp, these had already finished making their bothies and open tents. When the others had finished their bothies and open tents, these had finished preparing food and drink. When the others had finished preparing food and drink, these had finished eating their meal. When the others had finished their meal, these were asleep. Even as their slaves and servants surpassed the slaves and servants of the men of Ireland, so their warriors and champions will surpass those of the men of Ireland on this occasion on the hosting'. 'All the better do we deem that' said Ailill, 'for it is with us they march and it is for us they fight'. 'It is not with us they will go nor for us they will fight'. 'Let them stay at home then' said Ailill. 'They shall not stay' said Medb. 'What shall they do then' said Findabair, 'if they do not go forth nor yet stay at home?' 'Death and destruction and slaughter I desire for them' said Medb. 'Woe betide him who speaks thus' said Ailill, 'because of their having pitched their tents and set up their stronghold quickly and promptly'. 'By the truth of my conscience' said Fergus, 'only he who inflicts death on me shall

{line 335-368}inflict death on those men'. 'Not to me should you say that, Fergus', said Medb, 'for my army is numerous enough to slay and kill you with the thirty hundred Leinstermen surrounding you. For I have the seven Maines with their seven divisions of thirty hundred and the sons of Mága with their division and Ailill with his division, and I myself have my household guard. Our numbers are sufficient to slay and kill you with the division of the Leinstermen around you'. 'It is not fitting to speak thus to me' said Fergus, 'for I have here the seven underkings of the Munstermen with their seven divisions. Here too is a division of the best among the noble warriors of Ulster. Here are the finest of the noble warriors of the men of Ireland, the division of the Gailioin. I myself am bond and surety and guarantee for them since they came from their own lands, and me shall they uphold in this day of battle. Furthermore' said Fergus, 'those men shall not be

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. I shall disperse yon division of the Gailioin amongst the men of Ireland so that not

five of them shall be together in one place'. 'I care not' said Medb, 'in what way they are, provided only that they are not in the close battle array in which they now are'. Then Fergus dispersed that division among the men of Ireland so that no five men of them were together in one spot.

Thereafter the hosts set out upon their march. It was difficult for them to attend to that mighty army, which set forth on that journey, with the many tribes and the many families and the many thousands whom they brought with them that they might see each other and know each other and that each might be with his familiars and his friends and his kin on the hosting. They said too in what manner it was fitting to go on that hosting. They said that they should go thus: with every troop around their king, with every band around their leader, every group around their chief, and every king and royal heir of the men of Ireland on his own mound apart. They discussed too who ought to guide them between the two provinces, and they said that it should be Fergus, because the hosting was a hostile hosting for him, for he had been seven years in the kingship of Ulster, and when the sons of Usnech had been slain in despite of his guarantee and surety, he had come from there, 'and he has been seventeen years in exile and in enmity away from Ulster'. Therefore it would be fitting that he should go before all to guide them. Then Fergus went before all to guide them, but a feeling of affection for the Ulsterman seized him and he led the troops astray to the north and to the south, and messengers went from him with warnings to the Ulstermen

{line 369-403}and he began to delay and hold back the army. Medb perceived this, and she reproached him and chanted the lay:

Medb

O Fergus, what do we say of this? What manner of path is this which we go? Past every tribe we wander north and south.

Fergus

O Medb, why are you perturbed? This is not anything which resembles treachery. O woman, the land I traverse belongs to the men of Ulster.

Medb

Ailill, the splendid, with his army, fears that you will betray him

"fears ... him", following LU, ST

. Hitherto you have not given your mind to leading us on the right path.

Fergus

Not to the disadvantage of the host did I go on each wandering road in turn, but to try and avoid thereafter Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim.

Medb

It is wrong of you to betray our host, O Fergus mac Rosa Rúaid, for much wealth did you get here in your exile, O Fergus.

'I shall not be in front of the army any longer.' said Fergus, 'but seek some one else to lead them'. Yet Fergus took his position in the van of the army.

The four great provinces of Ireland were on Cúil Silinne that night. A sharp premonition of the arrival of Cú Chulainn came to Fergus and he told the men of Ireland to be on their guard, for there would come upon them he who was the slashing lion and the doom of enemies and the foe of armies, the supporting leader and the slaughtering of a great host, the hand bestowing gifts and the flaming torch, to wit, Cú Chulainn the son of Sualtair. And Fergus was thus prophesying the coming of Cú Chulainn, and he made the lay and Medb answered him:

Fergus

It is well for you to keep watch and ward with many weapons and many warriors. He whom we fear will come, the great and valiant one from Muirtheimne.

Medb

Kindly is that of you—a counsel of battle—O valiant Mac Róig. Men and arms I have here on the spot to answer Cú Chulainn.

Fergus

Men and arms are expended in the fray, O Medb from Mag Aí, against the rider of Liath Macha, every night and every day.

Medb

I have here in reserve warriors to fight and to plunder, thirty hundred hostage chiefs, the warriors of the Gailioin.

Warriors from fair Crúachu, heroes from clear-robed Lúachair, four provinces of fair Gaels—all these will defend me from that one man.

Fergus

He who has troops in Bairrche and Banna will draw blood across the shafts of spears. Into the mire and sand he will cast that division of the Gailioin.

As swift as the swallow and as speedy as the harsh wind—thus is my fair dear Cú in mutual slaughter above the breath of his foes.

Medb

O Fergus, famed in song, let this message go from you to Cú Chulainn, that it were prudent for him to be silent for he shall be harshly checked in Crúachu.

Fergus

Valiantly will men be despoiled in the land of Badb's daughter. The Hound of the Smith—with shedding of gore—will overthrow companies of goodly heroes(?).

After that lay: the army of the four great provinces of Ireland came eastwards over Móin Coltna that day and there met them eight score deer. The army spread out and surrounded them and killed them so that none escaped. Yet though the division of the Gailioin were dispersed, only five deer fell to the men of Ireland. The one division of the Gailioin carried of the rest of the eight score deer.

It was on the same day that Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim and Sualtach Sídech, his father, arrived and their horses grazed around the pillar-stone at Ard Cuillenn. Sualtaim's steeds cropped the grass down to the soil north of the pillar-stone, Cú Chulainn's steeds {line 445-81}cropped the grass down to the soil and the bedrock to the south of the pillar-stone. 'Well, father Sualtaim' said Cú Chulainn 'I have a premonition that the army is at hand, so go for me with warnings to the Ulstermen that they stay not on the open plains but go to the woods and waste places and deep valleys of the province to evade the men of Ireland'. 'And you, my fosterling, what will you do?' 'I must go southwards to Tara to keep a tryst with the handmaiden of Feidilmid Noíchruthach with my own surety until morning'. 'Woe to him who goes thus', said Sualtaim 'and leaves the Ulstermen to be trampled underfoot by their enemies and by outlanders for the sake of going to a tryst with any women'. 'I must go however, for unless I do, men's contracts will be falsified and women's words be verified'.

Sualtaim went with warnings to the Ulstermen. Cú Chulainn went into the wood and cut a prime oak sapling, whole and entire, with one stroke and, standing on one leg and using but one hand and one eye, he twisted it into a ring and put an ogam inscription on the peg of the ring and put the ring around the narrow part of the standing-stone at Ard Cuillenn. He forced the ring down until it reached the thick part of the stone. After that Cú Chulainn went to his tryst.

As for the men of Ireland, they came to the pillar-stone at Ard Cuillenn and began to survey the unknown province of Ulster. Now two men of Medb's household were always in the van at every encampment and hosting, at every ford and every river and every pass. And this they did so that no stain might come to the princes' garments in the crowd or crush of host or army. These were the two sons of Nera mac Nuatair meic Tacáin, the two sons of the steward of Crúachu. Err and Innell were their names, and Fráech and Fochnam the names of their charioteers.

The nobles of Ireland came to the pillar stone and began to survey the grazing which the horses had made around the stone and to gaze at the barbaric ring which the

royal hero had left around the stone. And Ailill took the ring in his hand and gave it to Fergus and Fergus read out the ogam inscription that was in the peg of the ring and told the men of Ireland what the inscription meant.

And as he began to tell them he made the lay:

Fergus

1] This is a ring. What is its meaning for us? What is its secret message? And how many put it here? Was it one man oft many?

2] If ye go past it tonight and do not stay in camp beside it, the Hound who mangles all flesh will come upon you. Shame to you if ye flout it.

3] If ye go on your way from it, it brings ruin on the host. Find out, O druids, why the ring was made.

4] It was the swift cutting(?) of a hero. A hero cast it. It is a snare for enemies. One man—the sustainer of lords, a man of battle (?)—cast it there with one hand.

5] It gave a pledge (?) with the harsh rage of the Smith's Hound from the Cráebrúad. It is a champion's bond, not the bond of a madman. That is the inscription on the ring.

6] Its object is to cause anxiety to the four provinces of Ireland—and many combats. That is all I know of the reason why the ring was made.

After that lay: Fergus said: 'I swear to you that if ye flout that ring and the royal hero who it and do not spend a night here in encampment until one of you make a similar ring, standing on one foot and using one eye and one hand as he did, even though that hero be hidden underground or in a locked house, he will slay and wound you before the hour of rising on the morrow, if ye flout it'. 'It is not that indeed that we would wish' said Medb, 'that anyone should wound us or shed our blood after we have come to this unknown province, the province of Ulster. More pleasing to us that we should wound another and spill his blood'. 'We shall not set this ring at naught' said Ailill, 'and we shall not flout the royal hero who wrought it, but we shall take shelter in this great wood in the south until morning. Let our encampment be made there'. Then the hosts advanced and with their swords they hewed down the wood to make a path for their chariots, so that Slechta is still the name of that spot where is Partraige Beca south-west of Cenannas na Ríg near Cúil Sibrilli.

Heavy snow fell on them that night. So deep it was that it reached to the shoulders of men, to the flanks of horses and to the shafts of chariots, so that the provinces of Ireland were all one level plain with the snow. but not tents or bothies or pavilions were set up that night. No preparation of food or drink was made. No meal or repast was consumed. None of the men of Ireland knew

{line 521-556}whether it was friend or foe who was next to him until the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow. It is certain that the men of Ireland had never experienced a night in encampment which held more discomfort and hardship for them than that night at Cúil Sibrilli. The four great provinces of Ireland came forth early on the morrow with the rising of the sun across the glistening snow, and they went forward from that district to another.

As for Cú Chulainn, however, he did not rise early until he ate a repast and meal and washed and bathed on that day. He told his charioteer to harness the horses and yoke his chariot. The charioteer harnessed the horses and yoked the chariot, and Cú Chulainn went into his chariot and they followed the track of the army. They found the trail of the men of Ireland going past them from one district to another. 'Alas, my friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'would that we had not gone to our tryst with a woman last night. The least that one who is guarding a border can do is to give a warning cry or shout or alarm or tell who goes the road. We failed to announce it. The men of Ireland have gone past us into Ulster'. 'I foretold for you, Cú Chulainn' said Láeg, 'that if you went to your tryst, such a disgrace would come upon you'. 'Go, Láeg, I pray you, on the track of the army and make an estimate of them, and find out for us in what number the men of Ireland went past us'. Láeg came to the track of the host and came in front of the track and to one side of it and went to the rear of it. 'You are confused in your reckoning, my friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn. 'I am indeed' said Láeg. 'Come into the chariot and I shall make an estimate of them'. The charioteer came into the chariot. Cú Chulainn went on the track of the host and made an estimate of their numbers and came to one side and went to the rear. 'You are confused in your reckoning, little Cú' said Láeg. 'I am not' said Cú Chulainn, 'for I know in what number the hosts went past us, namely, eighteen divisions, but the eighteenth division was dispersed among the men of Ireland'.—Now Cú Chulainn possessed many and various gifts: the gift of beauty, the gift of form, the gift of build, the gift of swimming, the gift of horsemanship, the gift of playing fidchell, the gift of playing brandub, the gift of battle, the gift of fighting, the gift of conflict, the gift of sight, the gift of speech, the gift of counsel, the gift of fowling(?), the gift of laying waste (?), the gift of plundering in a strange border.

'Good, my friend Láeg, harness the chariot for us and ply the goad for us on the horses. Drive on the chariot and turn your left-hand board to the hosts to see can we overtake them in the van or in the

{line 557-592}rear or in the middle. For I shall not live if a friend or foe among the men of Ireland fall not by my hand tonight'. Then the charioteer plied the goad on the

horses. He turned his left board to the hosts and came to Taurloch Caille Móire north of Cnogba na Ríg which is called Áth n-Gabla. Then Cú Chulainn went into the wood and descended from his chariot and cut a forked pole of four prongs, whole and entire, with one stroke. He pointed it and charred it and put an ogam inscription on its side and cast it out of the back of his chariot from the tip of one hand so that two thirds of it went into the ground and but one third of it was above ground. Then it was that the two lads mentioned, the two sons of Nera mac Nuatair meic Tacáin, came upon him engaged in that task, and they vied with one another as to which of them would first wound him and first behead him. Cú Chulainn attacked them and cut off their four heads from them and from their charioteer and impaled a head of each man of them on a prong of the pole. And Cú Chulainn sent the horses of that band back by the same road to meet the men of Ireland, with their reins lying loose and the headless trunks red with gore and the bodies of the warriors dripping blood down on to the framework of the chariots. For he did not deem it honourable or seemly to take the horses or garments or arms from the bodies of those he killed. Then the hosts saw the horses of the band who had gone in advance of them and the headless bodies and the corpses of the warriors dripping blood down on the framework of the chariots. The van of the army waited for the rear, and all were thrown into panic.

Medb and Fergus and the Maines and the sons of Mágu came up. For this is how Medb was wont to travel; with nine chariots for herself alone, two chariots before her, two behind, two on each side and her chariot between them in the very middle. And the reason she used to do that was so that the clods of earth cast up by the horses' hooves or the foam dripping from the bridle-bits or the dust raised by the mighty army might not reach her and that no darkening might come to the golden diadem of the queen. 'What is this?' said Medb. 'Not hard to say' they all answered. 'These are the horses of the band that went in advance of us and their headless bodies in their chariots'. They held counsel, and they decided that was the track of a multitude and the approach of a great army and that it was the men of Ulster who came to them thus. And this is what they decided on: to send Cormac Conn Longes to find out who was at the ford, for if the Ulstermen were there, they would not kill the son of their own king. Then Cormac Conn

{line 593- 629}Longes mac Conchobuir came with thirty hundred armed men to find out who was at the ford. And when he got there he saw only the forked pole in the middle of the ford with four heads on it dripping blood down the stem of the pole into the current of the stream and the hoof-marks of the two horses, and the track of a single charioteer and of a single warrior leading eastwards out of the ford.

The nobles of Ireland came to the ford and they all fell to examining the forked pole.

They marvelled and wondered who had wrought the slaughter. 'What name have ye for this ford until now, Fergus?' said Ailill. 'Áth n-Grena' said Fergus, 'and Áth n-Gabla shall be its name forever now from this forked pole'.

And he recited the lay:

Fergus

1] Áth n-Grena will change its name because of the deed performed by the strong, fierce Hound. There is here a four- pronged forked branch to bring fear on the men of Ireland.

2] On two of its prongs are the heads of Fraech and Fochnam—presage of battle! On its other two points are the heads of Err and Innell.

3] What inscription is that on its side? Tell us, O druids fair. And who wrote that inscription on it? How many drove it into the ground?

4] Yon forked branch with fearful strength that you see there, O Fergus, one man cut-and hail to him!—with one perfect stroke of his sword.

5] He pointed it and swung it back behind him—no easy exploit—and then flung it down that one of you might pluck it out of the ground.

6] Áth n-Grena was its name hitherto. All will remember it. Ath n-Gabla will be its name forever from that forked branch which you see in the ford.

After the lay: Ailill said: 'I marvel and wonder, Fergus, who would have cut the forked pole and slain so swiftly the four who

{line 630-664}went before us'. 'Rather should you marvel and wonder at him who cut, whole and entire, the forked pole that you see with one stroke, who sharpened and pointed it and made a cast of it from the back of his chariot with the tip of one hand so that it went two third of its length into the ground and only one third is above it, and no hole was dug for it with his sword but it was driven in through the stony ground. It is tabu for the men of Ireland to go into the bed of this ford until one of you pluck out the pole with the tip of one hand even as he drove it in just now'. 'You are of our army, Fergus' said Medb, 'so bring us the forked pole from the bed of the ford'. 'Let me have a chariot' said Fergus. A chariot was brought to Fergus, and he gave a tug to the forked pole and made fragments and small pieces of the chariot. 'Let a chariot be brought to me' said Fergus again. A chariot is brought to Fergus and he gave a strong pull to the forked pole and made fragments and small pieces of the chariot. 'Bring me a chariot'. said Fergus. He tugged the pole with all his strength and shattered the chariot into pieces. As for the seventeen chariots of the Connachtmen, Fergus broke them all to fragments and small pieces and yet he could not draw the pole from the bed of the ford. 'Give over, Fergus' said Medb, 'do not

break any more of my people's chariots, for had you not been on this hosting now, we should already have reached the Ulstermen and had our share of booty and herds. We know why you are acting thus: it is to hold back and delay the host until such time as the Ulstermen recover from their debility and give us battle, the battle of the Táin'. 'Let a chariot be brought to me at once' said Fergus. Then his own chariot was brought to Fergus, and Fergus gave a strong wrench to the forked pole and neither wheel nor pole nor shaft of the chariot creaked or groaned. As was the strength and bravery with which it was driven in by him who had driven it in, so was the might and valour with which the warrior drew it out—Fergus, the gap-breaker of a hundred, the sledge hammer of smiting, the destructive stone of enemies, the leader of resistance, the enemy of multitudes, the destroyer of a mighty army, the blazing torch, the commander of a great battle. He drew it up with the tip of one hand until it reached the top of his shoulder and he put the forked pole in Ailill's hand. And Ailill looked at it. 'The fork seems all the more perfect to me' said Ailill, 'in that it is a single cutting I see on it from top to bottom'. 'All the more perfect indeed' said Fergus, and he began to praise the forked pole and made this lay about it:

Fergus

1] Here is the famous forked pole beside which harsh Cú Chulainn stood, and on which he left—to spite some one of you—the four heads of strangers.

2] It is certain that he would not retreat from the forked pole at the approach of one man, strong and fierce. Though the bright Hound has left it, blood remains on its hard bark.

3] Woe to him who will go eastward on the hosting to seek the cruel Donn Cúailnge. Heroes will be cut in pieces by the baneful sword of Cú Chulainn.

4] No easy gain will be his strong bull for whom a fight will be fought with keen weapons. When every skull has been tormented, all the tribes of Ireland will weep.

5] I have no more to say concerning the son of Deichtire, but men and women shall hear of this pole as it now stands.

After that lay: Ailill said: 'Let us pitch our tents and pavilions, and let us prepare food and drink and let us make music and melody and let us eat and take food, for it is unlikely that the men of Ireland ever at any time experienced a night of encampment that held more hardship and distress for them than last night'. Their encampments were set up and their tents pitched. Food and drink was prepared by them, music and melody played, and they ate a meal. And Ailill asked Fergus a question: 'I marvel and wonder as to who would come to us on the marches and slay so swiftly the four who went in advance. Is it likely that Conchobor mac Fachtna Fáthaig the high king of Ulster would come to us?' 'It is not likely indeed' said Fergus, 'for it is lamentable to revile him in his absence. There is

nothing that he would not pledge for his honour's sake. For if it were he who had come, armies and hosts and the pick of the men of Ireland

Ulster, ST

who are with him would have come too, and even though the men of Ireland and the men of Scotland, the Britons and the Saxons were opposed to him in one place and one meeting and one muster, in one camp and on one hill, he would give them all battle, it is he who would win victory and it is not he who would be routed'. 'Tell me, then, who was likely to have come to us? Was it perhaps Cuscraid Mend Macha

{line 702-733}mac Conchobuir from Inis Cuscraid?' 'It was not likely' said Fergus, son of the high king. 'There is nothing he would not stake for the sake of his honour, for if it were he who came, the sons of kings and royal princes who are with him in mercenary service would also come, and if there were before him in one spot and one Ireland and the men of Scotland, the Britons and the Saxons, he would give them all battle, it is he who would be victorious and it is not he who would be routed'. 'Tell me, then, would Eogan mac Durthacht the King of Fernmag come to us?' 'It was not likely indeed for if it were he who came, the steady men of Fernmag would come with him and he would give battle etc'. 'Tell me then who was likely to come to us. Was it Celchair mac Uthechair?' 'It was not likely indeed. It is shameful to revile him in his absence. He is the destructive stone of his enemies in the province, he is leader of resistance to all, he is the Ulstermen's doorway of battle, and if there were before him in one spot ut ante together with all the men of Ireland from west to east and from south to north, he would give them battle, he would be victorious and not he would be routed'.

'Tell me, then, who would be likely to have come to us?' 'Nay who but the little lad, my fosterson and the fosterson of Conchobor. Cú Chulainn na Cerdda the Hound of Culann the Smith he is called'. 'Yes indeed' said Ailill. 'I have heard you speak of that little lad once upon a time in Crúachu. What is the age of that boy now?' 'It is not his age that is most troublesome indeed' said Fergus, 'for the deeds of that boy were those of a man when he was younger than he is now'. 'How so?' said Medb. 'Is there among the Ulstermen now his equal in age who is more redoubtable than he?' 'We do not find there a wolf more bloodthirsty nor a hero more fierce nor any of his contemporaries who could equal the third or the fourth part of Cú Chulainn's warlike deeds. You do not find there' said Fergus, 'a hero his equal nor a sledge-hammer of smiting nor doom of hosts nor a contest of valour who would be of more worth than Cú Chulainn. You do not find there one that could equal his age and his growth, his size and his splendour, his fearsomeness and his eloquence, his harshness, his feats of arms and his valour, his bearing, his attack and

his assault, his destructiveness, his troublesomeness and his tumultuousness, his quickness, his speed and his violence, and his swift victory with the feat of nine men on each pointed weapon

"pointed weapon", following LU, ST

above him'. 'We make but little account of him' said

{line 734-765}Medb. 'He has but one body. He shuns wounding who evades capture. His age is reckoned as but that of a nubile girl nor will that youthful beardless sprite ye speak of hold out against resolute men'. 'We do not say so' said Fergus, 'for the deeds of that little boy were those of a man when he was younger than he now is'.

Here begin the youthful deeds of Cú Chulainn

Fergus

'For this boy was reared in the house of his father and mother at Airgdig in Mag Muirtheimne, and the stories of the youths of Emain were told to him. For this is how Conchobor spends his time of kingship since he assumed sovereignty: as soon as he arises, settling the cares and business of the province, thereafter dividing the day into three, the first third of the day spent watching the youths playing games and hurling, the second third spent in playing brandub and fidchell and the last third spent in consuming food and drink until sleep comes on them all, while minstrels and musicians are meanwhile lulling him to sleep. Though I am banished from him, I swear' said Fergus, 'that there is not in Ireland or in Scotland a warrior the counterpart of Conchobor.'

The stories about the youths and boys in Emain were told to that lad, and the little lad asked his mother if he might go to play to the playing-field at Emain, 'It is too soon for you, my son' said his mother, 'until there go with you a champion of the champions of Ulster or some of the attendants of Conchobor to ensure your safety and protection from the youths.' 'I think it long to wait for that, mother' said the little boy, 'and I shall not wait for it, but show me in what place lies Emain.' 'Far away from you is the spot where it lies' said his mother. 'Slíab Fúait is between you and Emain.' 'I shall make a guess at it then' said he.

The boy went forth and took his playthings. He took his hurleystick of bronze and his silver ball; he took his little javelin for casting and his toy spear with its end sharpened by fire, and he began to shorten the journey by playing with them. He would strike his ball with the stick and drive it a long way from him. Then with a second stroke he would throw his stick so that he might drive it a distance no less than the first. He would throw his javelin and he would cast his spear and would make a playful rush after them. Then he would catch his hurley-stick and his ball

{line 766-800}and his javelin, and before the end of his spear had reached the ground he would catch its tip aloft in the air.

He went on to the place of assembly in Emain where the youths were. There were thrice fifty youths led by Follomain mac Conchobuir at their games on the green of Emain. The little boy went on to the playing-field into their midst and caught the ball between his two legs when they cast it nor did he let it go higher than the top of his knee nor go lower than his ankle, and he pressed it and held it close between his two legs, and not one of the youths managed to get a grasp or a stroke or a blow or a shot at it. And he carried the ball away from them over the goal.

Then they all gazed at him. They wondered and marvelled. 'Well, boys' said Follomain mac Conchobuir, 'attack yon fellow, all of you, and let him meet death at my hands, for it is tabu for you that a youth should join your game without ensuring his protection from you. Attack him all together, for we know that he is the son of an Ulster chieftain, and let them not make it a habit to join your games without putting themselves under your protection and safeguard.'

Then they all attacked him together. They cast their thrice fifty hurley-sticks at the boy's head. He lifted up his single play-thing stick and warded off the thrice fifty sticks. Then they cast the thrice fifty balls at the little boy. He raised his arms and his wrists and his palms and warded off the thrice fifty balls. They threw at him the thrice fifty toy spears with sharpened butt. The boy lifted up his toy wooden shield and warded off the thrice fifty spears. Then he attacked them. He threw fifty kings' sons of them to the ground beneath him. 'Five of them' said Fergus, 'went between me and Conchobor in the spot where we were playing chess on the chess-board Cendchaem on the mound of Emain. The little boy pursued them to cut them down. Conchobor seized the little lad by the arms.' 'Nay, lad, I see that you do not deal gently with the youths.' 'I have good reason for that' said the boy. 'Though I came from distant lands, I did not get the honour due to a guest from the youths on my arrival.' 'Why, who are you?' asked Conchobor. 'I am little Setanta mac Sualtaim, the son of Deichtire your sister, and not through you did I expect to be thus aggrieved.' 'Why, my lad' said Conchobor, 'do you not know of the prohibition that the youths have, and that it is tabu for them that a boy should come to them from outside and not first claim their protection?' 'I did not know' said the little boy, 'and if I had known, I should have been on my guard

{line 801-838}against them.' 'Well, lads' said Conchobor, 'undertake the protection of the little boy.' 'We grant it indeed' say they.

The little boy placed himself under the protection of the youths. Then they loosed

hands from him but once more he attacked them. He threw fifty kings' sons to the ground beneath him. Their fathers thought that he had killed them but it was not so, he had merely terrified them with his many and violent blows. 'Nay' said Conchobor. 'Why do you still attack them?' 'I swear by my gods that until they in their turn all come under my protection and guarantee as I have done with them, I shall not lift my hands from them until I bring them all low.' 'Well, little lad, take on you the protection of the youths.' 'I grant it' said the little boy. Then the youths placed themselves under his protection and guarantee.

'A little boy who did that deed' said Fergus, 'at the end of five years after his birth and overthrew the sons of champions and warriors in front of their own fort and encampment, there were no need of wonder or surprise that he should come to the marches and cut a four-pronged pole and kill one man or two men or three or four when his seventeen years are accomplished on Táin Bó Cúailnge'.

Then said Cormac Cond Longas, the son of Conchobor: 'The year after that that little boy did a second deed'. 'What deed was that?' asked Ailill.

Cormac Cond Longas

Culand the smith dwelt in Ulster. He prepared a feast for Conchobor and went to Emain to invite him. He told him to come with only a small number unless he could bring a few genuine guests, for neither land nor domain had he but only his sledge- hammers and his anvils, his fists and his tongs. Conchobor said he would bring with him to Culand only a small number.

Culand came on to his fort to prepare food and drink. Conchobor remained in Emain until it was time to disperse when day drew to a close. The king put on his light travelling garb and went to bid farewell to the youths. Conchobor went to the playing-field and saw something that astonished him: thrice fifty boys at one end of the field and a single boy at the other end, and the single boy winning victory in taking the goal and in hurling from the thrice fifty youths. When they played the hole- game—a game which was played on the green of Emain—and when it was their turn to cast the ball and his to defend, he would catch the thrice fifty balls outside the hole and none would go past him into the hole. When it was their turn to keep goal and his to hurl, he would put the thrice fifty balls unerringly into the hole. When they played

{line 839-873} at pulling off each others's clothes, he would tear their thrice fifty mantles off them and all of them together were unable to take even the brooch out of his cloak. When they wrestled, he would throw the same thrice fifty to the ground beneath him and a sufficient number of them to hold him could not get to him. Chonchobor began to examine the little boy. 'Ah, my warriors' said Conchobor, 'happy is the land from which

came the little boy ye see, if his manly deeds were to be like his boyish exploits.' 'It is not fitting to speak thus' said Fergus, 'for as the little boy grows, so also will his deeds of manhood increase with him.' 'Let the little boy be summoned to us that he may go with us to share the feast to which we are going.' The little boy was summoned to Conchobor. 'Well my lad.' said Conchobor, 'come with us to enjoy the feast to which we are going.' 'I shall not go indeed' said the little boy. 'Why so?' asked Conchobor. 'Because the youths have not yet had enough of play and games and I shall not go from them until they have had their fill of play.' 'It is too long for us to wait for you, little lad, and we shall not.' 'Go on ahead' said the little boy, 'and I shall go after you.' 'You do not know the way at all, little boy' said Conchobor. 'I shall follow the trail of the company and the horses and the chariots.'

Then Conchobor came to the house of Culand the smith. The king was served, and they were honoured according to rank and profession and rights and nobility and accomplishments. Reeds and fresh rushes were strewn beneath them. They began to drink and make merry. Culand asked Conchobor: 'Good now, O King, have you appointed anyone to follow you tonight to this stronghold?' 'I have not' said Conchobor for he did not remember the little boy he had appointed to come after him. 'Why so?' asked Conchobor. 'I have a good bloodhound and when his dogchain is taken off no traveller or wayfarer dares come into the same canton as he, and he recognises no one but myself. His strength is such that he can do the work of a hundred'. Then said Conchobor. 'Let the bloodhound be loosed for us that he may guard the canton.' His dog-chain was loosed from the bloodhound and he made a swift circuit of the canton and he came to the mound where he was wont to be while guarding the dwelling, and he lay there with his head on his paws. And wild, savage and here, rough, surly and battlesome was he who lay there.

