

# The Wooing of Emer by Cú Chulainn

(An Irish hero-tale of the eleventh century, translated from the original manuscript [Based on LU and Stowe MS 992 (D. iv. 2)].)[1]

There lived once upon a time a great and famous king in Emain Macha,[2] whose name was Conchobar, son of Fachtna Fathach.[3] In his reign there was much store of good things with the men of Ulster. Peace there was, and quiet and pleasant greeting; there was fruit and fatness and harvest of the sea; there was sway and law and good lordship during his time with the men of Ulster. There was great state and rank and plenty in the king's house at Emain.

On this wise was that house—viz., the Red Branch of Conchobar, after the likeness of the House of the Midcourt.[4] Nine beds were in it from the fire to the wall. Thirty feet was the height of each bronze front that was in the house. Carvings of red yew were therein. It was a board [...] below, and a roof of tiles above. The bed of Conchobar was in the front of the house, with boards of silver, with pillars of bronze, with the glitter of gold on their head-pieces, and carbuncles in them, so that day and night were equally light in it, with its silver board above the king to the highest part of the royal house. Whenever Conchobar struck the board with a royal rod, all the men of Ulster were silent thereat. The twelve beds of the twelve chariot-chiefs were round about that bed.

Yea, the valiant warriors of the men of Ulster found place in that king's house at the drink, and no man of them would touch the other. Splendid, lavish, and beautiful were the valiant warriors of the men of Ulster in that house. There were great and numerous gatherings of every kind in that house, and wonderful pastimes. There were games and music and singing there—viz., heroes were at their feats, poets sang, harpers and players on the timpan[5] struck their sounds.

Now, once the men of Ulster were in Emain Macha with Conchobar drinking the iern-gual (iron-coal).[6] A hundred fillings of beverage went into it every evening. This was the drinking of the 'coal' that would satisfy all the men of Ulster at one time. The chariot-chiefs of Ulster were performing on ropes stretched across from door to door in the house at Emain. Fifteen feet and nine score was the size of that house. The chariot-chiefs were performing three feats—viz., the spear-feat, and the apple-feat, and the sword-edge feat.

These are the chariot-chiefs who performed those feats—Conall the Victorious, son of Amorgen; Fergus, son of Roich the Overbold; Loegaire the Victorious, son of Connad; Celtchar, son of Uthider; Dubthach, son of Lugaid; Cuchulaind, son of Soaldam; Scel, son of Barnene (from whom the Pass of Barnene is named), the warder of Emain Macha. From him is the saying, 'a story of Scel's,' for he was a mighty story-teller.

Cuchulaind surpassed all of them at those feats for quickness and deftness. The women of Ulster loved Cuchulaind greatly for his quickness at the feats, for the nimbleness of his leap, for the excellency of his wisdom; for the sweetness of his speech, for the beauty of his face, for the loveliness of his look. For there were seven pupils in his kingly eyes, four of them in his one eye, and three of them in the other. He had seven fingers on either hand, and seven toes on either of his two feet. Many were his gifts. First, his gift of prudence until his warrior's flame appeared, the gift of feats, the gift of buanfach,<sup>[7]</sup> the gift of draught-playing, the gift of calculating, the gift of sooth-saying, the gift of sense, the gift of beauty. But three faults had Cuchulaind—that he was too young (for his moustache had not grown, and all the more would unknown youths deride him), that he was too daring, that he was too beautiful.

The men of Ulster took counsel about Cuchulaind, for their women and maidens loved him greatly. For there was no wife with Cuchulaind at that time. This was the counsel, that they would seek a woman whom Cuchulaind might choose to woo. For they were sure that a man who had a wife to attend to him would less ravish their maidens and accept the love of their women. And, besides, they were troubled and afraid that Cuchulaind would perish early, so that for that reason they wished to give him a wife that he might leave an heir; for they knew that his re-birth would be of himself.

Then Conchobor sent out nine men into each province of Erin to seek a wife for Cuchulaind, to see if they would find in any dun or in any chief place in Erin the daughter of a king, or of a chief, or of a lord of land, whom Cuchulaind might be pleased to choose and woo. All the messengers returned that day a year gone, and had not found a maiden whom Cuchulaind chose to woo.

Thereupon Cuchulaind himself went to woo a maiden that he knew in Luglochta Loga—viz., Emer, the daughter of Forgall the Wily. Then Cuchulaind himself and his charioteer Loeg, son of Riagabar (or Reincobir), went in his chariot. That was the one chariot which the host of the horses of the chariots of Ulster could not follow, on account of the swiftness and speed of the chariot and of who sat in it.

on her playing field, with her foster-sisters around her. These were daughters of the lords of land that lived around the dun of Forgall. They were learning needle-work and fine handiwork from Emer. She was the one maiden whom he deigned to address and woo of the maidens of Erin. For she had the six gifts—viz., the gift of beauty, the gift of voice, the gift of sweet speech, the gift of needle-work, the gift of wisdom, the gift of chastity. Cuchulaind said that no maiden should go with him but she who was his equal in age and shape and race, and skill and deftness, who was the best handworker of the maidens of Erin, and that none was a fitting wife for him unless such were she. And as she was the one maiden that fulfilled all those conditions, Cuchulaind went to woo her above all.

It was in his festal array that Cuchulaind went on that day to address Emer and to show his beauty to her. As the maidens were sitting on the bench of gathering at the dun, they heard something coming towards them, the clatter of the horses' hoofs, the creaking of the chariot, the cracking of the straps, the grating of the wheels, the rush of the hero, the clanking of the weapons. 'Let one of you see,' said Emer, 'what it is that is coming towards us.'

'Truly, I see here,' said Fiall, daughter of Forgall, 'two steeds of like size, beauty, fierceness, and

speed, bounding together

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high-headed, spirited, powerful, pricking their ears(?), thin-mouthed, with long tresses, with broad foreheads, much speckled, slightly slender, very broad, impetuous, with curling manes, with curling tails. At the right pole of the chariot is a grey horse, broad-haunched, fierce, swift, fleet, wild, taking small bounds, broad-maned

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thundering, stamping, with curling mane, high-headed, broad-chested. The large-gebed

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hard turf is aflame under his four hard hoofs, a flock of swift birds follows, he takes his course along the road, there darts from him a flash of breath, a blast of red-sparkling fire stands out from his curbed jaws.'

'The other horse jet-black, hard-headed, round, slender-footed, broad-hoofed

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spirited, curly, plaited, tressed, broad-backed, firmly shod,

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fiery, fierce, strongly striding, firmly stamping, long-maned, curly-maned, long-tailed, with firm curls, broad of forehead, beautiful he moves along after having beaten the horses in the land, he bounds over the smooth dry sward, he follows the levels of the midglen, he finds no obstacle in the land

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'A chariot of fine wood with wicker-work, on which are white bronze wheels. A white pole of white silver with a mounting of white bronze. A very high creaking frame of tin, round and firm. A curved strong yoke of gold. Two plaited firm yellow reins. Hard poles, straight as sword-blades.'

A dark [8] sad man in the chariot, the fairest of the men of Erinn. A beautiful purple five-folded tunic around him, a brooch of inlaid gold on his white breast at its opening, against which it heaves, full strokes beating. A shirt with a white hood, interwoven red with flaming gold. Seven red dragon-gems on the ground of either of his two eyes. Two blue-white blood-red cheeks that breathe sparks and flashes of fire. A ray of love burns in his look. Me thinks, a shower of pearls has been poured in his mouth. As black as the side of a black [...] each of his two eyebrows. A gold-hilted sword resting on his two thighs. A blood-red handfitted spear with a sharp mettlesome blade on a shaft of wood [...] is fastened to the copper frame of the chariot. A purple shield with a rim of silver, with ornamental beasts of gold over his two shoulders. He leaps the heroes' salmon-leap [...] many like swift feats over it, the chariot-chief of the one chariot.

