

Chapter XIII

§ 72. The heroes ceased their discussions and their babblings and fell to eating and enjoying themselves. It was Sualtam mac Rôig, father of Cuchulainn himself, who that night attended upon the Ultonians. Moreover, Conchobar's ladder-vat was filled for them. Their portion having been brought to their presence, the spencers came to serve, but at the outset they withheld the Champion's Portion from distribution. "Why not give the Champion's Portion," quoth Duach of the Chafer Tongue, "to some one of the heroes; those three have not returned from the King of Cruachan, having no sure token with them, whereby the Champion's Portion may be assigned to one of them?"

§ 73. Thereupon Loigaire the Triumphant got up and lifted on high the bronze cup having the silver bird [chased] on the bottom. "The Champion's Portion is mine," he quoth, "and none may contest it with me." "It is not," quoth Conall Cernach. "Not alike are the tokens we brought off with us. Yours is a cup of bronze, whereas mine is a cup of white metal (findruini). From the difference between them the Champion's Portion clearly belongs to me." "It belongs to neither of you," quoth Cuchulainn as he got up and spoke. "Ye have brought no token that procures you the Champion's Portion. Yet the king and queen whom ye visited were loath in the thick of distress to intensify the strife. But no less than your deserts have ye received at their hands. The Champion's Portion remains with me, seeing I brought a token distinguished above the rest."

§ 74. He then lifted on high a cup of red gold having a bird chased on the bottom of it in precious dragon-stone, the size of his eyes twain. All the Ultonian nobles in the suite of Conchobar mac Nessa saw it. "Therefore it is I," he quoth, "who deserve the Champion's Portion, provided I have fair play." "To thee we all award it," quoth Conchobar and Fergus and the Ulster nobles as well. By the verdict of Ailill and of Mève the Champion's Portion is yours." "I swear by my people's god," said Loigaire and Conall the Victorious, "that the cup you have brought is purchased. Of the jewels and of the treasures in your possession have you given to Ailill and to Mève for it in order that a defeat might not be on record against you, and that the Champion's Portion might be given to no one else in preference. By my people's god, that judgment shall not stand; the Champion's Portion shall not be yours." They then sprang up one after the other, their swords drawn. Straightway Conchobar and Fergus intervened, whereupon they let down their hands and sheathed their swords. "Hold!" quoth Sencha, "do as I bid." "We will," they quoth

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