As for the youths, they remained in Emain until it was time for them disperse. They went each of them to the house of his father and mother, or of his fostermother and fosterfather. But the little

{line 874-907} boy went on the track of the company until he reached the house of Culand the smith. He began to shorten the way as he went with his playthings. When he reached the green before the stronghold where Culand and Conchobor were, he threw away all his playthings in front of him except his ball alone. The bloodhound perceived the little boy and bayed at him, and the baying of the bloodhound was heard throughout all the countryside. And it was not a sharing out for a feast the hound was minded to make of the boy but rather to swallow him entire past the wall of his chest and the breadth of his throat and the midriff of his breast. The boy had no means of defence, but he made a cast of the

ball and it went through the gaping mouth of the bloodhound and carried all his entrails out through the back way, and the boy then seized him by two legs and dashed him against the standing-stone so that he was scattered into pieces on the ground. Conchobor had heard the baying of the hound. 'Alas, my warriors' said Conchobor, 'would that we had not come to enjoy this feast.' 'Why so?' asked they all. 'The little boy who arranged to come after me, my sister's son, Setanta mac Sualtaim, has been killed by the hound.' All the famous Ulstermen rose with one accord. Though the gateway of the dwelling was wide open, they all went to meet him out over the palisades of the stronghold. Though all reached him quickly, quickest was Fergus and he lifted the little boy from the ground on to his shoulder and brought him into the presence of Conchobor. And Culand came forth and saw his bloodhound lying in scattered pieces. His heart beat against his breast. He went across into the stronghold then. 'I welcome your arrival, little boy' said Culand, 'for the sake of your mother and your father, but I do not welcome your arrival for your own sake.' 'Why are you angry, with the boy?' asked Conchobor. 'Would that you had not come to consume my drink and eat my food, for my substance now is substance wasted, my livelihood a lost livelihood. Good was the servant you have taken from me. He used to guard my herds and flocks and cattle for me.' 'Be not angry at all, master Culand'said the little boy, 'for I shall deliver a true judgment in this matter.' 'What judgment would you deliver on it, my lad?' said Conchobor. 'If there is a whelp of that hound's breeding in Ireland, he will be reared by me until he be fit for action like his sire. I shall myself be the hound to protect Culand's flocks and cattle and land during that time.' 'A good judgement you have given, little boy.' said Conchobor. 'I would not have given a better myself.' said Cathbad. 'Why shall

{line 908-943} you not be called Cú Chulainn Culand's Hound because of this?' 'Nay' said the little boy, 'I prefer my own name, Setanta mac Sualtaim.' 'Do not say that, lad' said Cathbad, 'for the men of Ireland and of Scotland shall hear of that name, and that name shall be ever on the lips of the men of Ireland and of Scotland.' 'I am willing that it shall be my name' said the boy. Hence the famous name of Cú Chulainn clung to him since he killed the hound of Culand the smith.

'A little boy who performed that exploit' said Cormac Cond Longas, 'six years after his birth, who killed the bloodhound with which hosts and armies dared not be in the same canton, there were no need to wonder or marvel that he should come to the marches and cut a four-pronged pole and kill one man or two or three or four, now that his seventeen years are completed on Táin Bó Cúailnge'.

'The little boy performed a third exploit in the following year again' said Fiachu mac

Fir Aba. 'What exploit did he perform?' asked Ailill.

Fiachu mac Fir Aba

Cathbad the druid was teaching his pupils to the north-east of Emain, and eight pupils of the class of druidic learning were with him. One of them asked his teacher what omen and presage was for that day, whether it was good or whether it was ill. Then said Cathbad that a boy who should take up arms on that day would be splendid and famous but would be shortlived and transient. Cú Chulainn heard that as he was playing south-west of Emain, and he threw aside all his playthings and went to Conchobor's sleeping chamber. 'All good attend you, O king of the warriors' said the little boy. —That is the speech of a person making a request of someone.—'What do you ask for, little lad?' said Conchobor. 'I wish to take arms' said the little boy. 'Who has advised you, lad?' said Conchobor. 'Cathbad the druid' said the little boy. 'He would not deceive you, lad' said Conchobor. Conchobor gave him two spears and a sword and a shield. The little boy shook and brandished the arms and shattered them into small pieces. Conchobor gave him two other spears and a shield and a sword. He shook and brandished, flourished and waved them, and shattered them into small pieces. As for the fourteen suits of arms which Conchobor had in Emain for the youths and boys—for to whichever one of them should take arms Conchobor would give equipment of battle and the youth would have victory in his valour thereafter—that little boy made fragments and small pieces of them all.

{line 944-980}

'Indeed these weapons are not good, father Conchobor' said the little boy, 'none of them suits me.' Conchobor gave him his own two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook and brandished and flourished and waved them so that the point of spears and sword touched the butt, and yet he did not break the weapons and they withstood him. 'These weapons are good indeed' said the little boy, 'they are suited to me. I salute the king whose weapons and equipment these are. I salute the land from which he came.' Then Cathbad the druid came into the tent and spoke. 'Is yon boy taking arms?' said Cathbad. 'He is indeed' said Conchobor. 'Not by your mother's son would I wish arms to be taken today' said Cathbad. 'Why is that? Is it not you who advised him?' said Conchobor. 'Not I indeed' said Cathbad. 'What mean you, you distorted sprite' said Conchobor, 'have you deceived me?' 'Do not be angry, father Conchobor' said the little boy, 'for it is he who advised me, for his pupil asked him what omen was for the day and he said that a boy who took arms on this day would be splendid and renowned but short-lived and transient.' 'I spoke truth' said Cathbad. 'You will be splendid and renowned but short-lived and transient.' 'It is a wonderful thing if I am but one day and one night in the

world provided that my fame and my deeds live after me.' 'Come, little lad, mount the chariot now for it is the same good omen for you.'

He mounted the chariot, and the first chariot he mounted, he shook and swayed around him and shattered it to pieces. He mounted the second chariot and shattered it to pieces in the same way. He made fragments of the third chariot also. As for the seventeen chariots which Conchobor had in Emain to serve the youths and boys, the little lad shattered them all to pieces and they withstood him not. 'These chariots are not good, father Conchobor' said the little boy, 'none of these suits me.' 'Where is Ibar mac Riangabra?' asked Conchobor. 'Here' answered Ibar. 'Harness my own two horses for yon boy and yoke my chariot.' The charioteer harnessed the horses and yoked the chariot. Then the little boy mounted the chariot. He rocked the chariot around him and it withstood him and did not break. 'This chariot is good indeed' said the little boy, 'and it is my fitting chariot.'

'Well, little boy' said Ibar, 'let the horses go to their pasture now.' 'It is too soon yet, Ibar' said the little boy. 'Come on around Emain now for to-day is the first day I took

{line 981-1015} arms, that it may be a triumph of valour for me.' They drove thrice around Emain. 'Let the horses go to their pasture now, little boy' said Ibar. 'It is too soon yet, Ibar' said the little boy. 'Come on so that the boys may wish me well, for to-day is the first day I took arms.' They went forward to the place where the boys were. 'Is yon lad taking arms?' they asked 'Yes indeed.' 'May it be for victory and first- wounding and triumph, but we deem it too soon that you took arms because you part from us in our games.' 'I shall not part from you at all, but it is with a good omen I took arms to- day.' 'Let the horses go to their pasture now, little boy' said Ibar. 'It is still too soon, Ibar' said the little boy. 'And this great road which goes past us, where does it lead?' said the little boy. 'Why do you bother about it?' said Ibar. 'You are an importunate fellow, I see, little lad' said Ibar. 'I wish, fellow, to ask about the chief roads of the province. How far does it go?' 'It goes to Áth na Foraíre on Slíab Fúait' said Ibar. 'Do you know why it is called Áth na Foraíre?' 'I do indeed' said Ibar. 'A goodly warrior of the Ulstermen is always there, keeping watch and ward so that no warriors or strangers come to Ulster to challenge them to battle and so that he may be the champion to give battle on behalf of the whole province. And if poets leave Ulstermen and the province unsatisfied, that he may be the one to give them treasures and valuables for the honour of the province. If poets come into the land, that he may be the man who will be their surety until they reach Conchobor's couch and that their poems and songs may be the first to be recited in Emain on their arrival.' 'Do you know who is at that ford to-day?' 'I do indeed' said Ibar, 'Conall Cernach

mac Amargin, the heroic and triumphant, the finest of the warriors of Ireland' said Ibar. 'Go on, fellow, that we may reach the ford.' They drove forward in front of the ford where Conall was. 'Is yon boy taking arms?' asked Conall. 'He is indeed' said Ibar. 'May that be for victory and first-wounding and triumph.' said Conall, 'but we deem it too soon for you to take arms because you are not yet fit for action if he that should come hither needed protection, for you would be complete surety for all the Ulstermen, and the nobles of the province would rise up at your summons.' 'What are you doing here, master Conall?' said the little boy. 'I am keeping watch and ward for the province here, lad' said Conall. 'Go home now, master Conall' said the boy, 'and let me keep watch for the province here.' 'Nay,

{line 1016-1050} little boy' said Conall. 'You are not yet fit to meet a goodly warrior.' 'Then I shall meanwhile go on southwards' said the boy, 'to Fertais Locha Echtrand to see if I might redden my hands in the blood of a friend or an enemy to-day.' 'I shall go with you to protect you, lad' said Conall. 'that you may not go alone to the marches.' 'Nay' said the boy. 'I shall indeed go with you' said Conall, 'for the Ulstermen will censure me if I let you go alone to the marches.'

His horses are harnessed for Conall and his chariot yoked, and he went to protect the boy. When Conall came abreast of him, the boy was certain that if the chance of performing a great deed were to come his way, Conall would not let him do it. He took from the ground a stone which filled his fist. He made a cast at the yoke of Conall's chariot and broke it in two so that Conall fell through the chariot on to the ground and his shoulder was dislocated. 'What is this, boy?' said Conall. 'It was I who cast a shot to see if my marksmanship was straight and in what way I shoot, and to see if I am the makings of a good fighter.' 'A bane on your shot and a bane on yourself! Even if you leave your head with your enemies now, I shall not go with you to guard you any more.' 'That is exactly what I asked you' said he, 'for it is tabu for you Ulstermen to proceed on your way despite an insecure chariot.' Conall came back again northwards to Áth na Foraire.

As for the little boy, he went south to Fertais Locha Echtrand. He was there until the close of day. 'If we might venture to say so, little lad' said Ibar, 'we would deem it time to go now to Emain, for already for some time the serving of meat and drink and the sharing out has been made in Emain. You have your appointed place there between Conchobor's knees every day you come there while my place is merely among the messengers and jesters of Conchobor's household. I think it time for me to go and scramble for a place with them.' 'Then harness the horses for us.' The charioteer harnesses the horses and the boy mounted the chariot. 'Well, Ibar, what mound is that mound up there now?' 'That is Slíab

Moduirn' said Ibar. 'And what is that white cairn on the top of the mountain?' 'That is Findcharn Slebe Moduirn' said Ibar. 'Yon cairn is pleasant' said the little boy. 'It is pleasant indeed' said Ibar. 'Come on, fellow, to that cairn.' 'Well, you are an importunate boy' said Ibar, 'but this is my first expedition with you. It will be my last expedition for ever if once I reach Emain.' However

{line 1051-1083} they went to the summit of the hill. 'Well now, Ibar' said the boy, 'teach me all the places of Ulster on every side for I do not know my way at all about the territory of Conchobor.' The driver pointed out to him all the places of Ulster all around him. He told him the names of the hills and plains and mounds of the province on every side. He pointed out the plains and strongholds and renowned places of the province. 'Well now, Ibar' said the little boy, 'what plain is that to the south of us which is full of retreats and corners and nooks and glens?' 'That is Mag m-Breg' said Ibar. 'Show me the buildings and renowned places of that plain.' The driver showed him Temair and Taitiu, Cleitech and Cnogba and Brug Meic in Óc and the fortress of the sons of Nechta Scene. 'Are not these the sons of Nechta who boast that the number of Ulstermen alive is not greater than the number of those Ulstermen who have fallen at their hands?' 'They are indeed' said the driver. 'Come on to the stronghold of the sons of Nechta' said the little lad. 'Woe to him who says that!' said Ibar. 'We know that it is a very foolish thing to say that. Whoever goes there' said Ibar, 'it will not be I.' 'You shall go there alive or dead' said the boy. 'Alive I shall go south' said Ibar, 'but dead I know I shall be left at the stronghold of Nechta's sons.'

They went on to the stronghold and the boy leapt from the chariot on to the green. Thus was the green before the stronghold: there was a pillar-stone on it and around the stone an iron ring, a ring of heroic deeds, with an ogam inscription on its peg. And thus ran the inscription: if any man came on that green and if he were a warrior bearing arms, it was tabu for him to leave the green without challenging to single combat. The little boy read out the inscription and put his two arms around the stone, that is, the stone and its ring, and he pitched it into the pool and the water closed over it. 'It seems to us' said Ibar, 'that that is no better than that it should remain where it was, and we know that you will find on this green what you are looking for now, namely, symptoms of death and dissolution.' 'Well now, Ibar, settle the coverings and rugs of the chariot for me that I may sleep for a little while.' 'Woe to him who says that' said the driver 'for this is a land of enemies and not a green for pleasure.' The driver arranged the rugs and skin-coverings of the chariot. The little boy fell asleep on the green.

Then there came on to the green one of the sons of Nechta, Foíll mac Nechtain. 'Do not unharness the horses, driver'

{line 1084-1116} said Fóill. 'I do not attempt it at all' said Ibar, 'their traces and reins are still in my hand.' 'Whose are these horses?' said Fóill. 'Conchobor's two horses' said the driver, 'the two piebald-headed ones.' 'I recognise them as such, and what brought the horses here to the border of the marches?' 'A youthful lad of ours who took up arms' said the driver. 'He came to the edge of the marches to display his form.' 'May that not be for victory or triumph' said Fóill. 'Had I known that he was old enough to fight, his dead body would have returned north to Emain and he would not have returned alive.' 'He is not old enough to fight indeed' said Ibar, 'and it is not meet even to say so to him. He is in but the seventh year from his birth.' The little boy raised his head from the ground and passed his hand over his face, and he blushed crimson from head to foot. 'I am indeed capable of action' said the little boy. 'It pleases me better than that you should say that you are not.' 'It will please you still better if only we meet on the ford, but go and fetch your weapons for I see that you have come in cowardly fashion, unarmed, and I do not wound charioteers or messengers or those unarmed.' The fellow hastened to fetch his weapon. 'It behoves you to act warily with yon man, little lad' said Ibar. 'Why is that?' said the boy. 'The man you see is Fóill mac Nechtain. No points nor weapons nor sharp edges harm him.' 'Not to me should you say that, Ibar' said the boy. 'I shall take in hand for him my deil cliss, that is, the round ball of refined iron, and it will land on the flat of his shield and the flat of his forehead and carry out through the back of his head a portion of brain equal to the iron ball, and he will be holed like a sieve so that the light of the air will be visible through his head.' Fóill mac Nechtain came forth. Cú Chulainn took in hand for him the deil cliss, and hurled it so that it landed on the flat of his shield and the flat of his forehead and took the ball's equivalent of his brains through the back of his head, and he was holed like a sieve so that the light of the air was visible through his head. And Cú Chulainn struck off his head from his neck.

The second son, Túachall mac Nechtain, came forth on the green. 'I see you would boast of that deed' said Túachall. 'Indeed I think it no cause for boasting to slay one warrior.' 'You will not boast of that now for you will fall by my hand.' 'Go and fetch your weapons for you have come in cowardly fashion, unarmed.' The fellow hastened to fetch his weapons. 'You should have a care for yon fellow, little lad' said Ibar.

{line 1117-1152} 'Why so?' said the boy. 'The man you see is Túachall mac Nechtain. Unless you get him with the first blow or the first cast or the first touch, you will never do so, so skilfully and craftily does he move around the points of the weapons.' 'Not to me should that be said, Ibar' said the boy. 'I shall take in hand the great spear of Conchobor, the venomous lance. It will land on the shield over his breast, and having

pierced his heart, it will crush through a rib in the side that is farther from me. It will be the cast of an outlaw not the blow of a freeman. From me he shall not get until the day of doom any place where he may be cured or tended.' Túachall mac Nechtain came out on the green, and the boy threw Conchobor's spear at him and it went through the shield over his breast and crushed through a rib in the side farther from Cú Chulainn after piercing his heart in his chest. Cú Chulainn struck off his head before it reached the ground.

Then came forth the youngest of the sons, Faindle mac Nechtain, on to the green. 'Foolish were they who fought with you here.' 'Why is that?' said the boy. 'Come away down to the pool where your foot will not touch bottom.' Faindle hastened on to the pool. 'You should have a care for yon fellow, little lad' said Ibar. 'Why so?' said the boy. 'The man you see is Faindle mac Nechtain, and he is so called because he travels over water like a swallow or squirrel. The swimmers of the world cannot cope with him.' 'Not to me should that be said, Ibar' said the boy. 'You know our river Calland in Emain. When the youths surround it to play their games on it and when the pool is not safe, I carry a boy over it on each of my two palms and a boy on each of my two shoulders and I myself do not wet even my ankles as I carry them.' They met upon the water and the boy clasped his arms around Faindle and held him until the water came up flush with him, and he dealt him a violent blow with Conchobor's sword and struck his head from his trunk, letting the body go with the current and taking with him the head.

Then they went into the stronghold and pillaged the fort and fired it so that its buildings were level with its outer walls. They turned about on their way to Slíab Fúait and took with them the three heads of the sons of Nechta.

They saw in front of them a herd of wild deer. 'What are these numerous fierce cattle, Ibar?' said the boy. 'Are they tame or are they deer?' 'They are deer indeed' said Ibar. 'That is a herd of wild deer which frequent the recesses of Slíab Fúait.' 'Ply the goad on the horses for us, that we may catch

{line 1153-1188} some of them.' The charioteer plied the goad on the horses. The king's fat horses could not keep up with the deer. The boy dismounted and caught two swift, strong stags. He tied them to the shafts and ropes and thongs of the chariot.

They went forward to the mound of Emain. They saw a flock of white swans fly past them. 'What kind of birds are those, Ibar?' said the boy. 'Are they tame or just birds?' 'Just birds' said Ibar. 'They are a flock of swans which come in from the crags and rocks and islands of the ocean to feed on the plains and level spots of Ireland.' 'Which would be the more wonderful, to bring them alive to Emain or to bring them dead, Ibar?' said the boy. 'More wonderful indeed to bring them alive' said Ibar, 'For not everyone can catch the

living birds.' Then the boy cast a small stone at them. He brought down eight of the birds. Then he cast a big stone and brought down sixteen of the birds. 'Bring hither the birds, Ibar' said the boy. 'I am in a predicament' said Ibar. 'How is that?' said the boy. 'I have good reason to say so. If I move from where I am, the iron wheels of the chariot will cut me down, so fierce and so powerful (?) and so strong is the pace of the horses. If I stir at all, the stags' antlers will pierce and gore me.' 'Ah, no true warrior are you, Ibar' said the boy, 'for with the look that I shall give the horses, they will not break their straight course, and with the look that I shall give the deer, they will bow their heads in awe and fear of me, and it will not matter to you even if you stepped across their antlers.' Then Ibar tied the birds to the shafts and cords and thongs and strings and ropes of the chariot.

They went forward and came to Emain. Then Leborcham perceived them. She was the daughter of Aí and Adarc. 'A single chariot-warrior is here' said Leborcham, 'and terribly he comes. He has in the chariot the bloody heads of his enemies. There are beautiful, pure-white birds held (?) by him in the chariot. He has wild, untamed deer bound and tied and fettered. If he be not met tonight, the warriors of Ulster will fall at his hand.' 'We know that chariot-warrior' said Conchobor. 'It is the little boy, my sister's son, who went to the marches and shed blood there, but he has not had his fill of combat, and if he be not met, all the warriors of Emain will fall by his hand.' And the plan they devised was this: to send the women- folk out to meet the boy, thrice fifty women, that is, ten and seven score women, all stark naked, led by their chieftainess, Scannlach, to

{line 1189-1220} expose all their nakedness and shame to him. All the young women came forth and discovered all their nakedness and shame to him. The boy hid his face from them and laid his countenance against the chariot that he might not see the women's nakedness. Then the boy was lifted out of the chariot. He was placed in three vats of cold water to quench the ardour of his wrath. The first vat into which the boy was put burst its staves and hoops like the breaking of a nutshell about him. As for the second vat, the water would seethe several hand-breadths high in it. As for the third vat the water grew hot in it so that one man might endure it while another would not. Thereupon the boy's wrath abated, and his garments were put

"were put", following ST

on him. His comely appearance was restored, and he blushed crimson from head to foot. He had seven toes on each of his feet and seven fingers on each of his hands. He had seven pupils in each of his royal eyes and seven gems sparkling in each pupil. Four dimples in each cheek, a blue dimple, a purple, a green, and a yellow. Fifty tresses of hair he had between one ear and the other, bright yellow like the top of a birch-tree or like

brooches of pale gold shining in the sun. He had a high crest of hair, bright, fair, as if a cow had licked it. He wore a green mantle in which was a silver pin, and a tunic of thread of gold. The boy was placed between Conchobor's knees and the king began to stroke his hair.

A little lad who did those deeds when he was seven years old, who overcame the champions and warriors by whom two thirds of the men of Ulster had fallen and had been unavenged until this boy arose, there were no need to wonder or marvel that he should come to the marches and kill one man or two or three or four when his seventeen years were completed at the time of the Cattle-raid of Cúailnge.

Thus far then is some account of the youthful deeds of Cú Chulainn on the Cattle-raid of Cúailnge, together with the prologue of the tale and an account of the route and march of the host out of Crúachu.

The story proper is what follows now.

The four great provinces of Ireland came the next day eastwards over Cruinn, that is, the mountain called Cruinn. Cú Chulainn went ahead of them. He met the charioteer of Órlám, the son of Ailill and Medb who was at Tamlachta Órláim to the north of

{line 1221-1255} Dísert Lochad, cutting chariot poles from a holly-tree in the wood. 'Well, Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'boldly do the Ulstermen behave if it is they who are thus cutting down the wood in front of the men of Ireland. And do you stay here for a little while until I find out who is cutting down the wood in this manner'. Then Cú Chulainn went on and came upon the charioteer. 'What are you doing here, lad?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'I am cutting the chariot poles from a holly-tree here' said the driver, 'for our chariots broke yesterday hunting that famous deer, Cú Chulainn. And by your valour, warrior, come to my help, lest that famous Cú Chulainn come upon me'. 'Take your choice, lad' said Cú Chulainn, 'either to gather the poles or to strip them'. 'I shall gather them for it is easier'. Cú Chulainn began to strip the poles, and he would draw them between his toes and between his fingers against their bends and knots until he made them smooth and polished and slippery and trimmed. He would make them so smooth that a fly could not stay on them by the time he cast them from him. Then the charioteer looks at him. 'Indeed it seems to me that it was not a labour befitting you that I imposed on you. Who are you?' asked the driver. 'I am the famous Cú Chulainn of whom you spoke just now'. 'Woe is me!' cried the charioteer, 'for that am I done for'. 'I shall not slay you, lad' said Cú Chulainn, 'for I do not wound charioteers or messengers or men unarmed. And where is your master anyway?' 'Over yonder on the mound' said the charioteer. 'Go to him and warn him to be on his guard, for if we meet, he will fall at my hands'. Then the charioteer went to his

master, and swiftly as the charioteer went, more swiftly still went Cú Chulainn and struck off Órlám's head. And he raised the head aloft and displayed it to the men of Ireland.

Then came the three Meic Árach on to the ford at Ard Ciannacht to meet with Cú Chulainn. Lon and Ualu and Díliu were their names; Mes Lir and Mes Laig and Mes Lethair were the names of their charioteers. They came to encounter Cú Chulainn because they deemed excessive what he had done against them the previous day, namely, killing the two sons of Nera mac Nuatair meic Thacáin at Áth Gabla and killing Órlám, the son of Ailill and Medb, as well and displaying his head to the men of Ireland. They came then that they might kill Cú Chulainn in the same way and bear away his head as a trophy. They went to the wood and cut three rods of white hazel to put in the hands of their charioteers so that all six of them together might fight with Cú

{line 1256-1288} Chulainn. Cú Chulainn attacked them and cut off their six heads. Thus fell Meic Árach by the hand of Cú Chulainn.

There came also Lethan on to his ford on the Níth in the district of Conaille Muirtheimne, to fight with Cú Chulainn. He attacked him on the ford. Áth Carpait was the name of the ford where they reached it, for their chariots had been broken in the fighting at the ford. Mulchi fell on the hill between the two fords, whence it is still called Gúalu Mulchi. Then Cú Chulainn and Lethan met, and Lethan fell by the hand of Cú Chulainn who cut off his head from his trunk on the ford, but he left it with it, that is, he left his head with his body. Whence the name of the ford ever since is Áth Lethan in the district of Conaille Muirtheimne.

Then came the harpers of Caínbile from Ess Ruaid to entertain them. The men of Ireland thought that they had come from the Ulstermen to spy on them, so the hosts hunted them vigorously for a long distance until they escaped from them, transformed into wild deer, at the standing-stones at Lia Mór. For though they were called the harpers of Caínbile, they were men of great knowledge and prophecy and magic.

Then Cú Chulainn vowed that wherever he saw Medb, he would cast a stone at her and it would not go far from the side of her head. It happened as he said. Where he saw Medb to the west of the ford, he cast a stone from his sling at her and killed the pet bird on her shoulder. Medb went eastwards over the ford, and he cast another stone from his sling at her east of the ford and killed the pet marten which was on her shoulder. Whence the names of those places are still Meide in Togmaill and Meíde ind Eóin, and Áth Srethe is the name of the ford across which Cú Chulainn cast the stone from his sling.

The four great provinces of Ireland came on the morrow and began to ravage Mag m-Breg and Mag Muirtheimne. And there came to Fergus, Cú Chulainn's fosterfather, a

keen premonition of the arrival of Cú Chulainn, and he told the men of Ireland to be on their guard that night for Cú Chulainn would come upon them. And he praised him here again, as we have written above, and chanted a lay:

Fergus

Cú Chulainn of Cúailnge will come upon you in advance of the heroes of Cráebrúad. Men will be bloodily wounded because of the harrying of Mag Muirtheimne.

For Cú Chulainn went a longer journey than this, as far as the mountains of Armenia. He waged combat beyond his wont. He slaughtered the Amazons.

More difficult was it for him to drive the sons of Nechta from their couches and to slay with one hand the hound of the smith—valorous deed!

I have no more to say concerning Deichtere's son. I swear that, in truth, though you reach him not, he will come to you.

After that lay: On the same day, the Donn Cúailnge came to Crích Maírgín and with him fifty heifers, and he pawed up the earth, that is, he cast the turf over him with his heels. On the same day the Morrígu daughter of Ernmas came from the fairy-mounds and sat on the pillar-stone in Temair Cúailnge, warning the Donn Cúailnge against the men of Ireland. She began to speak to him and she said: 'Good now, O pitiful one, Donn Cúailnge, be on your guard, for the men of Ireland will come upon you and will carry you off to their encampment unless you take heed'. And she began to warn him thus and spoke these words aloud: 'Nach fitir' etc.[gap: untranslated rhetoric/extent: 6 lines]

Then Donn Cúailnge came and advanced into Glenn na Samaisce in Slíab Culind with fifty of his heifers.

Here are some of the virtues of the Donn Cúailnge: He would bull fifty heifers every day. These would calve before the same hour on the following day, and those of them that did not calve would burst with the calves because they could not endure the begetting of the Donn Cúailnge. It was one of the virtues of the Donn Cúailnge that fifty youths used to play games every evening on his back. Another of his virtues was that he used to protect a hundred warriors from heat and cold in his shadow and shelter. It was one of his virtues that no spectre or sprite or spirit of the glen dared to come into one and the same canton as he. It was one of his virtues that each evening as he came to his byre and his shed and his haggard, he used to make a musical lowing which was enough melody and delight for a man in the north and in the south and in the middle of the district of Cúailnge. Those are some of the virtues of Donn Cúailnge.

Then on the morrow the hosts came into the rocks and dunes (?) of Conaille Muithemne. And Medb ordered that a shelter of shields should be placed over her lest Cú

Chulainn should make a cast at her from hills or heights or mounds. However on that day Cú Chulainn did not succeed in wounding or attacking the men or Ireland in the rocks and dunes of Conaille Muirthemne.

The men of the four great provinces of Ireland spent that night in Rede Loche in Cúailnge and pitched their camps there. Medb told a handmaid of her household to go to the river and fetch her water for drinking and washing. Loche was the maid's name. Then Loche came, wearing the golden diadem of the queen on her head and accompanied by fifty women. And Cú Chulainn cast a stone at her from his sling and broke in three the golden diadem and killed the girl on the plain where she was. Whence is the name Rede Loche in Cúailnge. For Cú Chulainn had thought, for want of knowledge and information, that it was Medb who was there.

On the morrow the hosts went as far as the river Glais Cruind, and they tried to cross the Glaise but failed to do so. Clúain Carpat is the name of the first place where they reached it, and that spot is called Clúain Carpat because the Glaise carried a hundred of their chariots away to the sea. Medb asked of her people that a warrior from amongst them should go and test the depth of the river. A great and valiant warrior of Medb's household called Úalu, rose up and took on his back a huge rock, and he came to test the depth of the stream. And the river Glais swept him back, dead and lifeless, with his stone on his back. Medb ordered him to be brought up out of the river and his grave dug and his stone raised. Whence the name Lia Úaland in the district of Cúailnge.

Cú Chulainn kept very close to the hosts that day, inviting them to fight and do combat, and killed a hundred of their warriors, including Róen and Roí, the two historians of the Foray.

Medb ordered her people to go and fight and do combat with Cú Chulainn. 'It will not be I' and 'It will not be I', said one and all from the place where they were. 'No captive is due from my people. Even if he were, it is not I who would go to oppose Cú Chulainn, for it is no easy task to encounter him'.

The hosts proceeded along the side of the river Glaise since they were unable to cross it, and they reached the spot where the

{line 1367-1400} Glaise rises in the mountain, If they wished, they could have gone between the Glaise and the mountain, but Medb did not permit it but ordered them to dig and hack a path for her through the mountain, so that it might be a reproach and disgrace to the Ulstermen. Since then Bernais Tána Bó Cúailnge is the name of that place, for afterwards the drove of cattle was taken through it.

The men of the four great provinces of Ireland encamped that night at Belat Aileáin.

Until then its name was Belat Aileáin, but from that time its name was Glenn Táil, because of the great amount of milk which the herds and cattle yielded there to the men of Ireland. And Líasa Líac is another name for that place. It is so called because it was there that the men of Ireland built byres and enclosures for their herds and their cattle.

The men of the four great provinces of Ireland came on as far as Sechair. Sechair was the name of the river until then but Glas Gatlaig is its name ever since. It is so called because the men of Ireland brought their herds and cattle across it tied with withes and ropes, and when they had crossed, the hosts let their withes and ropes drift down the stream. Hence the name of Glas Gatlaig.

That night the men of the four great provinces of Ireland came and encamped in Druim En in the district of Conaille Muirthemne, and Cú Chulainn took up his position close beside them at Ferta in Lerga. And that night Cú Chulainn waved and brandished and shook his weapons so that a hundred warriors among the host died of fright and fear and dread of Cú Chulainn. Medb told Fiachu mac Fir Aba of the Ulstermen to go and parley with Cú Chulainn and to offer him terms. 'What terms would be offered him?' asked Fiachu mac Fir Aba. 'Not hard to say' answered Medb. 'He shall be compensated for the damage done to Ulstermen that he may be paid as the men of Ireland best adjudge. He shall have entertainment at all times in Crúachu and wine and mead shall be served to him, and he shall come into my service and into the service of Ailill for that is more advantageous for him than to be in the service of the petty lord with whom he now is'.—And that is the most scornful and insulting speech that was made on the Foray of Cúailnge, namely, to call Conchobor, the finest king of a province in Ireland, a petty lord.

Then came Fiachu mac Fir Aba to parley with Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn welcomed him. 'I trust that welcome'. 'You may well trust it'. 'To parley with you have I come from Medb'. 'What terms did you bring?' 'Compensation shall be

{line 1401-1436} made to you for the damage done to the Ulstermen that you may be paid as the men of Ireland best adjudge. You shall have entertainment in Crúachu and be served with wine and mead. And you shall enter the service of Ailill and of Medb, for that is more advantageous for you than to be in the service of the petty lord with whom you now are'. 'No, indeed' said Cú Chulainn. 'I would not exchange my mother's brother for another king'. 'Come early tomorrow to Glenn Fochaíne to a meeting with Medb and Fergus'.