'There is a charioteer before him in that chariot, a very slender, long-sided, much freckled man. Very curly bright-red hair on his head. A ring of bronze on his brow which prevents his hair from falling over his face. Patins of gold on both sides of the back of his head to confine his hair. A shoulder-mantle with sleeves about him, with openings at his two elbows. A rod of red gold in his hand with which he keeps the horses in order.'

Meanwhile Cuchulaind had come to the place where the maidens were. And he wished a blessing to

them. Emer lifted up her lovely fair face and recognised Cuchulaind. And then she said: 'May God make smooth the path before you!' 'May you be safe from every harm!,' said he. 'Whence hast thou come?' she asked. 'From Intide Emna,' he replied. 'Where did you sleep?' said she. 'We slept,' he said, 'in the house of the man who tends the cattle of the plain of Tethra.' 'What was your food there?' she asked. 'The ruin of a chariot was cooked for us there,' he replied, 'Which way didst thou come?' said she. 'Between the Two Mountains of the Wood,' said he, 'Which way didst thou take after that?' said she. 'Not hard to tell,' said he. 'From the Cover of the Sea, over the Great Secret of the Men of Dea,[9] over the Foam of the two Steeds of Emain, over the Garden of the Morrigan,[10] over the Back of the Great Sow, over the Glen of the Great Dam, between the God and his Seer, over the Marrow of the woman Fedelm, between the Boar and his Dam, over the Washing of the Horses of Dea, between the King of Ana (or Ara) and his Servant, to Mondchuile of the Four Corners of the World, over Great Crime, over the Remnants of the Great Feast, between Dabach and Dabchine, to Luglochta[11] Loga, to the daughters of the nephew of Tethra, King of the Fomori.'

'What is the account of thee, oh maiden?' said Cuchulaind. 'Not hard to tell, truly,' said the maiden, 'Tara of the women,[12] the whitest of maidens, the [...]

of chastity, a prohibition which is not taken, a watchman who sees no one.[13] A modest woman is a worm,[14] a scaldcrow [...]

a rush which none come near.[15] The daughter of a king, a flame of honour, a road that cannot be entered [...]

viz. I have champions that follow me to guard me from whoever will take me against their pleasure, without their and Forgall's knowledge of my act.'

'Who are the champions that followed thee, oh maiden?' said Cuchulaind. 'Not hard to tell, truly,' said Emer. 'Two Lui, two Luath, Luath and Lath Goible, son of Tethra, Triath and Trescath, Brion and Bolor, Bas, son of Omnach, eight Condla, Cona, son of Forgall. Every man of them has the strength of a hundred and the feats of nine. Forgall himself, too, hard is it to tell his many powers. He is stronger than any labourer, more learned than any druid, sharper than any poet. It will be more than all your games to fight against Forgall himself, For many powers of his have been recounted [...]

of manly deeds.'

'Why dost thou not reckon me, oh maiden, with those strong men?' said Cuchulaind. 'If thy deeds have been recounted, why should I not reckon thee among them?' 'Truly, I swear, oh maiden,' said Cuchulaind, 'that I shall make my deeds recounted among the glories of the strength of heroes.' 'What then is thy strength?' said Emer. 'Not hard to tell, truly,' said he. 'When I am weak in fight, I defend twenty. Sufficient for thirty is a third of my strength. I alone make combat against forty. My protection guards a hundred. Fords and battlefields are avoided for fear and dread of me. Hosts and multitudes and many armed men flee with the terror of my face.'

'Those are good fights of a tender boy,' said the maiden, 'but thou hast not yet reached the

strength of chariot-chiefs.' 'Truly, oh maiden,' said he, 'well have I been brought up by my dear foster-father Conchobor. Not as a churl looks to the heritage of his children, not between flag-stone and kneading-trough, nor from the fire to the wall, nor on the floor of the one larder (?) have I been brought up by Conchobor, but among chariot-chiefs and champions, among jesters and druids, among poets and learned men, among the lords of land and farmers of Ulster have I been reared, so that I have all their manners and gifts.'

'Who then have brought thee up in all those deeds thou boastest?' said Emer. 'Not hard to tell, truly. Fair-speeched Sencha[16] has taught me so that I am strong, wise, swift, deft,

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I am wise in judgments, I am not forgetful. I

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anybody before wise men, I attend to their speeches. I direct the judgments of all the men of Ulster, and do not alter them, through the training of Sencha. Blai, the lord of lands, took me to himself on account of the kinship of his race, so that I got my due with him, so that I invite the men of Conchobor's province with their king. I entertain them for the time of a week, I settle their gifts and their spoils, I aid them in their honour and their fines.'

'Fergus has fostered me, so that I slay strong warriors through the strength of valour. I am fierce in valour and prowess, so that I am able to guard the border of the land against foreign foes. I am a shelter for every poor man, I am a rampart of fight for every wealthy man, I give comfort to each wretch, I deal mischief to each strong man, through the fosterage of Fergus.'

'I came to the knee of the poet Amorgen, so that I praise a king for any excellency he has, so that I can stand up to any man in valour, in prowess, in wisdom, in splendour, in cleverness, in justice, in boldness. I am a match for any chariot-chief, I give thanks to no one, but to Conchobor all.'

'Findchoem[17] has cared for me, so that the victorious Connall Cernach[18] is my

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foster-brother. Cathbad of the gentle face has taught me for the sake of Dechtire,[19] so that I am a skilful student of the arts of the god of druidism, so that I am learned in the excellencies of knowledge. All the men of Ulster have equally brought me up, both charioteers and chariot-chiefs, both kings and chief-poets so that I am the darling of the host and multitude, so that I fight for the honour of them all alike. Honourably have I been asked by Lug[20] son of Cond, son of Ethlend

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of Dechtire to the house

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of the brug. And thou, oh maiden,' said Cuchulaind, 'how hast thou been reared in Luglochta Loga?' 'Not hard to tell, truly,' answered the maiden. 'I was brought up,' said she, 'in ancient virtues, in lawful behaviour in keeping chastity, in equal

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of a queen, in stately form, so that to me is attributed every noble stately form among the hosts of

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women,' 'Good are those virtues, truly,' said Cuchulaind, 'Why then,' said he, 'should it not be fitting for us both to become one? For I have not hitherto found a maiden capable of holding

converse with me at a meeting in this wise,' 'A question. Hast thou a wife?' said the maiden. 'For under my protection

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after thee.' 'Not so,' said Cuchulaind. 'I may not marry,' said the maiden, 'before the sister who is older than I am, viz., Fial, daughter of Forgall, whom thou seest near me here. She is an excellent handworker.' 'It is not she, truly, with whom I have fallen in love,' said Cuchulaind, 'Nor have I ever accepted a woman that has known a man before me, and I have been told that yonder girl has slept with Carpre Niafer,[21] once.'

While they were thus conversing, Cuchulaind saw the breasts of the maiden over the bosom of her smock. Then he said: 'Fair is this plain, the plain of the noble yoke.' Then the maiden spoke these words: 'No one comes to this plain,' said Emer, 'who does not slay as many as a hundred (comainm n-aircid) on each ford from the Ford of Scennmenn at Ollbine, to Banchuing Arcait[22] where swift Brea breaks the brow of Fedelm.' 'Fair is this plain, the plain of the noble yoke,' said Cuchullaind. 'No one comes to this plain,' said she, 'who has not achieved the feat of slaying three times nine men with one blow (genid grainde), oh calf of the cow

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so as to preserve a man in the midst of each nine of them,' 'Fair is this plain, the plain of the noble yoke,' said Cuchulaind, 'No one comes to this plain,' said she, 'who does not meet Benn Suain, the son of Roscmelc, from summer's end to the beginning of spring, from the beginning of spring to May-day, from May-day to the beginning of winter.' 'It is said, it shall be done,' said Cuchulaind. 'It is offered, it is granted, it is taken, it is accepted,' said Emer. 'A question. What is the account of thee?' said she, 'I am the nephew (nia) of the man that disappears in another in the wood of Badb,' said he. 'And what is thy name?' said she: 'I am the hero (núadu) of the plague that befalls dogs,' said he.

