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A great army was mustered

by the Connachtmen, that is, by Ailill and Medb, and word went from them to the three other provinces. And Ailill sent messengers to the seven sons of Mágu: Ailill, Anlúan, Moccorb, Cet, Én, Bascall and Dóche, each with his fighting force of three thousand, and also to Cormac Conn Longas the son of Conchobor, who was billeted with his three hundred men in Connacht. They all came on then until they reached Crúachain Aí

Now Cormac's men were in three companies as they marched to Crúachain. The first band wore vari-coloured cloaks wrapped around them. Their hair was shorn. They had tunics falling to the knee. They carried long shields, and each man bore in his hand a broad, bright spear on a slender shaft. The second band wore dark-grey cloaks and red-embroidered tunics reaching down to their calves. Their long hair hung down behind. They carried white shields, and in their hands they bore five-pronged spears. ‘It is not Cormac as yet’, said Medb.

Then came the third band. They wore purple cloaks and hooded red-embroidered tunics reaching to their feet. Their trimmed hair fell down to their shoulders. They bore curved shields with scalloped rims, and each man carried a spear as great as the pillar of a palace in his hand. ‘This is Cormac now,’ said Medb.

So then the four provinces of Ireland were gathered together in Crúachain Aí. Their prophets and druids did not permit them to go thence, but kept them for a fortnight awaiting an auspicious omen. Then, on the day that they set forth, Medb said to her charioteer:

‘All those who part here today from comrade and friend will curse me for it is I who have mustered this hosting.’ ‘Wait then,’ said the charioteer, ‘until the chariot has turned right- handwise to strengthen the good omen so that we may come back again.’

When the charioteer turned back the chariot and they were about to descend, they saw in front of them a grown maiden. She had yellow hair. She wore a vari- coloured cloak with a golden pin in it and a hooded tunic with red embroidery. She had shoes with golden fastenings. Her face was oval, narrow below, broad above. Her eyebrows were dark and black. Her beautiful black eyelashes cast a shadow on to the middle of her cheeks. Her lips seemed to be made of partaing. Her teeth were like a shower of pearls between her lips. She had three plaits of hair: two plaits wound around her head, the third hanging down her back, touching her calves behind. In her hand she carried a weaver's beam of white bronze, with golden inlay. There were three pupils in each of her eyes. The maiden was armed and her chariot was drawn by two black horses.

‘What is your name,’ asked Medb of the maiden. ‘I am Feidelm, the poetess of Connacht,’ said the maiden. ‘Whence do you come?’ asked Medb. ‘From Albion after learning the art of divination,’ answered the maiden. ‘Have you the power of prophecy called imbas forosna?’ ‘I have indeed,’ said the maiden. ‘Look for me then and tell me how it will fare with my hosting.’ Then the maiden

looked and Medb said: ‘O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see the fate of the army?’ Feidelm answered and said: ‘I see it bloody, I see it red.’ ‘That is not so,’ said Medb, ‘for Conchobor lies in his debility in Emain together with the Ulstermen and all the mightiest of their warriors, and my messengers have come and brought me tidings of them. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our host?’ asked Medb again. ‘I see it blood-stained, I see it red,’ said the maiden. ‘That is not so,’ said Medb, ‘for Celtchar mac Uthidir is in Dún Lethglaise together with a third of the men of Ulster, and Fergus mac Roeich meic Echdach is here in exile with us with three thousand men. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our host?’ ‘I see it blood-stained, I see it red,’ answered the maiden. ‘That matters not indeed,’ said Medb, ‘for in every muster and in every army assembled in a great encampment there are quarrels and strife and bloody woundings. So look once more for us, and tell us the truth. O Feidelm Prophetess, how do you see our host?’

‘I see it blood-stained, I see it red,’ said Feidelm and she spoke as follows:

1. I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats, with many a wound in his flesh. A hero's light is on his brow. His forehead is the meeting-place of many virtues.
2. In each of his eyes are the seven jewel-bright pupils of a hero. His spearpoints(?) are unsheathed. He wears a red mantle with clasps.
3. His face is beautiful. He amazes women-folk.This lad of handsome countenance looks in the battle like a dragon.
4. Like is his prowess to that of Cú Chulainn of Murthemne.I know not who is this Cú Chulainn of fairest fame, but this I do know, that by him the army will be bloodily wounded.
5. I see a tall man in the plain who gives battle to the host. In each hand he holds four small swords with which to perform great deeds.
6. He attacks with his gáe bolga and also with his ivory-hilted sword and his spear. He can ply them on the host. Each weapon as he casts it has its own special use.
7. This man wrapped in a red mantle sets his foot on every battle-field. Across the left wheel-rim of his chariot he attacks them. The distorted one kills them. I see that he has changed from the form in which hitherto he has appeared to me.
8. He has moved forward to the battle. Unless heed be taken, there will be destruction. I think that it is Cú Chulainn mac Súaldaim who now comes to you.
9. He will lay low your entire army. He will slaughter you in dense crowds. Ye will leave with him a thousand severed heads. The prophetess Feidelm does not conceal your fate.
10. Blood will flow from heroes' bodies. Much harm will be wrought by the hand of this hero. He will kill warriors; the men of Clanna Dedad meic Sin will flee. Men's bodies will be hacked and women will weep because of the Hound of the Smith whom I now see.

On the Monday after the autumn festival of Samain they set out. They travelled south-east from Crúachain Aí, past Mucc Cruinb, past Terloch Teóra Crích, past Túaim Móna, past Cúil Silinne

i.e. Loch Carrcín", and got its name from Silend daughter of Madchar
, past Fid, past Bolga, past Coltain, past Glune Gabair, past Mag Trego, past northern Tethbab

i.e. Cairpre
, past southern Tethba, past Tíarthechta, past Ord, southwards past Slais, past Indeóind, past Carn, past Ochtrach, past Mide, past Findglassa Assail, past Delt, past Delind, past Sailig, past Slaibre, past Slechta (where they hewed down the trees), past Cúil Sibrinne, southwards past Ochuinn, northwards past Úata, past Dub, southwards past Comur, past Tromma and eastwards past Fothromma, past Sláne and Gort Sláni, southwards past Druim Licce, past Áth Gabla, past Ardachad, northwards past Féraind, past Findabair, southwards past Aisse, past Druim Sálfind, past Druim Caín, past Druim mac nDega, past Eódond Mór and Eódond Bec, past Méthe Tog[maill] and Méthe Eóin; past Druim Cáemtechta, past Scúap and Imscúap, past Cend Ferna, past Baile, past Aile, past Báil Scena and Dáil Scena, past Ferste, past Ross Lochad, past Sále, past Lochmach, past Ánmag, past Deind, past Delt, past Dubglais, past Fid Mór

i.e. Trúalli"
, past Colptha, past Crond in Cúailnge. From Findabair in Cúailnge the armies of Ireland spread out over the province in quest of the Bull. For they had gone past all these places before reaching Findabair.

Here ends the introductory part. The story in due order now begins.

The Story in Due Order

When they had come on the first stage of their journey from Crúachain to Cúil Silinne, the site of Loch Cairrcín today, Medb told her charioteer to harness her nine chariots

She was always accompanied by nine chariots, so that the dust raised by the great army should not soil her
for her that she might drive around the encampment and see who among them was reluctant and who was glad to go on the hosting. Now his tent was pitched for Ailill and his equipment was placed therein, both beds and blankets. Fergus mac Róich was next to Ailill in his tent. Cormac Conn Longas, son of Conchobor, was next to him. Then came Conall Cernach, with Fíacha mac Fir Fhebe, the son of Conchobor's daughter, beside him. Medb, the daughter of Eochu Feidlech was on the other side of Ailill, with Finnabair, the daughter of Ailill and Medb, beside her and Flidais next to Finnabair. This was not counting the servants and attendants.