Then early on the morrow Cú Chulainn came to Glenn Fochaíne. Medb and Fergus came there too to meet him, and Medb gazed at Cú Chulainn, and in her own mind she belittled him for he seemed to her no more than a boy. 'Is that the famous Cú Chulainn of

whom you speak, Fergus?' asked Medb. And Medb began to speak to Fergus and made the lay:

Medb

1] If that is the fair Hound of whom ye Ulstermen speak, no man who faces hardship but can ward him off from the men of Ireland.

Fergus

2] Though young the Hound you see there who rides over Mag Muirthemne, no man who places foot on earth but he will repel in single combat.

Medb

3] Let terms be taken from us to the warrior. He is mad if he violate them. He shall have half his cows and half his womenfolk, and let him change his way of fighting.

Fergus

4] I wish that the Hound from great Muirthemne be not defeated by you. I know that if it be he, he fears no fierce or famous deed of arms.

'Speak you to Cú Chulainn, Fergus' said Medb. 'Nay', said Fergus, 'rather speak to him yourself, for ye are not far apart in this glen, Glenn Focharáire'. And Medb began to address Cú Chulainn and chanted a lay:

Medb

1] O Cú Chulainn renowned in song, ward off from us your sling. Your fierce famed fighting has overcome us and confused us.

Cú Chulainn

O Medb from Múr mac Mágach, I am no inglorious coward. As long as I live I shall not yield to you the driving of the herd of Cúailnge.

Medb

3] If you would accept from us, O triumphant Hound of Cúailnge, half your cows and half your womenfolk, you will get them from us through fear of you

"you ... you", following ST

.

Cú Chulainn

4] Since I, by virtue of those I have slain, am the veteran who guards Ulster, I shall accept no terms until am given every milch cow, every women of the Gael.

Medb

5] Too greatly do you boast, after slaughtering our nobles, that we should keep guard on the best of our steeds, the best of our possessions, all because of one man.

Cú Chulainn

6] O daughter of Eochu Find Fáil, I am no good in such a contention. Though I am a warrior—clear omen!—my counsels are few.

Medb

7] No reproach to you is what you say, many-retinued son of Deichtere. The terms are such as will bring fame to you, O triumphant Cú Chulainn.

After that lay: Cú Chulainn accepted none of the terms that Medb asked of him. In that manner they parted in the glen and each side withdrew equally angry.

The men of the four great provinces of Ireland encamped for three days and three nights at Druim En in Conaille Muirthemne. But neither huts nor tents were set up, nor was meal or repast eaten by them and no music or melody was played by them during those three nights. And every night until the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow, Cú Chulainn used to kill a hundred of their warriors. 'Not long will our hosts last in this manner' said Medb, 'if Cú Chulainn kill a hundred of our men every night. Why do we not offer him terms and why do we not parley with him?' 'What terms are those?' asked Ailill. 'Let him be offered those of the cattle that have milk and those of the captives who are base-born, and let him cease to ply his sling on the men of Ireland and let him allow the hosts at least to sleep'. 'Who

{line 1473-1505} will go with those terms?' asked Ailill. 'Who else but Mac Roth, the messenger' said Medb. 'I shall not go indeed' said Mac Roth, 'for I do not know the way and I do not know where Cú Chulainn is'. 'Ask Fergus' said Medb, 'it is likely that he knows'. 'I do not know' said Fergus, 'but I should think that he might be between Fochaín and the sea, exposing himself to wind and sun after his sleeplessness last night when single-handed he slew and demolished the host'. It was as Fergus had said.

Heavy snow fell that night so that all the provinces of Ireland were one white expanse. And Cú Chulainn cast off the twenty-seven shirts, waxed and hard as boards, which used to be bound to his skin with ropes and cords so that his sense might not be deranged when his fit of fury came upon him. The snow melted for thirty feet around him on all sides, so great was the ardour of the warrior and so hot the body of Cú Chulainn, and the charioteer could not remain near him because of the greatness of the fury and ardour of the warrior and because of the heat of his body.

'A single warrior comes towards us, little Cú' said Láeg. 'What kind of warrior?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'A dark-haired, handsome, broad-faced fellow. A fine brown cloak about him, a bronze pin in his cloak. A strong, plaited shirt next to his skin. Two shoes between his feet and the ground. He carries a staff of white hazel in one hand and in the other a one-edged sword with guards of ivory'. 'Well, driver' said Cú Chulainn, 'those are

the tokens of a messenger. That is one of the messengers of Ireland coming to speak and parley with me'.

Then Mac Roth arrived at the spot where Láeg was. 'Whose vassal are you, fellow?

"Whose ... fellow", following ST

' asked Mac Roth. 'I am vassal to the warrior up yonder' said the driver. Mac Roth came to the spot where Cú Chulainn was. 'Whose vassal are you, warrior?

"Whose ... warrior", following ST

' asked Mac Roth. 'I am the vassal of Conchobor mac Fachtna Fáthaig'. 'Have you no information more exact than that?' 'That is enough for now' said Cú Chulainn. 'Find out for me where I might find that famous Cú Chulainn whom the men of Ireland are hunting now on this hosting'. 'What would you say to him that you would not say to me?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'I have come from Ailill and Medb to parley with him and to offer him terms and peace'. 'What terms have you brought him?' 'All that are milch of the kine, all that are base-born among the

{line 1506-1538} captives, on condition that he cease to ply his sling against the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder feat he performs against them every evening'. 'Even if he whom you seek were at hand, he would not accept the proposals you ask. For the Ulstermen, if they have no dry cows, will kill their milch cows for companies and satirists and guests, for the sake of their honour, and they will take their low-born women to bed and thus there will arise in the land of Ulster a progeny which is base on the side of the mothers'. Mac Roth went back. 'Did you not find him?' asked Medb. 'I found a surly, angry, fearsome, fierce fellow between Fochaín and the sea. I do not know if he is the famed Cú Chulainn'. 'Did he accept those terms?' 'He did not indeed'. And Mac Roth told them the reason why he did not accept. 'It was Cú Chulainn to who you spoke' said Fergus.

'Let other terms be taken to him' said Medb. 'What terms?' asked Ailill. 'All the dry kine of the herds, all the noble among the captives, and let him cease to ply his sling on the hosts for not pleasant is the thunder feat he performs against them every evening'. 'Who will go with those terms?' 'Who but Mac Roth'. 'I shall indeed go' said Mac Roth, 'for now I know the way'. Mac Roth came to speak to Cú Chulainn. 'I have come now to speak with you for I know that you are the famous Cú Chulainn'. 'What terms did you bring with you then?' 'All the dry kine in the herd, all the nobly-born among the captives, and cease to ply your sling against the men of Ireland and let them sleep, for not pleasant is the thunder feat you perform against them every evening'. 'I shall not accept those terms, for the Ulstermen will kill their dry kine for the sake of their honour, for Ulstermen are generous, and Ulstermen will be left without any dry cattle or any milch cattle. They will set their free-

born women to work at querns and kneading troughs and bring them into slavery and servile work. I do not wish to leave after me in Ulster the reproach of having made slaves and bondwomen of the daughters of the kings and royal leaders of Ulster'. 'Are there any terms at all that you accept now.?' 'There are indeed' said Cú Chulainn. 'Do you tell me terms then?' asked Mac Roth. 'I vow' said Cú Chulainn, 'that it is not I who will tell them to you'. 'Who then?' asked Mac Roth. 'If you have within the camp' said Cú Chulainn, 'some one who should know my terms, let him tell you, and if you have not, let no one come any more to me offering terms or peace, for whoever so comes, that will be the length of his life'. Mac Roth went back

{line 1539-1572} and Medb asked him for news. 'Did you find him?' said Medb. 'I did indeed' said Mac Roth. 'Did he accept?' asked Medb. 'He did not' said Mac Roth. 'Are there any terms which he accepts?' 'There are, he says'. 'Did he make known those terms to you?' 'What he said' answered Mac Roth, 'was that it will not be he who will tell you them'. 'Who then?' asked Medb. 'But if there is among us one who should know the terms he asks, let him tell me, and if there is not, let no one ever again come near him. But there is one thing I assert' said Mac Roth, 'even if you were to give me the kingship of Ireland I myself shall not go to tell them to him'.

Then Medb gazed at Fergus. 'What terms does yonder man demand, Fergus?' said Medb. 'I see no advantage at all for you in the terms he asks' said Fergus. 'What terms are those?' said Medb. 'That one man from the men of Ireland should fight him every day. While that man is being killed, the army to be permitted to continue their march. Then when he has killed that man, another warrior to be sent to him at the ford or else the men of Ireland to remain in camp there until the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow. And further, Cú Chulainn to be fed and clothed by you as long as the Foray lasts'.

'By my conscience' said Ailill, 'those are grievous terms'. 'What he asks is good' said Medb, 'and he shall get those terms, for we deem it preferable to lose one warrior every day rather than a hundred warriors every night'. 'Who will go and tell those terms to Cú Chulainn?' 'Who but Fergus' said Medb. 'No' said Fergus. 'Why not?' asked Ailill. 'Let pledges and covenants, bonds and guarantees be given for abiding by those terms and for fulfilling them to Cú Chulainn'. 'I agree to that' said Medb, and Fergus bound them to security in the same way.

Fergus's horses were harnessed and his chariot yoked, and his two horses were harnessed for Etarculmul son of Fid and of Lethrinn, a stripling of the household of Medb and Ailill. 'Where are you going?' asked Fergus. 'We are going with you' said Etarculmul, 'to see the form and appearance of Cú Chulainn and to gaze upon him'. 'If you were to

follow my counsel' said Fergus, 'you would not come at all'. 'Why so?' 'Because of your haughtiness and your arrogance, and also because of the fierceness and the valour and the savageness of the lad against whom you go, for I think that there will be strife between you before ye part'.

{line 1573-1604} 'Will you not be able to make intervention between us?' said Etarcumul. 'I shall' said Fergus, 'if only you yourself will not seek contention and strife "contention and strife", following ST
' . 'I shall never seek that'.

Then they went forward to Cú Chulainn where he was between Focháin and the sea, playing búanbach with his charioteer. And no one came into the plain unnoticed by Láeg and yet he used to win every second game of búanbach from Cú Chulainn. 'A single warrior comes towards us, little Cú' said Láeg. 'What manner of warrior is he?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'It seems to me that the chariot of the warrior is as big as one of the greatest mountains on a vast plain. It seems to me that the curly, thick, fair- yellow, golden hair hanging loose around his head is as great as the foliage of one of the tall trees which stand on the green before a great fort. He wears a purple, fringed mantle wrapped around him with a golden, inlaid brooch in it. A broad, grey spear flashing in his hand. A bossed, scalloped shield over him with a boss of red gold. A long sword, as long as a ship's rudder

"A long ... rudder, following LU and ST

, firmly fixed and resting on the two thighs of the great, proud warrior who is within the chariot'. 'Welcome is the arrival to us of this guest' said Cú Chulainn. 'We know that man. It is my master Fergus who comes'. 'I see another chariot-warrior coming towards us also. With much skill and beauty and splendour do his horses advance'. 'That is one of the youths of the men of Ireland, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn. 'To see my form and appearance that man comes, for I am renowned among them within their encampment'. Fergus arrived and sprang from the chariot, and Cú Chulainn bade him welcome. 'I trust that welcome' said Fergus. 'You may well trust, it' said Cú Chulainn, 'for if a flock of birds pass over the plain, you shall have one wild goose and the half of another. If fish swim into the estuaries, you shall have a salmon with the half of another. You shall have a handful of watercress and a handful of sea-weed and a handful of water parsnip. If you must fight or do battle I shall go to the ford on your behalf and you shall be watched over and guarded while you sleep and rest'. 'Well indeed, we know what provisions for hospitality you have now on the Foray of Cúailnge. But the condition that you asked of the men of Ireland, namely, single combat, you shall have it. I came to bind you to that, so undertake to fulfil it'. 'I agree indeed, master Fergus'

{line 1605-1637} said Cú Chulainn. And he delayed no longer than that conversing lest the men of Ireland should say that Fergus was betraying them to his fosterling. His two horses were harnessed for Fergus and his chariot was yoked, and he went back.

Etarcumul remained behind him gazing at Cú Chulainn for a long while. 'What are you staring at, lad?' said Cú Chulainn. 'I am staring at you' said Etarcumul. 'You have not far to look indeed' said Cú Chulainn. 'You redden your eye with that. But if only you knew it, the little creature you are looking at, namely, myself, is wrathful. And how do you find me as you look at me?' 'I think you are fine indeed. You are a comely, splendid, handsome youth with brilliant, numerous, various feats of arms. But as for reckoning you among goodly heroes or warriors or champions or sledge-hammers of smiting, we do not do so nor count you at all'. 'You know that it is a guarantee for you that you came out of the camp under the protection of my master, Fergus. But I swear by the gods whom I worship that but for Fergus's protection, only your shattered bones and your cloven joints would return to the camp'. 'Nay, do not threaten me any longer thus, for as for the condition you asked of the men of Ireland, namely, single combat, none other of the men of Ireland than I shall come to attack you tomorrow'. 'Come on, then, and however early you come, you will find me here. I shall not flee from you'. Etarcumul went back and began to converse with his charioteer. 'I must needs fight with Cú Chulainn tomorrow, driver' said Etarcumul. 'You have promised it indeed' said the charioteer, 'but I know not if you will fulfil your promise'. 'Which is better, to do so tomorrow or at once tonight?' 'It is my conviction' said the driver, 'that though doing it tomorrow means no victory, yet still less is to be gained by doing it tonight, for the fight is nearer

"for destruction is nearer tonight", ST

'. 'Turn the chariot back again for me, driver, for I swear by the gods whom I worship never to retreat until I carry off as a trophy the head of yon little deer, Cú Chulainn'.

The charioteer turned the chariot again towards the ford. They turned the left board of the chariot towards the company as they made for the ford. Láeg noticed that. 'The last chariot-fighter who was here a while ago, little Cú' said Láeg. 'What of him?' said Cú Chulainn. 'He turned his left board towards us as he made for the ford'. 'That is Etarcumul, driver, seeking combat of me. And I did not welcome him because of the guarantee of

{line 1638-1671} my fosterfather under which he came out of the camp, and not because I wish to protect him. Bring my weapon to the ford for me, driver. I do not deem it honourable that he should reach the ford before me'. Then Cú Chulainn went to the ford and unsheathed his sword over his fair shoulder and was ready to meet Etarcumul at the

for. Etarcumul arrived also. 'What are you seeking, lad?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'I seek combat with you' said Etarcumul. 'If you would take my advice, you would not come at all' said Cú Chulainn. 'I say so because of the guarantee of Fergus under which you came out of the encampment and not at all because I wish to protect you'. Then Cú Chulainn gave a flow (fotalbeim) and cut away the sod from beneath the sole of his foot so that he was cast prostrate with the sod on his belly. If Cú Chulainn had so wished, he could have cut him in two. 'Begone now for I have given you warning'. 'I shall not go until we meet again'. said Etarcumul. Cú Chulainn gave him an edge-blow (fáebarbeim). He sheared his hair from him, from poll to forehead and from ear to ear as if it had been shaved with a keen, light razor. He drew not a drop of blood. 'Begone now'. said Cú Chulainn, 'for I have drawn ridicule on you'. 'I shall not go until we meet again, until I carry off your head and spoils and triumph over you or until you carry off my head and spoils and triumph over me'. 'The last thing you say is what will happen, and I shall carry off your head and spoils and I shall triumph over you'. Cú Chulainn dealt him a blow (múadalbeim) on the crown of his head which split him to his navel. He gave him a second blow crosswise so that the three sections into which his body was cut fell at one and the same time to the ground. Thus perished Etarcumul, son of Fid and Leithrinn.

Fergus did not know that this fight had taken place. That was but natural, for sitting and rising, journeying or marching, in battle or fight or combat, Fergus never looked behind him lest anyone should say that it was out of fearfulness he looked back, but he was wont to gaze at what was before him and on a level with him. Etarcumul's charioteer came abreast of Fergus. 'Where is your master, driver?' asked Fergus. 'He fell on the ford just now by the hand of Cú Chulainn' said the driver. 'It was not right' said Fergus, 'for that distorted sprite Cú Chulainn to outrage me concerning him who came there under my protection. Turn the chariot for us, driver' said Fergus, 'that we may go and speak with Cú Chulainn'.

Then the charioteer turned the chariot. They went off towards the ford. 'Why did you violate my pledge, you distorted sprite' said Fergus, 'concerning him who came under my safeguard and protection?' 'By the nurture and care you gave me, tell me which you would prefer, that he should triumph over me or that I should triumph over him. Moreover enquire of his driver which of us was at fault against each other'. 'I prefer what you have done. A blessing on the hand that struck him!'

Then two withes were tied round Etarcumul's ankles and he was dragged along behind his horses and his chariot. At every rough rock he met, his lungs and liver were left behind on the stones and rocks (?). Wherever it was smooth for him, his scattered joints

came together around the horses. Thus he was dragged across the camp to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb. 'Here is your youth for you' said Fergus, 'for every restoration has its fitting restitution'. Medb came out to the door of her tent and raised her voice aloud. 'We thought indeed' said Medb, 'that great was the ardour and wrath of this young hound when he went forth from the camp in the morning. We thought that the guarantee under which he went, the guarantee of Fergus was not that of a coward'. 'What has crazed the peasant-woman?' said Fergus. 'Is it right for the common cur to seek out the bloodhound whom the warriors of the four great provinces of Ireland dare not approach or withstand? Even I myself would be glad to escape whole from him'. Thus fell Etarcumul.

That is the story of the Encounter of Etarcumul and Cú Chulainn.

Then there rose up a great and valiant warrior of Medb's household, called Nath Crantail, and he came to attack Cú Chulainn. He scorned to bring with him any arms except thrice nine spits of holly which were sharpened, charred and pointed by fire. And Cú Chulainn was on the pond before him.—And as for the pond, it was not safe but there were nine spits fixed in it, and Cú Chulainn used not to miss a single spit of them.—Then Nath Crantail cast a spit at Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn stepped on to the upper point of the spit which Nath Crantail had cast. Nath Crantail cast a second spit. He cast a third spit and Cú Chulainn stepped from the tip of the second spit on to the tip of the last spit.

Then the flock of birds flew out of the plain. Cú Chulainn pursued them as swift as any bird, that they might not escape him but might leave him that evening's meal. For what sufficed

{line 1708-1742} and served Cú Chulainn on the Foray of Cúailnge was fish and fowl and venison. However Nath Crantail was sure that Cú Chulainn fled in defeat from him, so he went forward to the door of the tent of Medb and Ailill and lifted up his voice: 'This famous Cú Chulainn of whom ye speak' said Nath Crantail, 'has fled in rout before me just now'. 'We knew' said Medb, 'that that would happen, and that if only goodly heroes and warriors came to meet him, the young and beardless sprite would not withstand resolute men. For when a goodly warrior came to him, he did not hold out against him but was routed by him'. Fergus heard that and he was greatly grieved that any man should taunt Cú Chulainn with having fled. And Fergus told Fiachu mac Fir Aba to go and speak with Cú Chulainn. 'And tell him that it was seemly for him to attack the hosts as long as he performed deeds of valour upon them but that it were fitter for him to hide himself rather than to flee before a single warrior from among them'. Then Fiachu came to speak with Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn bade him welcome. 'I trust that welcome, but I have come to speak to you from your fosterfather Fergus. He said that it was seemly for you to attack the hosts

as long as you did deeds of valour but that it were more fitting for you to hide yourself than to flee before a single man of their warriors'. 'Why, who among you boasts of that?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'Nath Crantail' said Fiachu. 'Why, do you not know, you and Fergus and the nobles of Ulster, that I do not wound charioteers or messengers or folk unarmed? No weapons had Nath Crantail, only a wooden spit, and I would not wound him until he had a weapon. Tell him to come to me here early in the morning tomorrow and I shall not flee from him'. It seemed long to Nath Crantail until it was bright day for him to attack Cú Chulainn. Early on the morrow he came to attack him. Cú Chulainn rose early on that day, and a fit of rage came on him, and he angrily cast a fold of his cloak around him so that it wrapped itself round the pillarstone, and he dragged the pillarstone out of the ground between himself and his cloak. And he knew nothing of this because of the greatness of his rage, and he became distorted. Then came Nath Crantail and said: 'Where is this Cú Chulainn?' 'Over yonder' said Cormac Cond Longas mac Conchobuir. 'That is not how he appeared to me yesterday' said Nath Crantail. 'Then repel yon warrior' said Cormac 'and it is the same as if you repelled Cú Chulainn'.

Then Nath Crantail came and cast his sword at Cú Chulainn, and it struck the pillarstone which was between Cú Chulainn and his cloak, and the sword broke on the pillarstone. Cú Chulainn jumped from the ground to the top of the boss of Nath Crantail's shield and dealt him a return blow past the top of the shield and cut off his head from his trunk. Quickly he raised his hand again and dealt him another blow on the top of the trunk and cut him into two severed parts down to the ground. Thus fell Nath Crantail by the hand of Cú Chulainn. Thereafter Cú Chulainn said:

'If Nath Crantail has fallen, there will be increase of strife. Alas that battle cannot now be given to Medb with a third of the host!'

After that Medb with a third of the army of the men of Ireland proceeded as far north as Dún Sobairche and Cú Chulainn followed her closely that day. And Medb went to Cuib ahead of Cú Chulainn. And after he had gone northwards Cú Chulainn killed Fer Taidle, whence the place-name Taidle, and he killed the sons of Búachaill, whence the name Carn Mac m-Búachalla, and he killed Lúasce in Leitire whence Leitire Lúasce. He killed Bó Bulge in his swamp, from which comes the name Grelloch Bó Bulge. He killed Muirthemne on his hill whence the name Delga Muirthemne.

After that Cú Chulainn came southwards again to protect and guard his own land and territory, for it was dearer to him than the land and territory of any other.

Then there met him Fir Crandce, the two Artines and the two sons of Lecc and the two sons of Durcride, and the two sons of Gabal, and Drúcht and Delt and Dathen, Te and

Tualang and Turscur, Tore Glaisse and Glas and Glaisne—these are the same as the twenty Fir Fochard. Cú Chulainn overtook them as they were pitching their camp ahead of the rest and they fell by him.

Then there met Cú Chulainn Buide mac Báin Blai from the land of Ailill and Medb, one of Medb's household. Twenty-four warriors was the number of his company. Each man wore a mantle wrapped around him. Donn Cúailnge was driven hastily and forcibly in front of them after he had been brought from Glenn na Samaisce in Slíab Culind together with fifty of his heifers. 'Whence do ye bring the drove?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'From yonder mountain' said Buide. 'What is your own name?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'One who loves you not, who fears you not' said Buide. 'I am Buide mac Báin Blai from the land of

{line 1780-1813} Ailill and Medb'. 'Here is this little spear for you' said Cú Chulainn. And he cast the spear at him. The spear landed in the shield above his breast and crushed three ribs in the farther side after piercing his heart, and Buide mac Báin Blai fell. Hence the name Áth m-Buide in Crích Rois ever since.

While they were thus engaged exchanging the two short spears—for not at once did they finish—the Donn Cúailnge was carried off hastily and forcibly from them to the encampment as any cow might be taken. That was the greatest reproach and grief and madness that was inflicted on Cú Chulainn in this hosting.

As for Medb, every ford at which she stopped is called Áth Medbe. Every place where she erected her tent is called Pupall Medba, and every spot where she planted her horse-whip is called Bile Medba.

On this expedition Medb gave battle to Findmór the wife of Celtchair in front of Dún Sobairche, and she slew Findmór and ravaged Dún Sobairche.

After a fortnight the men of the four great provinces of Ireland came to the encampment together with Medb and Ailill and the men who were bringing the bull. But the bull's herdsman did not allow them to carry off Donn Cúailnge, so despite him they urged on both bull and heifers by beating their shields with sticks, and drove them into a narrow pass, and the cattle trampled the body of the herdsman thirty feet into the ground and made small fragments of his body. Forgemen was his name.

Bás Forgaimin is the name of that tale in the Foray of Cúailnge.

When the men of Ireland reached one spot, together with Medb and Ailill and the men who were bringing the bull to the camp, they all said that Cú Chulainn would be no more valiant than anyone else but for the strange feat he possessed, the javelin of Cú Chulainn. Then the men of Ireland sent Redg, Medb's satirist, to ask for the javelin. Redg asked for the javelin and Cú Chulainn did not give it at once to him, that is, he was

reluctant to give it. Redg threatened to deprive Cú Chulainn of his honour. Then Cú Chulainn cast the javelin after him and it lighted on the hollow at the back of his head and passed through his mouth out on to the ground, and he managed to speak only the word: 'Quickly did we get this treasure' when his soul parted from his body on

{line 1814-1845} the ford. And since then that ford is called Áth Solomshet. And the bronze from the spear landed on the stream, whence is the name Umanshruth ever since.

The men of Ireland debated as to which of them should attack Cú Chulainn, and they all agreed that Cúr mac Da Lóth would be the right man to attack him. For such was Cúr that it was not pleasant to be his bedfellow or to be intimate with him, and they said that if it were Cúr who fell, it would mean a lightening of oppression for the hosts, and that if it were Cú Chulainn, it would be still better. Cúr was summoned to Medb's tent. 'What do they want of me?' asked Cúr. 'To attack Cú Chulainn' said Medb. 'Ye think little of our valour, ye think it wonderful, when ye match me with a tender stripling such as he! Had I myself known why I was summoned. I should not have come for that. I should think it enough that a lad of his own age from among my household should go to oppose him on the ford'. 'Nay, it is foolish (?) to say that' said Cormac Cond Longas mac Conchobuir. 'It would be a fine thing for you yourself were Cú Chulainn to fall by you'. 'Make ye ready a journey for me in the early morning tomorrow for I am glad to go. It is not the killing of yonder deer, Cú Chulainn, that will cause you any delay'. Early on the morrow, then, Cúr mac Da Lóth arose. A cartload of arms was brought by him to attack Cú Chulainn and he began to try and kill him. Early on that day Cú Chulainn betook himself to his feats. These are all their names:

uballchless, fóenchless, cless cletínech, tetchless, corpchless, cless cait, ích n-errid, cor n-delend, leim dar neim, filliud eirred náir, gai bulga, baí brassi, rothchless, cless for análaib, brúud gine, sían curad, beim co fommus, táthbeim, reim fri fogaist, dírgud cretti fora rind, fornaidm níad.

It is impossible to translate most of these with any certainty as to the meaning.

Cú Chulainn used to practice each of these feats early every morning, in one hand, as swiftly as a cat makes for cream (?), that he might not forget or disremember them. Mac Da Lóth remained for a third of the day behind the boss of his shield, endeavouring to wound Cú Chulainn. Then said Láeg to Cú Chulainn: 'Good now, little Cú, answer the warrior who seeks to kill you'. Then Cú Chulainn looked at him and raised up and cast aloft the eight balls, and he made a cast of the ninth

{line 1846-1880} ball at Cúr mac Da Lóth so that it landed on the flat of his shield and the flat of his forehead and took a portion of brain the size of the ball out through the

back of his head. Thus Cú mac Da Lóth fell by the hand of Cú Chulainn.

'If your securities and guarantees now bind you' said Fergus, 'send another warrior to meet yon man at the ford, or else remain here in your camp until the bright hour of sunrise tomorrow, for Cú mac Da Lóth has fallen'. 'Considering why we have come' said Medb, 'it is all the same to us if we remain in the same tents'. They remained in that encampment until there had fallen Cú mac Da Lóth and Lath mac Da Bro and Srub Daire mac Fedaig and Mac Teora n-Aigneach. Those men fell by Cú Chulainn in single combat. But it is tedious to relate the prowess of each man separately.

Then Cú Chulainn said to Láeg, his charioteer: 'Go, friend Láeg, to the encampment of the men of Ireland and take a greeting from me to my friends and my fosterbrothers and my coevals. Take a greeting to Fer Diad mac Damáin and to Fer Det mac Damáin and to Bress mac Fírb, to Lugaid mac Nóis and to Lugaid mac Solamaig, to Fer Báeth mac Báetáin and to Fer Báeth mac Fir Bend. And take a special greeting to my fosterbrother Lugaid mac Nóis, for he is the only man who keeps faith and friendship with me now on the hosting, and give him a blessing that he may tell you who comes to attack me tomorrow'.

Then Láeg went forward to the encampment of the men of Ireland and took a greeting to the friends and fosterbrothers of Cú Chulainn, and he went too into the tent of Lugaid mac Nóis. Lugaid bade him welcome. 'I trust that welcome' said Láeg. 'You may do so' said Lugaid. 'I have come from Cú Chulainn to speak with you' said Láeg, 'and he has sent you a true and sincere greeting and wishes you to tell me who comes to attack Cú Chulainn to-day'. 'The curse of his intimacy and familiarity and friendship on him who comes! It is his very own fosterbrother, Fer Báeth mac Fir Bend. He was taken just now into Medb's tent. The girl Findabair was placed at his side. She it is who pours goblets for him. She it is who kisses him at every drink. She it is who serves him his meal. Not for all and sundry does Medb intend the liquor which is served to Fer Báeth, for only fifty wagon-loads of it were brought to the camp'.

Then Láeg went back to Cú Chulainn, crestfallen, sad, joyless and mournful. 'Crestfallen, sad, joyless and mournful my friend Láeg comes to me' said Cú Chulainn. 'It means that one of my fosterbrothers comes to attack me'.—For Cú Chulainn disliked more that a warrior of the same training as himself should come to him rather than some other warrior.—'Good now, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'who comes to attack me to-day?' 'The curse of his intimacy and brotherhood, of his familiarity and friendship be upon him! It is your very fosterbrother, Fer Báeth mac Fir Bend. He was taken just now into Medb's tent. The girl was placed at his side, and it is she who pours goblets for him. it is she who

kisses him with every drink, it is she who serves his meal. Not for all and sundry does Medb intend the liquor which is served to Fer Báeth. Only fifty wagon-loads of it were brought to the camp'.

Fer Báeth waited not until morning but went at once to renounce his friendship with Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn adjured him by their friendship and intimacy and brotherhood, but Fer Báeth did not consent to relinquish the combat. Cú Chulainn left him in anger, and trampled a sharp shoot of holly into the sole of his foot so that it injured alike flesh and bone and skin. Cú Chulainn tore out the holly shoot by the roots and cast it over his shoulder after Fer Báeth, and he cared not whether it reached him or not. The holly shoot hit Fer Báeth in the depression at the nape of his neck and went out through his mouth on to the ground, and thus Fer Báeth died. 'That was indeed a good cast (forcherd), little Cú' said Fiacha mac Fir Aba. For he considered it a good cast to kill the warrior with the holly shoot. Whence is still the name Focherd Muirtheimne for the spot where they were.