After those noble words, Cuchulaind went from them, and they did not hold any further converse on that day. When Cuchulaind was driving across Bray, Loeg, his charioteer, asked him: 'Now,' said he, 'the words which thou and the maiden Emer spoke, what did you mean by them?' 'Dost thou not know,' answered Cuchulaind, 'that I am wooing Emer? And it is for this reason that we disguised our words lest the girls should understand that I am wooing her, for if Forgall knew it, we should not meet with his consent.'

Cuchulaind then repeated the conversation from the beginning to his charioteer, explaining it to him, to beguile the length of their way. 'By Intide Emna which I said when she asked me 'whence hast thou come?' I meant from Emain Macha. It is called Emain Macha from this, Macha the daughter of Sainreth Mac in Botha, wife of Crundchu, son of Agnomon, ran a race against two steeds of the king, after she had been forced to it by a strong injunction. She beat them, and bare a boy and a girl at one birth. And from those twins (emuin) is called, and from that Macha is named the plain of Macha.'

'Or again, it is from this that Emain Macha is, as it is in the following tale. Three kings were reigning together over Erinn. They were from Ulster, viz. Dithorba, son of Diman, from Uisnech of Meath, Aed the Red, son of Badurn, son of Aircet the Bald, in the land of Aed, Cimbaeth, son of Findairget, from Finnabair of Mag Inis. It is he who brought up Ugaine the Great, son of Eochu the Victorious. Then the men made an agreement, that each of them was to reign seven years. Three times seven

sureties were pledged between them, seven druids to revile them forever; or seven poets to lampoon, and satirise, and upbraid them; seven chiefs to wound them and burn them; unless each man gave up his reign at the end of seven years, having preserved true government, viz. the produce of each year, without decay of any kind, and without the death of a woman from concubinage. Each of them reigned three times in his turn, during sixty-six years. Aed the Red was the first of them to die, or rather he was drowned in Ess Ruaid, and his body was taken into the sid there, whence Sid Aeda, and Ess Ruaid. He left no children, except one daughter, whose name was Macha the Red-haired. She demanded the kingship in its due time. Cimbaeth and Dithorba said they would not give kingship to a woman. A battle was fought between them. Macha routed them. She was sovereign for seven years. Meanwhile Dithorba had fallen. He left five noble sons behind, Baeth and Brass and Betach, Uallach and Borbchass. These now demanded the kingship Macha said she would not give it to them, 'for not by favour did I obtain it,' said she, 'but by force in the battlefield.' A battle was fought between them. Macha routed the sons of Dithorba, who left a slaughter of heads before her, and went into exile in the wilds of Connaught. Macha then took Cimbaeth to her as her husband, and leader of her troops. When now Macha and Cimbaeth were united, Macha went to seek the sons of Dithorba in the shape of a leper, viz. she smeared herself with rye-dough and [...]

. She found them in Buirend Connacht, cooking a wild boar. The men asked tidings of her, and she gave them. And they let her have food by the fire. Said one of them: 'Lovely is the eye of the girl, let us lie with her.' He took her with him into the wood. She bound that man by dint of her strength, and left him in the wood. She came back to the fire. 'Where is the man who went with thee?' they asked. 'He is ashamed to come to you,' she replied, 'after having lain with a leper.' 'There is no shame,' said they, 'for we shall all do the same.' Each man took her into the wood. She bound every one of them, one after the other and brought them all in one chain to Ulster. The men of Ulster wanted to kill them. 'No,' said she, 'for that would be the ruin of my true government. But they shall be thralls, and shall dig a rath round me, and that shall be the eternal seat of Ulster for ever.' Then she marked out the dun for them with her brooch, viz., a golden pin on her neck, i.e., a brooch on the neck of Macha (eo imma muin Macha). Hence is Emain Macha in truth.'

'The man, I said, in whose house we slept, he is the fisherman of Conchobor. Roncu is his name. It is he that catches the fish on his line under the sea; for the fish are the cattle of the sea, and the sea is the plain of Tethra, a king of the kings of the Fomori.'

'The cooking-hearth, I said. A foal was cooked for us on it. A foal is the ruin of a chariot to the end of three weeks[23]  
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and there is a gess on a chariot to the end of three weeks for any man to enter it after having last eaten horse-flesh. For it is the horse that sustains the chariot.'

'Between the two Mountains of the Wood[24] I said. These are the two mountains between which we came, viz., Sliab Fuait[25] to the west of us, and Sliab Cuilinn[26] to the east of us. We were in Oircel[27] between them, i.e., the wood which is between them, viz., on the road I meant between the two.'

'The road, I said, viz., from the Covering of the Sea, i.e., from the Plain of Murthemne.'[28] The sea

was on it for thirty years after the deluge, whence is Teme Mara, i.e., the shelter, or covering of the sea. Or again, it is from this that it is called the Plain of Murthemne, viz., a magic sea was on it with [...] in it, so that one could sit on it, so that a man with his armour might sit down on the ground of [...] until the Dagda came with his club of anger, and sang the following words at it, so that it ebbed away at once:

Silent thy hollow head,  
Silent thy dirty body,  
Silent thy  
[...]  
brow.

‘Over the Great Secret of the men of Dea, i.e., a wonderful secret and a wonderful whisper. It is called the Marsh of Dolluid<sup>[29]</sup> to-day. Dolluid, son of Carpre Niafer, was wounded by Matu. Before that, however, its name was Great Secret of the Men of Dea, because it was there that the gathering of the battle of Moytura was first planned by the Tuatha De Danann, for the purpose of throwing off the tribute which the Fomori exacted from them, viz., two-thirds of corn and milk and offspring.’

‘Over the Foam of the Two Steeds of Emain. There was a famous youth reigning over the Gaels. He had two horses reared for him in Sid Eremon of the Tuatha Dea. Nemed, son of Nama, was the name of that king. Then those two horses were let loose from the Sid, and a splendid stream burst after them from the Sid, and there was great foam on that stream, and the foam spread over the land for a great length of time, and was thus to the end of a year, so that hence that water was called Uanub, i.e., foam on the water, and it is Uanub to-day.’

‘The Garden of the Morrigan, I said, that is Ochtur Netmon. The Dagda gave that land to the Morrigan, and she lived there. After a year she killed Ibor Boiclid, son of Garb, in her garden. The [...] which her garden grew were [...] in that year, for the son of Garb was her relation.’

‘The Back of the Great Sow I said, that is Druimm n-Ebreg. For the shape of a sow appeared to the sons of Milid on every hill and on every height in Erinn, when they came over and wanted to land in it by force, after a spell had been cast on it by the Tuatha De Danann.’

‘The Glen of the Great Dam I said, i.e., Glenn m-Breogain, viz. Glenn m-Breogain and Moy Bray were named after Breoga, son of Breogann Sendacht, son of Milid. It was called Glen of the Great Dam, because Dam of Dile, son of Smirgoll, son of Tethra, who was king over Erinn, lived there. This Dam died in [...] a woman [...] of Moy Bray to the west to the mouth [...]

‘The road, I said, between the god and his Seer, viz., between Mac Oc of the Sid of the Brug and his seer, viz., Bresal was a seer to the west of the Brug. Between them was the one woman, the wife of the Smith.[30] That is the way I went. Mairne, then, is between the hill of the Sid of the Brug in which Oengus is, and the Sid of Bresal, the druid.’