After she had surveyed the host, Medb came back and said that it would be vain for the rest to go on that expedition if the division of the Gailióin went also. ‘Why do you belittle the men?’ asked Ailill. ‘I am not belittling them,’ said Medb. ‘They are splendid warriors. When the others were making their shelters, the Gailióin had already finished thatching their shelters and cooking their food. When the rest were eating, they had already finished their meal and their harpers were playing to them. So it is useless for them to go on this expedition,’ said Medb, ‘for it is they who will take credit for the victory of the army.’ ‘Yet it is for us they fight,’ said Ailill. ‘They shall not go with us,’ said Medb. ‘Let them stay here then,’ said Ailill. ‘Indeed they shall not,’ said Medb. ‘They will overpower us when we have come back and seize our land.’ ‘Well then, what shall be done with them,’ asked Ailill, ‘since neither their staying nor their going pleases you?’ ‘Kill them!’ said Medb.

‘I shall not deny that is a woman's counsel,’ said Ailill. ‘You speak foolishly,’ said Fergus in a low voice. ‘It shall not happen unless we are all killed, for they are allies of us Ulstermen.’ ‘Nevertheless,’ said Medb, ‘we could do it. For I have here with me my own household retinue numbering two divisions, and the seven Maines are here, my seven sons, with seven divisions. Their luck can protect them,’ said she. ‘Their names are Maine Máthramail, Maine Aithremail, Maine Mórgor, Maine Mingor, Maine Mo Epirt, who is also called Maine Milscothach, Maine Andóe and Maine Cotageib Uile—he it is who has inherited the appearance of his mother and his father and the dignity of them both ’

‘That will not be,’ said Fergus, ‘There are here seven kings from Munster, allies of us Ulstermen, and a division with each king. I shall give you battle in the middle of the encampment where we now are, supported by those seven divisions, by my own division and by the division of the Gailióin. But I shall not argue the point,’ said Fergus. ‘We shall arrange the warriors of the Gailióin so that they shall not prevail over the rest of the army. Seventeen divisions,’ said Fergus, ‘is the number here in our encampment, not counting the camp-followers and our boys and our women- folk—for each chief here in Medb's company has brought his wife. The eighteenth division is that of the

Gailióin. Let them be distributed throughout all the host.’ ‘I care not,’ said Medb, ‘provided that they do not remain in the close battle array in which they now are.’ This then was done; the Gailióin were distributed among the host. Next morning they set out for Móin Choltna. There they met with eight score deer in a single herd. They encircled them and killed them. Wherever there was a man of the Gailióin, it was he who got a deer, for the rest of the host got only five of the deer. They came on then to Mag Trego and there they encamped and prepared food for themselves.

According to one version it was then that Dubthach chanted this lay:

1. Admit that hitherto ye have not heard nor listened to the trance-speech of Dubthach. A fierce hosting lies before you, contending for Findbenn, the bull of Ailill's wife.
2. There will come a leader of armies who will try to recover the cattle of Murthemne. Because of the companionship of the two swineherds, ravens on the battle-field will drink men's blood.
3. The watchful river Crann will offer them resistance and will not let them cross into Murthemne until the work of warriors is finished in the mountain north of Ochaíne.
4. ‘Quickly,’ said Ailill to Cormac, ‘come and hold back your son.’ None comes from the plains where the cattle graze but is affrighted(?) by the din of the army.
5. In due course a battle will be fought here with Medb and a third of the army. Men's corpses will then lie here if the distorted one come to you.

Thereupon the Némain, that is, the war-goddess, attacked them. That was not the quietest of nights for them with the trance-speech of the boorish Dubthach as he slept. The hosts rose up at once and the army was thrown into confusion until Medb came and quelled them.

Then, after the army had been led astray across bogs and streams, they went and spent the night in Granard in northern Tethba. For the sake of kinship Fergus sent a warning to the Ulstermen who were still suffering from their debility, all except Cú Chulainn and his father Súaltaim. When the warning message had come from Fergus, Cú Chulainn and his father went as far as Irard Cuillenn, that is, Crossa Cail, there to watch for the enemy host. ‘I have a premonition that the host will arrive tonight,’ said Cú Chulainn to his father. ‘Take a warning from us to the men of Ulster. I must go to Feidelm Noíchride’—he meant to tryst with her handmaiden who was secretly Cú Chulainn's concubine—‘to fulfil my own pledge which I gave her.’ Then before he went, he twisted a withe into a ring and wrote an ogam inscription on its peg, and cast it over the top of a pillar-stone. Then Fergus was given the task of leading the army along the path. He went far astray to the south to give the Ulstermen time to complete the mustering of their army. This he did out of affection for his own kin.

Ailill and Medb noticed this, and Medb said:

1. O Fergus, this is strange. What manner of path do we travel? We go astray to south and to north, past every strange district.

2. Ailill of Mag Aí with his army fears that you will betray him. Until now he heeded not where the path led.
3. If you feel the pull of kinship, do not lead horses any longer. Perhaps someone else may be found to guide us on our way.

Fergus answered:

1. O Medb, what perturbs you? This is not anything resembling treachery. O woman, the land across which I shall lead you belongs to the men of Ulster.
2. Not with intent to harm the hosting do I go in turn along each devious road, but that I may avoid the great one who guards Mag Murthemne.
3. It is not to save my mind from weariness that I go thus aside from the path, but I am trying to avoid meeting Cú Chulainn mac Súaltaim even at a later time.

They went on then to Irard Cuilenn, today called Crossa Caíl. The four sons of Irard mac Anchinnel

or the four sons of Nera mac Núada meic Taccain, as is found in other versions
, Eirr and Indell with Foich and Fochlam their two charioteers, were those who always preceded the hosts to protect their brooches and their rugs and their mantles that the dust raised by the army might not soil them. These men found the withe Cú Chulainn had cast and they noticed the grazing made by the horses. For Súaltaim's two horses had cropped the grass to its roots in the earth while Cú Chulainn's horses had licked the soil down to the bedrock beneath the grass. Then these four men sat still till the host came up, and their musicians played to them. They handed the withe to Fergus mac Róich; he read out the ogam inscription that was on it.

When Medb arrived she asked: ‘Why are you waiting here?’ ‘We are waiting,’ said Fergus, ‘because of yonder withe. There is on its peg an ogam inscription which reads: ‘Let none go past till there be found a man to throw a withe made of one branch as it is in the same way with one hand. But I except my friend Fergus.’ In truth,’ said Fergus, ‘it is Cú Chulainn who has cast it and it is his horses which grazed this plain.’ And he put the withe in the druid's hand and chanted this song:

1. Here is a withe. What is its message for us? What is its secret meaning? And how many put it there? Was it few or many?
2. Will it bring ruin on the army if they go past it? Find out, O ye druids, why the withe was left there.

A druid answered:

1. A hero cast it there, the swift cutting(?) of a hero, a source of perplexity to warriors, containment of chiefs with their followers. One man cast it there with one hand.
2. Does not the king's army obey him unless they have broken faith? I know no reason why the withe was cast there save that one of you should cast a withe even as one man did.

Then said Fergus to them ‘If ye flout this withe or if ye go past it, though it be in a man's possession or in a locked house, it will go after the man who wrote the ogam inscription, and he will kill one of you before morning unless one of you cast a withe in like manner.’ ‘We do not wish, however, that any one of us should be killed straight away,’ said Ailill. ‘Let us go to the end of yon great wood to the south of us, Fid Dúin. We shall go no farther than that.’ The army then hewed down the wood to make a path for the chariots. That place is called Slechta. It is there that the Partraige (now) live.