'Go, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'and speak with Lugaid in the camp of the men of Ireland, and find out whether anything has happened to Fer Báeth or not

The matter here added is a translation of the text in ST lines 1943-2040, to supply what is lost in a whole-page lacuna in LL.

and ask him who will come against me tomorrow'. Láeg goes forward to Lugaid's tent. Lugaid welcomed him. 'I trust that welcome' said Láeg. 'You may trust it' said Lugaid. 'I have come to speak with you on behalf of your fosterbrother that you may tell me if Fer Báeth reached the camp'. 'He did' said Lugaid, 'and a blessing on the hand that smote him for he fell dead in the glen a short time

{line 1914-1950} ago'. 'Tell me who will come tomorrow to fight against Cú Chulainn'. 'They are asking a brother of mine to oppose him, a foolish youth, proud and arrogant, but a strong smiter and a victorious fighter. And the reason he is sent to fight him is that he may fall by Cú Chulainn and that I might then go to avenge his death on Cú Chulainn, but I shall never do that. Láiríne mac Í Blaitmic is my brother's name. I shall go to speak with Cú Chulainn about that' said Lugaid. His two horses were harnessed for Lugaid and his chariot was yoked to them. He came to meet Cú Chulainn and a conversation took place between them. Then said Lugaid: 'They are urging a brother of mine to come and fight with you, a foolish youth, rough, uncouth, but strong and stubborn, and he is sent to fight you so that when he falls by you, I may go to avenge his death on you, but I shall never do so. And by the friendship that is between us both, do not kill my brother. Yet I swear, that even if you all but kill him. I grant you leave to do so, for it is in despite of me that he goes against you'. Then Cú Chulainn went back and Lugaid went to

the camp.

Then Láiríne mac Nóis was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb and Finnabair was placed beside him. It was she who used to serve him goblets and she who used to kiss him at every drink and she who used to hand him his food. 'Not to all and sundry does Medb give the liquor that is served to Fer Báeth or to Láiríne' said Finnabair. 'She brought only fifty wagon-loads of it to the camp'. 'Whom do you mean?' asked Ailill. 'I mean that man yonder' said she. 'Who is he?' asked Ailill. 'Often you paid attention to something that was not certain. It were more fitting for you to bestow attention on the couple who are best in wealth and honour and dignity of all those in Ireland, namely, Finnabair and Láiríne mac Nóis'. 'That is how I see them' said Ailill. Then in his joy Láiríne flung himself about so that the seams of the flockbeds under him burst and the green before the camp was strewn with their feathers.

Láiríne longed for the full light of day that he might attack Cú Chulainn. He came in the early morning on the morrow and brought with him a wagon-load of weapons, and he came on to the ford to encounter Cú Chulainn. The mighty warriors in the camp did not think it worth their while to go and watch Láiríne's fight, but the women and boys and girls scoffed and jeered at his fight. Cú Chulainn came to the ford to encounter Láiríne, but he scorned to bring any weapons and came unarmed to meet him. He struck all Láiríne's weapons out of his hand as one might deprive

{line 1951-1985} a little boy of his playthings. Then Cú Chulainn ground and squeezed in between his hands, chastised him and clasped him, crushed him and shook him and forced all his excrement out of him until a mist arose on all sides in the place where he was. And after that he cast him from him, from the bed of the ford across the camp to the entrance of his brother's tent. However Láiríne never after rose without complaint and he never ate without pain, and from that time forth he was never without abdominal weakness and constriction of the chest and cramps and diarrhoea. He was indeed the only man who survived battle with Cú Chulainn on the Foray of Cúailnge. Yet the after-effects of those complaints affected him so that he died later.

That is the Fight of Láiríne on the Foray of Cúailnge.

Then Lóch Mór mac Mo Febis was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb. 'What would ye with me?' asked Lóch. 'That you should fight with Cú Chulainn' answered Medb. 'I shall not go on such an errand for I deem it no honour to attack a youthful, beardless stripling, and I do not intend that as an insult to him, but I have the man to attack him, namely, Long mac Emonis, and he will accept reward from you'. Long was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Medb promised him great rewards, to wit, the clothing of

twelve men in garments of every colour, a chariot worth four times seven cumala, Finnabair as his wedded wife, and entertainment at all times in Crúachu with wine served to him. Then Long came to meet Cú Chulainn and Cú Chulainn killed him.

Medb told her women-folk to go and speak to Cú Chulainn and tell him to put on a false beard of blackberry juice. The women came forward towards Cú Chulainn and told him to put on a false beard. 'For no great warrior in the camp thinks it worth his while to go and fight with you while you are beardless'. After that Cú Chulainn put on a beard of blackberry juice and came on to the hillock above the men of Ireland and displayed that beard to all of them in general.

Lóch mac Mo Febis saw this and said. 'That is a beard on Cú Chulainn'. 'That is what I see' said Medb. She promised the same rewards to Lóch for checking Cú Chulainn. 'I shall go and attack him' said Lóch.

Lóch came to attack Cú Chulainn and they met on the ford where Long had fallen. 'Come forward to the upper ford' said

{line 1986-2015} Lóch. 'for we shall not fight on this one'. For he held unclean the ford at which his brother had fallen. Then they met on the upper ford.

It was at that time that the Morrígan daughter of Ernmas from the fairy-mounds came to destroy Cú Chulainn, for she had vowed on the Foray of Regamain that she would come and destroy Cú Chulainn when he was fighting with a mighty warrior on the Foray of Cúailnge. So the Morrígan came there in the guise of a white, red-eared heifer accompanied by fifty heifers, each pair linked together with a chain of white bronze. The womenfolk put Cú Chulainn under tabus and prohibitions not to let the Morrígan go from him without checking and destroying her. Cú Chulainn made a cast at the Morrígan and shattered one of her eyes. Then the Morrígan appeared in the form of a slippery, black eel swimming downstream, and went into the pool and coiled herself around Cú Chulainn's legs. While Cú Chulainn was disentangling himself from her, Lóch dealt him a wound crosswise through his chest. Then the Morrígan came in the guise of a shaggy, russet-coloured she-wolf. While Cú Chulainn was warding her off, Lóch wounded him. Thereupon Cú Chulainn was filled with rage and wounded Lóch with the ga bulga and pierced his heart in his breast. 'Grant me a favour now, Cú Chulainn' said Lóch. 'What favour do you ask?' 'No favour of quarter do I ask nor do I make a cowardly request' said Lóch. 'Retreat a step from me so that I may fall facing the east and not to the west towards the men of Ireland, lest one of them say that I fled in rout before you, for I have fallen by the ga bulga'. 'I shall retreat' said Cú Chulainn, 'for it is a warrior's request you make'. And Cú Chulainn retreated a step from him. Hence the ford has since then been known as Áth Traiged at

the end of Tír Mór.

Cú Chulainn was seized by great depression that day for that he fought single-handed on the Foray of Cúailnge. And he ordered his charioteer Láeg to go to the men of Ulster and bid them come to defend their cattle. And great dejection and weariness took possession of Cú Chulainn

"And ... Chulainn", translating ST

and he uttered these verses:

Cú Chulainn

1] Go forth from me, O Láeg. Let the hosts be roused. Tell them for me in strong Emain that each day in battle I am weary, and I am wounded and bloody.

2] My right side and my left—hard to appraise either of them. It was no physician's hand which smote them [gap: text untranslated/extent: 1 line].

3] Tell noble Conchobor that I am weary, wounded sore in my side. Greatly has Dechtire's dear son, he of many retinues, changed in appearance.

4] I am here all alone guarding the flocks, not only do I not let them not go, but neither can I hold them. In evil plight I am and not in good, as I stand alone at many fords.

5] A drop of blood drips from my weapon. I am sorely wounded. No friend comes to me in alliance or to help, my only friend is my charioteer.

6] If but few sing here for me, a single horn rejoices not. But if many horns make music, then the sound is sweeter.

7] This is a proverb known to many generations: a single log does not flame. But if there were two or three, their firebrands would blaze.

8] A single log is not easily burnt unless you get another to kindle it. One man alone is treacherously dealt with. A single millstone is ineffective.

9] Have you not heard at every time that one man alone is treacherously dealt with? I speak truth. But what cannot be endured is the harrying of a great army.

10] However few the band, care is spent on them. The provision for an army is not cooked on a single fork—that is a similitude for it.

11] I am alone before the host at the ford by the end of Tír Mór. I was outnumbered when attacked by Lóch together with Bodb, according to the prophecies of Táin Bó Regomna.

12] Lóch has mangled my hips; the shaggy, russet she-wolf has bitten me. Lóch has wounded my liver; the eel has overthrown me.

13] With my spearlet I warded off the she-wolf and destroyed her eye. I broke her legs at the beginning of this mortal combat.

14] Láeg sent Aífe's spear downstream, a swift (?) cast. I threw the strong, sharp spear by which Lóch mac Emonis perished.

15] Why do not the Ulstermen give battle to Ailill and the daughter of Eochu? While I am here in sorrow, wounded and bloody as I am.

16] Tell the great Ulstermen to come and guard their drove. The sons of Mága have carried off their cows and divided them out amongst them.

17] I pledge a pledge which holds, and has been fulfilled. I pledge by the honour of the Hound, that not one shall come to me as I stand alone.

18] But vultures are joyful in the camp of Ailill and Medb. Sad are the cries [gap: text untranslated/extent: 1 word] at their shout on Mag Muirthemne.

19] Conchobor comes not forth until his numbers be sufficient. While thus he is not joyful, it is harder to reckon his anger.

That is the Fight of Lóch Mór mac Mo Femis with Cú Chulainn on the Foray of Cúailnge.

Then Medb sent forth six together to attack Cú Chulainn, to wit, Traig and Dorn and Dernu, Col and Accuis and Eraíse, three druids and three druidesses. Cú Chulainn attacked them and they fell by him. Since the terms of fair play and single combat had been broken against Cú Chulainn, he took his sling and began to shoot at the host that day northwards from Delga. Though the men of Ireland were numerous that day, not one of them could turn southwards, neither hound nor horse nor man.

Then came the Morrígu, daughter of Ernmas, from the elf-mounds in the guise of an old woman and in Cú Chulainn's presence she

{line 2104-2133} milked a cow with three teats. The reason she came thus was to be succoured by Cú Chulainn, for no one whom Cú Chulainn had wounded ever recovered until he himself had aided in his cure. Maddened by thirst, Cú Chulainn asked her for milk. She gave him the milk of one teat. 'May this be swiftly wholeness for me'. The one eye of the queen which had been wounded was cured. Cú Chulainn asked her for the milk of another teat. She gave it to him. 'Swiftly may she be cured who gave it'. He asked for the third drink and she gave him the milk of the third teat. 'The blessing of gods and non-gods be on you, woman'.—The magicians were their gods and the husbandmen were their non-gods.—And the queen was made whole.

Then Medb sent a hundred men together to assail Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn attacked them all and they fell by his hand. 'It is a hateful thing for us that our people should be slaughtered thus' said Medb. 'That was not the first hateful thing that came to us from that man' said Ailill. Hence Cuillend Cind Dúne is still the name of the place where

they were then and Áth Cró is the name of the ford by which they were, and rightly so because of the great amount of their blood and gore which flowed with the current of the river.

Breslech Maige Muirthemne

The four provinces of Ireland pitched their camp at the place called Breslech Mór in Mag Muirthemne. They sent their share of the cattle and booty on ahead southwards to Clithar Bó Ulad. Cú Chulainn took his post at Ferta I I- Lergaib close beside them, and his charioteer, Lóeg mac Rianganabra, kindled a fire for him on the evening of that night. Cú Chulainn saw far off, over the heads of the four great provinces of Ireland, the fiery glitter of the bright gold weapons at the setting of the sun in the clouds of evening. Anger and rage filled him when he saw the host, because of the multitude of his foes and the great number of his enemies. He seized his two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook his shield and brandished his spears and waved his sword, and he uttered a hero's shout from his throat. And the goblins and sprites and spectres of the glen and demons of the air gave answer for terror of the shout that he had uttered

"he had uttered", following ST

, and Nemain, the war

{line 2134-2166} goddess, brought confusion on the host. The four provinces of Ireland made a clangour of arms around the points of their own spears and weapons, and a hundred warriors of them fell dead that night of terror and fright in the middle of the encampment.

As Lóeg was there, he saw something: a single man coming straight towards him from the north-east across the camp of the four great provinces. 'A single man approaches now, little Cú' said Lóeg. 'What manner of man is there?' said Cú Chulainn. 'An easy question: a man fair and tall, with his hair cut broad, curly, yellow hair. He has a green mantle wrapped about him with a brooch of white silver in the mantle above his breast. He wears a tunic of royal satin with red insertion of red gold next to his white skin and reaching to his knees. he carries a black shield with a hard boss of white bronze. In his hand a five-pointed spear and beside it a forked javelin. Wonderful is the play and sport and diversion he makes with these weapons. But none accosts him and he accosts none, as if no one in the camp of the four great provinces of Ireland saw him'. 'That is true, my fosterling' said he. 'That is one of my friends from the fairy mounds coming to commiserate with me for they know of my sore distress as I stand alone now against the four great provinces of Ireland on the Foray of Cúailnge'. It was indeed as Cú Chulainn said. When the warrior came to where Cú Chulainn was, he spoke to him and commiserated with him.

'Sleep now for a little while, Cú Chulainn' said the warrior, 'your heavy slumber at the Ferta in Lerga till the end of three days and three nights, and for that space of time I shall fight against the hosts'.

Then Cú Chulainn slept his deep slumber at the Ferta in Lerga till the end of three days and three nights. It was right that the length of the sleep should correspond to the greatness of his weariness, for from the Monday before Samain exactly until the Wednesday after the festival of spring Cú Chulainn had not slept in that time, except when he dozed for a little while leaning against his spear after midday, with his head on his clenched fist and his clenched fist about his spear and his spear resting on his knee, but he was striking and cutting down and slaying and killing the four great provinces of Ireland during that time. Then the warrior put plants from the síd and healing herbs and a curing charm into the wounds and cuts and gashes and many injuries of Cú Chulainn so that Cú Chulainn recovered in his sleep without his perceiving it at all.

It was at this time that the youths came southwards from Emain Macha, thrice fifty of the kings' sons of Ulster together with Follomain mac Conchobuir, and they gave battle thrice to the hosts and three times their own number fell by them, but the youths fell too, all except Follomain mac Conchobuir. Follomain vowed that he would never go back to Emain until he should take with him Ailill's head and the golden diadem that was on it. That was no easy thing for him for the two sons of Beithe mac Báin, the two sons of Ailill's fostermother and fosterfather, came up with him and wounded him so that he fell by them. That is the Death of the Youths from Ulster and of Follomain mac Conchobuir.

Cú Chulainn however was in his deep sleep at Ferta in Lerga till the end of three days and three nights. He arose then from his sleep and passed his hand over his face and he blushed crimson from head to foot, and his spirit was strengthened as if he were going to an assembly or a march or a tryst or a feast or to one of the chief assemblies of Ireland. 'How long have I been now in this sleep, warrior? Woe is me!' said Cú Chulainn. 'Why is that?' said the warrior. 'Because the hosts have been left without attack for that space of time'. said Cú Chulainn. 'They have not so been left indeed' said the warrior. 'Tell me, who has attacked them?' said Cú Chulainn. 'The youths came from the north, from Emain Macha, thrice fifty of the kings' sons of Ulster led by Follomain mac Conchobuir, and thrice they gave battle to the hosts in the space of the three days and three nights when you were asleep, and three times their own number fell by them and all the youths fell too except for Follomain mac Conchobuir. Follomain vowed etc'. 'Alas that I was not in my full strength, for had I been, the youths would not have fallen as they did nor would Follomain have fallen'.

'Strive on, little Hound, it is no reproach to your honour and no disgrace to your valour'. 'Stay here for us tonight, O warrior' said Cú Chulainn, 'that we may together avenge the youths on the hosts'. 'I shall not stay indeed' said the warrior, 'for though a man do many valourous and heroic deeds in your company, not he but you will have the fame or the reputation of them. Therefore I shall not stay, but exert your valour, yourself alone, on the hosts for not with them lies any power over your life at this time'.

'The scythed chariot, my friend Lóeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'can you yoke it? If you can yoke it and have its equipment, then yoke it, but if you have not its equipment, do not yoke it'.

Then the charioteer arose and put on his hero's outfit for chariot-driving. Of the outfit for chariot-driving which he put on was his smooth tunic of skins, which was light and airy, supple and of fine texture, stitched and of deerskin, which did not hinder the movements of his arms outside. Over that he put on his outer mantle black as raven's feathers.—Simon Magus had made it for the King of the Romans, and Darius gave it to Conchobor and Conchobor gave it to Cú Chulainn who gave it to his charioteer. The same charioteer now put on his helmet, crested, flat-surfaced, four-cornered, with variety of every colour and form, and reaching past the middle of his shoulders. This was an adornment to him and was not an encumbrance. His hand brought to his brow the circlet of red-yellow like a red-gold plate of refined gold smelted over the edge of an anvil, as a sign of his charioteering, to distinguish him from his master. In his right hand he took the long spancel of his horses and his ornamented goad. In his left he grasped the thongs to check his horses, that is, the reins of his horses, to control his driving.

Then he put on his horses the iron inlaid breastplates which covered them from forehead to forehead, set with little spears and sharp points and lances and hard points, so that every wheel of the chariot was closely studded with points and every corner and edge, every end and front of that chariot lacerated in its passage. Then he cast a spell of protection over his horses and over his companion so that they were not visible to anyone in the camp, yet everyone in the camp was visible to them. It was right that he should cast this spell, for on that day the charioteer had three great gifts of charioteering, to wit, leim dar boilg, foscúl n-díriuch and immorchor n-delind.

Then the champion and warrior, the marshalled fence of battle of all the men of earth who was Cú Chulainn, put on his battle-array of fighting and contest and strife which he put on were the twenty-seven tunics worn next to his skin, waxed, board-like, compact, which were bound with strings and ropes and thongs close to his fair skin, that his mind and understanding might not be deranged when his rage should come upon him. Over that

outside he put his hero's battle-girdle of hard leather, tough and tanned, made from the best part of seven ox-hides of yearlings, which covered him from the thin part of his side to the thick part of his arm-pit; he used to wear it to repel spears and points and darts and lances and arrows, for they glanced from it as it they had struck against

{line 2240-2276} stone or rock or horn. Then he put on his apron of filmy silk with its border of variegated white gold, against the soft lower part of his body. Outside his apron of filmy silk he put on his dark apron of pliable brown leather made from the choicest part of four yearling ox-hides with his battle-girdle of cows' skin about it. Then the royal hero took up his weapons of battle and contest and strife. Of these weapons of battle were these: he took his ivory-hilted, bright-faced sword with his eight little swords; he took his five-pronged spear with his eight little spears; he took his javelin with his eight little javelins; he took his deil chliss with his eight little darts. He took his eight shields with his curved, dark-red shield into the boss of which a show-boar could fit, with its very sharp, razor-like, keen rim all around it which would cut a hair against the stream, so sharp and razor-like and keen it was. When the warrior did the "edge-feat" with it, he would cut alike with his shield or his spear or his sword. Then he put on his head his crested war-helmet of battle and strife and conflict, from which was uttered the shout of a hundred warriors with a long-drawn-out cry from every corner and angle of it. For there used to cry from it alike goblins and sprites, spirits of the glen and demons of the air, before him and above him and around him, wherever he went, prophesying the shedding of the blood of warriors and champions. There was cast over him his protective dress of raiment from Tír Tairngire brought to him from Manannán mac Lir, from the King of Tír na Sorcha.

Then his first distortion came upon Cú Chulainn so that he became horrible, many-shaped, strange and unrecognisable. His haunches shook about him like a tree in a current or a bulrush against a stream, every limb and every joint, every end and every member of him from head to foot. He performed a wild feat of contortion with his body inside his skin. His feet and his shins and his knees came to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams came to the front. The sinews of his calves came on the front of his shins and each huge, round knot of them was as big as a warrior's fist. The sinews of his head were stretched to the nape of his neck and every huge, immeasurable, vast, incalculable round ball of them was as big as the head of a month-old child.

Then his face became a red hollow (?). He sucked one of his eyes into his head so that a wild crane could hardly have reached it to pluck it out from the back of his skull on to the middle of his cheek. The other eye sprang out on to his cheek. His mouth was twisted back fearsomely. He drew the cheek back from the

{line 2277-2310} jawbone until his inner gullet was Seen. His lungs and his liver fluttered in his mouth and his throat. He struck a lion's blow with the upper palate on its fellow

"on its fellow', translating ST

so that every stream of fiery flakes which came into his mouth from his throat was as large as the skin of a three-year-old sheep. The loud beating of his heart against his ribs was heard like the baying of a bloodhound [gap: two words untranslated/extent: 2 words] or like a lion attacking bears. The torches of the war-goddess, the virulent rain-clouds, the sparks of blazing fire were seen in the clouds and in the air above his head with the seething of fierce rage that rose above him. His hair curled about his head like branches of red hawthorn used to re-fence the gap in a hedge. Though a noble apple-tree weighed down with fruit had been shaken about his hair, scarcely one apple would have reached the ground through it but an apple would have stayed impaled on each single hair because of the fierce bristling of his hair above him. The hero's light rose from his forehead so that it was as long and as thick as a hero's whetstone. As high, as thick, as strong, as powerful and as long as the mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose up from the very top of his head and became a dark magical mist like the smoke of a palace when a king comes to be attended to in the evening of a wintry day.

After Cú Chulainn had been thus distorted, the hero sprang into his scythed chariot with its iron points, its thin sharp edges, its hooks, its steel points, with its sharp spikes of a hero, its arrangement for opening, with its nails that were on the shafts and thongs and loops and fastenings in that chariot.

Then he performs 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 stopped at the thunder-feat of five hundred for he thought that at least that number should fall by him in his first attack and in his first contest of battle against the four provinces of Ireland. And he came forth in this manner to attack his enemies, and took his chariot in a wide circuit outside the four great provinces of Ireland. And he drove the chariot heavily. The iron wheels of the chariot sank deep into the ground so that the manner in which they sank into the ground left furrows sufficient to provide fort and fortress, for there arose on the outside as high as the iron wheels dikes and boulders and rocks and flagstones and gravel from the ground.

{line 2311-2341} The reason why he made this warlike encircling of the four great provinces of Ireland was that they might not flee from him and that they might not disperse around him until he took revenge on them by thus pressing them (?) for the wrong done to

the youths of Ulster. And he came across into the middle of the ranks and threw up great ramparts of his enemies' corpses outside around the host. And he made the attack of a foe upon foes among them so that they fell, sole of foot to sole of foot, and headless neck to headless neck, such was the density of their corpses. Thrice again he went around them in this way so that he left a layer of six around them, that is the soles of three men to the necks of three men, all around the encampment. So that the name of this tale in the Táin is Sesrech Breslige, and it is one of the three slaughters which cannot be numbered in the Foray, the three being Sesrech Breslige and Imslige Glennamnach and the battle at Gáirech and Irgáirech, except that on this occasion hound and horse and man suffered alike. Others say that Lug mac Eithlend fought along with Cú Chulainn at Sesrech Breslige.

Their number is not known nor is it possible to count how many fell there of the common soldiery, but their chiefs alone have been counted. Here follow their names: Two men called Cruaid, two called Calad, two called Cír, two called Cíar, two called Eicell, three called Cromm, three called Cur, three called Combirge, four called Feochar, four called Furachar, four called Cas; four called Fota, five called Caur, five called Cerman, five called Cobthach, six called Saxan, six called Dauith, six called Dáire, seven called Rochaid, seven called Rónán, seven called Rurthech, eight called Rochlad, eight called Rochtad, eight called Rinnach, eight called Mulach, nine called Daigith, nine called Dáire, nine called Damach, ten called Fiac, ten called Fiacha, ten called Feidlimid. Ten and six score kings did Cú Chulainn slay in the Breslech Mór in Mag Muirtheimne, and a countless number besides of hounds and horses and women and boys and children and the common folk. For not one man in three of the men of Ireland escaped without his thigh-bone or the side of his head or one eye being broken or without being marked for life.

Cú Chulainn came on the morrow to survey the host and to display his gentle, beautiful appearance to women and girls and maidens, to poets and men of art, for he held not as honour or dignity the dark form of wizardry in which he had appeared to

{line 2342-2377} them the previous night. Therefore he came on that day to display his gentle, beautiful appearance.

Beautiful indeed was the youth who came thus to display his form to the hosts, Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim. Three kinds of hair he had, dark next to the skin, blood-red in the middle and hair like a crown of red-gold covering them. Fair was the arrangement of that hair with three coils in the hollow at the back of his head, and like gold thread was every fine hair, loose-flowing, golden and excellent, long-tressed, distinguished and of beautiful colour, as it fell back over his shoulders. A hundred bright crimson twists of red-gold red-

flaming about his neck. A hundred strings with mixed carbuncles around his head. Four dimples in each of his two cheeks, a yellow dimple and a green, a blue dimple and a purple. Seven gems of brilliance of an eye in each of his royal eyes. Seven toes on each of his feet, seven fingers on each of his hands, with the grasp of a hawk's claws and the grip of a hedgehog's claws in every separate one of them.

Then he puts on his dress for assembly that day. Of that raiment was a fair mantle, well-fitting, purple, fringed, five-folded. A white brooch of white silver inset with inlaid gold over his white breast, as it were a bright lantern that men's eyes could not look at for its brilliance and splendour. A tunic of silk next to his skin, bordered with edges and braidings and fringes of gold and of silver and of white bronze, reaching to the top of his dark apron, dark-red, soldierly, of royal satin. A splendid dark-purple shield he bore with a rim of pure white silver around it. He wore a golden-hilted ornamented sword at his left side. In the chariot beside him was a long grey-edged spear together with a sharp attacking dagger, with splendid thongs and rivets of white bronze. He held nine heads in one hand and ten in the other, and these he brandished at the hosts in token of his valour and prowess. Medb hid her face beneath a shelter of shields lest Cú Chulainn should cast at her on that day.

Then the women begged the men of Ireland to lift them up on platforms of shields above the warriors' shoulders that they might see Cú Chulainn's appearance. For they wondered at the beautiful, gentle appearance they beheld on him that day compared with the dark buffoon-like shape of magic that had been seen on him the night before.

Then Dubthach Dáel Ulad was seized with envy and spite and great jealousy concerning his wife, and he advised the hosts to

{line 2378-2413} betray and abandon Cú Chulainn, that is, to lay an ambush around him on every side that he might be killed by them. And he spoke these words:

Dubthach Dáel Ulad

1] If this is the distorted one, there will be corpses of men because of him, there will be cries around courts. Men's feet will be [gap: text untranslated/extent: 1 word] ravens shall eat ravens' food.

2] Stones shall be erected over graves because of him. There will be increase of kingly slaughter. Unlucky are ye that battle with the wild one reached you on the slope.

3] I see the wild one's form. Nine heads he carries among his cushions
"among his cushions", translating LU.

I see the shattered spoils he brings, and ten heads as treasured triumph.

4] I see how your womenfolk raise their heads above the battle. I see your great queen who comes not to the fight.

5] If I were your counsellor, warriors would be in ambush on all sides that they might shorten his life, if this is the distorted one.

Fergus mac Fóig heard this, and it grieved him that Dubthach should advise the hosts to betray Cú Chulainn. And he gave Dubthach a strong and violent kick so that he fell on his face outside the group. And Fergus brought up against him all the wrongs and injustice and treachery and evil deeds that he had ever at any time done to the men of Ulster. And he spoke these words then:

Fergus

If it is Dubthach Dóeltenga, he draws back in the rear of the host. He has done nothing good since he slaughtered the womenfolk.

He performed an infamous and terrible deed of violence—the slaying of Fiacha mac Conchobuir. Nor was fairer another deed that was heard of him—the slaying of Cairbre mac Fedlimthe.

{line 2414-2450}

It is not for the lordship of Ulster that the son of Lugaid mac Casruba contends. This is how he treats men: those he cannot kill he sets at loggerheads.

Ulster's exiles do not wish that their beardless boy should be killed. If the men of Ulster come to you, they will turn back your herds.

All your cattle will be driven afar before the Ulstermen if they rise from their sickness. There will be deeds of violence—mighty tales— and queens will be tearful.

Men's corpses will be trampled underfoot. Men's feet will be in ravens' abode (?). Shields will lie flat on the slopes. Furious deeds will increase.

I see that your womenfolk have raised their heads above the battle. I see your great queen—she comes not to the combat.

The unvalorous son of Lugaid will not do any brave or generous deed. No king will see lances redden if this is Dubthach Dóeltenga.

Thus far the Scythed Chariot.

Then a bold warrior of the Ulstermen called Óengus mac Óenláime Gábe came up with the hosts, and he drove them before him from Moda Loga, which is now called Lugmud, to Áth Da Fhert on Slíab Fúait. Learned men say that if they had come to Óengus mac Óenláimne Gábe in single combat, they would have fallen by his hand. However that it is not what they did, but an ambush was made around him on every side and he fell by them at Áth Da Fhert on Slíab Fúait.

Here now is the tale Imroll Belaig Eóin

Then came to them Fiacha Fíaldána of the Ulstermen to have speech with the son

of his mother's sister, namely, Mane Andóe of the Connachtmen, and he came accompanied by Dubthach Dóel

{line 2451-2485} Ulad. Mane Andóe moreover came accompanied by Dóche mac Mágach. When Dóche mac Mágach saw Fiacha Fíaldána, he cast a spear at him straightaway and it went through his own friend Dubthach Dóel Ulad. Fiacha cast a spear at Dócha mac Mágach and it went through his own kinsman Maine Andóe of the Connachtmen. Then said the men of Ireland: 'A badly aimed cast' said they, 'was what befell the men, each of them wounding his own friend and relation'. So that is the miscast at Belach Eóin. And another name for it is Another Miscast at Belach Eóin.

Here now is the tale Tuige im Thamon

Then the men of Ireland told Tamon the jester to put on Ailill's garments and his golden crown and to go on the ford in front of them. So he put on Ailill's garments and his golden crown and came on the ford in front of them. The men of Ireland began to scoff and shout and jeer at him. 'It is the covering of a stump (tamon) for you, Tamon the jester' said they, 'to put on you Ailill's garments and his golden crown'. So that story is called Tuige in Thamon, the Covering of a Stump. Cú Chulainn saw Tamon, and it seemed to him, in his ignorance and want of information, that it was Ailill himself who was there, and he cast a stone at him from his sling and killed him on the ford where he was.

So that the place is Áth Tamuin and the story is called Tuige im Thamon.

The four great provinces of Ireland encamped at the pillar- stone in Crích Roiss that night. Then Medb asked the men of Ireland for one of them to fight and do battle with Cú Chulainn on the morrow. Every man of them kept saying: 'It will not be I who go'. 'It will not be I who leave my place. No captive is owing from my people'.

Then Medb asked Fergus to go to fight with and encounter Cú Chulainn, since she was unable to get the men of Ireland to do so. 'It would not be fitting for me' said Fergus. 'to encounter a young and beardless lad, my own fosterling'. However when Medb begged Fergus so urgently, he was unable not to undertake the fight. They remained there that night. Fergus rose early on the morrow and came forward to the ford of combat where Cú Chulainn was. Cú Chulainn saw him coming towards him.

{line 2486-2516} 'With weak security does my master Fergus come to me. He has no sword in the sheath of the great scabbard'. Cú Chulainn spoke truly.—A year before these event Ailill had come upon Fergus together with Medb on the hillside in Crúachu with his sword on the hill beside him, and Ailill had snatched the sword from its sheath and put a wooden sword in its place, and he swore that he would not give him back the sword until he gave it on the day of the great battle.—'I care not at all, my fosterling' said Fergus, 'for

even if there were a sword in it, it would not reach you and would not be wielded against you. But for the sake of the honour and nurture I and the Ulstermen and Conchobor gave you, flee before me to-day in the presence of the men of Ireland'. 'I am loath to do that' said Cú Chulainn, 'to flee before one man on the Foray of Cúailnge'. 'You need not shrink from doing so' said Fergus, 'for I shall flee before you when you shall be covered with wounds and blood and pierced with stabs in the battle of the Táin, and when I alone shall flee, then all the men of Ireland will flee'. So eager was Cú Chulainn to do whatever was for Ulster's weal that his chariot was brought to him and he mounted it and fled in rout from the men of Ireland. The men of Ireland saw that. 'He has fled from you! He has fled from you, Fergus!' said all. 'Pursue him, pursue him, Fergus' said Medb, 'let him not escape from you'. 'Not so indeed', said Fergus, 'I shall not pursue him any farther, for though ye may belittle that flight I put him to, yet of all who encountered him on the Foray of Cúailnge not one man of the men of Ireland did as much. So I shall not meet that man again until the men of Ireland meet him in turn in single combat'.