‘Over the Marrow of the Woman Fedelm I said, i.e., the Boyne. It is called Boyne from Boand, the wife of Nechtan, son of Labraid. She went to guard the hidden well at the bottom of the dun with the three cupbearers of Nechtan, viz., Flex and Lesc and Luam. Nobody came without blemish from that well, unless the three cupbearers went with him. The queen went out of pride and overbearing to the well, and said nothing would ruin her shape, nor put a blemish on her. She passed left-hand-wise round the well to deride its power. Then three waves broke over her, and smashed her two thighs and her right hand and one of her eyes. She ran out of the Sid to escape from this injury; until she came to the sea. Wherever she ran, the well ran after her. Segais was its name in the Sid, the river Segsa from the Sid to the Pool of Mochua, the Arm of the Wife of Nuadu and the Thigh of the Wife of Nuadu after that, the Boyne in Meath, Manchuing Arcait it is called from the Finda to the Troma, the Marrow of the Woman Fedelm from the Troma to the sea.’

‘The Boar (triath) I said and his Dam, that is Cleitech and Fessi. For triath is the name for a boar, the leader of herds; but it is also a name for a king, the leader of the great host. Cleitech then is [...]

of battle. Fessi, again, is a name for a great sow of a farmer's house. A boar and his dam, and between a boar and his sow then we went.’

‘The King of Ana, I said, and his Servant (gnia), i.e., Cerna through which we passed. Sid Cirine was its name of old. Cerna is its name since the [...]

viz., Enna Aigneach, slew Cerna, the king of Ana on that hill, and he slew his steward in the east of that place. Gnia was his name, from which is Rath Gniad in Cerna ever. On Gese, the king of the sons of Emne, did Enna do it, for there was great friendship between Gese and Cerna.’

‘The Washing of the Horses of Dea I said, i.e. Ange. The Washing of the Horses of Dea was its name originally, because in it the Men of Dea washed their horses when they came from the battle of Moytura. It was called Ange after the king whose horses the Tuatha De Danann washed in it.’

‘The four-cornered Mannchuile I said, that is Muin Chille. It is there where Mann the farmer was. There was a great mortality of cattle in Erinn in the reign of Bresal Brecc, son of Fiachu Fobrecc of Leinster. Then Mann made large deep chambers underground in the place which is called Uachtar Mannchuile to-day. And [...]

were made to keep off the plague. Afterwards he gave an entertainment to the king with twenty-four couples to the end of seven years, Mannchuile, then, are the corners of Mann, i.e. Ochtar Muinchille.’

‘Great Crime again, I said, i.e. Ailbine.[31] There was a famous king here in Erinn, viz., Ruad, son of

Rigdond, of Munster. He had an appointment of meeting with foreigners.[32] He went to the meeting with the foreigners round the south of Alba [33] with three ships. Thirty were in each ship. The fleet was arrested from below in the midst of the sea. Throwing jewels and precious things into the sea did not get them off. Lots were cast among them for who should go into the sea and find out what it was that held them fast. The lot fell upon the king himself. Then the king Ruad, son of Rigdond, leapt into the sea. The sea at once closed over him. He lighted upon a large plain on which nine beautiful women met him. They confessed to him that it had been they that had arrested the ships, in order that he should come to them. And they gave him nine vessels of gold to sleep with them for nine nights, one night with each of them. He did so. Meanwhile his men were not able to proceed quickly through the power of the women. Said one woman of them it was her time of conceiving, and she would bear a son, and he would come to them to fetch his son on his return from the east. Then he joined his men, and they went on their voyage. They stayed with their friends to the end of seven years, and then went back a different way and did not go near the same spot. And they landed in the bay of Ailbine. There the women came up to them. The men heard their music in their brazen ship. While they were stowing their fleet, the women came ashore and put the boy out of their ship on the land where the men were. The harbour was stony and rocky. Then the boy

[...]  
one of the stones, so that he died of it. The women saw it and cried all together: Ollbine, Ollbine! i.e. 'great crime'. Hence it is called Ailbine.'

'The Remnants of the Great Feast I said, that is Taillne;[34] It is there that Lug Scimaig gave the great feast to Lug, son of Ethle, to comfort him after the battle of Moytura, for that was his wedding feast of kingship. For the Tuath Dea made this Lug king after Nuada been killed. As to the place in which their remnants were put, he made a large hill of them. The name was Knoll of the Great Feast, or Remnants of the Great Feast, i.e. Taillne to-day.'

'Of the daughters of Tethra's nephew, viz., Forgall the Wily is the nephew of Tethra, king of the Fomori, viz., the son of his sister, for nia and a sister's son is the same, and a champion is also called nia.'

'As to the account of myself I gave her. There are two rivers in the land of Ross,[35] Conchobor is the name of one of them, and Dofolt (i.e., without hair, bald) the name of the other. Now the Conchobor falls into the Dofolt, viz., it mixes with it, so that they are one river.' 'I am the nephew (nia) of that man, viz. of Conchobor, i.e. I am the son of Dechtire, Conchobor's sister, or I am a champion of Conchobor's.'

'In the Wood of Badb, i.e. of the Morrighu, for that is her wood, viz. the land of Ross, and she is the Battle-Crow and is called the Wife of Neit, i.e. the Goddess of Battle, for Neit is the same as God of Battle.'

'The name I said I had: 'I am the hero (núadu) of the plague that befalls dogs.[36] I am núadu, i.e. I am a strong warrior of that plague, viz. I am wild and fierce in battles and fights.'

'When I said: 'Fair is this plain, the plain of the noble yoke,' it was not the plain of Bray that I praised then, but the shape of the maiden. For I beheld the yoke of her two breasts through the opening of her smock, and it is of that I said 'plain of the noble yoke', of the breasts of the maiden.'

'When she said: 'No one comes to this plain, who does not kill as many as argat,' viz. argat in the language of the poets means 'a hundred'; that is the interpretation, and this is what it means, that it is not easy to carry off the maiden, unless I slay a hundred men at each ford from Ailbine to the Boyne, together with Scennmenn the Wily, the sister of her father, who will change herself into every shape there, to destroy my chariot and to bring about my death,' said Cuchulaind.

'Geni grainde she said, i.e., she would not come with me, unless I jumped the hero's salmon-leap across the three ramparts to reach her. For three brothers of hers will be guarding her, viz., Ibur and Scibur and Catt; and a company of nine each of them, and I must deal a blow on each nine from which eight will die, but no stroke will reach any of her brothers among them; and I must carry her and her fostersister with their load of gold and silver out of the dun of Forgall.'

'Bend Suain, son of Rosc Mele, which she said this is the same thing, viz., that I shall fight without harm to myself from Samuin, i.e., the end of summer. For two divisions were formerly on the year, viz., summer from Beltaine (the first of May), and winter from Samuin to Beltaine. Or sainfuin, viz., suain (sounds), for it is then that gentle voices sound, viz., sám-son 'gentle sound'. To Oimolc, i.e., the beginning of spring, viz., different (ime) is its wet (folc), viz the wet of spring, and the wet of winter. Or, oi-melc, viz., oi, in the language of poetry, is a name for sheep, whence oibá (sheep's death) is named, ut dicitur coinbá (dog's death), echbá (horse's death), duineba (men's death), as bath is a name for 'death'. Oi-melc, then, is the time in which the sheep come out and are milked, whence oisc (a ewe), i.e., oisc viz., barren sheep. To Beldine, i.e. Beltine, viz., a favouring fire. For the druids used to make two fires with great incantations, and to drive the cattle between them against the plagues, every year. Or to Beldin, viz., Bel the name of an idol. At that time the young of every neat were placed in the possession of Bel. Beldine, then Beltine. To Brón Trogaill, i.e. Lammas-day, viz., the beginning of autumn; for it is then the earth is afflicted, viz., the earth under fruit. Trogam is a name for 'earth.'

Cuchulaind went driving on his way, and slept that night in Emain Macha. Then their daughters told the lords of land of the youth that had come in his splendid chariot, and of the conversation which he and Emer had held; that they did not know what they had said to one another, and that he had turned from them across the plain of Bray northward. Then the lords of land tell Forgall the Wily that, and that the girl had spoken to him. 'It is true,' said Forgall the Wily. 'The madman from Emain Macha has been here to converse with Emer, and the girl has fallen in love with him, and that is why they talked to one another. But it shall avail them nothing. I shall hinder them from getting what they wish.'