—According to others, however, it was here that the dialogue between Medb and Feidelm Banfháith as we have related above took place, and it was after the answer Feidelm made to Medb that the wood was cut down. Thus: ‘Look for me,’ said Medb, ‘(to see) how will my expedition fare.’ ‘It is hard for me,’ said the maiden. ‘The wood prevents me from seeing them properly.’ ‘That can be arranged,’ said Medb. ‘We shall cut down the wood.’ it was done, and Slechta is the name of that place.—

They spent the night then in Cúil Sibrille, that is, Cennannas. Heavy snow fell on them, reaching to the girdles of the men and the wheels of the chariots. They rose early on the morrow. That had not been a restful night for them because of the snow, nor had they prepared food for themselves that night. But Cú Chulainn did not come early from his tryst; he remained until he had washed and bathed. Then he came on to the track of the army. ‘Would that we had not gone thither nor betrayed the men of Ulster!’ cried Cú Chulainn. ‘We have let the enemy host come upon them unawares. Make an estimate of the host for us,’ said Cú Chulainn to Lóeg, ‘that we may know their number.’ Lóeg did so and said to Cú Chulainn ‘I am confused. I cannot estimate exactly.’ ‘If only I come, I shall not see them confusedly,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Get out of the chariot,’ said Lóeg. Cú Chulainn got out of the chariot and for a long time he estimated the number of the host. ‘Even you,’ said Lóeg, ‘do not find it easy.’ ‘It is easier for me, however, than for you. For I have three gifts, namely, the gift of sight, the gift of understanding, the gift of reckoning. I have reckoned up the numbers here.

This is one of the three cleverest yet most difficult reckonings ever made in Ireland, the three being this reckoning of the men of Ireland made by Cú Chulainn in the Táin, the reckoning made by Lug of the Fomorians in the battle of Mag Tuired and the reckoning of the army in Bruiden Da Derga made by Ingcél, [marginal note]
There are here in number eighteen divisions, but the eighteenth division, that is, the division of the Gailióin, has been distributed among the whole host so that it is confusing to count them.’

Then Cú Chulainn went round the host until he was at Áth nGrencha. There he cut down a forked branch with one blow of his sword and fixed it in the middle of the stream so that a chariot could not pass it on this side or on that. While he was thus engaged Eirr and Indell with their two

charioteers, Fóich and Fochlam, came up with him. He cut off their four heads and impaled them on the four prongs of the forked branch. Hence the name Áth nGabla.

that is, at the place called Beloch Caille Móire to the north of Cnogba, [marginal note]
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Then the horses of the four men went towards the host, with their bloodstained trappings. The host thought that there had been a battle in the ford before them. A band went from them to survey the ford; they saw only the track of one chariot and the forked branch with the four heads and an ogam inscription on its side. At that point the whole army arrived.

‘Are yonder heads those of some of our people?’ asked Medb. ‘They are of our people and of our choice men,’ said Ailill. One of them read aloud the ogam inscription that was on the side of the forked branch: ‘One man has cast this forked branch with one hand, and ye shall not go past it unless one of you, but not Fergus, has cast it with one hand.’ ‘It is marvellous,’ said Ailill, ‘how quickly the four were slain.’ ‘Do not think that marvellous,’ said Fergus, ‘but rather the cutting of the forked branch from its root with one blow, and if its end shows one cutting, it is all the greater achievement, and (it is marvellous) that it should have been driven in in this manner, for no hole was dug for it but it was cast from the back of a chariot with one hand.’ ‘Deliver us in this difficulty, Fergus,’ said Medb. ‘Give me a chariot then,’ said Fergus, ‘that I may pull the branch out so that it may be seen if its end shows one cutting.’ Then Fergus smashed fourteen of their chariots but from his own chariot he drew the forked branch out of the ground and he saw that its end was one cutting.

‘We must take heed of the nature of the people to whom we are going,’ said Ailill. ‘Let all of you prepare food. Last night was not restful for you with the snow. And let some of the adventures and stories of the people to whom we go be related to us.’ So then they were told the adventures of Cú Chulainn.

Ailill asked ‘Is it Conchobar who has done this?’ ‘It is not indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘He would not have come to the marches unless he was accompanied by a number sufficient to give battle.’ ‘Was it Celtchar mac Uthidir?’ ‘It was not indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘He would not have come to the marches without a number sufficient to give battle around him.’ ‘Was it Eógan mac Durthacht?’ ‘It was not indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘He would not have come past the marches without thirty scythed chariots. The man who would have done the deed is Cú Chulainn,’ said Fergus. ‘It is he who would have cut down the tree with one blow from its root, and he who would have killed the four men as quickly as they were killed, and he who would have come to the border accompanied (only) by his charioteer.’

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.’

The Boyhood Deeds

‘He was reared,’ said Fergus, ‘by his father and mother at the Airgthech in Mag Muirthemne. He was told the famous tales of the youths in Emain. For,’ said Fergus, ‘thrice fifty youths are usually there engaged in play. This is how Conchobor spends his time of sovereignty: one third of the day spent watching the youths, another third playing fidchell, another third drinking ale till he falls asleep therefrom. Though we have been exiled by him, (I still maintain that) there is not in Ireland a warrior more wonderful,’ said Fergus.

‘Cú Chulainn asked his mother to let him go to join the boys. ‘You shall not go,’ said his mother, ‘till you be escorted by some of the Ulster warriors.’ ‘I think it too long to wait for that,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Point out to me in what direction is Emain.’ ‘To the north there,’ said his mother, ‘and the journey is hard. Slíab Fúait lies between you and Emain.’ ‘I shall make an attempt at it at all events,’ said Cú Chulainn. He went off then with his wooden shield and his toy javelin, his hurley and his ball. He kept throwing the javelin in front of him and catching it by the point before its end touched the ground.’

‘Then he went to the boys without binding them over to protect him. For no one used to come to them in their playing-field till his protection was guaranteed, but Cú Chulainn was not aware of the fact that this was tabu for them. ‘The boy insults us,’ said Follomon mac Conchobair. ‘Yet we know he is of the Ulstermen. Attack him.’ They threw their thrice fifty javelins at him, and they all stuck in his toy shield. Then they threw all their balls at him and he caught them, every single ball, against his breast. Then they threw their thrice fifty hurling-clubs at him. He warded them off so that they did not touch him, and he took a load of them on his back.’

‘Thereupon he became distorted. His hair stood on end so that it seemed as if each separate hair on his head had been hammered into it. You would have thought that there was a spark of fire on each single hair. He closed one eye so that it was no wider than the eye of a needle; he opened the other until it was as large as the mouth of a mead-goblet. He laid bare from his jaw to his ear and opened his mouth rib-wide(?) so that his internal organs were visible. The champion's light rose above his head.’

‘Then he attacked the boys. He knocked down fifty of them before they reached the gate of Emain. Nine of them came past me and Conchobar where we were playing chess. Cú Chulainn leapt over the chess-board in pursuit of the nine. Conchobar seized him by the forearm. ‘The boys are not well treated.’ said Conchobar. ‘It was right for me (to treat them so), master Conchobar,’ said he. ‘I came to play with them from my home, from my father and mother, and they were not kind to me.’ ‘What is your name?’ said Conchobar. ‘I am Sétanta the son of Súaltaim and of Deichtire, your sister. It was not to be expected that I should be tormented there.’ ‘Why were the boys not bound over to protect you?’ asked Conchobar. ‘I did not know of (the need of) that,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Undertake to protect me against them.’ ‘I agree,’ said Conchobar. But then he turned again and attacked the boys throughout the house. ‘What have you got against them now?’ asked Conchobar.

‘Let me be bound over to protect them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Undertake it then,’ said Conchobar. ‘I agree,’ said Cú Chulainn. So they all went into the playing field. And those boys who had been knocked down there rose to their feet, helped by their fostermothers and their foster- fathers.’

‘At one time,’ said Fergus, ‘when Cú Chulainn was a boy, he never slept in Emain. ‘Tell me,’ said Conchobar to him, ‘Why do you not sleep?’