That is called the Encounter of Fergus.

Here now is the story Cinnit Ferchon.

Ferchú Loingsech was of the Connachtmen. He was engaged in fighting and harassing Ailill and Medb. From the day these assumed rule, he came not to their encampment on expedition or hosting, in straits or need or hardship, but spent his time plundering and pillaging their borders and lands behind their backs. At that time he happened to be in the eastern part of Mag n-Aí. Twelve men was the number of his band. He was told that one man had been holding back and checking the four great provinces of Ireland

{line 2517-2551} from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring, slaying one man of their number at a ford every day and a hundred warriors every night. Ferchú took counsel with his men. 'What better plan could we carry out' said he, 'than to go and attack yonder man who is checking and holding back the four great provinces of Ireland and to bring back with us his head in triumph to Ailill and Medb. Though we have done many wrongs and injuries to Ailill and to Medb, we shall obtain peace thereby if that man fall by us'. That is the plan they decided on. And they came forward to the place where Cú Chulainn was, and when they came, they did not grant him fair play or single combat but all twelve of them attacked him straightaway. However Cú Chulainn fell upon them and forthwith struck off their twelve heads. And he planted twelve stones for them in the ground and put a head of each one of them on its stone and also put Ferchú Loingsech's head on its stone. So that the spot where Ferchú Loingsech left

his head is called Cinnit Ferchon that is, Cennáit Ferchon the Headplace of Ferchú.

Then the men of Ireland debated as to whom they should send to fight and do combat with Cú Chulainn at the hour of early morning on the morrow. They all agreed that it should be Calatín Dána with his twenty-seven sons and his grandson Glas mac Delga. Now there was poison on each man of them and poison on each weapon that they carried; none of them ever missed a throw, and anyone whom one of them wounded, if he died not at once, would die before the end of nine days. Great rewards were promised them for this fight and they undertook to engage in it. This agreement was made in the presence of Fergus but he was unable to dispute it; for they said that they counted it as single combat that Calatín Dána and his twenty-seven sons and his grandson Glas mac Delga should all engage in the fight, for they asserted that his son was but one of his limbs and one of his parts and that the issue of his own body belonged to Calatín Dána.

Fergus came forward to his tent and followers and heaved a sigh of weariness. 'We are sad for the deed to be done to- morrow' said Fergus. 'What deed is that?' asked his followers. 'The killing of Cú Chulainn' said he. 'Alas!' said they, 'who kills him?' 'Calatín Dána' said he, 'with his twenty seven sons and his grandson Glas mac Delga. There is poison on every man of them and poison on each of their weapons, and there is none

{line 2552-2590} whom one of them wounds but dies before the end of nine days if he do not die at once. And there is not man who should go to witness the encounter for me and bring me news if Cú Chulainn should be killed, to whom I would not give my blessing and my gear'. 'I shall go there' said Fiachu mac Fir Aba. They remained there that night. Early on the morrow Calatín Dána arose with his twenty-seven sons and his grandson Glas mac Delga, and they advanced to where Cú Chulainn was, and Fiachu mac Fir Aba came too. And when Calatín reached the spot where Cú Chulainn was, they cast at him at once their twenty- nine spears nor did a single spear miss its aim and go past Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn performed the "edge-feat" with his shield and all the spears sank half their length into the shield. Not only was that not a misthrow for them but yet not a spear wounded him or drew blood. Then Cú Chulainn drew his sword from its warlike scabbard to lop off the weapons and so to lessen the weight of his shield. While he was so doing, they went towards him and all together they smote his head with their twenty-nine clenched right fists. They belaboured him and forced his head down so that his face and countenance met the gravel and sand of the ford. Cú Chulainn uttered his hero's cry and the shout of one outnumbered and no Ulsterman alive of those who were awake but heard him. Then Fiachu mac Fir Aba came towards him and saw how matters were, and he was filled with emotion on seeing a man of his own folk in danger. He drew his sword from its

warlike scabbard and dealt a blow which lopped off their twenty-nine fists at one stroke and they all fell backwards; so intense was their effort, so tight their grip.

Cú Chulainn raised his head and drew his breath and gave a sight of weariness, and then he saw the man who had come to his help. 'It is timely aid, my fosterbrother' said Cú Chulainn. 'Though it be timely aid for you, it will not be so for us, for though you think little of the blow I struck, yet if it be discovered, the three thousand men of the finest of Clann Rudraige that we number in the camp of the men of Ireland will be put to the sword'. 'I swear' said Cú Chulainn, 'now that I have raised my head and drawn my breath, that unless you yourself make it known, not one of those yonder shall tell of it henceforth'. Then Cú Chulainn fell upon them and began to strike them and to cut them down, and he scattered them around him in small pieces and divided quarters, east and west throughout the ford. One of them, Glas mac Delga, escaped by taking to his heels while Cú Chulainn was beheading the rest, and Cú Chulainn rushed after him, and Glas

{line 2591-2623} came round the tent of Ailill and Medb and only managed to say 'fiach, fiach' when Cú Chulainn struck him a blow and cut off his head.

'They made quick work of yon man' said Medb. 'What debt did he speak of, Fergus?' 'I do not know' said Fergus, 'unless perhaps some one in the camp owed him debts and they were on his mind. However' said Fergus, 'it is a debt of flesh and blood for him. I swear indeed' said Fergus, 'that now all his debts have been paid in full to him'.

Thus fell at Cú Chulainn hands Calatín Dána and his twenty-seven sons and his grandson Glas mac Derga. And there still remains in the bed of the ford the stone around which they fought and struggled and on it the mark of their sword hilts and of their knees and elbows and of the hafts of their spears. And the name of the ford is Fuil Iairn to the west of Áth Fhir Diad. It is called Fuil Iairn because swords were bloodstained there.

Thus far the Encounter with the Sons of Calatín.

The Encounter with Fer Diad

Then the men of Ireland considered what man should be sent to fight with Cú Chulainn in the hour of early morning on the morrow. They all said that it should be Fer Diad mac Damáin meic Dáire, the brave warrior from Fir Domnand. For similar and equal was their power of fighting and combat. With the same fostermothers, Scáthach and Úathach and Aífe, had they learnt the arts of valour and arms, and neither of them had any advantage over the other save that Cú Chulainn possessed the feat of the ga bulga. However, to counterbalance this Fer Diad had a horn-skin when fighting with a warrior on the ford.

Then messengers and envoys were sent for Fer Diad. Fer Diad refused and denied

and again refused those messengers and he did not come with them, for he knew what they wanted of him, which was, to fight with his friend and companion and fosterbrother, Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim, and so he came not with them. Then Medb sent the druids and satirists and harsh bands for Fer Diad that they might make against him three satires to stay him and three lampoons, and that they might raise on his face three

{line 2624-2670} blisters, shame, blemish and disgrace, so that he might die before the end of nine days if he did not succumb at once, unless he came with the messengers. For the sake of his honour Fer Diad came with them, for he deemed it better to fall by shafts of valour and prowess and bravery than by the shafts of satire and reviling and reproach. And when he arrived, he was greeted with honour and served, and pleasant-tasting, intoxicating liquor was poured out for him until he was intoxicated and merry. And great rewards were promised him for engaging in that fight, namely, a chariot worth four times seven cumala, the equipment of twelve men in garments of every colour, the equal of his own domains in the arable land of Mag n-Aí, freedom from tax and tribute, from encampment and expedition and exaction for his son and his grandson and his great-grandson to the end of time, Findabair as his wedded wife, and in addition the golden brooch in Medb's mantle.

As Medb made these promises, she spoke the following words and Fer Diad answered her:

Medb

You shall have a reward of many bracelets and your share of plain and forest together with freedom for your posterity from to-day for ever, O Fer Diad mac Damáin. You shall have beyond all expectation (?). Why should you not accept what others accept?

Fer Diad

I shall not accept it without surety, for no warrior without skill in casting am I. It will be an oppressive task for me to-morrow, great will be the exertion. A Hound called also of Culann, hard is the task, it is not easy to resist him. Great will be the disaster.

Medb

You shall have warriors as guarantee. You shall not go to assemblies. Into your hand shall be given fine steeds and their bridles. O valourous Fer Diad, since you are a fearless man, you shall be my confidant before all others and free of all tribute.

Fer Diad

I shall not go without sureties to engage in the battle of the ford. Its memory will live on till doomsday in full vigour and strength. I shall not accept guarantees other than sun and moon, sea and land [gap: text untranslated/extent: 6 words].

Medb

What avails you to delay it? Bind it, as may please you, by the right hand of kings and princes who will go surety for you [gap: text untranslated/extent: 4 words]. You shall have all that you ask, for it is certain that you will kill the man who comes to encounter you.

Fer Diad

Without six sureties—let it not be less— I shall not accept these conditions before performing my exploits there where there are hosts. Were I to have my wish, I shall decide, though I am not equal, to fight with brave Cú Chulainn.

Medb

Domnall or Cairbre or bright Niamán of plundering, even the bardic folk, you will have as sureties however. Take Morand as a security, if you wish for its fulfilment, take gentle Cairbre Manand and take our two sons.

Fer Diad

O Medb, great in boastfulness! the beauty of a bridegroom does not touch you. You are assuredly the master in Crúachu of the mounds. Loud your voice, great your fierce strength. Bring me satin richly variegated, give me your gold and your silver, for you have offered them to me.

Medb

8] Are you not the chief hero to whom I shall give my circular brooch? From to-day until Sunday, no longer shall the respite be. O strong and famous warrior, all the finest treasures on earth shall thus be given to you, you shall have them all.

Finnabair of the champion, the queen of the West of Inis Elga, when the hound of the Smith has been slain, you shall have, O Fer Diad.

Then Medb took sureties from Fer Diad that he should fight with six heroes on the morrow, or if he deemed it preferable, fight with Cú Chulainn alone. And Fer Diad took sureties from her, as he believed, that she should send those six heroes to fulfil the conditions that had been promised to him if Cú Chulainn were to fall at his hands.

Then his horses were harnessed for Fergus and his chariot yoked and he came forward to where Cú Chulainn was that he might tell him how matters were. Cú Chulainn made him welcome. 'Welcome is your coming, my master Fergus' said Cú Chulainn. 'I deem that welcome trustworthy, my fosterling' said Fergus.

{line 2725-2762} 'But the reason I have come is to tell you who comes to meet you and fight with you at the hour of early morning tomorrow'. 'Let us hear it from you then' said Cú Chulainn. 'Your own friend and companion and fosterbrother, the man who is your equal in feats of arms and prowess and great deeds, Fer Diad mac Damáin meic Dáire,

the brave warrior of Fir Domnand'. 'By my conscience' said Cú Chulainn, 'it is not to encounter him we wish any friend of ours to come'. 'That is why' said Fergus, 'you should be on your guard against him and prepare for him, for not like the rest who encountered you and fought with you on the Foray of Cúailnge at this time is Fer Diad mac Damáin meic Dáire' 'I have been here, however' said Cú Chulainn, 'checking and holding back the four great provinces of Ireland from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring, and in all that time I have not gone a step in retreat before a single man. Still less shall I retreat, I think, before this man'. And as Fergus spoke thus putting him on his guard, he said these words and Cú Chulainn answered him:

Fergus

1] O Cú Chulainn—clear covenant— I see that it is time for you to rise. Fer Diad mac Demáin of the ruddy countenance comes here to meet you in his wrath.

Cú Chulainn

2] I am here—no easy task—strongly holding back the men of Ireland. I never retreated a step to avoid encounter with a single opponent.

Fergus

3] Fierce is the man who wreaks his anger with his blood- red sword. Fer Diad of the many followers has a horn-skin against which no fight or combat can prevail.

Cú Chulainn

4] Be silent, argue not this matter, O Fergus of the mighty weapons. Over every land and territory, there is not fight against odds for me.

Fergus

5] Fierce is the man—scores of deeds of valour—it is not easy to overcome him. there is the strength of a hundred in his body, brave is the hero. The points of weapons pierce him not, the edge of weapons cuts him not.

Cú Chulainn

6] If I and Fer Diad of well-known valour were to meet at a ford, it would not be a fight without fierceness (?); our sword- fight would be wrathful.

Fergus

7] I should prefer above reward, O Cú Chulainn of the red sword, that you should be the one to take the spoils of proud Fer Diad eastwards.

Cú Chulainn

8] I vow and promise, though I am not good in vaunting, that I shall be the one to triumph over the son of Damán mac Dáire.

Fergus

9] It was I who, in requital for the wrong done me by Ulstermen, collected the forces from the east. With me their heroes and warriors came from their own lands.

Cú Chulainn

10] Were Conchobor not in his debility, the meeting would be hard. Medb of Mag in Scáil has never come on a more uproarious march.

Fergus

11] A greater deed now awaits your hand—the fight with Fer Diad mac Damáin. Have with you O Cú Chulainn, a weapon harsh and hard and famed in son.

Fergus came forward to the encampment. Fer Diad went to his tent and his followers and told them how Medb had obtained from him a covenant whereby he would fight and encounter six heroes on the morrow or else fight and encounter Cú Chulainn alone if he should prefer. He told them too that he had obtained from Medb a covenant whereby she should send the same six heroes to fulfil the promises that had been made to him if Cú Chulainn should fall by him.

That night the men in Fer Diad's tent were not cheerful, tranquil, joyful or merry, but they were sad, sorrowful and downhearted. For they knew that when the two heroes, the two battle-breaches of a hundred, encountered each other, one of them would fall or both would fall, and if it were one of them, they believed that it would be their own lord, for no easy matter was it to fight and encounter Cú Chulainn on the Foray of Cúailnge.

Fer Diad slept heavily at the beginning of the night and when the end of the night was come, his sleep departed from him and his drunkenness left him, and anxiety concerning the fight preyed upon him. He ordered his charioteer to harness his horses and to yoke his chariot. The charioteer began to dissuade him. 'It were better for you to stay here than to go there' said the driver. 'Hold

{line 2803-2845} your peace, lad' said Fer Diad. And as he spoke, he said these words and the servant answered him:

Fer Diad

Let us go to this encounter to contend with this man, until we reach the ford above which the war-goddess will shriek. Let us go to meet Cú Chulainn, to wound him through his slender body, that a spear-point may pierce him so that he may die thereof.

Charioteer

It were better for you to stay here. No smooth speech will ye exchange. There will be one to whom sorrow will come. Your fight will be short. An encounter with a noble of the Ulstermen is one from which harm will come. Long will it be remembered. Woe to him who goes on that course!

Fer Diad

Not right is what you say, for diffidence is not the business of a warrior and we must not show timidity. We shall not stay here for you. Be silent, lad. We shall presently be brave. Better is stoutness than cowardice. Let us go to the encounter.

Fer Diad's horses were harnessed and his chariot was yoked, and he came forward to the ford of combat though as yet day with its full brightness had not come. 'Well, lad' said Fer Diad, 'spread the coverings and rugs of my chariot beneath me that I may sleep a heavy fit of slumber here, for I did not sleep during the last part of the night with anxiety about the fight'. The servant unharnessed the horses and unyoked the chariot, and Fer Diad slept his heavy fit of slumber on it.

As for Cú Chulainn now, he rose not until day had dawned on him with its full brightness lest the men of Ireland should say that it was fear or cowardice that caused him to do so if he rose early. But when day came with its full brightness, he bade his charioteer harness his horses and yoke his chariot. 'Good my lad' said Cú Chulainn, 'harness our horses for us and yoke our chariot, for an early riser is the warrior appointed to meet us, namely, Fer Diad mac Damáin meic Dáire'. 'The horses are harnessed, the chariot is yoked. Mount the chariot then. There is no reproach to your valour'.

Then Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim mounted his chariot, the blow-dealing, feat-performing, battle-winning, red-sworded hero, and

{line 2846-2889} around him shrieked goblins and sprites and fiends of the glen and demons of the air, for the Túatha De Danand used to raise a cry about him so that the fear and terror and horror and fright that he inspired might be all the greater in every battle and field of conflict and in every encounter to which he went.

Not long was Fer Diad's charioteer there when he heard something: a noise and a clamour and an uproar, a tumult and thunder, a din and a great sound, namely, the clash of shields, the rattle of spears, the mighty blows of swords, the loud noise of helmet, the clang of breastplate, the friction of weapons, the violence of feats of arms, the straining of ropes, the rumble of wheels and the creaking of the chariot, the hoof-beats of the horses and the deep voice of the hero and warrior as he came to the ford to meet him.

The servant came and laid his hand upon his master. 'Well, Fer Diad' said the servant, 'arise for they are coming to you at the ford'. And the servant spoke these words:

Charioteer

1] I hear the sound of a chariot with fair yoke of silver; I perceive the form of a man of great size rising above the front of the strong chariot. Past Bregros and past Braine they advance along the road, past the tree-stump at Baile in Bile, victorious is their triumph.

2] A clever Hound drives, a bright chariot-fighter harnesses, a noble hawk lashes his steeds towards the south. Blood-stained is the Hound. It is sure that he will come to us. We know—let there not be silence about it—that he comes to give us battle.

3] Woe to him who is on the hill awaiting the worthy Hound. Last year I foretold that he would come at some time, the Hound of Emain Macha, the Hound with shape of every colour, the Hound of spoils, the Hound of battle. I hear him and he hears us.

‘Well, lad’ said Fer Diad, ‘why have you praised that man ever since you left your house? It is almost a cause of strife that you should have praised him so highly. But Ailill and Medb have prophesied to me that that man would fall by me, and since is for reward, he shall be destroyed shortly by me. And now it is time for help’. And he spoke these words and the servant answered him:

Fer Diad

1] It is time now for help. Be silent, do not praise him. It was no deed of friendship, for he is not doom over the brink (?). If you see the hero of Cúailnge with his proud feats, since it is for reward, he shall soon be destroyed.

Charioteer

2] If I see the hero of Cúailnge with his proud feats, he does not flee from us but towards us he comes. Though skilful, he is not grudging. He runs and not slowly, like water from a high cliff or like a swift thunderbolt.

Fer Diad

3] So much have you praised him that it is almost a cause of a quarrel. Why have you chosen him since you came forth from your house? Now they appear, now they are challenging him. None come to attack him save cowardly churls.

Not long was Fer Diad's charioteer there when he saw something: a beautiful, five-edged, four-wheeled chariot approaching with strength and swiftness and skill, with a green awning, with a framework of narrow compact opening, in which feats were exhibited, a framework tall as a sword-blade, fit for heroic deeds, behind two horses, swift, high-springing, big eared, beautiful, bounding, with flaring nostrils, with broad chests, with lively heart, high-groined, wide-hoofed, slender-legged, mighty and violent. In one shaft of the chariot was a grey horse, broad-thighed, small stepping, long-maned. In the other shaft a black horse, flowing maned, swift-coursing, broad-backed. Like a hawk to its prey (?) on a day of harsh wind, or like a gust of the stormy spring wind on a March day across a plain, or like a furious stag newly roused by hounds in the first chase—so were the two horses of Cú Chulainn in the chariot, as if they were on a bright, fiery flagstone, so that they shook the earth and made it tremble with the speed of their course.

Cú Chulainn arrived at the ford. Fer Diad remained on the southern side of the ford, Cú Chulainn stayed on the northern side. Fer Diad made Cú Chulainn welcome. 'Welcome is your coming Cú Chulainn' said Fer Diad. 'Until now I trusted that welcome' said Cú Chulainn, 'but today I trust it no more. And Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn, 'it were fitter that I should welcome you rather than that you should welcome me, for it is you who have come to the country and province in which I dwell, and it was not right for you to come and fight with me, rather should I have gone to fight with you, for driven before you are my womenfolk and youths

{line 2936-2985} and boys, my horses and steeds, my droves and flocks and herds'. 'O Cú Chulainn' said Fer Diad, 'what caused you to come and fight with me? For when we were with Scáthach and Úathach and Aífe, you were to me a serving-man who used to prepare my spears and dress my couch'. 'That is true indeed' said Cú Chulainn, 'because of my youth and lack of age I used to act thus for you. But that is not how I am today indeed for there is not in the world a warrior whom I shall not drive off'.

And then each of them reproached the other bitterly as they renounced their friendship, and Fer Diad spoke these words and Cú Chulainn answered him:

Fer Diad

1] What has led you, little Hound, to fight with a strong champion? Your flesh (?) will be blood-red above the steam of your horses. Woe to him who comes as you do! It will be as vain as the kindling of a fire from a single stick of firewood. If you reach your home, you will be in need of healing.

Cú Chulainn

2] I have come, a wild boar of the herd, before warriors, before troops, before hundreds, to thrust you beneath the waters of the pool. In anger against you and to prove you in a many-sided encounter so that harm may come to you as you defend your life.

Fer Diad

3] There is here on who will crush you. It is I who will slay you, for it is I who can. The defeat of their hero in the presence of the Ulstermen, may it long be remembered, may it be to them loss.

Cú Chulainn

4] How shall we meet? Shall we groan over corpses? On what pool shall we fight as we meet on the ford? Shall it be with hard swords or with strong spear-points that you will be slain before your hosts if the time has come?

Fer Diad

5] Before sunset, before night, if you are in straits, you attack. When you fight at

Bairche, the battle will not be bloodless. The Ulstermen are calling you. A cancer (?) has attacked them. Evil will be the sight for them. They will be utterly defeated.

Cú Chulainn

6] You have come to the gap of danger. The end of your life is at hand. Sharp weapons will be wielded on you, it will be no gentle purpose. It will be a great champion who will slay you. We two shall meet. You shall not be the leader of three men from now until Doomsday.

Fer Diad

7] Leave off your warning. You are the most boastful man on earth. You shall have neither reward nor remission for you are no hero overtopping others. I it is who know you, you with the heart of a bird. You are but a nervous lad without valour or force.

Cú Chulainn

8] When we were with Scáthach, by dint of our usual valour we would fare forth together and traverse every land. You were my loved comrade, my kin and kindred. Never found I one dearer. Sad will be your death.

Fer Diad

9] Too much you neglect your honour that we may not do battle, but before the cock crows, your head will be impaled on a spit. O Cú Chulainn of Cúailnge, frenzy and madness have seized you. All evil shall come to you from us for yours is the guilt.

'Well, Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn, 'it was not right for you to come and fight with me by reason of the strife and dissension stirred up by Ailill and Medb, and all who came thus got neither success or profit but they fell by me, and neither shall you have success or profit from it and you will fall at my hands'. As he spoke, he said these words and Fer Diad hearkened to him:

Cú Chulainn

Do not draw near me, O valiant warrior, Fer Diad son of Damán. You will fare the worse for it. It will bring sorrow to many.

By just truth, come not near me, for I am the one destined to bring you to your grave. Why was not my prowess directed solely against you?

Let not many feats overcome (?) you, though you the hornskinned are bloodstained. The maid of whom you boast will not be yours, O son of Damán.

Findabair, the daughter of Medb, though great her beauty, that maid though fair, you shall not wed.

Findabair, the king's daughter, when the truth of the matter is told, she played many men false, she destroyed such as you.

Break not unknowing your oath to me. Break not compact, break not friendship.
Break not word an promise. Come not towards me, O valiant warrior.

To fifty warriors the maid was pledged—a wise pledge indeed. Their death came through me, from me they got only justice dealt by a spear.

Though fierce and proud was Fer Báeth with his household of goodly warriors, yet I soon quelled his pride and slew him with one cast.

Bitter was the lessening of Srubdaire's valiant deeds, Srubdaire who was the darling of a hundred women. Once his renown was great but neither gold nor fine raiment saved him.

If it were to me that she had been affianced, the woman in whom all the fair province delights

"in ... delights", reading C.

, I would not wound your breast, in the south or in the north, in the west or in the east.

'Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn, 'that is why it was not right for you to come and fight with me. For when we were with Scáthach and Úathach and Aífe, we used to go together into every battle and field of contest, into every fight and combat, into every wood and wasteland, every secret place and hidden spot'. And as he spoke he said these words:

Cú Chulainn

We were loving friends. We were comrades in the wood. We were men who shared a bed. We would sleep a deep sleep after our weary fights in many strange lands. Together we would ride and range through every wood when we were taught by Scáthach.

Fer Diad

'O accomplished Cú Chulainn' said Fer Diad, 'we have learnt the same art. They have overcome the bonds of friendship. Your wounds have been paid for. Remember not our fosterage together. O Hound, it is of not avail to you'.

'Too long have we been like this now' said Fer Diad, 'and what weapons shall we use today, Cú Chulainn?' 'Yours is the choice of weapons until night today' said Cú Chulainn, 'for you were the first to reach the ford'. 'Do you remember at all' said Fer Diad, 'the choice feats of arms which we practised with Scáthach and Úathach and Aífe?' 'I remember them indeed' said Cú Chulainn. 'If you do, let us have recourse to them'.

They had recourse to their choicest feats of arms. They put on two shields marked with emblems and took their eight ocharcles and their eight javelins and their eight ivory-hilted blades and their eight battle-darts. These would fly from them and to them like bees on a fine day. They cast no weapon which found not its aim. Each of them began to cast

these weapons at the other from the twilight of early morning until the middle of the day, and they blunted their many weapons against the curved surfaces and bosses of the shields. Despite the excellence of the casting, the defence was so good that neither of them wounded or drew blood from the other during that time. 'Let us lay aside these weapons now, Cú Chulainn' said Fer Diad, 'since not by them comes the decision between us'. 'Let us do so indeed if the time has

{line 3117-3151} come' said Cú Chulainn. They ceased then and gave their weapons into the hands of their charioteers.

'What weapons shall we use now, Cú Chulainn?' said Fer Diad. 'Yours is the choice of weapons until night' said Cú Chulainn, 'since you were the first to reach the ford'. 'Let us take then' said Fer Diad, 'to our polished, sharpened, hard, smooth spears with their thongs of hard flax'. 'Let us do so indeed' said Cú Chulainn. Then they took on them two hard, equally strong shields and they had recourse to the polished, sharpened, hard, smooth spears with their thongs of hard flax. Each of them fell to casting the spears at the other from the middle of the day till the evening. Despite the excellence of the defence, so good was their mutual casting that during that time each of them bled and reddened and wounded the other. 'Let us cease from this now, Cú Chulainn' said Fer Diad. 'Let us do so indeed if the time has come' said Cú Chulainn. They ceased then and gave their weapons into the hands of their charioteers.

Then each of them went towards the other and put an arm around the other's neck and kissed him thrice. That night their horses were in one paddock and their charioteers at one fire, and their charioteers made litter-beds of fresh rushers for them and on them pillows for wounded men. Then came folk of healing and curing to heal and cure them, and they put herbs and healing plants and a curing charm into their wounds and cuts, their gashes and many stabs. Of every herb and healing plant and curing charm which was applied to the wounds and cuts, the gashes and many stabs of Cú Chulainn, an equal amount was sent westwards by him across the ford to Fer Diad lest the men of Ireland should say, if Fer Diad fell by him, that it was because of the advantage Cú Chulainn had over him in healing. Of every food and every palatable, pleasant, strong drink which was brought from the men of Ireland to Fer Diad, an equal portion was sent northwards from him across the ford to Cú Chulainn, for the purveyors of food to Fer Diad were more numerous than those of Cú Chulainn. All the men of Ireland were purveyors of food to Fer Diad that he might ward off Cú Chulainn from them. The men of Bregia were purveyors to Cú Chulainn. They used to come to him daily, that is, every night.

They remained there that night. They arose early on the morrow and came forward

to the ford of combat. 'What weapons shall we use today, Fer Diad?' said Cú Chulainn. 'Yours is the choice of weapons until night' said Fer Diad, 'since I had choice of weapons on the day that is past'. 'Let us then' said Cú Chulainn, 'take to our great long spears today, for we think that thrusting with the spears today will bring us nearer to a decisive victory than the casting of missiles did yesterday. Let our horses be harnessed for us and our chariots yoked that we may fight from our horses and chariots today'. 'Let us do so indeed' said Fer Diad. Then they put on two broad, strong shields that day. They had recourse to the great long spears that day. Each of them began to pierce and wound, to overthrow (?) and cast each other down (?) from the twilight of early morning until sunset. If it were usual for birds in flight to pass through men's bodies, they would have gone through their bodies that day and carried lumps of flesh and blood through their wounds and cuts into the clouds and the air outside. And when evening came their horses were weary and their charioteers tired, and the heroes and champions themselves were weary {line 3152-3186} too. 'Let us cease from this now, Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn, 'for our horses are weary and our charioteers are tired, and when they are weary, why should we also not be weary?' And as he spoke he said these words:

Cú Chulainn

1] We are not bound to endure the swaying of the chariots, said he, straining against giants. Let their spancels be put on the horses, for the noise of battle is over.

'Let us cease indeed if the time for it has come' said Fer Diad. They ceased. They gave over their weapons into the hands of their charioteers. Each of them came towards the other. Each put an arm around the others's neck and kissed him thrice. That night their horses were in one paddock, their charioteers at one fire. Their charioteers made for them litter-beds of fresh rushers with the pillows of wounded men on them. Physicians and doctors came to examine and watch them and to attend on them that night for, because of the dreadfulness of their wounds and gashes, of their cuts and many stabs, all they could do for them was to apply spells and incantations and charms to them to staunch the bleeding and haemorrhage and to keep the dressings in place. Of all the spells and incantations and charms which were applied to the wounds and gashes of Cú Chulainn, and equal portion was sent by him westwards across the ford to Fer Diad. Of all the food and palatable, pleasant, strong drink which was brought from the men of Ireland to Fer Diad, an equal amount was sent by him northwards across the ford to Cú Chulainn. For Fer Diad's purveyors of food were more numerous than those of Cú Chulainn as all the men of Ireland were purveyors of food to Fer Diad for warding off Cú Chulainn from them, but only the men of Bregia were purveyors of food to Cú Chulainn. They used to come and

converse with him daily, that is, every night.

They remained there that night. They rose early on the morrow and came forward to the ford of combat. Cú Chulainn saw that Fer Diad had an ill and gloomy appearance on that day. 'Your appearance is not good today, Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn. 'Your hair has grown dark today and your eye dull, and you are changed from your usual form and figure'. 'Not because I fear or dread you am I thus today however' said Fer Diad, 'for there is not in Ireland today a warrior I shall not repel'. And Cú Chulainn was lamenting and pitying him, and he spoke these words and Fer Diad answered:

Cú Chulainn

O Fer Diad, if this is you, sure I am that you are one utterly doomed, that you should come at a woman's behest to fight with your fosterbrother.

Fer Diad

O Cú Chulainn—wise fulfilment—O great hero, great warrior! A man must make this journey to the sod whereon is his grave.

Cú Chulainn

Findabair the daughter of Medb, however beautiful her form, was given to you not for love of you but to prove your noble might.

Fer Diad

My might is long since proven, O Hound of the gentle rule. None braver has been heard of or found until today.