Thereupon Forgall the Wily went towards Emain Macha in the garb of a foreigner, as if it were an embassy from the King of the Foreigners that came to confer with Conchobor, with an offering to him of golden treasures of the White Foreigners,<sup>[37]</sup> and all sorts of good things besides. Their number was three. Great welcome was made to him then. When he had sent away his men on the third day, Cuchulaind and Conall and other chariot-chiefs of the men of Ulster were praised before him. He said that it was true, and that the chariot-chiefs performed marvellously, but that were Cuchulaind to go to Domnall the Soldierly in Alba; his skill would be the more marvellous, and if he went to Scathach to learn soldierly feats, he would excel the warriors of all Europe. But it was for this that he proposed it to Cuchulaind, that he might not come back again. For he thought that if Cuchulaind was in her friendship, he would get death thereby, through the wildness and fierceness of the warrior yonder, and [...].

Cuchulaind consented to go, and Forgall bound himself that were he to go in that time, he would give to Cuchulaind whatever he wished. Forgall went home, and the warriors arose in the morning and set themselves to do what they had vowed. They went, namely Cuchulaind and Loegaire the Victorious and Conchobor, and Conall Cernach, say some, went with them

Cuchulaind then went across Bray to visit the maiden. He spoke with Emer before he went in his ship. The maiden told him that it was Forgall who had desired him in Emain to go to learn soldierly feats, in order that Emer and he might not meet. And she told him to be on his guard wherever he went, lest he should destroy him. Each of them promised the other to keep their chastity until they met again, unless either of them should get death thereby. They bade farewell to each other, and he turned towards Alba.

When they had arrived at Domnall's, they were taught by him to blow a leathern bellows under the flagstone of the small hole. They would perform on it till their soles were black or livid. They were taught another thing on a spear, on which they would jump and perform on its point, viz., the champion's coiling round the points of spears, or dropping on its head. Then the daughter of Domnall, Dornolla by name, fell in love with Cuchulaind. Her form was very gruesome, her knees were large, her heels turned before her, her feet behind her, big dark-grey eyes in her head, her face as black as a bowl of jet. She had a very strong forehead, her rough bright-red hair in threads round her head. Cuchulaind refused to lie with her. Then she swore to be revenged on him for this.

Domnall said Cuchulaind would not have true knowledge of what was taught until he went to Scathach, who lived eastward of Alba. So the four went across Alba, viz., Cuchulaind, and Conchobor, the King of Ulster, and Conall Cernach, and Loegaire the Victorious. Then before their eyes appeared unto them Emain Macha. Now Conchobor and Conall and Loegaire were not able to go past it. The daughter of Domnall had raised that vision in order to sever Cuchulaind from his companions to his ruin.

This is what other versions say, that it was Forgall the Wily who raised this vision before them to make them turn back, so that Cuchulaind through his returning should not fulfil what he had promised him in Emain, and thus would he be shamed thereby; or were he peradventure to go east to learn soldierly feats, both known and unknown [...] of Aife, he should all the more get death through being alone.

Then of his own will, Cuchulaind went away from them on an unknown road [...] For the powers of the girl were great, and she wrought evil against him, and severed him from his companions. Now, when Cuchulaind went across to Alba, he was sad and gloomy and weary for the loss of his comrades, for he knew whither he should go to seek Scathach. For he had promised his comrades not to return again to Emain, unless he had reached Scathach, or found death. When he saw that he was astray and ignorant, he lingered.

While he was there, he beheld a terrible great beast like a lion coming towards him, which kept regarding him, nor did him any harm. Whatever way he went, the beast went before him, and moreover it turned its side towards him. Then he took a leap and was on its neck. He did not guide it then, but went wherever the beast liked. Four days they went in that wise, until they came to the bounds of dwellers, and to an island where lads were rowing on a small loch. They laughed at the

unwonted sight of the hurtful beast yonder doing service to a man. Cuchulaind then leaped off, and the beast parted from him, and he blessed it.

He then went on, and came to a large house in a great glen. There he met a maiden of fair make in the house. The maiden addressed him and bade him welcome, 'Welcome thy coming oh Cuchulaind!' said she. He asked whence she knew him. She answered that they both had been dear foster-children with Ulbeccan Sexa, 'when I was there and thou learning sweet speech from him,' said she. The maiden gave him to drink and to eat, and then he turned from her.

He then met a brave youth who made the same welcome to him. They exchanged converse between them. Cuchulaind was asking to know the way to the dun of Scathach. The youth taught him the way across the Plain of Ill-luck which lay before him. On the hither half of the plain the feet of men would stick fast. On the further half the grass would rise and hold them fast on the points of its blades. The youth gave him a wheel and told him to follow its track thence across one-half of the plain. Then he gave him an apple, and told him to follow the ground where the apple would run, and that in such wise he would reach the far end of the plain. Thus Cuchulaind went across the plain. He then proceeded further. The youth had also told him there was a large glen before him, and a single narrow path through it which was full of monsters that had been sent by Forgall to destroy him, and that was his road to the house of Scathach across terrible high strong districts.

Each of them then wished a blessing to the other, Cuchulaind and the youth Eochu Bairche. He it was who taught him how he should win honour in the house of Scathach. The same youth also foretold him what he would suffer of hardships and straits in the Cattle-spoil of Cualgne. He also told him what evil and exploits and contests he would achieve against the men of Erin.

Then Cuchulaind went on that road across the Plain of Ill-luck and through the Perilous Glen as the youth had taught him. This was the road which Cuchulaind took, to the camp where the scholars of Scathach were. He asked where she was. 'In yonder island,' said they. 'Which way must I go to her?' said he. 'By the Bridge of the Cliff,' said they, 'and no man can cross it before he has achieved valour.' For on this wise was that bridge. It had two low heads and the mid space, and whenever anybody would leap on its one head, the other head would lift itself up and throw him on his back. This is what some versions relate here, that a crowd of the warriors of Erin were in that dun learning feats from Scathach, viz. Ferdia, son of Daman, and Noise, son of Usnech, and Lochmor, son of Egomas, and Fiamain, son of Fora, and an innumerable host besides. But it is not told in this version that they were there at that time.

Cuchulaind then tried three times to cross the bridge, and could not do it. The men jeered at him. Then he grew mad and jumped on the head of the bridge, and made the hero's salmon leap so that he got on its midst. And the other head of the bridge had not yet fully raised itself when he reached it, and threw himself from it, and was on the ground of the island. He went to the dun, and struck the door with the shaft of his spear, so that it went through it. Scathach was then told. 'True,' said she, 'someone who has achieved valour somewhere else.' And from her she sent her daughter to know who the youth was. Then Uathach, the daughter of Scathach, went forth. She looked at him, but did not speak to him, so much did the striking shape which she saw on the youth move her desire. She went back to where her mother was, and praised to her the man whom she had seen. 'The man has pleased thee,' said her mother, 'I see it by thee.' 'It is true,' said the maiden, 'He has pleased me,' said she, 'but sleep thou with him to-night; if that is what thou askest.' 'It is indeed

not unpleasant to me,' said Scathach, 'if it be thy own will.'

Then the maiden served him with water and food, and looked to his pleasure. She made him boldly welcome in the shape of a servant (?) viz., profiting by it. Cuchulaind took hold of her, and broke her finger. The maiden shrieked. The whole household came to help, and the people of the dun also. Then arose also a champion against him, viz. Cochar Cruifne, a warrior of Scathach's. He and Cuchulaind attacked each other, and fought together for a long time. Then the champion remembered his feats of valour, and Cuchulaind returned them as if he had been taught them from his youth, and the champion fell by him, and he struck his head off. Sorrowful was the woman Scathach at this. Then Cuchulaind said to her he would take upon himself the work and service of the man that had fallen, so that he was the leader of her host and her champion in his stead. And Uathach then came and conversed with Cuchulaind.