‘I do not sleep unless my head and my feet are equally high.’ So a pillar-stone was placed by Conchobar at his head and another at his feet, and a special couch was made for him between them. On another occasion a certain man went to wake him and with his fist Cú Chulainn struck him on the forehead, driving the front of his forehead on to his brain, while with his arm he knocked down the pillar-stone. ‘Surely,’ said Ailill, ‘that was the fist of a warrior and the arm of a strong man!’’ ‘From that time on,’ said Fergus, ‘they never dared to wake him (but left him) till he woke of his own accord.’

The Death of the Boys

‘Another time he was playing ball in the playing-field east of Emain, he alone on one side against the thrice fifty boys. He kept defeating them in every game in that way all the time. Eventually the boy began to belabour them with his fists and fifty of them died. Whereupon he fled and hid under the pillow of Conchobar's couch. The Ulstermen rose up around him but I and Conchobar stood up to defend him. The boy rose to his feet under the couch and on to the floor of the house he threw from him the couch together with the thirty warriors who were in it.’

‘Then the Ulstermen sat around him in the house and we arranged matters and made peace between the boys and him,’ said Fergus.

The Fight between Eógan mac Durthacht and Conchobar

‘There was strife between the Ulstermen and Eógan mac Durthacht. The Ulstermen went to battle while Cú Chulainn was left behind asleep. The Ulstermen were defeated. Conchobar and Cúscraid Menn Macha and many others besides were left on the field. Their groans awoke Cú Chulainn. Then he stretched himself so that the two flag-stones which were about him were smashed. Bricriu yonder witnessed this happening,’ said Fergus. ‘Then he arose. I met him in front of the fort as I came in severely wounded. ‘Hey! Welcome! master Fergus,’ said he. ‘Where is Conchobar?’ ‘I do not know,’ said He went on his way then. The night was dark. He made for the battlefield. He saw in front of him a man with half a head carrying the half of another man on his back.’

‘‘Help me, Cú Chulainn!’ said he. ‘I have been wounded and I have brought half of my brother on my back. Take a turn with me in carrying him.’ ‘I will not,’ said he. Whereupon the other threw the burden he was carrying to him, but Cú Chulainn cast it off. They wrestled then and Cú Chulainn was thrown. He heard the war- goddess crying from among the corpses. ‘Poor stuff to make a warrior is he who is overthrown by phantoms!’ Whereupon Cú Chulainn rose to his feet, and, striking off his opponent's head with his hurley, he began to drive the head like a ball before him across the plain’.

‘‘Is my master Conchobar on this battle-field?’ Conchobar answered him. Cú Chulainn went towards him and saw him in the ditch with the earth around him on all sides hiding him. ‘Why have you come to the battle-field’ said Conchobar, ‘where you may die of fright?’ He lifted Conchobar out of the ditch then. Six of our strong men in Ulster could not have lifted him out more courageously. ‘Go before us to yonder house,’ said Conchobar, ‘and make a fire for me there.’ He kindled a big fire for him.’

‘‘Well,’ said Conchobar, ‘if I now had a roast pig, I should live.’ ‘I will go and fetch one,’ said Cú Chulainn. He went off then and saw a man at a cooking-pit in the middle of the wood, with one hand holding his weapons, the other cooking a pig. Great was the fearsomeness of the man. Nevertheless he attacked him and carried off his head and his pig. Afterwards Conchobar ate the pig. ‘Let us go to our house,’ said Conchobar. They met Cúscraid mac Conchobair. He too bore severe wounds, Cú Chulainn carried him on his back. The three of them went on to Emain Macha.’

The fate of the twenty-seven men and the reason why none dared to wound the Ulstermen when they were in their debility.

‘On another occasion the Ulstermen were in their debility. ‘Among us,’ said Fergus, ‘women and boys do not suffer from the debility nor does anyone Cú Chulainn and his father, and so none dares to shed their blood for whosoever wounds them at once suffers himself from the debility or he wastes away or his life-span is shortened.’’

‘Twenty-seven men came to us from the Isles of Faiche. While we were suffering the debility they climbed over into our backcourt. The women in the fort cried out in warning. The boys who were in the playing-field came on hearing the cries, but when they saw the dark gloomy men, they all fled except Cú Chulainn alone. He cast hand-stones at them and belaboured them with his hurley. He killed nine of them but they dealt him fifty wounds, and then they went off’.

‘If a man did those deeds when he was five years old, it were no wonder that he should have come to the marches, and cut off the heads of yon four men.’

The killing of the Smith's Hound by Cú Chulainn and the reason why he is called Cú Chulainn

‘Indeed we know that boy’, said Conall Cernach, ‘and we know him all the better in that he is a fosterling of ours. Not long after the deed which Fergus has just related, he performed another exploit.’

‘When Culann the smith prepared a feast for Conchobar, he asked Conchobar not to bring a great crowd with him for the feast he had made was not provided by his possession of land or estate but was gained by the work of his hands and his tongs. Then Conchobar set off together with fifty chariot-warriors, the noblest and most illustrious of the heroes.’

‘Conchobar visited the playing-field then. It was always his custom to pay the boys a fleeting visit to ask a greeting of them. There he saw Cú Chulainn playing ball against thrice fifty boys, and defeating them. When they were engaged in driving the ball into the hole, he would fill the hole with his balls and the boys would not be able to ward him off. When it was they who were throwing at the hole, he by himself would ward them off so that not even a single ball would go into it. When they were wrestling, he alone would throw the thrice fifty boys, yet not all of them together could surround him to throw him. When they were engaged in the game of stripping one another, he would strip them all stark-naked but they could not even take his brooch from his mantle. Conchobor marvelled at this. He asked if the boy's deeds would correspond (to his present ones) when he attained the age of manhood. They all said that they would. Conchobor said to Cú Chulainn outside the territory of Ulster, nor yet I. ‘Come with me to the feast to which we are going since you are a guest.’ ‘I have not yet had my fill of play, master Conchobor,’ said the boy. ‘I shall follow you.’ When they had all come to the feast, Culann asked Conchobar: ‘Do you expect anyone to follow you?’ ‘No,’ said Conchobor. He did not remember the arrangement with his fosterling to come after him. ‘I have a blood hound,’

[i.e. a hound brought from overseas, i.e. the whelp of a mastiff.] said Culann. ‘There are three chains on him and three men holding each chain. He was brought from Spain. Let him be loosed to guard our cattle and our stock and let the fort be shut.’ At that point the boy arrived. The dog made for him. He still kept on with the play; he would throw his ball and then throw his hurley after it so that it struck the ball, neither stroke being greater than the other. And he threw his toy spear after

them and caught it before it fell. And though the dog was approaching him, it interfered not with his play. Conchobor and his household were so dismayed by this that they could not move. They thought they would not reach him alive though the fort was open. Now when the hound came towards the boy, he cast aside his ball and his hurley, and he tackled the dog with both hands, that is, he put one hand on the apple of the hound's throat and the other at the back of his head, and dashed him against the pillar-stone that was beside him so that all the hound's limbs sprang apart. According to another version, however, he threw his ball into the hound's mouth and it drove his entrails out through him.’

‘The Ulstermen rose up to fetch the boy, some leaping over the wall of the court, others going out by the gate. They placed him in Conchobar's arms. A great alarm was raised by them at the thought that the son of the king's sister had almost been killed. At that point Culann entered the house.’

‘‘Welcome, little lad, for your mother's sake. But as for myself, would that I had not prepared a feast! My livelihood is now a livelihood wasted, my husbandry a husbandry lost without my hound. That hound was not one of the three hounds that were in the brain of Conganchness, as some hold, for it was to take vengeance for Cú Roí's death on the men of Ulster that Conganchness had gone and that happened long after the Cattle-Raid, but Cú Chulainn was only seven years old when he killed the smith's hound. Thus the theory held by those people is false; the smith's hound had been brought from Spain, as is asserted in the text of the tale. The servant who has been taken from me, that is, my hound, maintained life and honour for me. He was defence and protection for my goods and my cattle. He guarded all my beasts for me in field and in house.’’