Cú Chulainn

You are the cause of all that happens, O son of Damán mac Dáire, that you should come at woman's behest to cross swords with your fosterbrother.

Fer Diad

Should I part from you without a fight, O gentle Hound, though we are fosterbrothers, my word and my name would be held in ill esteem by Ailill and Medb of Crúachu.

Cú Chulainn

He has not yet put food to his lips nor has he yet been born of king or bright queen for whom I would consent to do you harm.

Fer Diad

O Cú Chulainn—many deeds of valour—not you but Medb betrayed us. You will have victory and fame. Not on you is our guilt.

Cú Chulainn

My brave heart is a clot of blood. My life has almost left me. No equal fight do I

deem it to encounter you, Fer Diad.

‘However much you belittle me today’ said Fer Diad, ‘what weapons shall we use?’ ‘You have the choice of weapons until night today’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘for it was I who chose them yesterday’. ‘Let us then’ said Fer Diad, ‘take our heavy, hardsmiting swords today, for we think that the mutual striking with swords today will bring us nearer to a decisive victory than did the thrusting with spears yesterday’. ‘Let us do so indeed’

{line 3229-3270} said Cú Chulainn. Then they took up two great, long shields that day. They wielded their heavy, hard-smiting swords. Each of them began to smite and hew, to slaughter and slay each other, and every portion and piece that each hacked from the shoulders and thighs and shoulder-blades of the other was as big as the head of a month-old child. Each of them kept on smiting the other in this way from the twilight of early morning until evening. ‘Let us cease from this now, Cú Chulainn’ said Fer Diad. ‘Let us cease indeed if the time for it has come’ said Cú Chulainn. So they ceased and gave over their weapons into the hands of their charioteers. Though two cheerful, tranquil, happy and joyful men had met there, their parting that night was the parting of two sad, unhappy, dispirited ones. That night their horses were not in the same paddock nor their charioteers at the same fire.

They remained there that night. Then Fer Diad rose early on the morrow and came alone to the ford of combat, for he knew that this was the decisive day of the fight, and he knew too that one of them would fall in the fight that day or that both would fall. Then before Cú Chulainn came to meet him, he put on his battle equipment. Of that battle equipment was his filmy satin apron with its border of variegated gold which he wore next to his fair skin. Outside that he put on his apron of supple brown leather, and outside that a great stone as big as a millstone, and outside that stone, through fear and dread of the ga bulga that day, he put his strong, deep, iron apron made of smelted iron. On his head he put his crested helmet of battle which was adorned with forty carbuncle-gems, studded with red enamel and crystal and carbuncle and brilliant stones from the eastern world. In his right hand he took his fierce, strong spear. He set at his left side his curved battle-sword with its golden hilt and guards of red gold. On the arching slope of his back he put his huge, enormous fair shield with its fifty bosses into each boss of which a show boar could fit, not to speak of the great central boss of red gold. That day Fer Diad exhibited many and wonderful and brilliant feats of arms which he had not learned from anyone before that, neither from fostermother nor fosterfather, not from Scáthach nor Úathach nor Aífe, but he invented them himself on that day to oppose Cú Chulainn.

Cú Chulainn too came to the ford and he saw the many brilliant, wonderful feats of

arms performed by Fer Diad. 'You see yonder, my friend Láeg, the many brilliant, wonderful feats performed by Fer Diad, and in due course now all those feats will be directed

{line 3271-3307} against me. Therefore if it be I who am defeated this day, you must incite me and revile me and speak evil of me so that my ire and anger shall rise the higher thereby. But if it be I who inflict defeat, you must exhort me and praise me and speak will of me that thereby my courage rise higher'. 'It shall so be done indeed, little Cú' said Láeg.

Then Cú Chulainn too put on his battle-equipment and performed that day many brilliant, wonderful feats which he had not learned from any other, not from Scáthach nor from Úathach nor from Aife.

Fer Diad saw these feats and knew that they would in due course be directed against him. 'What feat of arms shall we perform today, Fer Diad?' said Cú Chulainn. 'Yours is the choice until nightfall' said Fer Diad. 'Let us perform the "feat of the ford" then' said Cú Chulainn. 'Let us do so indeed' said Fer Diad. But though he said that, it was the feat he deemed it hardest to encounter for he knew that it was at the "feat of the ford" that Cú Chulainn overthrew every champion and every warrior he encountered. Great was the deed that was done on the ford that day, the two heroes, the two champions and the two chariot-fighters of western Europe, the two bright torches of valour of the Irish, the two bestowers of gifts and rewards and wages in the northwestern world, the two mainstays of the valour of the Irish coming from afar to encounter each other through the sowing of dissension and the stirring up of strife by Ailill and Medb. Each of them began to cast these weapons at each other from the twilight of early morning until midday, and when midday came, the rage of the combatants grew fiercer and they drew closer to each other.

Then for the first time Cú Chulainn sprang from the brink of the ford on to the boss of Fer Diad's shield, trying to strike his head from above the rim of the shield. Fer Diad gave the shield a blow with his left elbow and cast Cú Chulainn off like a bird on to the brink of the ford. Again Cú Chulainn sprang from the brink of the ford on to the boss of Fer Diad's shield, seeking to strike his head from above the rim of the shield. Fer Diad gave the shield a blow with his left knee and cast Cú Chulainn off like a child on to the brink of the ford. Láeg noticed what was happening. 'Alas!' said Láeg, 'your opponent has chastised you as a fond mother chastises her child. He had belaboured you as flax (?) is beaten in a pond. He had ground you as a mill grinds malt. He has pierced you as a tool pierces an oak. he has bound you as a twining plant binds trees. He has attacked you as a

{line 3308-3345} hawk attacks little birds, so that never again will you have a claim or right or title to valour of feats of arms, you distorted little sprite' said Láeg.

Then for the third time Cú Chulainn rose up as swift as the wind, as speedy as the swallow, as fierce as the dragon, as strong as the air, and landed on the boss of Fer Diad's shield, seeking to strike his head from above the rim of the shield. Then the warrior shook the shield and cast off Cú Chulainn into the bed of the ford as if he had never leapt at all (?).

Then occurred Cú Chulainn's first distortion. He swelled and grew big as a bladder does when inflated and became a fearsome, terrible, many-coloured, strange arch, and the valiant hero towered high above Fer Diad, as big as a fomóir or a pirate.

Such was the closeness of their encounter that their heads met above, their feet below and their hands in the middle over the rims and bosses of the shields. Such was the closeness of their encounter that they clove and split their shields from rims to centres. Such was the closeness of their encounter that they caused their spears to bend and turn and yield to pressure from points to rivets. Such was the closeness of their encounter that sprites and goblins and spirits of the glen and demons of the air screamed from the rims of their shields and from the hilts of their swords and from the butt-ends of their spears. Such was the closeness of their encounter that they forced the river from its usual course and extent, and a couch might have been prepared for king or queen on the floor of the ford for not a drop of water remained there except what might drip there with the wrestling and trampling of the two heroes and champions on the floor of the ford. Such was the closeness of their encounter that the horses of the Irish went mad and frenzied and broke their spancels and shackles, their ropes and traces, and women and boys and children and those unfit to fight and the mad among the men of Ireland broke out through the camp south-westwards.

By this time the two combatants were at the edge-feet of swords. Then Fer Diad caught Cú Chulainn unguarded and dealt him a blow with his ivory-hilted blade which he plunged into Cú Chulainn's breast. And Cú Chulainn's blood dripped into his belt and the ford was red with the blood from the warrior's body. Cú Chulainn brooked not this wounding for Fer Diad attacked him with a succession of deadly stout blows, and he asked Láeg for the ga bulga.—Such was the nature of the ga bulga: it used to be set downstream and cast from between the toes: it made

{line 3346-3383} one wound as it entered a man's body but it had thirty barbs when one tried to remove it and it was not taken from a man's body until the flesh was cut away about it.

And when Fer Diad heard the mention of the ga bulga, he thrust down the shield to shelter the lower part of his body. Cú Chulainn cast the fine spear from off the palm of this

hand over the rim of the shield and over the breast- piece of the horn-skin so that its farther half was visible after it had pierced Fer Diad's heart in his breast. Fer Diad thrust up the shield to protect the upper part of his body but that was help that came too late. The charioteer sent the ga bulga downstream. Cú Chulainn caught it between his toes and made a cast of it at Fer Diad. And the ga bulga went through the strong, thick apron of smelted iron and broke in three the great stone as big as a millstone and entered Fer Diad's body through the anus and filled every joint and limb of him with its barbs. 'That suffices now' said Fer Diad. 'I have fallen by that cast. But indeed strongly do you cast from your right foot. And it was not fitting that I should fall by you'. As he spoke, he uttered these words:

Fer Diad

O Hound of the fair feats, it was not fitting that you should slay me. Yours is the guilt which clung to me. On you my blood was shed.

Doomed men who reach the gap of betrayal do not flourish. Sad is my voice. Alas! heroes (?) have been destroyed.

My ribs like spoils are broken. My heart is gore. Would that I had not fought! I have fallen O Hound.

Then Cú Chulainn hastened towards him and clasped him in his arms and lifted him up with his weapons and armour and equipment and took him northwards across the ford so that his spoils might be to the north of the ford and not to the west with the men of Ireland. Cú Chulainn laid Fer Diad on the ground there and as he stood over Fer Diad a swoon and faintness and weakness came upon him. Láeg saw that and he feared that all the men of Ireland would come and attack Cú Chulainn. 'Come, little Hound' said Láeg, 'arise now for the men of Ireland will come to attack us and it will not be single combat that they will grant us since Fer Diad mac Damáin meic Dáire has fallen at your hands'. 'What avails it me to arise now, fellow' said Cú Chulainn,

{line 3384-3423} 'considering the man who has fallen by me'. As the servant spoke, he said these words and Cú Chulainn answered him:

Charioteer

Arise, O war-hound of Emain. High courage befits you more than ever. You have cast off Fer Diad of the hosts, God's doom! Your fight was hard.

Cú Chulainn

What avails me high courage? Madness and grief have hemmed me in, after the deed I have done and the body that I have wounded harshly with my sword.

Charioteer

It was not fitting for you to mourn him. Fitter for you to boast in triumph. The strong man armed with spears has left you mournful, wounded, bleeding.

Cú Chulainn

Even had he cut off a leg from me or a hand, I still grieve that Fer Diad who rode on steeds is not living for ever.

Charioteer

The maidens of the Red Branch are better pleased at what has been done, that he should die and you should live, though they do not deem it a small thing that you two should be parted for ever.

Since the day you left Cúailnge in pursuit of the brilliant Medb, all that you have killed of her fighters she deems indeed a famous carnage.

You have not slept peacefully in pursuit of your great herd. Though your company was few, yet many a morning you rose early.

Cú Chulainn began to lament for and commiserate with Fer Diad then and he spoke these words:

'Alas, Fer Diad, sad for you that you spoke not with one of the company who knew of my great deeds of valour and arms before we met together in conflict!'

'Sad for you that Láeg mac Riangbra did not put you to shame with counsel about our comradeship!'

'Sad for you that you did not agree to the clear advice of Fergus!'

'Sad for you that Conall the fair, triumphant, exultant, victorious Conall, did not help you!'

'For those men do not follow the messages or desires or sayings or the false promises of the fairhaired women of Connacht. For those men know that there will not be born among the Connachtmen a being to perform deeds equal to yours, in the wielding of shields and bucklers, of spears and swords, in the playing of chess and draughts, in the driving of horses and chariots'.

'There will not be a hero's hand to hack warrior's flesh like that of Fer Diad, the shapely scion. The breach made by the red-mouthed war-goddess will not be dug up (?) for encampments full of shimmering shields. It will not be Crúachain that will contend for or obtain covenants equal to yours till the very end of life now, O red-cheeked son of Damán!' said Cú Chulainn.

Then Cú Chulainn rose and stood over Fer Diad. 'Ah Fer Diad' said Cú Chulainn, 'greatly did the men of Ireland betray and abandon you when they brought you to fight and do combat with me, for to contend and do battle with me on the Foray of Cúailnge was no

easy task’.

As he spoke, he said these words:

Cú Chulainn

O Fer Diad, you have been betrayed. Alas for your last meeting where you have died while I remain! Alas for ever for our long parting!

When we were yonder with Scáthach the victorious, we thought that till great doomsday our friendship would not end.

Dear to me was your splendid blush, dear your perfect and fair form, dear your bright clear eye, dear your bearing and your speech.

There never strode to flesh-rending fight, there never grew wrathful in his manliness, there never held shield upon the wide slope, one like unto you, warlike son of Damán.

I have never met such as you until now, since the only son of Aífe fell; your peer in deeds of battle I found not here, O Fer Diad.

Findabair, the daughter of Medb, though great her beauty, it is as vain to show her now to you, O Fer Diad, as to bind a withe around sand or gravel.

Then Cú Chulainn began to gaze at Fer Diad. ‘Well now, my friend Láeg’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘strip Fer Diad and take off his armour and his clothes that I may see the brooch for the sake of which he did battle’. Láeg came and stripped Fer Diad. He took his armour and clothing from him and Cú Chulainn saw the brooch and began to mourn for Fer Diad and to commiserate him, and he spoke these words:

Cú Chulainn

Alas for the golden brooch

"Alas ... brooch", translating ST

, O Fer Diad of the hosts! O strong and valiant smiter, victorious was your arm.

Your thick yellow hair was curly—a fair jewel. Your girdle, supple and ornamented, was around you until your death.

Our true comradeship was a delight for the eye of a nobleman. Your shield with its golden rim, your chess-board worth much treasure.

That you should fall by my hand I acknowledge was not just. Our fight was not gentle. Alas for the golden brooch!

"Alas ... brooch", translating ST

‘Well, my friend Láeg’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘cut open Fer Diad now and remove the ga bulga for I cannot be without my weapon’. Láeg came and cut open Fer Diad and removed the ga bulga. And Cú Chulainn saw his bloodstained, crimson weapon lying beside Fer

Diad and spoke these words:

Cú Chulainn

1] O Fer Diad, it is sad that I should see you thus, bloodstained yet drained of blood, while I have not as yet cleansed my weapon of its stains and you lie there in a bed of gore.

2] When we were yonder in the east with Scáthach and with Úathach, there would not be pale lips between us and weapons of battle.

3] Sharply Scáthach spoke her strong firm command: 'Go ye all to the swift battle. Germán Garbglas will come.'

4] I said to Fer Diad and to generous Lugaid and to Fer Báeth the son of fair Báetán that we should go to meet Germán.

5] We went to the rocks of battle above the sloping shore of Loch Lindfhormait. Four hundred we brought out from the Islands of the Victorious.

6] When I and valiant Fer Diad stood before the fort of Germán, I killed Rind mac Níuil and he slew Fúad mac Forníuil.

7] On the battle-field Fer Báeth killed Bláth son of Colba of the red sword, and Lugaid, the stern and swift, slew Mugairne from the Tyrrhene Sea.

8] After going in I slew four hundred wrathful men. Fer Diad slew Dam Dreimed and Dam Dílend—a stern company.

9] We laid waste the fort of wise Germán above the wide, many-coloured sea. We brought Germán alive to Scáthach of the broad shield.

10] Our fostermother imposed on us a pact of friendship and agreement that we should not grow angry with the tribe of fair Elg.

11] Sad was the battle, that slaughtering battle in which the son of Damán was struck down in weakness. Alas! the friend to whom I served a drink of red blood has fallen.

12] Had I seen you die amidst the warriors of great Greece, I should not have survived you, we should have died together.

13] Sad what befalls us, the fosterlings of Scáthach. I am wounded and covered with red gore while you no longer drive chariots.

14] Sad what befalls us, the fosterlings of Scáthach. I am wounded and covered with red gore while you lie dead.

15] Sad what befalls us, the fosterlings of Scáthach, you dead. I alive and strong. Valour is an angry combat.

'Well, O little Cú' said Láeg, 'let us leave this ford now. Too long have we been here'. 'We shall leave it indeed, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn. 'But to me every battle and

contest I have fought seems but play and sport compared with my fight against Fer Diad'.
And as he spoke, he said these words:

Cú Chulainn

1] Game was all and sport was all until it came to my meeting with Fer Diad on the ford. The same instruction we had, the same power of guarantee (?). The same tender foster-mother we had whose name is beyond all others.

2] All was play and sport compared with my meeting with Fer Diad on the ford. The same nature we had, the same fearsomeness, the same weapons we used to wield. Scáthach once gave two shields to me and to Fer Diad.

3] All was play and sport compared with my meeting with Fer Diad on the ford. Beloved was he, the golden pillar, whom I laid low on the ford. O strong one of the tribes, you were more valiant than all others.

4] All was play and sport compared with my meeting with Fer Diad on the ford, the furious, fiery lion, the wave, wild and swelling, like the day of doom.

5] All was play and sport compared with my meeting with Fer Diad at the ford. I thought that beloved Fer Diad would live after me for ever. Yesterday he was huge as a mountain, today only his shadow remains.

6] Three uncountable bands there fell by my hand on the Foray. The finest men, the finest cattle and horses I slaughtered on every side.

7] Though numerous the army which came from stout Crúachu, yet I slew more than a third of them and less than half with the rough plying of my weapons.

8] There has not come into the centre of battle, nor has Banba ever nurtured, nor has there travelled over land or sea any king's son more famous than Fer Diad.

Thus far the Tragic Death of Fer Diad.

There came now to help and succour Cú Chulainn a few of the Ulstermen, namely, Senall Uathach and the two Maic Fecce, Muiredach and Cotreb. They took him to the streams and rivers of Conaille Muirthemne to wash and cleanse his wounds and his stabs, his cuts and many sores, against the current of those streams and rivers. For the Túatha De Danann used to put herbs and healing plants and charms on the streams and rivers in Conaille Muirthemne to help and succour Cú Chulainn, so that the streams used to be speckled and green-surfaced from them.

These are the names of the rivers which healed Cú Chulainn:

Sás, Búan, Bithlán, Findglais, Gleóir, Glenamain, Bedg, Tadg, Telameit, Rind, Bir, Brenide, Dichaem, Muach, Miliuc, Cumu[not]g, Cuilenn, Gainemain, Drong, Delt, Dubglass.

The men of Ireland told Mac Roth, the chief herald, to go to keep watch and ward for them on Slíab Fúait lest the Ulstermen should come upon them unawares. So Mac Roth came to Slíab Fúait. Not long was he there when he saw a single chariot-warrior on Slíab Fúait coming straight towards him from the north. In the chariot was a man, stark-naked, with neither weapon nor garment save only an iron spit in his hand with which he pricked alike his charioteer and his horses, and it seemed to him as if he would never reach the hosts while they were still alive. Mac Roth brought these tidings to the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus with the nobles of the men of Ireland. Ailill asked news of him on his arrival. 'Well, Mac Roth' said Ailill, 'have you seen any one of the Ulstermen on the track of this host today?' 'I know not indeed' said Mac Roth, 'but I saw a solitary chariot-fighter coming straight across Slíab Fúait. In the chariot there is a man, stark-naked, with no garment or weapon at all except for an iron spit in his hand with which he pricks alike both his charioteer and his horses, for it seemed to him that he would not reach this host in time to find them alive'.

'Who would you think was yonder, Fergus?' said Ailill. 'I think' said Fergus, 'that it would be Cethern mac Fintain coming there'. It was true for Fergus that it was Cethern mac Fintain arriving there. Then Cethern mac Fintain reached them, and the fort and encampment was overthrown (?) on them and he wounds them all around him in every direction and on all sides. He too is wounded from all sides and points. Then he came from them, with his entrails and intestines hanging out, to the place

{line 3634-3670} where Cú Chulainn was being cured and healed, and he asked Cú Chulainn for a physician to cure and heal him. 'Well, my friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'go to the encampment of the men of Ireland and tell their physicians to come forth and cure Cethern mac Fintain. I swear that though they be hidden underground or in a locked house I shall inflict death on them before this hour tomorrow if they do not come'. Láeg came forward to the encampment of the men of Ireland and bade their physicians come forth and cure Cethern mac Fintain. The physicians of the men of Ireland thought it no pleasant task to come and cure one who was to them a foe and an enemy and an outlander, but they feared that Cú Chulainn would inflict death on them if they did not come. So they came. As each man reached him, Cethern mac Fintain would show him his wounds and his gashes, his sores and his bleeding cuts. To each man who would say: 'He will not live. He cannot be cured' Cethern mac Fintain would deal a blow with his right fist in the middle of his forehead and drive his brains out through the orifices of his ears and the joinings of his skull. However, Cethern mac Fintain slew up to fifteen of the physicians of the men of Ireland. As for the fifteenth man, only a glancing blow reached him, but he lay unconscious

in a heavy swoon among the corpses of the other physicians for a long time. His name was Ithall, the physician of Ailill and Medb.

Then Cethern mac Fintain asked Cú Chulainn for another physician to heal and cure him. 'Well now, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'go for me to Fíngin the seer-physician, the physician of Conchobor at Ferta Fíngin in Lecca Slebe Fúait, and let him come hither heal Cethern mac Fintain'. Láeg came on to the seer-physician Fíngin at Ferta Fíngin in Lecca Slebe Fuait and told him to come and cure Cethern mac Fintain showed him his wounds and his stabs, his gashes and his bleeding cuts.

'Examine this wound for me, master Fíngin' said Cethern. Fíngin examined the wound. 'This is a slight wound given unwillingly by one of your own blood' said the physician, 'and it would not carry you off prematurely[It]'. 'That is true indeed' said Cethern. 'One man came to me there. He had a crest of hair. He wore a blue cloak wrapped around him. A silver brooch in the cloak over his breast. He carried a curved shield with scalloped edge; in his hand a five- pointed spear and beside it a small pronged spear. He dealt this wound and he got a slight wound

{line 3671-3705} from me too'. 'We know that man' said Cú Chulainn. 'That was Illand Ilarchless the son of Fergus, and he had no desire that you should fall by his hand but gave that mock-thrust at you lest the men of Ireland should say that he was betraying or abandoning them if he did not give it'.

'Examine this wound also for me, master Fíngin', said Cethern. Fíngin examined the wound. 'This is the deed of a proud woman' said the physician. 'That is true indeed' said Cethern. 'There came to me there a woman, tall, beautiful, pale and long-faced. She had flowing, golden-yellow hair. She wore a crimson, hooded cloak with a golden brooch over her breast. A straight, ridged spear blazing in her hand. She gave me that wound and she too got a slight wound from me'. 'We know that woman' said Cú Chulainn. 'It was Medb the daughter of Eochu Feidlech, the high-king of Ireland, who came in that wise. She would have deemed it victory and triumph and cause for boasting had you fallen at her hands'.

'Examine then this wound for me, master Fíngin' said Cethern. Fíngin examined the wound. 'This is the attack of two champions' said the physician. 'It is true indeed' said Cethern. 'Two men came to me there. They had crests of hair. Two blue cloaks wrapped about them. Silver brooches in the cloaks above their breasts. A necklace of pure white silver round the neck of each of them'. 'We know those two men' said Cú Chulainn. 'They were Oll and Othine, members of the household of Ailill and Medb. They never go into battle that they are not assured of wounding a man. They would deem it victory and

triumph and cause for boasting that you should fall at their hands’.

‘Examine this wound for me now, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. Fíngin examined that wound. ‘Two warriors came to me there of splendid, manly appearance. Each of them thrust a spear in me and I thrust this spear through one of them’. Fíngin examined that wound. ‘This wound is all black’ said the physician. ‘The spears went through your heart and crossed each other within it and I prophesy no cure here, but I would procure for you some herbs of healing and curing so that the wounds should not carry you off prematurely’. ‘We know these two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They were Bun and Mecconn of the household of Ailill and Medb. They desired that you should fall at their hands’.

‘Examine this wound for me now, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. Fíngin examined the wound. ‘This was the bloody onset of the

{line 3706-3740} two sons of the king of Caill’. ‘That is true’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two warriors, fair-faced, dark-browed, tall, with golden crowns on their heads. Two green mantles wrapped about them. Two brooches of white silver in the mantles over their breasts. Two five-pronged spears in their hands’. ‘Very numerous are the wounds that have inflicted on you’ said the physician. ‘Into your gullet the spears went and their points met within you, nor is it easy to work a cure here’. ‘We know these two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They are Bróen and Brudne the sons of three lights, the two sons of the king of Caill. They would think it victory and triumph and cause for boasting if you should fall by them’.

‘Examine this wound for me, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. Fíngin examined that wound. ‘This was the attack (?) of two brothers’ said the physician. ‘That is true indeed’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two choice warriors. They had yellow hair. Dark-grey, fringed cloaks wrapped about them. Leaf-shaped brooches of white bronze in the mantles over their breasts. Broad, shining spears in their hands’. ‘We know those two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They are Cormac Coloma Ríg, and Cormac mac Maele Foga of the household of Ailill and Medb. They would have wished you to fall at their hands’.

‘Examine for me this wound, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. Fíngin examined that wound. ‘This was the attempt of two brothers’ said the physician. ‘It is true indeed’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two youthful warriors, both alike. One had curling brown hair, the other curling yellow hair. Two green mantles were wrapped around them and two brooches of bright silver were in the mantles over their breasts, Two shirts of smooth, yellow silk next to their skin. Bright-hilted swords at their girdles. Two bright shields they carried, ornamented with animal designs in silver. Two five-pronged spears with rings of pure white silver they bore in their hands’. ‘We know those two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They

were Maine Máithremail and Maine Aithremail, two sons of Ailill and Medb. They would deem it victory and triumph and cause for boasting if you should fall at their hands’.

‘Examine this wound for me, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. ‘Two warriors came to me there. A brilliant appearance they had and they were tall and manly. They wore strange, foreign clothes. Each of them thrust a spear into me and I thrust a spear into each of them’. Fingin examined the wound. ‘Severe are the wounds they have inflicted on you’ said the physician. ‘They

{line 3741-3774} have severed the sinews of your heart within you so that your heart rolls about in your breast like an apple in movement (?) or like a ball of thread in an empty bag, and there is not a sinew supporting it at all, and I cannot effect a cure here’. ‘We know those two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They are two of the warriors of Irúath who were chosen expressly by Ailill and Medb that they might kill you, since not often does anyone survive their attack. For they desired that you should fall at their hands’.

‘Examine this wound for me, master Fíngin’ said Cethern. Fíngin examined that wound. ‘This was the thrust of a father and son’ said the physician. ‘It is true indeed’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two tall men, with shining eyes, with golden diadems flashing on their heads. They wore kingly raiment. Gold-hilted, ornamented swords at their girdles with scabbards of pure white silver and rings of variegated gold outside them’. ‘We know those two’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They were Ailill and his son Maine Condasgeib Uile. They would deem it victory and triumph and cause of congratulation if you had fallen at their hands’.

Thus far the Wounds of Cethern on the Táin.

‘Well then, Fíngin, seer-physician’ said Cethern mac Fintain, ‘what remedy and advice do you give me now?’ ‘What I say to you’ said Fíngin the seer-physician, ‘is that you should not exchange

translating ST

your great cows for yearlings this year, for if you do, it is not you who will enjoy them and they will not profit you.’ ‘That is the remedy and advice the other physicians gave me, and it is certain that it brought them no advantage or profit but they fell by me, and neither shall it bring advantage or profit to you for you will fall by me’. And Cethern gave him a strong, violent kick so that he landed between the two wheels of the chariot. ‘Wicked is that old man’s (?) kick’ said Cú Chulainn. Whence the name of Úachtar Lúa in Crích Rois from that day until today.

Nevertheless Fíngin Fáithlíraig gave his choice to Cethern mac Fintain: either a long illness and afterwards help and succour, or else a temporary healing during three days

and three nights that he might then exert all his strength against his enemies. Cethern chose a temporary healing of three days and three nights that he might himself exert all his strength against his enemies,

{line 3775-3881} for as he said, he would leave behind him no one he would better like to take vengeance for him than himself. So then Fíngin Fáithlíraig asked Cú Chulainn for a marrow-mash to cure and heal Cethern mac Fintain. Cú Chulainn proceeded to the encampment of the men of Ireland and brought from there all he found of their herds and flocks and droves, and made of them a mash, flesh and bones and hides all together. And Cethern was placed in the marrow-mash for the space of three days and three nights, and he began to soak up the marrow-mash which was about him. And the marrow entered into his wounds and gashes, his sores and many stabs. Then after three days and three nights he arose from the marrow-mash, and thus it was that he arose: with the board of his chariot pressed to his belly to prevent his entrails from falling out.

That was the time when his wife Finda daughter of Eochu came from the north, from Dún Da Benn, bringing him his sword. Cethern mac Fintain came towards the men of Ireland. However he gave a warning of his coming to Íthall, the physician of Ailill and Medb. Íthall had lain unconscious in a heavy swoon among the corpses of the other physicians for a long space of time. 'O men of Ireland' said the physician, 'Cethern son of Fintan will come to attack you now that he has been cured and healed by Fíngin Fáithlíraig, so make ready to answer him'. Then the men of Ireland put Ailill's garments and his golden crown on the pillar-stone in Crích Rois that Cethern mac Fintain might first wreak his rage on it when he arrived. Cethern saw Ailill's garments and his golden crown on the pillar-stone, and for want of information he thought that it was Ailill himself who was there. He made a rush at it and drove the sword through the pillar-stone up to its hilt. 'This is a trick' said Cethern, 'and against me it has been played, and I swear that until there be found among you some one to put on that royal dress and golden crown I see yonder, I shall not cease to smite and slaughter them'. Maine Andóe, the son of Ailill and Medb, heard this, and he put on the royal dress and golden crown and advanced through the midst of the men of Ireland. Cethern pursued him closely and made a cast of his shield at him, and the scalloped edge of the shield cut him in three to the ground together with chariot and charioteer and horses. Then the armies attacked Cethern on both sides and he fell at their hands in the spot where he was.

Those are the tales of Caladgleó Cethirn and Fuile Cethirn.

Here follows Fiacalgleó Fintain.

Fintan was the son of Niall Niamglonnach from Dún Da Benn, and the father of

Cethern. And he came to avenge the honour of the Ulstermen and to take revenge for his son's death on the hosts. Thrice fifty was the number of their band, and they came with two spear-heads on every shaft, a spear-head on the point and a spear-head on the butt, so that they wounded the hosts alike with points and butts. They gave battle three times to the hosts and three times their own number fell by them, and there fell also all the people of Fintan mac Neill except Crimthann the son of Fintan who was saved by Ailill and Medb under a shelter of shields. Then the men of Ireland said that it would be no disgrace to Fintan mac Neill to evacuate the encampment for him and that his son Crimthann should be allowed to go free with him, while the hosts should withdraw a day's march to the north and he should cease to attack the hosts until such time as he should come to them on the day of the great battle when the four great provinces of Ireland should meet at Gáirech and Ilgáirech in the Foray of Cúailnge, as had been prophesied by the druids of the men of Ireland. Fintan mac Neill agreed to this and his son was set free to him. The encampment was evacuated for him and the hosts retreated a day's journey northwards again, checking and holding themselves back. And each man of Fintan's people and each man of the men of Ireland were found with the lips and nose of each of them in the teeth of the other. The men of Ireland noticed this and said: 'This is the tooth-fight for us, the tooth-fight of Fintan's people and of Fintan himself'.

So that is Fiacalgleó Fintain.