On the third day the maiden advised Cuchulaind, that if it was to achieve valour that he had come, he should go through the hero's salmon-leap at Scathach, where she was teaching her two sons, Cuar and Cett, in the great yew tree, when she was there; that he should then set his sword between her two breasts until she gave him his three wishes, viz., to teach him without neglect, and that he might wed her (Uathach) without the payment of the wedding gift, and to tell him what would befall him; for she was a prophetess.

Then Cuchulaind went to the place where Scathach was. He placed his two feet on the two edges of the basket of the cless, and bared his sword, and put its point to her heart, saying: 'Death over thee!' said he, 'Thy three wishes from me!' said she, viz., 'thy three wishes as thou canst utter them in one breath,' 'They shall be taken,' said Cuchulaind. He then pledged her. Other versions say here Cuchulaind took Scathach with him to the shore, and lay with her there, and slept with her, and that it was then that she sang this, prophesying to him everything that would befall him, saying: 'Welcome, oh  
[...]  
' etc. But that is not told thus after this account.

Uathach then slept with Cuchulaind, and Scathach taught him skill of arms. During the time that he was with Scathach and the husband of Uathach, her daughter, a certain famous man who lived in Munster, viz. Lugaid, son of Nos, son of Alamac, the renowned king, and fosterbrother of Cuchulaind, went eastward with twelve chariot-chiefs of the high kings of Munster, to woo twelve maidens of the men of Mac Rossa. All these were betrothed to men before. When Forgall the Wily heard this, he went to Tara, and said to Lugaid that the best maiden in Erin, both in shape and chastity and handiwork, was living with him unmarried. Lugaid said it pleased him well. Then Forgall betrothed the maiden to the king; and the twelve daughters of the twelve lords of land in Bray besides to the twelve under-kings that were together with Lugaid.

The king went along with Forgall to his dun for the wedding. When now Emer was brought to Lugaid to sit by his side, she took in both her hands his two cheeks, and laid it on the troth of his honour and his life and confessed that it was Cuchulaind she loved, that Forgall was against it, that it was loss of honour for anyone to take her to wife. Then, from fear of Cuchulaind, Lugaid did not dare to sleep with Emer, and he returned home again.

Scathach was at that time carrying on war against other tribes over which the Princess Aife was ruling. Then the two hosts assembled to fight. Cuchulaind was put in bonds by Scathach, and a sleeping potion had been given him before, that he might not go to the battle lest anything should happen to him there. As a precaution (?) she did this. Then forthwith out of his sleep started Cuchulaind after an hour. While anybody else would have slept twenty-four hours with this sleeping potion, it was only one hour for him.

He then went with the two sons of Scathach against the three sons of Ilsuanach, viz., Cuar and Cett and Cruife, three warriors of Aife's. Alone he met them all three, and they fell by him. There was a meeting in battle on the next morning, and both hosts went until the two arrays were face to face. Then went the three sons of Esse Enchinde, viz. Cire and Bire and Blaicne, three other warriors of Aife, and began combat against the two sons of Scathach. They went on the path of feats. Scathach uttered a sigh at this, for she knew not what would come of it, first, as there was no third man with her two sons against those three and then she was afraid of Aife, because, she was the hardest woman-warrior in the world. Then Cuchulaind went up to her two sons, and sprang on the path, and met them all three, and they fell by him.

Aife challenged Scathach to combat, Cuchulaind went up before Aife, and asked what it was she loved most. Scathach said: 'What she loves most,' said she, 'is her two horses and her chariot and her charioteer.' Cuchulaind and Aife went on the path of feats and began combat there. Then Aife shattered Cuchulaind's weapon so that his sword was no longer than his fist 'Ah,' cried he, 'the charioteer of Aife and her two horses and her chariot have fallen down in the glen, and have all perished!' At that Aife looked up. Then Cuchulaind approached her, seized her at her two breasts, took her on his back like a shoulder-load, and carried her with him to his own host. Then he threw her from him to the ground, and placed his bare sword over him. And Aife said: 'Life for life, oh Cuchulaind!' 'My three wishes to me!' said he, 'Thou shalt have them, as they come with thy breath,' said she. 'These are my three wishes,' said he, 'thou to give hostage to Scathach, without ever afterwards opposing her, thou to be with me this night before thy dun, and to bear me a son,' 'I promise it all thus,' said she. It was done in that wise.

Cuchulaind then went with Aife and slept with her that night. Then Aife said she was with child, and that she would bear a boy. 'I shall send him this day seven year to Erinn,' said she, 'and do thou leave a name for him,' Cuchulaind left a golden finger-ring for him, and said to her that he should go and seek him in Erinn, when the ring would fit on his finger. And he said that Conla was the name to be given to him, and told her that he should not make himself known to anyone, that he should not go out or the way of any man, nor refuse combat to any man.

Thereupon Cuchulaind returned back again to his own people and came along the same road. He met an old woman on the road who was blind of her left eye. She asked him to beware and not be on the road before her. He said there was no room for a footing for him save on the cliff of the sea which was beneath him. She besought him to leave the road to her. Then he left the road except that his toes clung to it. When she passed over him she hit his great toe to throw him off the path down the cliff. He noticed it and leapt the hero's salmon-leap up again, and struck the woman's head off. She was the mother of the three last warriors that had fallen by him, viz., Esse Enchinde, and in order to destroy him had come to meet him.

Thereafter the hosts went with Scathach to her own land, and hostages were given to her by Aife. And Cuchulaind stayed there for the day of his recovery.

After the full lore of his soldierly arts with Scathach had passed for Cuchulaind—as well as the apple-feat, the thunder-feat, the blade-feat, the fœn-feat, and the spear-feat, the rope-feat, the body-feat, the cat's feat, the salmon-feat of a chariot-chief, the throw of the staff, the jump over [...], the whirl of a brave chariot-chief, the spear of the bellows,[38] the boi of swiftiness, the wheel-feat, the othar-feat, the breath-feat, the brud game, the hero's whoop, the blow [...], the counter-blow, running up a lance and righting the body on its point, the scythe-chariot, and the hero's twisting round the points of spears,—then came a message to him to return to his own land, and he took leave. Then Scathach told him what would befall him in the future, and sang to him in the seer's large shining ken,[39] and spake these words:

‘Welcome, oh victorious, warlike  
[...].’[40]

Then Cuchulainn went in his ship to reach Erin. This was the crew of the one ship, viz., Lugaid and Luan Da Mac Loich and Ferbaeth and Larin and Ferdiad and Drust, son of Serb. They went to the house of Ruad, King of the Isles, on Samuin night.[41] There were there before them Conall Cernach and Loegaire Buadach levying the tribute; for there was tribute at that time from the Isles of the Foreigners to the men of Ulster.[42]

Then Cuchulaind heard a wailing before him in the dun of the king. ‘What lament is that?’ said Cuchulaind, ‘the daughter of Ruad is taken as tribute to the Fomori,’ said they, ‘It is therefore that the wailing is in the dun.’ ‘Where is the maiden?’ said he. ‘She is on the shore below,’ said they. Cuchulaind went until he was near the maiden on the strand. He asked tidings of her. The maiden told him fully. ‘Whence do the men come?’ said he, ‘From that distant island yonder,’ said she. ‘Be not here in sight of the robbers.’ He remained there awaiting them and killed the three Fomori in single combat. But the last man wounded him at the wrist. The maiden gave him a strip from her garment round his wound. He then went away without making himself known to the maiden.

The maiden came to the dun and told her father the whole story. Thereafter Cuchulaind came to the dun like every other guest. Then Conall and Loegaire welcomed him. Many in the dun boasted of having killed the Fomori, but the maiden did not believe them. A bath was then prepared by the king, and each one was brought to her separately. Then Cuchulaind came like everybody else, and the maiden recognized him, ‘I shall give the maiden to thee.’ said Ruad, ‘and I shall pay her wedding-gift myself.’ ‘Not so,’ said Cuchulaind. ‘Let her come this day year to Erin after me, if it be pleasant to her, and she will find me there.’