‘‘That is no great matter,’ said the boy. ‘A whelp of the same litter will be reared by me for you, and until such time as that hound grows and is fit for action, I myself shall be a hound to protect your cattle and to protect yourself. And I shall protect all Mag Murthemne; neither flock nor herd shall be taken thence from me without my knowing it.’ ‘Your name shall be Cú Chulainn (the Hound of Culann) then,’ said Catbhad. ‘I am glad that it should be my name,’ said Cú Chulainn. It were no cause of wonder that one who had done this when he was seven, should have performed a valiant deed now that he is seventeen years old,’ said Conall Cernach.

The Death of Nechta Scéne's Three Sons

‘He did still another exploit,’ said Fiachu mac Fir Fhebe. ‘Cathbad the druid was with his son Conchobar mac Nessa. There were with him a hundred active men learning the druid's art—that was the number that Cathbad used to instruct. One of his pupils asked him for what that day would be of good omen. Cathbad said that if a warrior took up arms on that day, his name for deeds of valour would be known throughout Ireland and his fame would last for ever. Cú Chulainn heard this. He went to Conchobar to ask for arms. Conchobar asked: ‘Who prophesied good fortune for you?’ ‘Master Cathbad,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘We know him indeed,’ said Conchobar. He gave him a spear and a shield. Cú Chulainn brandished them in the middle of the hall so that not one was left unbroken of the fifteen spare sets of weapons which were kept in Conchobar's household to replace broken weapons or to provide for the taking up of arms by someone. Finally Conchobar's own arms were given to him. They withstood him, and he brandished them and blessed the king whose arms they were, saying: ‘Happy the people and race over whom reigns the owner of these arms’’

‘Then Cathbad came to them and asked: ‘Is the boy taking up arms?’ ‘Yes,’ said Conchobar. ‘That is not lucky for the son of his mother,’ said he. ‘Why, was it not you who instructed him?’ ‘It was not I indeed,’ said Cathbad. ‘What use is it for you to deceive me so, you sprite?’ said Conchobar to Cú Chulainn. ‘O king of the Fían, it is no deceit,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘He prophesied good fortune for his pupils this morning and I heard him from where I was on the south side of Emain, and then I came to you.’ ‘It is indeed a day of good omen,’ said Cathbad. ‘It is certain that he who takes up arms today will be famous and renowned, but he will, however, be short-lived.’ ‘A mighty thing!’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Provided I be famous, I am content to be only one day on earth.’’

‘On another day a certain man asked the druids for what that day was a good omen. ‘The name of one who goes (for the first time) into a chariot on this day,’ said Cathbad, ‘will be famed throughout Ireland for ever.’ Then Cú Chulainn heard this, and he came to Conchobar and said to him: ‘Master Conchobar, give me a chariot.’ Conchobar gave him a chariot. Cú Chulainn put his hand between the two shafts and the chariot broke. In the same way he smashed twelve chariots. So finally Conchobar's chariot was given to him and it withstood the test. Thereafter he went into the chariot with Conchobar's charioteer. The charioteer, whose name was Ibor, turned the chariot under him. ‘Come out of the chariot now,’ said the charioteer. ‘These are fine horses.’ ‘I am fine too, lad,’ said Cú Clulainn. ‘Just go on around Emain and you shall be rewarded for it.’’

‘The charioteer drove off and Cú Chulainn made him go along the road that he might greet the boys, ‘and so that the boys may wish me well.’ Then he besought him to go back over the road again. When they had come there Cú Chulainn said to the charioteer: ‘Ply the goad on the horses.’ ‘In what direction?’ asked the charioteer. ‘As far as the road will lead,’ said Cú Chulainn.’

‘Thence they came to Slíab Fúait where they found Conall Cernach. It had fallen to Conall to guard the province that day. For each warrior of the Ulstermen spent a day in turn in Slíab Fúait, to protect anyone who came that way with poetry or with challenge to battle, so that there he might be encountered and so that no one should go unnoticed into Emain. ‘I wish you prosperity, victory and triumph!’ said Conall. ‘Go to the fort, Conall, and leave me here to watch now,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘That will do,’ said Conall, ‘if it is (merely) to undertake the protection of one coming with poetry. However, if it be to fight some one, it is still too soon for you to do that.’ ‘Perhaps it will not be necessary at all,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Meanwhile let us go to take a look at the sand-bank of Loch Echtra. There are usually warriors staying there.’ ‘I am willing,’ said Conall. So they set out.’

‘Cú Chulainn threw a stone from his sling and the shaft of Conall Cernach's chariot broke. ‘Why have you thrown the stone, lad?’ asked Conall. ‘To test my shooting and the accuracy of my shot,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘And it is the custom with you Ulstermen that you do not drive on in a chariot which is unsafe. Go back to Emain master Conall, and leave me here to keep watch.’ ‘I am willing,’ said Conall. Conall Cernach did not go past that spot afterwards.’

‘Cú Chulainn went on to Loch Echtra but they found no one there. The charioteer told Cú Chulainn that they should go to Emain to be in time for the feasting there. ‘No,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘What mountain is that over there?’ ‘Slíab Monduirnd,’ said the charioteer. ‘Let us go to it,’ said Cú Chulainn.’

‘Then they went to it, and when they had reached the mountain, Cú Chulainn asked ‘What white cairn is that over there on the mountain-top?’ ‘Finncharn,’ said the charioteer. ‘What plain is that yonder?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘Mag mBreg,’ said the charioteer.’

‘So he told him the name of every chief fort between Temair and Cennannas. He named, moreover, their meadowlands and their fords, their renowned places and their dwellings, their forts and their fortified heights. He showed him too the fort of the three sons of Nechta Scéne, from Inber Scene. Fer Ulli mac Lugdach was their father and Nechtan Scéne their mother. The Ulstermen had killed their father which is the reason they were at war with the Ulstermen to wit, Fóill, Fannall and Túachell. ‘Is it they who say,’ asked Cú Chulainn, ‘that there are not more Ulstermen alive than they have killed of them?’ ‘It is they indeed,’ said the charioteer. ‘Let us go to meet them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘It is dangerous for us,’ said the charioteer.’

‘‘Indeed it is not to avoid danger that we go,’ said Cú Chulainn. Then they set off, and they unyoked their horses at the confluence of a bog and a river, on the south above the fort of the sons of Nechta Scéne. And Cú Chulainn cast the withe that was on the pillar-stone as far as his arm could throw it out into the river and let it float downstream. This violated a tabu which bound the sons of Nechta Scéne who noticed what had been done and came towards them. But Cú Chulainn, after letting the withe drift with the current, fell asleep at the pillar-stone, having said to the charioteer: ‘Do not wake me for a few, but wake me for several.’’

‘However the charioteer was now sore afraid, and he harnessed the chariot and he tugged at the rugs and skin-coverings that were under Cú Chulainn, though he did not dare to waken him because Cú Chulainn had previously told him not to waken him for a few.’

‘Then came the sons of Nechta Scéne. ‘Who is here?’ said one of them. ‘A little lad who has come on an expedition in a chariot today,’ answered the charioteer. ‘May his first taking up of arms not bring him prosperity or success. He must not stay in our land and the horses must not graze here any longer,’ said the warrior. ‘Their reins are ready in my hand.’ said the charioteer. ‘You had no reason to show yourself unfriendly to him, and anyway,’ said Ibor to the warrior, ‘the lad is asleep.’ ‘I am no lad indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘but the lad who is here has come to seek battle with a man.’ ‘That pleases me well,’ said the warrior. ‘It will please you well now in yonder ford,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘This is fitting for you,’ said the charioteer. ‘Beware of the man who comes against you. Fóill (Sly) is his name. If you reach him not with the first thrust, you will never reach him.’ ‘I swear by the god by whom my people swear, he shall not play that trick again on Ulstermen if once the broad spear of my master Conchobar reach him from my hand. It will mean an outlaw's hand, that is, death, for him.’ Then Cú Chulainn cast the spear at Fóill so that his back broke therefrom and he carried off his spoils and his severed head then.’

