

The Death of Órlám

On the morrow they went over Iraid Culenn. Cú Chulainn went forward and came upon the charioteer of Órlám, son of Ailill and Medb, at a place called Tamlachta Órláim a little to the north of Dísert Lochait where he was cutting wood.

According to another version, however, it was the shaft of Cú Chulainn's chariot that had broken and he had gone to cut a new shaft when he met the charioteer of Órlám. But according to this version it was the charioteer who cut the shafts.

'It is a bold action on the part of the Ulstermen if it is they who are yonder,' said Cú Chulainn, 'while the army is on their track.' He went to the charioteer to reprimand him, thinking he was one of the Ulstermen. He saw the man cutting wood, that is, chariot-shafts. 'What are you doing here?' said Cú Chulainn. 'Cutting chariot-shafts,' said the charioteer. 'We have broken our chariots hunting yon wild deer, Cú Chulainn. Help me,' said the charioteer. 'Decide whether you will collect the shafts or strip them.' 'I will strip them,' said Cú Chulainn. Then Cú Chulainn stripped the shafts between his fingers in the presence of the other, and he cleaned them both of bark and of knots. 'It was not your proper work that I set you,' said the charioteer who was sore afraid. 'Who are you?' asked Cú Chulainn. 'I am the charioteer of Órlám, son of Ailill and Medb,' said he. 'And who are you?' 'My name is Cú Chulainn,' said he. 'Woe is me !' said the charioteer. 'Fear nothing,' said Cú Chulainn. 'Where is your master?' 'He is on the mound yonder,' said the charioteer. 'Come on then with me,' said Cú Chulainn, 'for I do not kill charioteers.'

Cú Chulainn went to Órlám, killed him and cut off his head and brandished it before the host. He put the head then on the charioteer's back and said: 'Take that with you and go thus to the camp. If you do not go thus, I shall cast a stone at you from my sling.' When the charioteer drew near the camp, he took the head from his back, and related his adventures to Ailill and Medb. 'It is not like catching a fledgling,' said she. 'And he said that if I did not bring the head to the camp on my back, he would break my head for me with a stone.'

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