

The Eulogy of Cú Chulainn

‘What manner of man,’ asked Ailill, ‘is this Hound whom we have heard of among the Ulstermen? What age is that famous youth?’ ‘I can tell you that,’ said Fergus. ‘In his fifth year he went to the boys in Emain Macha to play. In his sixth year he went to learn feats of arms to Scáthach and went to woo Emer. In his seventh year he took up arms. At the present time he is seventeen years old.’

‘Is he the most formidable among the Ulstermen?’ asked Medb. ‘More so than any one of them,’ answered Fergus. ‘You will not encounter a warrior harder to deal with, nor a spear-point sharper or keener or quicker, nor a hero fiercer, nor a raven more voracious, nor one of his age to equal a third of his valour, nor a lion more savage, nor a shelter in battle nor a sledge-hammer for smiting, nor a protector in fighting, nor doom of hosts, nor one better able to check a great army. You will not find there any man his equal in age like unto Cú Chulainn in growth, in dress, in fearsomeness, in speech, in splendour, in voice and appearance, in power and harshness, in feats, in valour, in striking power, in rage and in anger, in victory and in doom- dealing and in violence, in stalking, in sureness of aim and in game-killing, in swiftness and boldness and rage, with the feat of nine men on every spear- point.’

‘I reek little of that,’ said Medb. ‘He has but one body; he suffers wounding; he is not beyond capture. Moreover he is only the age of a grown girl and as yet his manly deeds have not developed.’ ‘Nay,’ said Fergus. ‘It were no wonder that he should perform a goodly exploit today, for even when he was younger, his deeds were those of a man.’

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