‘‘Beware of the next man,’ said the charioteer. ‘Fannall (Swallow) is his name. He skims over water as lightly as a swan or a swallow.’ ‘I swear that he will not play that stick on Ulstermen again,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘You have seen how I travel across the pool in Emain.’ Then they met in the ford. Cú Chulainn killed that man and carried off his spoils and his head.’

‘‘Beware of the next man who comes to you,’ said the charioteer. ‘Túachell (Cunning) is his name, and it is no misnomer for no weapons wound him.’ ‘Here is the deil chlis for him to confound him so that it may riddle him like a sieve,’ said Cú Chulainn. Then he cast the spear at him and knocked him down. He went towards him and cut off his head. He carried off his head and his spoils to his own charioteer. Then he heard the cry of their mother, Nechta Scéne, bewailing them. He carried off the spoils and brought the three heads with him in his chariot and said ‘I will not part from these tokens of my triumph until I reach Emain.’ Thereupon they set forth with their trophies. Cú Chulainn said to the charioteer: ‘You promised us a good drive, and we need it now because of the fight and because of the pursuit behind us.’’

‘They drove on then to Slíab Fúait. So swift was the run they made across Brega after his urging of the charioteer that the chariot-horses used to outstrip the wind and birds in flight, and Cú Chulainn used to catch the stone he had thrown from his sling before it reached the ground.’

‘On reaching Slíab Fuait they found a herd of deer before them. ‘What are those nimble cattle over there?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘Wild deer,’ said the charioteer. ‘Which would the Ulstermen deem best, that I should take them to them alive or dead?’ ‘It is more wonderful (to take them) alive’ said the charioteer. ‘Not every one can do so, but there is not one of them who cannot take them dead. But you cannot carry off any one of them alive,’ added the charioteer. ‘Indeed I can,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Ply the goad on the horses and drive them to the bog.’ The charioteer did so, and the horses stuck fast in the bog. Cú Chulainn sprang out of the chariot and caught the deer that was nearest to him and the finest of the herd. He lashed the horses through the bog and subdued the deer immediately and tied it up between the two poles of the chariot.’

‘Again they saw before them a flock of swans. ‘Which would the Ulstermen deem best,’ asked Cú Chulainn, ‘that I should carry them alive to them or carry them dead?’ ‘The bravest and most active carry them off alive,’ said the charioteer. Cú Chulainn then threw a small stone at the birds and

brought down eight of them. Again he threw a big stone and struck twelve of them. All this was done by his ‘return-stroke’. ‘Collect the birds for me,’ said Cú Chulainn to his charioteer. ‘If I go to get them, the wild deer will spring on you.’’

‘‘It is not easy for me to go there,’ said the charioteer. ‘The horses have become wild so that I cannot go past them. Nor can I go past the iron wheels of the chariot because of their sharpness, and I cannot go past the deer for his antlers have filled all the space between the two poles of the chariot.’ ‘Step from his antlers then,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I swear by the god by whom the Ulstermen swear, that I shall so nod at him and so glare at him that he will not move his head towards you and will not dare to stir.’ That was done then. Cú Chulainn fastened the reins and the charioteer collected the birds. Then Cú Chulainn tied the birds to the strings and cords of the chariot. In this wise he went to Emain Macha with a wild deer behind his chariot, a flock of swans fluttering over it and three severed heads in his chariot.’

‘They reached Emain then. ‘A chariot-warrior is driving towards you!’ cried the watchman in Emain Macha. ‘He will shed the blood of every man in the fort unless heed be taken and naked women go out to meet him.’’

‘Then he turned the left side of his chariot towards Emain which was tabu for it. And Cú Chulainn said. ‘I swear by the god by whom Ulstermen swear that, unless some man is found to fight with me, I shall shed the blood of everyone in the fort.’ ‘Send forth naked women to meet him !’ ordered Conchobor. Then the women-folk of Emain came forth to meet him led by Mugain,

or by Férach, according to other versions [gloss] the wife of Conchobor mac Nessa, and they bared their breasts to him. ‘These are the warriors who will encounter you today,’ said Mugain.

or Férach [gloss]" .’

‘He hid his face. Then the warriors of Emain seized him and cast him into a tub of cold water. That tub burst about him. The second tub into which he was plunged boiled hands high therefrom. The third tub into which he went after that he warmed so that its heat and its cold were properly adjusted for him. Then he came out and the queen, Mugain, put on him a blue mantle with a silver brooch therein, and a hooded tunic, and he sat at Conchobor's knee which was his resting-place always after that.’

‘One who did that in his seventh year,’ said Fiachu mac Fir Pebe, ‘it were no wonder that he should triumph over odds and overcome in fair fight now that his seventeen years are complete today.’</poem>

A different Version up to the Death of Órlám

‘Let us go forward now,’ said Ailill. Then they reached Mag Mucceda. There Cú Chulainn cut down an oaktree in their path and on its side he wrote an ogam inscription which said that none should go past it until a warrior should leap across it in a chariot. They pitched their tents at that spot and they came to leap across it in their chariots. Thirty horses fell in the attempt and thirty chariots were broken there. Bélach nÁne is the name of that place ever since.

Neue SeiteThe Death of Fráech

They remained there till the morrow. Fráech was summoned to them. ‘Help us, Fráech,’ said Medb. ‘Deliver us in this strait. Go for us to meet Cú Chulainn to see if perhaps you may encounter him in battle.’ Fráech set forth, a company of nine men, early in the morning and reached Áth Fúait. He saw a warrior bathing in the river. ‘Wait here,’ said Fráech to his followers, ‘till I fight with yonder man. He is not good in water.’ He took off his clothes and went into the water to Cú Chulainn. ‘Do not come against me,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘You will die if you do and I should be sorry to kill you.’ ‘Indeed I shall go,’ said Fráech, ‘so that we may meet in the water, and give me fair play.’ ‘Arrange that as you please,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Let each of us clasp the other (and wrestle),’ said Fráech. For a long time they kept wrestling in the water, and Fráech was submerged. Cú Chulainn lifted him up again. ‘Now this time will you yield and accept your life?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I will not,’ said Fráech.

Cú Chulainn thrust him down again and Fráech died. He came to land. His people carried his body to the encampment. Ever after that ford was called Áth Fraích. The whole encampment mourned for Fráech. They saw a band of women dressed in green tunics bending over the corpse of Fráech mac Idaid. They carried him off into the fairy mound which was called Síd Fraích ever afterwards.

Fergus leapt across the oak-tree in his own chariot.

They went on as far as Áth Taiten. There Cú Chulainn overthrew six of them, namely, the six Dungail Irruis. Thence they went on to Fornocht. Medb had a young hound named Baiscne. Cú Chulainn threw a stone at it and took its head off. Druim Baiscne was the name of that place henceforth. ‘It is a disgrace for you,’ said Medb, ‘that you do not hunt down that wicked hind who is killing you.’ So they went in pursuit of him then and the shafts of their chariots broke in the hunting.

The Death of Órlám

On the morrow they went over Iraird 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 &Óacute;rlám. 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 &Óacute;rlám, 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 &Óacute;rlám, 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.’