Here follows Ruadruce Mind

Mend mac Sálcholgán was from Rena na Bóinne. His force numbered twelve men. They had two spear-heads on each shaft, a spear-head on the point and a spear-head on the butt, so that they wounded the hosts alike with points and butts. They attacked the hosts three times and three times their own number fell by them, and twelve of Mend's people fell. But Mend himself was wounded grievously so that he was reddened and bloodstained. Then said the men of Ireland: 'Red is this shame for Mend mac Sálcholgán, that his people should be killed and destroyed and he himself be wounded until he is reddened and bloodstained'.

This is Ruadruce Mind.

Then the men of Ireland said that it were no disgrace for Mend mac Sálcholgán if the encampment were cleared for him and if the hosts went back a day's journey to the north again, provided that he should cease to attack the hosts until Conchobor recovered from his debility and gave them battle at Gáirech and Ilgáirech, as the druids and prophets and seers of the men of Ireland had foretold.

Mend mac Sálcholgán agreed that the encampment should be vacated. The hosts

withdrew a day's journey to the north again, checking and staying themselves.

Here follows Airecur n-Arad.

Then the charioteers of the Ulstermen came to them, three fifties in number. They gave battle three times to the host and three times their own number fell by them, and the charioteers fell on the level spot on which they stood.

That is Airecor nArad.

Here follows Bángleó Rochada.

Reochaid mac Faithemain was of the Ulstermen. His force numbered one hundred and fifty, and he took up his position on a hillock opposite the host. Findabair, the daughter of Ailill and Medb, noticed that, and she said to her mother Medb: 'I loved yonder warrior long ago and he is my beloved and my chosen wooer'. 'If you loved him, my daughter, spend tonight with him and ask him for a truce for us with the host until he come to us on the day of the great battle where the four great provinces of Ireland will meet at Gáirech and Ilgáirech at the battle of the Foray of Cúailnge'. Reochaid mac Faithemain agreed to that and the girl spent that night with him.

One of the underkings of Munster who was in the camp heard of this and said to his people: 'That girl was betrothed to me long ago and that is why I have come now upon this hosting'. However, as for the seven underkings of Munster, they all said that that was why they had come. 'Why then' said they, 'should we not go to take vengeance for the woman and for our honour on the Maines who are keeping guard in the rear of the host at Imlech in Glendamrach?'

That was the plan they decided upon and they arose with their seven divisions of three thousand. Then Ailill rose to oppose them with his three thousand. Medb rose with her three thousand, and the sons of Mágu with their divisions. The Gaileóin and the Munstermen and the people of Tara rose. Intervention was made between them so that each man sat next to the other and beside his weapons. Yet before the intervention was accomplished, eight hundred valiant men from among them had fallen. Findabair, the daughter of Ailill and Medb, heard that this number of the men of Ireland had fallen because of her and on account of her, and her heart cracked like a nut in her breast through shame and modesty. Findabair Slebe is the name of the spot where she died. Then said the men of Ireland: 'Bloodless is this fight for Reochaid mac Faithemain, since eight hundred valiant soldiers have fallen because of him but he himself has escaped without a wound and without shedding his blood'.

That is Bángleó Rochada.

Mellgleó Illiach.

Íliach was the son of Cas mac Baicc meic Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraige. He was told how the four great provinces of Ireland had been plundering and laying waste Ulster and Pictland from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring, and he took counsel with his people. 'What better plan could I devise than to go and attack the men of Ireland and win victory over them and avenge the honour of Ulster? It matters not if I myself fall thereafter'. And that was the plan he decided on. His two old, decrepit, mangy horses which were on the strand beside the fort were harnessed for him, and his old chariot without any rugs or covering was yoked to the horses. He took up his rough, dark-coloured, iron shield with the rim of hard silver around it. On his left side he put his rough, heavy-smiting sword with grey guard. He took his two gapped, shaky-headed spears in the chariot beside him. His people filled his chariot around him with stones and rocks and great flagstones. In this wise he came forward towards the men of Ireland with his private parts hanging through the chariot. 'We should like indeed' said the men of Ireland, 'if it were thus that all the Ulstermen came to us'.

Dóche mac Mágach met him and welcomed him. 'Welcome is your arrival, Íliach' said Dóche mac Mágach. 'I trust that

{line 3915-3984} welcome' said Íliach, 'but come to me presently when my weapons are exhausted and when my valour has diminished so that you may be the one to behead me and not any other man of the men of Ireland. But keep my sword for Láegaire'.

Íliach plied his weapons on the men of Ireland until he had exhausted them, and when his weapons were exhausted, he attacked the men of Ireland with stones and rocks and great flagstones until they too were exhausted, and when they were finished, wherever he could seize one of the men of Ireland, he would crush him swiftly between his arms and his hands and make a marrow-mash of him, flesh and bones, sinews and skin all together. And the two marrow-mashes still remain side by side, the one which Cú Chulainn made from the bones of the Ulstermen's cattle to cure Cethern mac Fintain and the one which Íliach made from the bones of the men of Ireland. So that all those who fell at the hands of Íliach are called one of the three uncountable slayings of the Táin, and that tale is called Mellgleo n-Íliach.

It was called Mellgleo n-Íliach because he fought his fight with stones and rocks and great flagstones.

Dóche mac Mágach met him. 'Is not this Íliach?' said Dóche. 'It is I indeed' said Íliach, 'but come to me now and cut off my head and keep my sword for your friend Láegaire'. Dóche came to him and with a stroke of the sword cut off his head.

Thus far Mellgleo Íliach.

Oislige Amargin in Taitiu.

Amairgin was the son of Cas mac Baicc meic Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraige. He overtook the hosts going westwards over Taitiu and he turned them and drove them northwards over Taitiu. He lay on his left elbow in Taitiu and his people furnished him with stones and rocks and great flagstones and he fell to pelting the men of Ireland for three days and three nights.

Concerning Cú Ruí mac Dáire.

Cú Ruí was told that a single man had been holding the four great provinces of Ireland in check from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring. He was grieved by this and he thought that his people had been without him for too long, so he came forward to do battle and combat with Cú Chulainn.

{line 3949-3989} When he reached the place where Cú Chulainn was, he saw him lying there groaning, wounded and stabbed, and he scorned to do battle or combat with him after Cú Chulainn's fight with Fer Diad lest Cú Chulainn should die not so much of the wounds and gashes which he would inflict on him as of those which Fer Diad had already inflicted on him. Nevertheless Cú Chulainn offered to engage in battle with Cú Ruí.

Cú Ruí went forward then to the men of Ireland and when he got there, he saw Amairgin lying on his left elbow to the west of Taitiu. Cú Ruí came to the north of the men of Ireland. His people furnished him with stones and rocks and great flagstones and he began to hurl them directly against Amargin so that the warlike battle-stones collided in the clouds and in the air over their heads and each stone was shattered into a hundred pieces. 'By the truth of your valour, Cú Ruí' said Medb, 'cease from this stone-throwing, for it is no help to us but a hindrance'. 'I swear' said Cú Ruí, 'that I shall not cease till the day of doom until Amargin cease too'. 'I shall do so', said Amargin, 'and do you undertake not to come again to help and succour the men of Ireland'. Cú Ruí agreed to that and went away to his own land and his own people.

By this time they had gone westwards past Taitiu. 'It was not the agreement I made' said Amargin, 'not to cast stones at the host again'. So he came to the west of them and turned them before him to the north-east past Taitiu and began to pelt them for a long time.

Then said the men of Ireland that it would be no dishonour for Amargin if they vacated the encampment and the hosts went back a day's journey northwards holding themselves in check, and that Amargin should cease to attack the hosts until he came to them on the day of the great battle where the four great provinces of Ireland would meet at Gáirech and Ilgáirech in the battle of the Foray of Cúailnge. Amargin agreed to that and

the hosts withdrew a day's journey northwards once more.

That is Oislige Amargin in Taitiu.

The Long Warning of Sualtaim.

Sualtaim was the son of Becaltach mac Móraltaig and the father of Cú Chulainn. He was told of the distress of his son fighting against odds with Calatín Dána and his twenty-seven sons and

{line 3986-4021} his grandson Glas mac Delga. 'This is from afar' said Sualtaim. 'Is it the sky that cracks or the sea that ebbs or the earth that splits or is it the distress of my son against odds on the Foray of Cúailnge?' Sualtaim spoke truly indeed, and he went to Cú Chulainn presently though he did not go at once. When Sualtaim came to where Cú Chulainn was, he began to lament and commiserate with him. Cú Chulainn liked not that Sualtaim should lament and pity him, for he knew that though he was wounded and injured Sualtaim would be no protection to avenge him. For the truth was that Sualtaim was not a coward but neither was he a valiant, fighter but only a middling one. 'Well now, father Sualtaim' said Cú Chulainn, 'go to the Ulstermen in Emain and tell them to go now after their cattle, for I am unable to protect them any longer in the gaps and passes of the land of Conaille Muirthmene. I have stood alone against the four great provinces of Ireland from Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring, killing one man at the ford every day and a hundred warriors every night. Fair play is not granted to me nor single combat, and no one comes to help or succour me. Bent hoops of fresh hazel keep my mantle from touching me. Dry wisps of tow are stuffed in my wounds. From the crown of my head to the soles of my feet there is not a hair whereon the point of a needle could rest but has a drop of crimson blood on its very tip, except alone my left hand which is holding my shield, and even that hand has thrice fifty wounds on it. And unless they take vengeance for that at once, they will never do so until the brink of doom'.

Sualtaim set forth on the Líath Macha as his only horse, to take these warnings to the Ulstermen. And when he reached the side of Emain, he spoke these words: 'Men are slain, women carried off, cattle driven away, O Ulstermen!'

He got not the answer that sufficed him from the Ulstermen, and so he came forward opposite Emain and spoke the same words there: 'Men are slain, women carried off, cattle driven away, O Ulstermen!' He got not the answer that sufficed him from the Ulstermen.—This is how it was with the Ulstermen: it was tabu for them to speak before their king and it was tabu for the king to speak before his druids.—Sualtaim came forward then to the stone of the hostages in Emain Macha. He spoke the same words there: 'Men are killed, women carried off, cattle driven away!' 'Who kills them and who carries them off

and who drives them away?’ said Cathbath the druid. ‘Ailill and Medb have ravaged
{line 4022-4056} you’ said Sualtaim. ‘Your women-folk and your sons and your youths have been carried off, your horses and your steeds, your herds and your flocks and your cattle. Cú Chulainn alone is checking and holding back the four great provinces of Ireland in the gaps and passes of Conaille Muirthemne. Fair play is not granted to him nor single combat, and no one comes to aid or succour him. The youth has been wounded, blood has drained from his wounds. Bent hoops of fresh hazel hold his mantle over him. There is not a hair from his head to his feet on which the point of a needle could stand but has a drop of bright red blood on its tip, save only the left hand which holds his shield and even that hand bears thrice fifty wounds. And unless ye avenge this at once, ye will never avenge it until the end of doom and life’. ‘More fitting is death and destruction for the man who so incites the king’ said Cathbath the druid. ‘That is true indeed’ said all the Ulstermen. Sualtaim went his way in anger and wrath since he got not the answer which sufficed him from the Ulstermen. Then the Líath Macha reared under Sualtaim and came forward opposite Emain, and his own shield turned on Sualtaim and its rim cut off his head. The horse itself turned back again into Emain, with the shield on the horse and the head on the shield. And Sualtaim's head spoke the same words. ‘Men are slain, women carried off, cattle driven away, O Ulstermen!’ said the head of Sualtaim. ‘A little too loud is that cry’ said Conchobor, ‘for the sky is above us, the earth beneath us and the sea all around us, but unless the sky with its showers of stars fall upon the surface of the earth or unless the ground burst open in an earthquake, or unless the fish-abounding, blue-bordered sea come over the surface of the earth, I shall bring back every cow to its byre and enclosure, every woman to her own abode and dwelling, after victory in battle and combat and contest’. Then a messenger of his own household met Conchobor, to wit, Findchad Fer Bend Uma mac Fráechlethain, and Conchobor bade him go and assemble and muster the men of Ulster. And even as he enumerated the quick and the dead for him in the intoxication of his trance and his sickness, he said these words:

‘Arise, O Findchad, I send you forth. It is not desirable to neglect to tell it to the warriors of Ulster. Go from me to Derg to Dedaid in his inlet; to Lemain; to Follach; to Illaind at Gabar; to Dornaiil Feic at Imchlár; to Derg Indirg; to Feidilmid

{line 4057-4094} Chilaiir Chetaig at Ellonn; to Rigdonn, to Reochaid; to Lugaid; to Lugdaig; to Cathbath in his inlet; to Cairbre at Ellne; to Láeg at his causeway; to Geimen in his valley; to Senall Úathach at Diabul Arda; to Cethern mac Fintain at Carrlóg; to Tarothor; to Mulach in his fort; to the royal poet Amairgin; to Úathach Bodba; to the Morrígan at Dún Sobairche; to Eit; to Roth; to Fiachna at his mound; to Dam Drend; to

Andiaraid; to Maine Macbriathrach; to Dam Derg; to Mod; to Mothus; to Iarmothus; to Corp Cliath; to Gabarlach in Líne; to Eochu Semnech in Semne; to Celtchair mac Cuthechair in Lethglais; to Errge Echbel in Brí Errgi; to Uma mac Femarfessaig in Fedan Cúailnge; to Munremur mac Gercind in Moduirn; to Senlabair in Canann Gall; to Follomain; to Lugaid; to Lugaid Líne king of Bolg; to Búadgalach; to Abach; to Áne; to Ániach; to Lóegaire Milbel at his fire (?); to the three sons of Trosgal at Bacc Draigin; to Drend; to Drenda; to Drendus; to Cimm; to Cimbil; to Cimmin at Fán na Coba; to Fachtna mac Sencha in his rath; to Sencha; to Sencháinte; to Briccne; to Briccirne; to Brecc; to Búan; to Barach; to Óengus Bolg; to Óengus mac Lethi; to Allamiach the warrior

"to ... warrior", following YBL

; to Bruachar in Slánge; to Conall Cernach mac Amargin at Midlúachair; to Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim in Muirthemne; to Mend mac Sálcholcán at Rena; to the three sons of Fiachna, Ross, Dáire and Imchaid, in Cúailnge; to Connud mac Marna in Callann; to Condraid mac Amargin in his rath; to Amargin in Ess Rúaid; to Láeg at Leire; to Óengus Fer Bend Uma; to Ogma Grianainech at Brecc; to Eo mac Forne; to Tollcend; to Súde at Mag n-Eola and Mag n-Dea; to Conla Sáeb at Úarba; to Lóegaire at Ráith Imbil; to Amargin Iarngiunnaig in Tailtiu; to Furbaide Fer Bend mac Conchobuir at Sí in Mag n-Inis; to Causcraid Mend Macha mac Conchobuir in Macha; to Fíngin at Fíngabor; to Blae Fichet; to Blai Briuga at Fesser; to Eogan mac Durthacht at Fernmag; to Ord at Serthe; to Oblán; to Obail at Culend; to Curethar; to Liana; to Ethbenna; to Fer Nell; to Findchad of Sliab Betha; to Talgoba at Bernas; to Mend mac Fir Chúaland of Mag Dula; to Íroll; to Bláirine at Ialla Ilgremma; to Ros mac Ulchrothaig in Mag Nobla; to Ailill Find; to Fethen Bec; to Fethen Mór; to Fergna mac Findchona in Búrach; to Olchar; to Ebadchar; to Uathchar; to Etatchar; to Óengus mac Óenláme Gábe;

{line 4095-4135} to Ruadri at Mag Táil; to Beothach; to Briathrach in his rath; to Nárithlaind; to Lothor; to Muridach mac Feicge and Cotreib mac Feicge; to Fintan mac Neill Níamglonnaig in Dún Da Bend; to Feradach Finn Fechnach in Neimed of Slíab Fúait; to Amargin mac Ecelsalaig Goband by Búas; to Buinne mac Munremair; to Fidach mac Doraire'.

It was not difficult, however, for Findchad to make that muster and assembly which Conchobor had ordered. For those who were east of Emain and west of Emain and north of Emain came forth at once and spent the night at Emain at the behest of their king and the command of their prince, awaiting the recovery of Conchobor. But those who were south of Emain set forth at once on the track of the host along the road beaten out by the hooves of the cattle.

On the first stage of the journey on which the Ulstermen set forth with Conchobor, they spent the night at Irard Cuillend. 'What do we wait for here, O men?' said Conchobor. 'We await your sons' said they, 'Fiacha and Fiachna. They have gone from us to fetch Erc, the son of your daughter Fedlimid Nóchruthach and of Cairbre Nia Fer, that he may come to our army at this juncture with his full muster and assembly, his full gathering and levy'. 'I vow' said Conchobor, 'that I shall not await them here any longer until the men of Ireland hear that I have recovered from the weakness and debility in which I was, for the men of Ireland do not know yet if I am still alive'.

Then Conchobor and Celtchair went to Áth n-Irme with thirty hundred chariot-fighters armed with spears, and there they met eight score big men of the household of Ailill and Medb with eight score captive women. One captive woman held prisoner by each man of them, that was their share of the plunder of Ulster. Conchobor and Celtchair struck off their eight score heads and freed their eight score captives. Áth n-Irme was the name of that place until then, but it is called Áth Feinne ever since. The reason it is called Áth Feinne is because the warriors of the war-band (fian) from the east and the warriors of the war-band from the west met there in battle and contest on the brink of the ford.

Conchobor and Celtchair came back and spent that night in Irard Cuillend beside the men of Ulster. The trance of Celtchair follows here.

Then Celtchair uttered these words among the Ulstermen in Irard Cuillend that night: 'Taible lethderg'[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 6 lines].

In the same night Cormac Cond Longas, the son of Conchobor, spoke these words among the men of Ireland in Slemain Mide: 'Amra maitne'[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 3 lines].

In the same night Dubthach Dáel Ulad spoke these words among the men of Ireland in Slemain Mide: 'Móra maitne'[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 5 lines].

Then Dubthach awoke from his sleep and the Nemain brought confusion on the host so that they made a clangour of arms with the points of their spears and their swords, and a hundred warriors of them died on the floor of their encampment through the fearsomeness of the shout they had raised. However that was not the most peaceful night ever experienced by the men of Ireland at any time, because of the prophecies and the predictions and because of the spectres and visions which appeared to them.

Then said Ailill: 'I have succeeded in laying waste Ulster and the land of the Picts from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring. We have carried off their women-folk, their sons and their youths, their horses and steeds, their flocks and herds and cattle. We have levelled their hills behind them into lowlands, so that they might

be of equal height. Wherefore I shall not wait here for them any longer, but let them give me battle on Mag Aí if it so please them. And yet though we say this, let some one go forth to reconnoitre the broad plain of Meath to see whether the Ulstermen come thither, and if they do, I shall in no wise retreat, for it is not the good custom of a king ever to retreat'. 'Who should go there?' said they all. 'Who but Mac Roth, the chief messenger yonder'.

Mac Roth came forward to reconnoitre the great plain of Meath. Not long was he there when he heard a noise and a tumult and a clamour. It seemed to him almost as if the sky had fallen on to the surface of the earth, or as if the fish-abounding, blue-bordered sea had swept across the face of the world, or as if the earth had split in an earthquake, or as if the trees of the forest had all fallen into each other's forks and bifurcations and branches. However the wild beasts were hunted across the plain in such numbers that the surface of the plain of Meath was not visible beneath them.

Mac Roth came to report that to where Ailill was with Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Ireland. He related those tidings to them. 'What was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'Not difficult to tell' said Fergus. 'The noise and clamour and

{line 4179-4215} tumult that he heard, the din and the thunder and the uproar, were the Ulstermen attacking the wood, the throng of champions and warriors cutting down the trees with their swords in front of their chariots. It was that which hunted the wild beasts across the plain so that the surface of the plain of Meath is not visible beneath them'.

Once more Mac Roth scanned the plain. He saw a great grey mist which filled the void between heaven and earth. He seemed to see islands in lakes above the slopes of the mist. He seemed to see yawning caverns in the forefront of the mist itself. It seemed to him that pure-white linen cloths or sifted snow dropping down appeared to him through a rift in the same mist. He seemed to see a flock of varied, wonderful, numerous birds, or the shimmering of shining stars on a bright, frosty night, or the sparks of a blazing fire. He heard a noise and a tumult, a din and thunder, a clamour and uproar. He came forward to tell those tidings to where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Ireland. He told them these things.

'What was that, Fergus,?' asked Ailill. 'Not difficult to tell' said Fergus. 'The grey mist he saw which filled the void between earth and sky was the expiration of the breath of horses and heroes, and the cloud of dust from the ground and from the roads which rises above them driven by the wind so that it becomes a heavy, deep-grey mist in the clouds and in the air.'

'The islands in lakes which he saw there, and the tops of hills and mounds rising above the valleys of the mist, were the heads of the heroes and warriors above their

chariots and the chariots themselves. The yawning caverns he saw there in the forefront of the same mist were the mouths and nostrils of horses and heroes, exhaling and inhaling the sun and the wind with the swiftness of the host.'

'The pure-white linen cloths he saw there or the sifted snow dropping down were the foam and froth that the bits of the reins cast from the mouths of the strong, stout steeds with the fierce rush of the host. The flock of varied, wonderful, numerous birds which he saw there was the dust of the ground and the surface of the earth which the horses flung up from their feet and their hooves and which rose above them with the driving of the wind.'

'The noise and the tumult, the din and the thunder, the clamour and the outcry which he heard there was the shock of shields and the smiting of spears and the loud striking of swords, the clashing of helmets, the clangour of breastplates, the friction of the weapons

{line 4216-4250} and the vehemence of the feats of arms, the straining of ropes, the rattle of wheels, the trampling of the horses' hoofs and the creaking of chariots, and the loud voices of heroes and warriors coming towards us here.'

'The shimmering of shining stars on a bright night that he saw there, of the sparks of a blazing fire, were the fierce, fearsome eyes of the warriors and heroes from the beautiful, shapely, ornamented helmets, eyes full of the fury and anger with which they came, against which neither equal combat nor overwhelming number prevailed at any time and against which none will ever prevail until the day of doom'.

'We make little account of it' said Medb. 'Goodly warriors and goodly soldiers will be found among us to oppose them'. 'I do not count on that, Medb' said Fergus, 'for I pledge my word that you will not find in Ireland or in Alba a host which could oppose the Ulstermen when once their fits of wrath come upon them'.

Then the four great provinces of Ireland made their encampment at Clártha that night. They left a band to keep watch and guard against the Ulstermen lest they should come upon them unawares.

Then Conchobor and Celtchair set forth with thirty hundred chariot-fighters armed with spears and halted in Slemain Mide in the rear of the host. But though we say "halted" they did not halt completely, but came forward presently to the encampment of Medb and Ailill in an attempt to be the first to shed blood.

Not long was Mac Roth there when he saw something: a great and numerous troop of horsemen coming straight from the north-east to Slemain Mide. He went to where Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Ireland. Ailill asked tidings of him

when he arrived. 'Well now, Mac Roth' said Ailill, 'did you see anyone of the Ulstermen on the track of the host today?' 'I know not indeed' said Mac Roth, 'but I did see a great and numerous troop of horsemen coming directly from the north-east to Slemain Mide'. 'How many in number are the horsemen?' said Ailill. 'Not fewer, it seemed to me, than thirty hundred chariot-fighters armed with spears' said Mac Roth. 'Well Fergus' said Ailill, 'why did you try to frighten us just now with the dust and the smoke and the panting of a great army while that is all the battle force you have for us?'

'A little too soon do you disparage them' said Fergus, 'for perhaps (?) the army is more numerous than Mac Roth says'. 'Let us make a good plan swiftly concerning this' said Medb, 'for

{line 4251-4283} it was known that yonder huge, fierce, vehement man would attack us, Conchobor son of Fachtna Fáthach mac Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraige, the high-king of Ulster and the son of the high-king of Ireland. Let the men of Ireland be drawn up in open array to face Conchobor with a force of thirty hundred closing it in from the rear, and let the men be taken prisoner but not wounded for those who come number no more than the prisoners we need'

"those ... need", translating ST

. —That is one of the three most satirical sayings of Táin Bó Cúailnge, to suggest that Conchobor should be captured unwounded and that the thirty hundred princes of Ulster who accompanied him should be taken prisoner

"should ... prisoner", translating ST

. --Cormac Cond Longas, the son of Conchobor, heard that and he knew that, if he did not take vengeance at once on Medb for her boastful speech, he would never avenge it until the very end of doom and life.

Then Cormac Cond Longas rose up with his force of thirty hundred to wage war and battle on Ailill and Medb. To meet him rose Ailill with his thirty hundred, and Medb rose with her thirty hundred. The Maines arose with their thirty hundreds and Meic Mágach with their thirty hundreds. The Leinstermen and the Munstermen and the people of Tara rose up. The combatants were separated and each man of them sat down beside the other and near by his weapons. Nevertheless Medb drew up a hollow array to face Conchobor with a force of thirty hundred men closing in the rear. Conchobor came to this array of men and in no wise sought a way of entry, but cut a breach broad enough for a soldier opposite his face and his countenance, and cut a breach broad enough for a hundred on his right hand and another breach for a hundred on his left, and he turned in on them and wrought confusion in their midst and eight hundred valiant warriors of them fell at his hands. Then

he came from them, unwounded and unhurt, and took up his station in Slemain Mide, waiting for the Ulstermen.

'Come now, ye men of Ireland' said Ailill, 'let some one of us go to reconnoitre the broad plain of Meath to find out in what fashion the Ulstermen come to the hill in Slemain Mide and to give us an account of their arms and equipment, their heroes and soldiers and their battle-champions and the people of their land. To listen to him will be all the more pleasant for us now'. 'Who should go there?' asked they all. 'Who but Mac Roth, the chief messenger' said Ailill.

Mac Roth came forward and took up his station in Slemain Mide to await the Ulstermen. The Ulstermen began to muster on that hill and continued doing so from the twilight of early morning until sunset. In all that time the ground was hardly bare of them as they came with every division round its king, every band round its leader, and every king and every leader and every lord with the full number of his own particular forces and his army, his muster and his gathering. However before the hour of evening sunset all the Ulstermen had reached that hill in Slemain Mide.

Mac Roth came forward to the place where were Ailill and Medb and Fergus and the nobles of the men of Ireland, bringing an account of the first band. Ailill and Medb asked tidings of him on his arrival. 'Well now, O Mac Roth' said Ailill, 'in what guise and fashion do the men of Ulster come to the hill in Slemain Mide?'

'I know only this indeed' said Mac Roth. 'There came a fierce, powerful, well-favoured band on to that hill in Slemain Mide. It seems, if one looks at it, as if it numbered thirty hundred. They all cast off their garments and dug up a mound of turf as a seat for their leader. A warrior, slender, very tall, of great stature and of proud mien, at the head of that band. Finest of the princes of the world was he among his troops, in fearsomeness and horror, in battle and in contention. Fair yellow hair he had, curled, well-arranged, ringletted, cut short. His countenance was comely and clear crimson. An eager grey eye in his head, fierce and awe-inspiring. A forked beard, yellow and curly, on his chin. A purple mantle fringed, five-folded, about him and a golden brooch in the mantle over his breast. A pure-white, hooded shirt with insertion of red gold he wore next to his white skin. He carried a white shield ornamented with animal designs in red gold. In one hand he had a gold-hilted, ornamented sword, in the other a broad, grey spear. That warrior took up position at the top of the hill and everyone came to him and his company took their places around him.'

'There came also another band to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'It numbered almost thirty hundred

"It ... hundred", translating ST

. A handsome man in the forefront of that same band. Fair yellow hair he had. A bright and very curly beard on his chin. A green mantle wrapt around him. A pure silver brooch in the mantle over his breast. A dark-red, soldierly tunic with insertion of
{line 4316-4351} red gold next to his fair skin and reaching to his knees. A spear like the torch of a royal palace in his hand, with bands of silver and rings of gold. Wonderful are the feats and games performed by that spear in the warrior's hand. The silvern bands revolve round the golden rings alternately from butt to socket, and alternately the golden rings revolve round the silvern bands from socket to thong. He bore a smiting shield with scalloped rim. On his left side a sword with guards of ivory and ornament of gold thread. That warrior sat on the left hand of the warrior who had first come to the hill, and his company sat around him. But though we say that they sat, yet they did not really do so, but knelt on the ground with the rim of their shields at their chins, in their eagerness to be let at us. And yet it seemed to me that the tall, fierce warrior who led that company stammered greatly.'

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'Almost the same were they as the preceding one in number and appearance and apparel. A handsome, broad-headed warrior in the van of that company. Thick, dark-yellow hair he had. An eager, dark-blue, restless eye in his head. A bright and very curly beard, forked and tapering, on his chin. A dark-grey, fringed cloak wrapt about him. A leaf-shaped brooch of white bronze in the cloak over his breast. A white-hooded shirt next to his skin. A white shield with animal ornaments of silver he carried. A sword with rounded hilt of bright silver in a warlike scabbard at his waist. A spear like the pillar of a palace on his back. This warrior sat on the turfy mound in front of the warrior who had come first to the hill and his company took up their positions around him. But sweeter I thought than the sound of lutes in the hands of expert players was the melodious tone of the voice and speech of that warrior as he addressed the warrior who had come first to the hill and gave him counsel'.

'Who are those?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know them indeed' said Fergus. 'The first warrior for whom the sodded mound was cast up on the top of the hill until they all came to him was Conchobor mac Fachtna Fáthaig meic Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraige, the high-king of Ulster and the son of the high-king of Ireland. The great stammering hero who took up his position on the left of Conchobor was Causcraid Mend Macha, the son of Conchobor, with the sons of the Ulster princes around him and the sons of the kings of Ireland who are with him. The spear with silver bands and rings of gold that Mac Roth saw

in his hand is called the Torch of Causcraid. It is usual with that spear that the silver

{line 4352-4384} bands do not revolve the golden rings except shortly before some victory, and not at any other time, and it is likely that it was just before victory that they revolved just now.'

'The handsome, broad-headed warrior who sat on the mound in front of the warrior who had first come to the hill was Sencha mac Ailella meic Máilchló, the eloquent speaker of Ulster, the man who appeases the armies of the men of Ireland. o was that?' said Ailill to Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'The men who came there is the starting of strife, a warrior for conflict, doom of enemies. That was Eogan mac Durthachta from the north, the steadfast ruler of Farney

"steadfast ... Farney", translating ST

'.

'There came another band to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'In truth boldly they made for that hill. Great is the horror and vast the fear which they brought with them. Their garments were all cast back. A big-headed, valiant warrior in the van of that company, and he was fierce and fearsome. Fine grizzled hair he had. Great yellow eyes in his head. A yellow mantle of the breadth of five hands around him. A pin of yellow gold in the mantle over his breast. A yellow, bordered shirt next to his skin. In his hand a rivetted spear, broad-bladed and long-shafted, with a drop of blood on its edge'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know that hero indeed' said Fergus.

'He who came there shuns not battle nor battlefield nor conflict. That was Lóegaire Búadach mac Connaid Buide meic Iliach from Ráith Immil in the North.'

