

Chapter XI

[Thereafter he followed his charioteer. “My plan,” quoth Mève to Ailill, “is to keep those three heroes with us again to-night, and to further test them.” “Do as thou deemest right,” quoth Ailill. The men were then detained and brought to Cruachan and their horses unyoked.][16]

§ 63. Their choice of food was given them for their horses. Conall and Loigaire told them to give oats two years old to theirs. But Cuchulainn chose barley grains for his. They slept there that night. The women were apportioned among them. Findabair, with a train of fifty damsels, was brought into the stead of Cuchulainn. Sav the Eloquent (Sadb Sulbair), another daughter of Ailill and of Mève, with fifty maids in attendance, was ushered into the presence of Conall Cernach. Conchend, daughter of Ceit mac Magach, with fifty damsels along with her, was brought into the presence of Loigaire the Triumphant. Moreover, Mève herself was wont to resort to the stead of Cuchulainn. They slept there that night.

§ 64. On the morrow they arose early in the morning and went into the house where the youths were performing the wheel-feat. Then Loigaire seized the wheel and tossed it till it reached half up the side wall. Upon that the youths laughed and cheered him. It was in reality a jeer, but it seemed to Loigaire a shout of applause. Conall then took the wheel; it was on the ground. He tossed it as high as the ridge-pole of the palace. The youths raised a shout at that. It seemed to Conall it was a shout of applause and of victory. To the youths it was a shout of scorn. Then Cuchulainn took the wheel—it was in mid-air he caught it. He hurled it aloft till it cast the ridge-pole from off the place; the wheel went a man’s cubit into the ground in the outside enclosure. The youths raised a shout of applause and of triumph in Cuchulainn’s case. It seemed to Cuchulainn, however, it was a laugh of scorn and of ridicule they then gave vent to.

§ 65. Cuchulainn anon sought out the womenfolk, and took thrice fifty needles from them. These he tossed up one after the other. Each needle went into the eye of the other, till in that wise they were joined together. He returned to the women, and gave each her own needle into her hand. The young braves praised Cuchulainn. Whereupon they bade farewell to the king, the queen, and household as well.