The Death of the three Sons of Gárach

Then the three Meic Gárach remained at their ford. Their names were Lon, Úalu and Diliu, and Mes Lir, Mes Lóech and Mes Lethan were their three charioteers. They thought Cú Chulainn had gone too far in doing what he had done, namely, killing the king's two foster-sons and his son and brandishing his son's head before the host. (They came then) that they might kill Cú Chulainn in revenge for &Óacute;rlám and so that they might themselves alone remove this cause of anxiety from the host. They cut three wooden rods for their charioteers so that the six of them together might do battle with Cú Chulainn. But then he killed all of them for they had broken the terms of fair play. At that time &Óacute;rlám's charioteer was standing between Ailill and Medb. Cú Chulainn threw a stone at him and his head broke and his brains gushed out over his ears. His name was Fer Teidil. So it is not true that Cú Chulainn never slew charioteers; but he did not kill them unless they were at fault.

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 &Óacute;rlám 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.

The Death of Lethan

Lethan came on to his ford over the Níth in Conaille, and he indeed waited to encounter Cú Chulainn. He was grieved by what Cú Chulainn had already done. Cú Chulainn cut off his head and left it there beside the body. Hence is the name Áth Lethan on the Níth. And their chariots broke when they met on the ford beside it. Hence is the name Áth Carpat. Mulcha, Lethan's charioteer, fell on the shoulder of the hill that lies between Áth Lethan and Áth Carpat. Hence comes the place-name Gúala Mulcha.

While the army was going over Mag mBreg Allecto came for a while, that is, the Mórrígan, in the form of a bird which perched on the pillar-stone in Temair Cúailnge and said to the bull: ‘Does the restless Black Bull know (it) without destructive falsehood? ... I have a secret that the Black Bull will know if he graze(?) ... on the green grass ... Fierce is the raven, men are dead, a sorrowful saying ... every day the death of a great tribe ... ’ Then the bull went with fifty heifers to Slíab Cuillinn, and his herdsman, Forgaimen, followed him. The bull threw off the thrice fifty boys who used to play on his back and killed two thirds of them. And before he went he pawed the earth in Tir Margéni in Cúailnge.

Cú Chulainn did not kill anyone between the Saili Imdoirchi in the district of Conaille until they reached Cúailnge. Cú Chulainn was then on the mountain Cuinche. He threatened that wherever he saw Medb he would cast a stone at her head. This was not easy for him, for Medb travelled surrounded by half the army and with a screen of shields over her head.

The Death of Lócha

A handmaid of Medb's called Lócha went with a great company of women to fetch water. Cú Chulainn thought that she was Medb. He threw a stone at her from Cuinche and killed her on her plain. Hence comes the place-name Réid Lócha in Cúailnge.

From Findabair Cúailnge the army scattered and set the country on fire. They gathered together all the women, boys, girls and cows that were in Cúailnge and brought them all to Findabair. ‘Your expedition was not successful,’ said Medb. ‘I do not see that you have the bull.’ ‘He is not in the province at all,’ said they all. Lóthar. Medb's cowherd was summoned to them. ‘Where do you think the bull is?’ she asked. ‘I am afraid to tell,’ said the cowherd. ‘The night that the Ulstermen fell into their debility the bull went away with sixty heifers and he is now in Dubchaire in Glenn Gat.’

‘Go,’ said Medb, ‘and take a withe between each pair of you.’ They did so then, and hence the glen is called Glenn Gat. Then they brought the bull to Findabair. When the bull caught sight of Lóthar the cowherd, he rushed at him and disembowelled him with his horns. Then together with his thrice fifty heifers the bull made for the encampment and fifty warriors were killed by him.That is the Death of Lóthar on the Foray.

Then the bull went away from them out of the camp, but they knew not where he had gone and they were grieved. Medb asked the cowherd if he knew where the bull was. ‘I fancy that he might be in the recesses of Slíab Cuillinn.’ So they turned back after ravaging Cúailnge but they did not find the bull there. The river Cronn rose up against them as high as the tops of the trees. They spent the night by the river-bank. And Medb ordered some of her people to go across.</poem>

The Death of Úalu

On the morrow a valiant hero called Úalu went and took a great flagstone on his back to go across the water. But the river turned him over and he lay with his stone on his belly. His grave and his headstone are on the road beside the stream. Lia Úalann is its name.

Afterwards they went round the river Cronn as far as its source, and they would have gone between its source and the mountain only that Medb would not allow it. She preferred that they should go across the mountain so that the track they made might remain there for ever as an insult to the men of Ulster. So they remained there three days and three nights until they had dug up the earth in front of them (to make a pass through the mountain) which was called Bernas Bó Cúailnge.

Then Cú Chulainn killed Cronn and Cóemdele and fought a furious(?) combat. A hundred warriors died by his hand … together with Roán and Roae, the two historians of the Táin. A hundred and forty-four kings were slain by him beside that same stream.

After that they came through the pass Bernas Bó Cúailnge with the stock and cattle of Cúailnge, and they spent the night in Glenn Dáil Imda in Cúailnge. Botha is the name of that place because they made huts (botha) to shelter them there. On the morrow they went on to the river Colptha. They heedlessly tried to cross it but it rose in flood against them and carried off to sea a hundred of their chariot- warriors. Cluain Carpat is the name of the district where they were drowned. They went round the river Colptha then to its source at Belat Alióin and spent the night at Liasa Liac. It is so called because they made sheds (liasa) for their calves there between Cúailnge and Conaille. They came through Glenn Gatlaig and the river Glais Gatlaig rose in flood against them. Before that its name was Sechaire, but from that time it was called Glais Gatlaig because they had taken their calves across bound together with wither. They spent the night in Druim Féne in Conaille.

Those then were their journeyings from Cúailnge to Machaire according to this version. But other authors and books give a different account of their wanderings from Findabair to Conaille, which is as follows

The Harrying of Cúailnge

When they had all arrived with their booty and assembled at Findabair Cúailnge, Medb said ‘Let the army be divided here. All the cattle cannot be taken by one route. Let Ailill go with half of them by Slige Midlúachra. Fergus and I will go by Bernas Bó nUlad.’ ‘The half of the drove that has fallen to our share is not lucky for us,’ said Fergus. ‘The cattle cannot be taken across the mountain unless they are divided.’ So it was done. Whence comes the name Bernas Bó nUlad.

Then Ailill said to Cuillius, his charioteer: ‘Spy for me today on Medb and Fergus. I do not know what has brought them thus together. I shall be glad if you can bring me a proof.’ Cuillius arrived when they were in Cluichri. The lovers remained behind while the warriors went on ahead. Cuillius came to where they were, but they did not hear the spy. Fergus's sword happened to be beside him and Cuillius drew it out of its scabbard, leaving the scabbard empty.

Then he came back to Ailill. ‘Well?’ said Ailill. ‘Well indeed,’ said Cuillius. ‘Here is a proof for you.’ ‘That is well,’ said Ailill. They exchanged smiles. ‘As you thought,’ said Cuillius, ‘I found them both lying together.’
‘She is right (to behave thus),’ said Ailill. ‘She did it to help in the cattle-driving. Make sure that the sword remain in good condition. Put it under your seat in the chariot, wrapped in a linen cloth.’

Then Fergus rose up to look for his sword. ‘Alas!’ he cried. ‘What ails you?’asked Medb. ‘I have wronged Ailill,’ said he. ‘Wait here until I come out of the wood, and do not wonder if it is a long time until I return.’ Now in fact Medb did not know of the loss of the sword. Fergus went off, taking his charioteer's sword in his hand. In the wood he cut a wooden sword. Hence the Ulstermen have the place-name Fid Mórdrúalle.

‘Let us go on after the others,’ said Fergus. All their hosts met in the plain. They pitched their tents. Fergus was summoned to Ailill to play chess. When he came into the tent Ailill began to laugh at him.

Fergus said: ‘Well for the man who is being laughed at if he be not deluded by the foolish violence of his fateful deed. By the point of my sword, halidom of Macha, swiftly shall we wreak vengeance on swords following on a cry (for help) from the Gaileóin had not a woman's triumph misdirected (me); following on a tryst bloody and gravestrewn and with blunt-edged spears between a great host with [their] commanders, there shall be fought a battle [extending] to the mountain of Nessa's grandson (Cú Chulainn) by a stout host, and the battle shall scatter the headless trunks of men.’

