

The Meeting of Fergus and Cú Chulainn

‘Let one of you come to meet me at Áth Da Fherta,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘It will not be I!’ ‘It will not be I!’ cried one and all from the place where they were. ‘No scapegoat is owed by my people, and even if he were, it is not I who would go in his stead as a victim.’ Then Fergus was begged to go against him. But he refused to encounter his foster-son, Cú Chulainn. He was plied with wine then until he was greatly intoxicated, and again he was asked to go and fight. So then he went forth since they were so earnestly importuning him.

Then Cú Chulainn said ‘It is with (a feeling of) security you come against me, master Fergus, seeing that you have no sword in your scabbard.’ —For, as we have already told, Ailill had stolen it from the scabbard.— ‘I care not indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘Even if there were a sword in it, it would not be wielded against you. Retreat a step from me, Cú Chulainn.’ ‘You in turn will retreat before me,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Even so indeed,’ answered Fergus.

Then Cú Chulainn retreated before Fergus as far as Grellach Dolluid so that on the day of the great battle Fergus might retreat before him. Afterwards Cú Chulainn dismounted (from his chariot) in Grellach Dolluid. ‘Go after him, Fergus!’ they all cried. ‘Nay,’ said Fergus. ‘Until my turn come round I shall not go, for it is no easy task for me. That man is too lively for me.’

They went on then and pitched camp in Crích Rois. Ferchú Loingsech, who had been exiled by Ailill, heard of this and came to encounter Cú Chulainn. Thirteen men was the number of his force. Cú Chulainn killed them at the place called Cingit Ferchon. Their thirteen headstones mark the spot.

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