Cuchulaind then came to Emain and told his adventures there. When he had cast his fatigue from him, he set out for the rath of Forgall to seek Emer. He was a whole year near it but could not approach her for the number of the watch. He came then at the end of the year, ‘It is to-day, oh Laeg,’ said Cuchulaind, ‘we have our meeting with the daughter of Ruad, but we know not the exact place, for we were not wise. Let us go,’ said he, ‘to the border of the land.’

When they were on the shore of Loch Cuan,[43] they beheld two birds on the sea. Cuchulaind put a stone in his sling and aimed at the birds. The men ran up to them after having hit one of the birds. When they came up to them this is what they saw, two women, the most beautiful in the world. These were Derbforgaill, the daughter of Ruad, and her handmaid. 'Evil is the deed thou hast done, oh Cuchulaind,' said she. 'It was to meet thee we came, though thou hast hurt us.' Cuchulaind sucked the stone out of her with its clot of blood round it. 'I shall not wed thee now,' said Cuchulaind, 'for I have drunk thy blood. But I shall give thee to my companion here, viz., to Lugaid of the Red Stripes.' And it was done thus.

Cuchulaind then wanted to go to the rath of Forgall. And the scythe-chariot was prepared for Cuchulaind that day. It was called scythe-chariot (carpat serrda) from the iron scythes that were from it, or again because it was first invented by the Serians.

He then arrived at the rath of Forgall, and jumped the hero's salmon-leap across the three ramparts, so that he was on the ground of the dun. And he dealt three blows in the liss, so that eight men fell from each blow, and one man escaped in the midst of each group of nine, viz., Scibur and Ibur and Cat, three brothers of Emer. Forgall then made a leap on to the rampart of the rath without, in fleeing from Cuchulaind, and he fell and was without life. Cuchulaind took Emer with him and her foster-sister, with their two loads of gold and silver, and took a leap back again across the third rampart with the two maidens and went forth.

Cries were raised around them from every direction. Scennmend[44] rushed against them, Cuchulaind killed her[45] on the ford, which is hence called the Ford of Scennmend, Thence they came to Glondath. There Cuchulaind killed hundred men of them. 'Great is the deed (glond) which thou hast done,' said Emer, 'to have killed hundred armed able-bodied men,' 'Glond-Áth shall be its name for ever,' said Cuchulaind.

He reached Cru Foit (Blood-turf). Its name was originally Rae-bán (White Field) until then. He dealt great angry blows on the hosts in that place, so that the streams of blood broke over it on each side. 'The height is a turf of blood through thee today, oh Cuchulaind.' cried the maiden. So hence it is called Crúfoit, viz., Cró-fót i.e., Turf of Blood. The pursuers overtook them at Ath n-Imfúait on the Boyne. Emer left the chariot. Cuchulaind made a chase on the shore, so that the clods flew from the hoofs of the horses across the ford northward. He made another chase northward so that the clods flew from the hoofs of the horses over the ford southward. Hence it is called Ford of the Two Clods, from the clods hither and thither.

Now Cuchulaind killed one hundred on each ford from Ath Scennmend at Ollbine to the Boyne of Bray, and he fulfilled all the deeds that he had vowed to the maiden, and he came safely out of it, and reached Emain Macha towards the darkness of that night. Emer was brought into the Red Branch to Conchobor and to the men of Ulster, and they bade her welcome. There was a grim evil-tongued man of the men of Ulster in the house, viz., Bricriu of the Venomous Tongue, the son of Arba. It was then he said: 'Forsooth, it will be disagreeable to Cuchulaind what will happen to-night, viz., the woman whom he brought with him will sleep with Conchobor. For with him is the deflowering of virgins before the men of Ulster ever.' Cuchulaind grew mad when he heard that, and shook himself so that the cushion burst which was under him, and its feathers were flying

about the house. He went out then.

‘This is very hard,’ said Cathbad, ‘but it is an ordinance to the king to do everything that Bricriu has said. Cuchulaind will slay him that will sleep with his wife.’ ‘Let Cuchulaind be called to us,’ said Conchobar, ‘to know if we can soothe his wrath.’ Then Cuchulaind came. ‘Arise,’ said Conchobar, ‘and bring me the herds that I have in Slieve Fuait.’ Then Cuchulaind went, and drove together whatever he found in Slieve Fuait of swine and stags, and of every sort of fowl game besides, and drove them in one drove with him to the meadow of Emain. Then his wrath had departed from him.

A council was held by the men of Ulster about this affair. This was the resolution they arrived at, that Emer was to sleep that night with Conchobar, and Fergus and Cathbad in one bed with them to watch over the honour of Cuchulaind, and the men of Ulster should bless him if he accepted it. He did accept it, and it was done thus. Conchobar paid Emer's wedding gift on the morrow, and Cuchulaind's honour price was paid, and he slept then with his wife, and they did not separate after that until they both died.

Then the chieftainry of the youths of Ulster was given to Cuchulaind. These were the youths in Emain at that time, about whom the poet spoke, setting forth their names:

The youths of Emain, the fairest host,  
When they were in the Red Branch,  
Furbaide—white the rod—with Cuscraid and Cormac.  
Conaing, Glasni, Glan, Fiachaig, and Findchad,  
Cuchulaind, hard as steel and bright, the victorious son of Dechtire,  
Fiachna, Follomain was there, Cacht, Mane, Crimthand,  
The Seven Manes of Sliab in Chon, Bres, Nar, Lothor,  
The six sons of Fergus were there, Ilarchless, Illand,  
Fiamain, Bunne, Bri, Mul, Claidbech, Conri,  
Laegaire Cass, Conall Claen, and the two Ethers noble and fair.  
Mesdiad and Mesdedad, the beloved children of Amargen Giunnach,  
Comchraid the son of Cas, from Sliab Smoil, Conchraid the son of Bad Bernad Broin,  
Conchraid the son of the Derg, the son of Find, Conchraid Suana the son of Sailcend.

p.307

Aed the son of Findderg, Ollach Brec, Aed, the son of Findach, a host of strength,  
Aed the son of Conall, Cirrid Oath, Aed the son of Dond, Aed the son of Duach, Fergus the  
son of Lete, a bright festival, Fergus the son of Derg, the son of Dare,  
Fergus the son of Ross—the verses say—Fergus the son of Dub, the son of Crimthand.  
The three sons of Traiglethan—strong renown—Siduad, Currech and Carman.  
The three sons of Uslend of the Battles, Naise and Anle and Ardan,  
The three Flands, the three Finds, the three Conns of Ciul, the names of the nine sons of  
Sceol,  
The three Faelans, the three Colla Cain, the three sons of Niall, the three sons of Sitgal.  
Lon and Iliach, the most beautiful men, the foster-brothers of Cormac Crichid.  
The three Dondgas the sons of Mac Rossa, the three Dungas, the three Daelgos.  
The poets of Cormac Ciul, the nine sons of Lir, son of Eterscel,

His three pipers—fair the deed—Find, Eochaid, and Illand.  
His horn-blowers of music next, the two Aeds and Firgein.  
Three jesters to make sharp remarks, Athirne and Drec and Drobél.  
His three distributors of renown, Find, Eruath, and Fatemain.  
Three grandsons of Cletech—bright perfection—Uath, Urud and Aslinge.  
Aed Eochaid, renowned of Emain, the two fair sons of Ilgabla,  
The son of Bricriu who  
[...]  
with the youths of Emain.

