

The Death of the Marten and of the Pet Bird

Cú Chulainn threatened in Méithe that, wherever afterwards he should see Ailill or Medb, he would cast a stone from his sling at them. He did so indeed; he threw a stone from his sling and killed the marten on Medb's shoulder south of the ford. Hence is the name Méithe Togmaill. And north of the ford he killed the bird that was on Ailill's shoulder. Hence the name Méithe nEoin. —Or, according to another version, both marten and bird were on Medb's shoulder and their heads were struck off by the stones cast. Then Reúin was drowned in his lake; hence the name Loch Reóin.

‘Your opponent is not far from you,’ said Ailill to the Maines. They rose to their feet and gazed around. When they sat down again Cú Chulainn struck one of them and smashed his head. ‘That was no successful expedition! It ill befitted you to boast,’ said Maenén the jester. ‘I should have cut his head off.’ Then Cú Chulainn cast a stone at him and smashed his head.

In this manner then these men were killed: first of all Órlám on his height, then the three Meic Gárach at their ford, Fer Teidil at his dedil and Maenén on his hill.

‘I swear by the god by whom my people swear,’ said Ailill, ‘that I shall cut in twain whatever man shall make a mock of Cú Chulainn here. Come on now, I beg you, travelling by day and by night until we reach Cúailnge. That man will kill two thirds of your army (if he continue) in this way.’

Then the harpers of Caín Bile came to them from Ess Ruaid to entertain them with music. But they thought that the harpers had come from the Ulstermen to spy on them. So they hunted them until they went before them into the pillar-stones at Lía Mór in the north, transformed into deer, for (in reality) they were druids possessed of great occult knowledge.

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