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A thick-necked, corpulent warrior in the van of that company. He had black, cropped hair and a scarred, crimson countenance. A grey, bright eye in his head. A bloodstained

"bloodstained", translating ST

spear shimmering above him. A black shield with hard rim of white bronze he bore. A dun-coloured mantle of curly wool

"of coloured wool", translating ST

around him. A brooch of white gold in the mantle over his breast. A plaited shirt of silk next to his skin. A sword with guards of ivory and ornament of thread of gold over his garments on the outside'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He that came there is the starting of strife; he is the stormy wave which drowns; he is a man of three shouts; he is the sea pouring over ramparts. That was Munremur mac Gercind from Modorn in the north'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said mac Roth.
'A broad, bulky warrior in the van of that company,

[gap: text untranslated/extent: 3 words]

and dusky-coloured, fierce and bull-like. A round eye, dull and haughty, in his head. Yellow, very curly hair he had. A round, red shield he bore aloft, with a rim of hard silver around it. In his hand a broad-bladed, long-shafted spear. A striped cloak he wore with a brooch of bronze in the cloak over his breast. A hooded shirt reaching to his calves. An ivory-hilted sword on his left thigh'. 'Who was that?' Ailill asked Fergus. 'He is a prop of battle. He is victory in every conflict. The man who came there is an instrument which pierces. That was Connud mac Morna from Callann in the north'.

'There came yet another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'Vigorously and violently, in truth, did they make for that hill and shook the forces that had arrived there before them. A handsome and noble man in the van of that company. Most beautiful of the men of the world was he, in shape and form and make, in arms and equipment, in size and dignity and honour, in figure and valour and proportion'. 'That is indeed no lie' said Fergus. 'That is his fitting description. He who came there is no foolish one in bareness. He is the enemy of

{line 4417-4448} all. He is the force which cannot be endured. He is a stormy wave which engulfs. The glitter of ice is that handsome man. That was Feidilmid Chlair Chetail from Ellann in the north'.

'There came still another band on to the same hill on Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'Not many heroes are more beautiful than the hero in the forefront of that band. Cropped, red-yellow hair he had. His face was narrow below and broad above. An eager, grey eye, glittering and gay, in his head. A shapely, well-proportioned man, tall, slender-hipped, broad-shouldered. Thin red lips he had and shining, pearl-like teeth. A white, seemly body. A purple cloak wrapt about him

"A ... wrapt about him", translating YBL, ST

. A golden brooch in the cloak over his breast. A shirt of royal silk with a hem of red gold next to his white skin. A white shield with emblems of animals in red gold on it he bore. At his left side an ornamented sword with golden hilt. In his hand a long spear with shining edge and a sharp aggressive javelin with splendid thongs, with rivets of white bronze'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He who came there is in himself the half of a battle; he is the dividing of a combat; he is the wild fury of a watch-dog. That was Reochaid mac Faithemain from Rígdond in the north'.

'There came still another band to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A

hero brawny-legged, thick-thighed, in the forefront of that band. Every one of his limbs is almost as thick as a man. In truth, he is every inch a man' said he. 'Brown, cropped hair he had, and a ruddy, round countenance. An eye of many colours high in his head. A splendid swift man was he thus, accompanied by contentious, black-eyed warriors, with red, flaming banner, with self-willed behaviour, avoiding equal combat to vanquish overwhelming numbers, with the releasing (?) of an attack upon him and without any protection from Conchobor'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He who came there was full of valour and prowess, of hot bloodedness and violence. He is a consolidator of hosts and weapons. He is the point of perfection in battle and combat of the men of Ireland in the north my own foster-brother, Fergus mac Leite from LÍne in the north'.

'There came still another band on to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'one which was steady and outstanding. A

{line 4449-4481} handsome, lively hero in the forefront of that band. Next to his skin a fine, fringed garment of blue cloth with plaited, intertwined fine loops of white bronze and strong, splendid buttons of red gold on its slashes and its breast. A mantle of many pieces with the choicest of colour wrapt about him. Five concentric circles of gold, to wit, his shield, he bore. At his left side a sword, hard, tough and straight, held in a high heroic grasp. A straight, ridged spear blazing in his hand'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is the choicest among royal poets. He is an attack on a fort. He is the way to the goal. Violent is the valour of him who came there, Amairgin mac Ecelsalaig Goband, the noble poet from Búas in the north'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A fair, yellow-haired warrior in the van of that company. Fair in all points was that man, hair and eye and beard and eyebrows and garments. A rimmed shield he bore. At his left side a gold-hilted, ornamented sword. In his hand a five-pronged spear which flashed above the whole host'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed', said Fergus. 'Beloved is that warrior who came into our territory to us. Beloved is that strong-smiting hero, beloved that bear which performs great deeds against enemies with the overwhelming violence of his attack. That was Feradach Find Fechnach from Nemed in Sliab Fúait in the north.'

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'Two youthful warriors at the head of that company. Two green cloaks wrapt about them and two brooches of white silver in the cloaks over their breasts. Two shirts of smooth, yellow silk next to their skin. Swords with white hilts at their girdles. Two five pronged

spears with bands of pure white silver in their hands. A slight difference of age between them'. 'Who are those?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know them indeed' said Fergus. 'They are two men of valour, two equally strong-necked ones, two equally bright flames, two equally bright torches, two champions, two heroes, two chief hospitallers, two dragons, two fires, two scatterers, two brave scions, two doughty ones, two fierce ones, the two beloved by the Ulstermen around their king. Those are Fiacha and Fiachna, two sons of Conchobor mac Fachtna meic Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraigi'.

'There came still another company to the same hill,' said Mac Roth, 'in size like the overwhelming sea, in red blazing like fire,

{line 4482-4515} in numbers a battalion, in strength a rock, in combativeness like doom, in violence like the thunder. A wrathful, terrible, fearsome man at the head of that company. He was big-nosed, big-eared and with prominent eyes. Rough, grizzled hair he had. A striped cloak he wore and in that cloak over his breast an iron stake which reaches from shoulder to shoulder. A rough, plaited shirt next to his skin. Along the side of his back a sword of refined iron, tempered seven times in the heat. A brown mound, to wit, his shield, he carried. A great, grey spear with thirty rivets through its socket in his hand. But the battalions and hosts were thrown into confusion on seeing that warrior surrounded by his company advancing to the hill in Slemain Mide'. 'Who was that?' said Ailill to Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is half a battle in himself, he is a leader of strife, he is a chief in valour. The man who came is the sea pouring across boundaries. That was Celtchair Mór mac Uthechair from Lethglais in the north'.

'There came still another band to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth, 'any they were strong and fierce, hateful and fearsome. A big-bellied, big-mouthed hero at the head of that band, with bright cheeks (?), with broad head, with long arms. Brown, very curly hair he had. A black swinging mantle he wore with a round brooch of bronze in the mantle over his breast. A splendid shirt next to his skin. A very long sword at his waist. A large spear in his right hand. A grey buckler, to wit, his shield, he bore'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is the lion, fierce, with bloodstained paws. He is the bear, violent and terrible, that overcomes the valiant. That was Eirрге Echbel from Brí Eirrgi in the north'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A huge and splendid man in the van of that company. Red hair he had and great red eyes in his head, and each of his great royal eyes was as long as a warrior's finger. A variegated mantle he wore. A grey shield he carried. A slender blue spear he held aloft. Around him was a company, bloodstained and wounded, while he himself was wounded

and bloody in their very him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is the bold and ruthless one. He is the awe-inspiring eagle. He is the strong spear. He is the goring beast (?) He is the fighter of Colptha. He is the victorious one of Baile. He is the lion? of Lorg. He is the loud-voiced {line 4516-4546} hero from Berna. He is the mad bull. That was Mend mac Sálcholgán from Rena na Bóinne'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A long-cheeked, sallow-faced man at the head of that company. Black hair he had and long legs. He wore a red cloak of curly wool with a brooch of pale silver in the cloak over his breast. A linen shirt next to his skin. A blood-red shield with a boss of gold he carried. At his left side a sword with hilt of silver, and aloft he carried an angular spear with socket of gold'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is the man of three paths, the man of three roads, the man of three highways, the man of three routs, the man of three triumphs, the man of three combats. That was Fergna mac Findchonna the chief of Búrach Ulad in the north'.

'There came still another band to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth. 'A great, comely man at the head of that band. He was like to Ailill yonder, the keen one who can restrain, in appearance and dignity and brightness, in arms and equipment, in valour and prowess, in generosity and great deeds. A blue shield with golden boss he carried. At his left side a gold-hilted sword. In his hand a five-pronged spear with gold. A golden diadem on his head'. 'Who was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know him indeed' said Fergus. 'He is manly steadfastness. He is an assault on overwhelming forces. He who came there is the vanquishing of men. That was Furbaide Fer Bend, the son of Conchobor, from Síil in Mag n-Inis in the north'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth, 'and they were steadfast and unlike the other companies. Some wore red mantles and some grey. Some wore blue mantles and others green. Overmantles of white and yellow, beautiful and brilliant, above them. There is in their very midst a little freckled lad in a crimson cloak with a golden brooch in the cloak over his breast. A shirt of royal satin with insertion of red gold next to his white skin. A white shield with animal designs in red gold he bore and on the shield was a boss of gold and around it a rim of gold. A small sword with golden hilt he had at his waist. Aloft he held a light sharp spear which shimmered'. 'Who was that' said Ailill to Fergus. 'I know not indeed' said Fergus, 'that I left behind me with the Ulstermen such a company as that or the little lad who is with them, and yet I should think it likely that they were the men of Tara with Erc the son of Fedilmid Nóchrothach, who is also the son of Cairbre

{line 4547-4580} Nia Fer, and if it is they,

[gap: text untranslated/extent: 5 words]

for this little lad has come on this occasion to succour his grandfather without asking permission of his father, and if it is they, this company will overwhelm you like the sea, for it is by reason of this company and the little lad among them that ye will be defeated on this occasion'. 'How is that?' asked Ailill. 'Not difficult to say' answered Fergus, 'for this little lad will experience neither fear nor dread when slaying and slaughtering you until he comes to you into the middle of your army. The noise of Conchobor's sword shall be heard like the baying of a watchdog

[gap: text untranslated/extent: 2 words]

or like a lion attacking bears. Outside the line of battle Cú Chulainn will cast up four great ramparts of men's corpses. Filled with affection for their own kin, the chiefs of the men of Ulster will in due course smite you. Bravely will those powerful bulls roar as they rescue the calf of their own cow in the battle on the morrow's morn'.

'There came still another company to the same hill in Slemain Mide' said Mac Roth, 'which numbered no less than thirty hundred. Fierce, bloodstained warrior bands. Fair, clear, blue and crimson men. They had long, fair-yellow hair, beautiful, brilliant countenances, clear kingly eyes. Shining, beautiful garments they wore. Wonderful, golden brooches on their bright- hued arms. Silken, fine-textured shirts. Shining, blue spears they carried. Yellow, smiting shields. Gold-hilted ornamented swords are set on their thighs. Loud-voiced care has come to them. Sad are all the horsemen (?). Sorrowful are the royal leaders. Orphaned the bright company without their protecting lord who used to defend their borders'. 'Who are these?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know them indeed' said Fergus. 'They are fierce lions. They are champions of battle. They are the thirty hundred from Mag Muirtheimne. The reason they are downcast, sorrowful and joyless, is because their territorial king is not among them, namely Cú Chulainn, the restraining, victorious, red-sworded, triumphant one'. 'They have good cause' said Madb, 'to be downcast, sorrowful and joyless, for there is no evil we have not wrought on them. We have plundered them and we have ravaged them from the Monday at the beginning of Samain until the beginning of spring. We have carried off their women and their sons and their youths, their horses and their steeds, their herds and their flocks and their cattle. We have cast down their hills behind them on to their slopes until they were of equal height'. 'You have no reason to boast over them, Medb' said Fergus, 'for you did no harm or wrong to them that the leader of that goodly band

{line 4581-4615} yonder has not avenged on you, since every mound and every

grave, every tomb from here to the eastern part of Ireland is a mound and a grave, a tombstone and a tomb for some goodly hero or for some brave warrior who fell by the valiant leader of yonder band. Fortunate is he whom they will uphold! Woe to him whom they will oppose! They will be as much as half a battle force against the men of Ireland when they defend their lord in the battle tomorrow morning'.

'I heard a great outcry there' said Mac Roth, 'to the west of the battle or to the east of the battle'. 'What outcry was that?' asked Ailill of Fergus. 'We know it indeed' said Fergus. 'That was Cú Chulainn trying to come to the battle when he was being laid prostrate on his sick-bed in Fert Sciach, with wooden hoops and restraining bands and ropes holding him down, for the Ulstermen allow him not to come there because of his wounds and gashes, for he is unfit for battle and combat after his fight with Fer Diad'.

It was as Fergus said. That was Cú Chulainn being laid prostrate on his sick-bed in Fert Sciach, held down with hoops and restraining bands and ropes.

Then there came out of the encampment of the men of Ireland two female satirists called Fethan and Collach, and they pretended to weep and lament over Cú Chulainn, telling him that the Ulstermen had been routed and that Conchobor had been killed and that Fergus had fallen in the fight against them.

It was on that night that the Morrígu daughter of Ernmas came and sowed strife and dissension between the two encampments on either side, and she spoke these words:
Crennait brain[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 5 lines]

She whispered to the Erainn that they will not fight the battle which lies ahead.

Then said Cú Chulainn to Láeg mac Rianga: 'Alas for you, my friend Láeg, if between the two battle- forces today anything should be done that you would not find out for me'. 'Whatsoever I shall find out concerning it, little Cú' said Láeg, 'shall be told to you. But see a little flock coming from the west out of the encampment now on to the plain. There is a band of youths after them to check and hold them. See too a band of youths

{line 4616-4654} coming from the east out of the encampment to seize them'. 'That is true indeed' said Cú Chulainn. 'It is the omen of a mighty combat and a cause of great strife. The little flock will go across the plain and the youths from the east will encounter those from the west

"and ... west", translating ST

'. It was as Cú Chulainn said: The little flock went across the plain and the youths met. 'Who gives battle now, my friend Láeg?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'The people of Ulster' said Láeg, 'that is, the youths'. 'How do they fight?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'Bravely do they fight' said Láeg. 'As for the champions who come from the east to the battle, they will

make a breach through the battle-line to the west. As for the champions from the west, they will make a breach through the battle-line to the east'. 'Alas that I am not strong enough to go afoot among them! For if I were, my breach too would be clearly seen there today like that of the rest'. 'Nay then, little Cú' said Láeg, 'it is no disgrace to your valour and no reproach to your honour. You have done bravely hitherto and you will do bravely hereafter'. 'Well now, friend Láeg' said Cú Chulainn, 'rouse the Ulstermen to the battle now for it is time for them to go there'.

Láeg came and roused the Ulstermen to the battle, and he spoke these words:

'Comeirget ríg Macha mórglonnaig

[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 5 lines]

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Then all the Ulstermen rose together at the call of their king and at the behest of their lord and to answer the summons of Láeg mac Riangabra. And they all arose stark naked except for their weapons which they bore in their hands. Each man whose tent door faced east would go westwards through his tent, deeming it too long to go around.

'How do the men of Ulster rise for battle now, friend Láeg?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'Bravely do they rise' answered Láeg. 'All are stark naked. Each man whose tent-door faces east rushed westwards through his tent, deeming it too long to go around'. 'I pledge my word' said Cú Chulainn, 'that their rising around Conchobor now in the early morn is speedy help in answer to a call of alarm.'

Then said Conchobor to Sencha mac Ailella: 'Good my master Sencha, hold back the men of Ulster, and do not let them come to the battle until omens and auguries are strongly in their favour and until the sun rises into the vaults of heaven and fills the glens and slopes, the hills and mounds of Ireland'. There they remained

{line 4655-4694} until a good omen was strengthened and sunshine filled the glens and slopes and hills and mounds of the province.

'Good my master Sencha' said Conchobor, 'rouse the men of Ulster for battle for it is time for them to go'. Sencha roused the men of Ulster for the fight, and he spoke the words: 'Comeirget rig Macha

[gap: rhetoric untranslated/extent: 6 lines]

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Not long was Láeg there when he saw all the men of Ireland rising together and taking up their shields and their spears and their swords and their helmets, and driving the troops before them to the battle. The men of Ireland began each of them to strike and smite, to hew and cut, to slay and slaughter the others for a long space of time. Then Cú

Chulainn asked Láeg, his charioteer, when a bright cloud covered the sun: 'How are they fighting the battle now, my friend Láeg?' 'Bravely they fight' said Láeg. 'If we were to mount, I into my chariot and En, the charioteer of Conall, into his chariot, and if we were to go in two chariots from one wing of the army to the other along the tips of their weapons, not a hoof nor a wheel nor an axle nor a shaft of those chariots would touch the ground, so densely, so firmly and so strongly are their weapons held in the hands of the soldiers now'. 'Alas that I have not the strength to be among them!' said Cú Chulainn, 'for if I had, my attack would be clearly seen there today like that of the rest'. 'Nay then, little Cú' said Láeg, 'it is no disgrace to your valour and no reproach to your honour. You have done bravely hitherto and you will do bravely hereafter'.

Then the men of Ireland began again to strike and smite, to hew and cut, to slay and slaughter the others for a long space and time. There came to them then the nine chariot-fighters of the warriors of Irúad and the three men on foot together with them, and the nine chariot-riders were no swifter than the three on foot.

Then there came to them also the ferchuitredaig, the triads of the men of Ireland, and their sole function in the battle was to slay Conchobor if he should be defeated and to rescue Ailill and Medb if it were they who were overcome. And these are the names of the triads: the three Conaires from Slíab Mis, the three Lussins of Lúachair, the three Niad Choirbb from Tilach Loiscthe, the three Dóelfhers from Dell, the three Dámaltachs from Loch Dergdergc, the three Bodars from the river Búas, the three Báeths from the river Buaidnech, the three Búageltachs of Mag m-Breg, the three Suibnes from the river Suir, the three Echtachs from

{line 4695-4726} Áine Cliach, the three Mailleths from Loch Eirne, the three Abratrúads from Loch Ríb, the three Mac Amras from Es Rúaid, the three Fiachas from Fid Nemain, the three Maines from Muireasc, the three Muiredachs from Mairge (?), the three Lóegaires from Lec Derg, the three Brodonns from the river Barrow, the three Descertachs of Dromm Fornocta, the three Finns from Findabair, the three Conalls from Collamair, the three Cairbres from Cliu, the three Maines of Mossud (?). the three Scáthglans of Scár (?). the three Echtachs of Eirc, the three Trenfhers of Taite (?), the three Fintans from (Magh) Femen, the three Rótanachs from (Mag) Raigne, the three Sárchorachs of Suide Laigen, the three Etarscels of Etabán, the three Aeds from Mag n- Aidne, the three Guaires from Gabail.

Then said Medb to Fergus: 'It were indeed fitting for you to give us your aid unstintingly in fighting today, for you were banished from your territory and your land and with us you got territory and land and estate and much kindness was shown to you'. 'If I

had my sword today' said Fergus, 'I would cut them down so that the trunks of men would be piled high on the trunks of men and arms of men piled high on arms of men and the crowns of men's heads piled on the crowns of men's heads and men's heads piled on the edges of shields, and all the limbs of the Ulstermen scattered by me to the east and to the west would be as numerous as hailstones between two dry fields (?) along which a king's horses drive, if only I had my sword'. Then said Ailill to his own charioteer, Fer Loga: 'Bring me quickly the sword that wounds men's flesh, O fellow. I pledge my word that if its condition and preservation be worse with you today than on the day when I gave it to you on the hillside at Crúachna Aí, even if the men of Ireland and of Alba are protecting you against me today, not all of them will save you'. Fer Loga came forward and brought the sword in all the beauty of its fair preservation, shining bright as a torch, and the sword was given into Ailill's hand. And Ailill gave the sword to Fergus and Fergus welcomed the sword: 'Welcome to you, O Caladbolg, the sword of Leite' said he. 'Weary are the champions of the war-goddess. On whom shall I ply this sword?' asked Fergus. 'On the hosts that surround you on all sides' said Medb. 'Let none receive mercy or quarter from you today except a true friend'. Then Fergus seized his arms and went forward to the battle. Ailill seized his arms. Medb seized her arms and came to the battle and three times they were victorious in the battle northwards until a phalanx and swords

{line 4727-4762} forced them to retreat again. Conchobor heard from his place in the battle-line that the battle had three times gone against him in the north. Then he said to his people, the intimate household of the Cráebrúad: 'Take up for a short time, my men, the position in which I am so that I may go and see who is thus victorious three times to the north of us'. Then said his household: 'We shall do so, for heaven is above us and earth beneath us and the sea all around us, and unless the firmament with its showers of stars fall upon the surface of the earth, or unless the blue-bordered fish-abounding sea come over the face of the world, or unless the earth quake, we shall never retreat one inch from this spot until such time as you come back to us again'.

Conchobor came forward to where he had heard the rout of battle against him three times in the north, and against the shield, the Óchaín Conchobuir, with its four golden corners and its four coverings of red gold. Then Fergus gave three strong, warlike blows on the Óchaín Conchobuir and Conchobor's shield groaned.—Whenever Conchobor's shield groaned, the shields of all the Ulstermen groaned.—Strongly and violently as Fergus struck Conchobor's shield, even as stoutly and as bravely did Conchobor hold the shield, so that the corner of the shield did not even touch Conchobor's ear.

'Alas, my men!' said Fergus, 'who holds his shield against me today in this day of

conflict where the four great provinces of Ireland meet at Gáirech and Ilgáirech in the battle of the Foray of Cúailnge?' 'There is a man here younger and mightier than you, and whose father and mother were nobler, one who banished you from your land and territory and estate, one who drove you to dwell with deer and hare and fox, one who did not permit you to hold even the length of your own stride in your land and territory, one who made you dependent on a woman of property, one who outraged you on one occasion by slaying the three sons of Usnech despite your safeguard, one who today will ward you off in the presence of the men of Ireland, namely, Conchobor mac Fachtna Fáthaig meic Rossa Rúaid meic Rudraigi, the high king of Ulster and the son of the high king of Ireland'.

'That has befallen me indeed' said Fergus. And Fergus grasped the Caladbolg in both hands and swung it back behind him so that its point touched the ground, and his intent was to strike three terrible and warlike blows on the Ulstermen so that their dead might outnumber their living. Cormac Cond Longas, the son of Conchobor, saw him and he rushed towards Fergus and

{line 4763-4797} clasped his two arms about him. 'Ready; yet not ready (?), my master Fergus. Hostile and not friendly is that, my master Fergus. Ungentle but not heedful (?) is that, my master Fergus. Do not slay and destroy the Ulsterman with your mighty blows, but take thought for their honour on this day of battle today'. 'Begone from me, lad' said Fergus 'for I shall not live if I strike not my three mighty, warlike blows upon the Ulstermen today so that their living outnumber their dead'.

'Turn your hand level' said Cormac Cond Longas, 'and strike off the tops of the hills over the heads of the hosts and that will appease your anger'. 'Tell Conchobor to come then into his battle-position'. Conchobor came to his place in the battle.

Now that sword, the sword of Fergus, was the sword of Leite from the elf-mounds. When one wished to strike with it, it was as big as a rainbow in the air.—Then Fergus turned his hand level above the heads of the hosts and cut off the tops of the three hills which are still there in the marshy plain as evidence. Those are the three Máela of Meath.

Now as for Cú Chulainn, when he heard the Óchain Conchobuir being struck by Fergus mac Róig, he said: 'Come now, my friend Láeg, who will dare thus to smite the Óchain of Conchobor my master while I am alive?' 'This huge sword, as big as a rainbow, sheds blood, increase of slaughter' said Láeg. 'It is the hero Fergus mac Róig. The chariot sword was hidden in the fairy mounds. The horsemen (?) of my master Conchobor have reached the battlefield'.

'Loosen quickly the wooden hoops over my wounds, fellow' said Cú Chulainn. Then Cú Chulainn gave a mighty spring and the wooden hoops flew from him to Mag Túaga in

Connacht. The bindings of his wounds went from him to Bacca in Corco M'ruad. The dry wisps of tow which plugged his wounds soared into the uppermost air and firmament as high as larks soar on a day of fair weather when there is no wind. His wounds broke out afresh and the trenches and furrows in the earth were filled with his blood and the tents from his wounds. The first exploit which Cú Chulain performed after rising from his sickbed was against the two female satirists, Fethan and Colla, who had been feigning to weep and lament over him. He dashed their two heads together so that he was red with their blood and grey with their brains. None of his weapons had been left beside him save only

{line 4798-4831} his chariot. And he took his chariot on his back and came towards the men of Ireland, and with his chariot he smote them until he reached the spot where Fergus mac Róig stood. 'Turn hither, my master Fergus' said Cú Chulainn. Fergus did not answer for he did not hear him. Cú Chulainn said again: 'Turn hither, my master Fergus, or if you do not, I shall grind you as a mill grinds goodly grain, I shall belabour you as flax-heads (?) are belaboured in a pool, I shall entwine you as a woodbine (?) entwines trees, I shall swoop on you as a hawk swoops on little birds'. 'That has befallen me indeed' said Fergus. 'Who will dare to speak those proud, warlike words to me here where the four great provinces of Ireland meet at Gáirech and Ilgáirech in the battle of the Foray of Cúailnge?' 'Your own fosterson' said Cú Chulainn, 'and the fosterson of Conchobor and of the rest of the men of Ulster, Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim, and you promised that you would flee before me when I should be wounded, bloody and pierced with stabs in the battle of the Táin, for I fled before you in your own battle on the Táin'.

Fergus heard that, and he turned and took three mighty, heroic strides, and when he turned, all the men of Ireland turned and were routed westwards over the hill. The conflict was centred against the men of Connacht. At midday Cú Chulainn had come to the battle. It was sunset in the evening when the last band of the men of Connacht fled westwards over the hill. By that time there remained in Cú Chulainn's hand only a fistful of the spokes around the wheel and a handful of shafts around the body of the chariot, but he kept on slaying and slaughtering the four great provinces of Ireland during all that time.

Then Medb covered the retreat of the men of Ireland and she sent the Donn Cúailnge around to Crúachu together with fifty of his heifers and eight of Medb's messengers, so that whoever might reach Crúachu or whoever might not, at least the Donn Cúailnge would arrive there as she had promised. Then her issue of blood came upon Medb and she said: 'Fergus, cover the retreat of the men of Ireland that I may pass my water'. 'By my conscience' said Fergus, 'It is ill-timed and it is not right to do so'. 'Yet I cannot but do so' said Medb, 'for I shall not live unless I do'. Fergus came then and

covered the retreat of the men of Ireland. Medb passed her water and it made three great trenches in each of which a household can fit. Hence the place is called Fúal Medba.

Cú Chulainn came upon her thus engaged but he did not wound her for he used not to strike her from behind. 'Grant me a favour today, Cú Chulainn' said Medb. 'What favour do you ask?' said Cú Chulainn. 'That this army may be under your protection and safeguard till they have gone westwards past Áth Mór'. 'I grant it' said Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn came around the men of Ireland and covered the retreat on one side of them to protect them. The triads of the men of Ireland came on the other side, and Medb came into her own position and covered their retreat in the rear. In that fashion they took the men of Ireland westwards past Áth Mór.

Then Cú Chulainn's sword was given to him and he smote a blow on the three blunt-topped hills at Áth Luain, as a counterblast to the three Máela Mide, and cut off their three tops.

Then Fergus began to survey

"survey", reading St

the host as they went westwards from Áth Mór. 'This day was indeed a fitting one for those who were led by a women' said Fergus. [gap: text untranslated/extent: 7 words] said Medb to Fergus. 'This host has been plundered and despoiled today. As when a mare goes before her band of foals into unknown territory, with none to lead or counsel them, so this host has perished today'.

As for Medb, she gathered and assembled the men of Ireland to Crúachu that they might see the combat of the bulls.

As for the Donn Cúailnge, when he saw the beautiful strange land, he bellowed loudly three times. The Findbennach of Aí heard him. Because of the Findbennach no male animal between the four fords of all Mag Aí, namely, Áth Moga and Áth Coltna, Áth Slissen and Áth m- Bercha, dared utter a sound louder than the lowing of a cow. The Findbennach tossed his head violently and came forward to Crúachu to meet the Donn Cúailnge.

Then the men of Ireland asked who should be an eye-witness for the bulls, and they all decided that it should be Bricriu mac Garbada.—A year before these events in the Foray of Cúailnge, Bricriu had come from one province to another begging from Fergus, and Fergus had retained him in his service waiting for his chattels and wealth. And a quarrel arose between him and Fergus as they were playing chess, and Bricriu spoke very insultingly to Fergus. Fergus struck him with his fist and with the chessman that he held in his hand and drove the chessman into

{line 4867-4900} his head and broke a bone in his skull. While the men of Ireland were on the hosting of the Táin, Bricriu was all that time being cured in Crúachu, and the day they returned from the hosting was the day Bricriu rose from his sickness.—And the reason they chose Bricriu in this manner was because he was no fairer to his friend than to his enemy. So Bricriu was brought to a gap in front of the bulls.

Each of the bulls caught sight of the other and they pawed the ground and cast the earth over them. They dug up the ground and threw it over their shoulders and their withers, and their eyes blazed in their heads like distended balls of fire. Their cheeks and nostrils swelled like smith's bellows in a forge. And each collided with the other with a crashing noise. Each of them began to gore and to pierce and to slay and slaughter the other. Then the Findbennach Aí took advantage of the confusion of the Donn Cúailnge's journeying and wandering and travelling, and thrust his horn into his side and visited his rage on him. Their violent rush took them to where Bricriu stood and the bulls' hooves trampled him a man's length into the ground after they had killed him.

Hence that is called the Tragical Death of Bricriu.

Cormac Cond Longas, the son of Conchobor, saw this happening and he took a spear which filled his grasp and struck three blows on the Donn Cúailnge from his ear to his tail. 'No wonderful, lasting possession may this chattel be for us' said Cormac, 'since he cannot repel a calf of his own age'. Donn Cúailnge heard this for he had human understanding, and he attacked the Findbennach, and for a long time and space they fought together until night fell on the men of Ireland. And when night fell, all the men of Ireland could do was to listen to their noise and their uproar.

That night the bulls traversed the whole of Ireland.

Not long were the men of Ireland there early on the morrow when they saw the Donn Cúailnge coming past Crúachu from the west with the Findbennach Aí a mangled mass on his antlers and horns. The men of Ireland arose and they knew not which of the bulls was there. 'Well now, men' said Fergus, 'leave him alone if it is the Findbennach Aí, and if it is Donn Cúailnge, leave him his triumph. I swear that what has been done concerning the bulls is but little in comparison with what will be done now'.

The Donn Cúailnge arrived. He turned his right side to Crúachu and left there a heap of the liver of the Findbennach. Whence the name Crúachna Áe.

He came forward to the brink of Áth Mór and there he left the loin of the Findbennach. Whence the name Áth Luain.

He came eastwards into the land of Meath to Áth Troim and there he left the liver of the Findbennach.

He tossed his head fiercely and shook off the Findbennach over Ireland. He threw his thigh as far as Port Lárga. He threw his rib-cage as far as Dublin which is called Áth Clíath. After that he faced towards the north and recognised the land of Cúailnge and came towards it. There there were women and boys and children lamenting the Donn Cúailnge. They saw the forehead of the Donn Cúailnge coming towards them. 'A bull's forehead comes to us!' they cried. Hence the name Taul Tairb ever since.

Then the Donn Cúailnge attacked the women and boys and children of the territory of Cúailnge and inflicted great slaughter on them. After that he turned his back to the hill and his heart broke like a nut in his breast.

So far the account and the story and the end of the Táin:

1. A blessing on every one who shall faithfully memorise the Táin as it is written here and shall not add any other form to it.

1. But I who have written this story, or rather this fable, give no credence to the various incidents related in it. For some things in it are the deceptions of demons, other poetic figments; some are probable, others improbable; while still others are intended for the delectation of foolish men.