

Chapter VII

§ 34. "I accept that then," quoth Cuchulainn. "I agree (lit. I allow it) then," quoth Loigaire. "Let us go then," quoth Conall the Victorious. "Let horses be brought us and thy chariot yoked, O Conall," quoth Cuchulainn. "Woe is me!" cried Conall. "Every one," quoth Cuchulainn, "knows well the clumsiness of thy horses and the unsteadiness of thy going and of thy turnout; thy chariot's movement is most heavy; each of the two wheels raiseth turf every way thy big chariot careers, so that for the space of a year there is a well-marked track easily recognised by the warriors of Ulster."

§ 35. "Dost thou hear that, Loigaire?" said Conall. "Woe is me," quoth Loigaire. "But I am not to blame or to reproach. I am nimble at crossing fords, and more, to breast the storm of spears, outstripping the warriors of Ulster. Put not on me the precedence of kings till I practise faring before kings and champions against single chariots in strait and difficult places, in woods and on confines, till the champion of a single chariot essay not to career before me."

§ 36. Thereupon Loigaire had his chariot yoked and he leapt therein. He drove over the Plain-of-the-Two-Forks, over the Gap-of-the-Watch, over the Ford of Carpat Fergus, over the Ford-of-the-Môrrigan to the Rowan Meadow of the Two Oxen in the Fews of Armagh (Clithar Fidbaidi), by the Meeting of the Four Ways past Dundalk, across Mag Slicech, westwards to the slope of Bregia. A dim, dark, heavy mist overtook him, confusing him in such wise that it was impossible for him to fare farther on the way. "Let us stay here," quoth Loigaire to his charioteer, until the mist clear up." Loigaire alighted from his chariot, and his gillie put the horses into the meadow that was near at hand.

§ 37. While there, the gillie saw a huge giant approaching him. Not beautiful his appearance: broad (of shoulder) and fat of mouth, with sack eyes and a bristly face; ugly, wrinkled, with bushy eyebrows; hideous and horrible and strong; stubborn, violent and haughty; fat and puffing; with big sinews and strong forearm, bold and audacious and uncouth. A shorn black patch of hair on him, a dun covering about him, a tunic over it to the ball of his rump; on his feet old tattered brogues, on his back a ponderous club like unto the wheel-shaft of a mill.

§ 38. "Whose horses are these, gillie?" he asked, as he gazed furiously at him. "The horses of Loigaire the Triumphant." "Yes! a fine fellow he!" And as he thus spake he brought down his club on the gillie and gave him a blow from top to toe. The gillie gave a cry, whereupon Loigaire came up. "What is this you are doing to the lad?" asked Loigaire. "'Tis by way of penalty for damage to the meadow," quoth the giant. "I will come myself then," quoth Logaire. They struggle together ... Loigaire

anon fled till he reached Emain, after having left his horses and gillie and arms.

§ 39. Not long thereafter Conall the Victorious took the same way and arrived at the plain where the druidical^[10] mist overtook Loigaire. The like hideous black, dark cloud overtook Conall the Victorious, so that he was unable to see either heaven or earth. Conall thereon leapt out and the gillie unharnessed the horses in the same meadow. Not long thereafter he saw the same giant [coming] towards him. He asked him whose servant he was. "I am servant to Conall the Victorious," he quoth. "A good man he," quoth the giant, as he raised his hands till they gave a blow to the gillie from top to toe. The fellow yelled. Anon came Conall. He and the giant got to close quarters. Stronger were the wrestling turns of the giant. Conall fled, as Loigaire had done, having left behind his charioteer and his horses and came to Emain.

§ 40. Cuchulainn then went by the same way till he came to the same stead. The like dark mist overtook him as fell upon the twain preceding. Cuchulainn sprang down, and Laig brought the horses into the meadow. He had not long to wait till he saw the same man coming towards him. The giant asked him whose servant he was. "Servant (companion) to Cuchulainn." "A good man he," quoth the giant, plying him with the club. Laig yelled. Anon Cuchulainn arrived. He and the giant came to close quarters and either pounded the other. The giant got worsted. He forfeited horses and charioteer, and Cuchulainn brought along with him his fellows' horses, charioteers and accoutrements, till he reached Emain in triumph. He gave them to their rightful owners.

§ 41. "Thine is the Champion's Portion," quoth Bricriu to Cuchulainn. "Well I wot from your deeds ye are not a whit on a par with Cuchulainn." "Not true, Bricriu," quoth they, "for we know it is one of his friends from Faëry that came to him to play us mischief and deal with us perforce as to the championship. We shall not forego our claim on that account." The men of Ulster, with Conchobar and Fergus, failed to effect a settlement. They sent them either to go to Curoi mac Dairi, or else to go to Cruachan, to Ailill and to Mève.^[11]

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