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1. The following tale, of which a translation is here for the first time attempted, belongs to the oldest, or heroic, cycle of early Irish literature. Its central figures were the Ulster King Conchobor and Cuchulaind, the hero of his war band and of the people. Several versions have come down to us, on which see Jubainville, *Catalogue de la Littérature Epique de L'Irlande*, p. 227. My translation is based on the fragment in the *Lebor na h-Uidre* (compiled about 1050 A.D.) and on a complete version in the *Stowe MS. 992* (compiled in 1300 A.D.). The tales of the heroic cycle were written down perhaps as early as the sixth century; at any rate the literary activity of the Irish monks turned early to the preservation of their national literature. But, with the exception of three ecclesiastical MSS. and the old Irish MSS, of the Continent, the whole of this literature was destroyed by the Norse invaders of Ireland; who 'burnt and threw into the water' all MSS. that they found in the monasteries. See *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, ed. Todd, p. 139. When, however, in the eleventh century, a period of comparative quiet followed, the monks once more set to work to resume what was left of the old literature, recovering the tattered fragments of the old MSS, and procuring copies from monasteries abroad. Thus, although we have these tales in this later form, there is no evidence to suppose that they have been much changed. Their contents are evidence of their origin and age. Conchobor and Cuchulaind were, I believe, historical personages, and Irish tradition and chronology were not perhaps so wild as one might think when they fixed their age at the beginning of our era. But on this, and on less startling problems, when the reader has the whole tale before him, I would like to say something.
2. The royal seat of Ulster
3. Fachtna Fathach, son of Rudraige, was king of Erin. He was the lover of Ness, the wife of the druid Cathbad. Hence Conchobor is also called the son of Cathbad. See *Rev. Celt.* VI., p. 178.
4. The feasting hall at Tara.
5. A small stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cf. *Rev. Celt.* VI., p. 183, 15.
6. This was the name of a huge copper wine-cask, so called, according to LL., p. 258 b, 'because there was a coal-fire in the house at Emain when it was drunk.'—Cf., also LL., 254b.
7. Some sort of game like draughts. See LU. 66a., 27.

8. In LL., p. 56, 29, Cuchulaind is called 'find', 'fair.'
9. The Túatha De Danand, a name for one of the races who inhabited Ireland before the coming of the Goidels.
10. One of the names of the Battle-goddess of the Ancient Irish, lit., 'Great Queen'.
11. Gloss: i.e. to the gardens.
12. Gloss: i.e. as Tara is above every hill, so I am above every woman.
13. Gloss: i.e. I am looked at by everybody for my beauty, and I look at nobody.
14. Gloss: i.e. when the worm is seen, it goes into the depth of the water.
15. Gloss: viz. for her beauty.
16. An ollam or chief poet of Ulster.
17. Findchóem and Dechtire were daughters of Cathbad.
18. The son of Amorgen and Findchóem.
19. The mother of Cuchulaind.
20. One of the Túatha De Danand, a supernatural being, who in the shape of a baby slept with Dechtire before she was married to Soaldam, and thus begat Cuchulaind. The house of the Brug referred to in the text is probably the same as that in which the Ulster heroes were entertained when they were in search of the wonderful birds. Cf. the Compert Conculaind 3 and 5 (Windisch, Ir. Texte pp. 137, 139), and LL. 144b, 18.
21. High King of Erin.
22. A name for part of the Boyne.
23. Nómad, a period of nine nights.
24. Dá cotot feda, now the Fews (fiodh) in Co. Armagh.
25. Now Slieve Fuad, Co. Armagh.
26. Now Slieve Gullion, Co. Armagh.
27. Now Forkill, Co. Armagh?
28. Co. Louth, between Dundalk and the Boyne.
29. Now Dolly's Green in Co. Meath? According to Hennessy, Chron. Scot. p. 388, it is now Girley, near Kells.
30. i.e., Goibniu, the smith of the Túatha Dé Danann.
31. Now the river Delvin, which forms the northern boundary of Co. Dublin.
32. Gaill, i.e., probably Norsemen.
33. Great Britain
34. Now Teltown, Co. Meath.
35. A district in Co. Meath, near Teltown. The two rivers are tributaries of the Blackwater.
36. Gloss: that is true, for wild fierceness, that is the plague which befalls dogs.
37. The Irish name for the Norwegians. The Danes were called Black.
38. This weapon (gai bulga) is thus described in the Book of Leinster, p. 87a: 'It was set upon the stream and cast from between the toes. It made the wound of one spear in entering the body, and (embedded) it had thirty barbs to open, and could not be drawn out of the body unless it was cut open.' With this weapon Cuchulaind killed Ferdiad in the Táin Bó Cúalgne. His charioteer set the spear on the stream, and Cuchulaind caught it between the toes of his foot, and throw a cast of it at Ferdiad so that it passed through the firm deep iron girdle of refined iron, and broke the great stone which was as large as a millstone, in three, and passed through the defences of his body into him so that every joint and every limb of him was filled with its barbs, 'I have enough now', said Ferdiad.
39. Imbas Forosnai. This is the name of a mode of divination thus described in Cormac's glossary, written about 900 A.D. 'The Imbas Forosnai sets forth whatever seems good to

the seer (file) and what he desires to make known. It is done thus. The seer chews a piece of red flesh of a pig, or a dog, or a cat, and then places it on a flagstone behind the door. He sings an incantation over it, offers it to the false gods, and then calls them to him. And he leaves them not on the next day, and chants then on his two hands, and again calls his false gods to him, lest they should disturb his sleep. And he puts his two hands over his two cheeks till he falls asleep. And they watch by him lest no one overturn him and disturb him till everything he wants to know is revealed to him, to the end of nine days or of twice or thrice that time, or however long he was judged at the offering.'

40. It is impossible at the present stage of our knowledge of Irish to translate this poem. In it Scathach tells Cuchulaind of the part he will play in the famous Cattlespoil of Cualgne, when the 'kine of Bray will be lifted,' when he will be 'alone against an immense herd.' 'The warriors of Cruachan, thou shalt scatter them.' 'Thy name shall reach the men of Alba.' 'Thirty years I reckon the strength of thy valour. Thence further I do not add.'
41. The eve of the first of November, All-Halloween.
42. The following passage from the Book of Leinster (p. 171b) is of great value for our knowledge of intercourse between the ancient Irish and the Scandinavians:— 'And send also (says the druid Cathbad to king Conchobor of Ulster) news and messages to thy absent friends, to Conall the victorious where he is levying tribute and tax in the lands of Lewis (Leódus), in the Shetlands (Inse Cadd) and in the Orkneys (Inse Or[c]), in the lands of Scythia and Dacia and Gothia and of the Norsemen (Northmann), voyaging in the sea of Wight (Muir n-Icht) and the Tyrrhene Sea, and plundering the roads of the Saxons. And send news and messages to thy absent friends to the meadow-lands of the Norse (co iathaib Gallecda, co Galliathaib na n-Gall), viz., to Amláib (or Olaib), the grandson of Inscoa, the king of Lochlann, to Findmór, son of Rofer, the king of the seventh part of Lochlainn, to Baré of the men of the Faroer (Seiggire), to the dun of the Fishercarls (Piscarcarla), to Brodor Roth and Brodor Fiúit, to Siugraid Soga, the king of Súdiam, to Sortadbud, the king of the Orkneys, to the seven sons of Romrach, to Hil, to Mael, to Muile, to Abram, son of Romrach, to Cet, son of Romrach, to Celg son of Romrach, to Mod, son of Herling, to Conchobor the victorious, son of Artur, son of Bruide, son of Dungal, to the son of the king of Alba, and Clothra, daughter of Conchobor the famous.' Several Irish chiefs were then sent on this errand, with the Norsemen Cano to guide them across the strait of the sea and the great ocean. They land in Lewis where they find Conall who sends his summons to the meadow-lands of the Norse. These at once bring together a large host and fleet, and come to Lewis. Then all set sail for Ireland. When they reach the strait of the Mull of Kintyre (sruthair na Máile Chind Tíre, i.e. The North Channel), a tremendous gale scatters their fleet, and they land in Ireland in three different places.
43. Strangford Lough.
44. Forgall's sister.
45. MS him.