Then Ailill spoke: ‘Do not wage battle after the loss of your sword … It defends Medb against many tribes … Sit down then,’ said Ailill, ‘so that we may play a game of chess. Your arrival is welcome.’ Then Ailill said ‘Play chess and draughts before a king and a queen. They have prepared a game for great eager armies. It matters not(?) what stake you lay … I am well- skilled. Perhaps in truth the first guilt will lie on the women … Findabair loves the bold Fergus, Fergus mac Rossa Róich with

lowing cattle and great armies surrounded(?) by tribes with great possessions, Fergus with the beauty of a king, the fierceness of a dragon, the venemous breath of a viper, the powerful blow of a lion.' Then they began to play chess. They moved the gold and silver chessmen across the bronze chessboard.
Ailill was heard speaking: 'It is not the due of a king ... ' Medb was heard to say: 'Cease those uncouth speeches. A noble lady is not the secret love of a stranger ... I am not given to destruction and unjust judgments ... ' Then Fergus was heard saying: 'Alas! With many words they wage war facing many tribes, and with secret counsels they will be nourished(?) and with treasure they will be bewitched(?), and with spears they will be cleared away ... that is, you will be obeyed.' They remained there that night and on the following morning they heard Ailill say 'A great champion comes to face the mighty army by Cronn, the river of Nessa's grandson. The men of Connacht will fight against an opponent. There will flow streams of blood from headless necks in a bloody and grave-strewn meeting of heroes. Many waters rise up against the beardless champion who will come from Ulster to the fray.'

Then Medb spoke: 'Do not contend, O arrogant son of Máta ... men are herded together, women are carried off ... great armies propose to come from the battle-field of Cúailnge and the hosts sleep on.' Fergus was heard: 'Let a great prince(?) be seized ... Let them swear by their people, let them make promises to their queens, let them fight against their enemies.' Medb was heard saying: 'Let what he says be done, let it be done.' Medb spoke: 'He judges in submission to you for many armies. Let them advance while Ailill is in your power...' They set forth on their way to the river Cronn, and Mane mac Ailella was heard to say: 'If I am quickly sent forth against a fair opponent of many feats, he will ward off father and mother on horned cattle ... '

Then Fergus was heard saying: 'Do not go, O valorous boy. They will give no other counsel until a beardless lad shall strike your head from your neck ... ' 'Let me go in front with the banished Ulstermen,' said Fergus, 'to make sure that the lad gets fair play, with the cattle before us and the army in our rear, and the women folk behind the army.'
Then Medb was heard saying: 'Hark, O Fergus! for the sake of your honour ... ward off (the enemy) with your fine army. Do not drive away the Ulstermen ... In Mag nAí you prevail over a meeting of companies.'

Fergus spoke: 'Alas! O foolish Medb whose voice I do not hear ... I am not the son of a weakling ... I shall not strike a great blow upon the tribes. Cease to cast stones at me ... '

Cú Chulainn came to Áth Cruinn to meet them. 'My friend Láeg,' said he to his charioteer, 'the armies are coming towards us.'

Láeg spoke: 'I swear by the gods that I shall perform a great deed in front of chariot- warriors in the small remnant of the battle. They are carried on slender steeds with silver yokes and golden wheels (on their chariots) ... You will march against kings. They will conquer with their power of leaping.'

Cú Chulainn spoke: 'Take heed, O Láeg, that you grasp the reins with the great victory of Macha ... I beseech the rivers to come to my help. I call upon heaven and earth and especially the river Cronn to aid me.'

1. The plaintive river Cronn offers them resistance and will not let them cross into Muirthemne until the work of warriors is finished in the mountain north of Ochaíne.

Thereupon the river rose in flood as high as the tree-tops.

Maine, the son of Ailill and Medb came forward before the others. Cú Chulainn slaughtered him on the ford and thirty horsemen of his household were submerged in the water. Cú Chulainn overthrew thirty-two of their brave warriors again at the river. They pitched their tents at that ford. Lugaid mac Nóis uí Lomairc Allchomaig accompanied by thirty horsemen came on a fleeting visit to parley with Cú Chulainn.

‘Welcome, Lugaid,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘If birds fly over Mag Murthemne you shall have a barnacle goose and a half. Or else if fish swim into the estuaries you shall have a salmon and a half. Or else you shall have three sprigs, a sprig of cress, a sprig of laver, a sprig of seaweed. A man shall take your place (to fight) at the ford.’ ‘That is welcome,’ said Lugaid. ‘I wish all goodness of the tribe for the lad.’ ‘Your army is fine,’ said Cú Chulainn.
‘You will not suffer even though the company you bring against them is few,’ said Lugaid. ‘Grant me fair play and goodly combat,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘O friend Lugaid, do the army hold me in fear?’ ‘I swear by the god of my people,’ said Lugaid, ‘that not one man or two dare go outside the camp to make water unless they go in companies of twenty or of thirty.’ ‘It will be a fine thing for them,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘if I begin to pelt them with stones from my sling. If every man's strength is put forth against me, it will be right for you, Lugaid, (to remember) your alliance with the men of Ulster. Tell me now what it is that you want.’ ‘I want a truce from you for my company.’

‘You shall have that provided that they bear a special sign (that I may recognize them.) And tell my friend Fergus that his company too should bear a special sign. Tell the physicians to make their company also bear a sign and let them swear to preserve my life and send me food every night.’ Lugaid left him then. Now it chanced that Fergus was in his tent with Ailill. Lugaid called him out and gave him the message.

Ailill was heard speaking: ‘Cair iss i sanassaib … Let us go with a small army, to a choice tent and an encampment … ’ ‘I swear by the god of my people that it is not so,’ said Fergus, ‘unless I ask the lad. Come, Lugaid, go and ask him if Ailill and his division of three thousand may join together with my company. Take him an ox and a flitch of bacon and a barrel of wine.’ Then Lugaid goes to him and gives him that message. ‘I do not mind if he go,’ said Cú Chulainn. So the two companies joined them. They remained there until night. Cú Chulainn wounded thirty of their warriors with stones from his sling. —Or, as some books tell it, they remained there for twenty nights. ‘Your journeyings will be unpleasant,’ said Fergus. ‘The Ulstermen will recover from their debility and they will crush us into the dust and gravel. We are ill-placed for battle. Come on to Cúil Airthir.’ It happened that Cú Chulainn went that night to speak with the men of Ulster.

‘What tidings have you?’ asked Conchobar. ‘Women are taken captive,’ said he, ‘cattle are driven away, men are slain.’ ‘Who takes them captive? Who drives them away? Who kills them?’ ‘… The man foremost in slaughter and killing, Ailill mac Máta, carries them off and Fergus mac Róich, the

brave one, who wields a sword ...' 'That is not of much benefit to you,' said Conchobar. 'Today we have been smitten (by the cess) as before.'

Thereafter Cú Chulainn left them. He saw the army going forth.

Ailill spoke: 'Alas! I see a chariot with bright points ... he will slay men in fords and capture cows, and the thirty will act when the army has come from Laigin. Blood will flow from headless necks. They will fall fighting for the cattle of the Ulstermen in the ford.' Cú Chulainn killed thirty of their warriors at Áth Durn. They made no stop then until at nightfall they reached Cúil Airthir. He killed thirty of them at that spot and they pitched their tents there.

Ailill's charioteer, Cuillius, was at the ford early in the morning washing the wheels of the chariot. Cú Chulainn hit him with a stone and killed him. Hence the place-name Áth Cuillne in Cúil Airthir.

They travelled on then and spent the night in Druim Féine in Conaille, as we have related above. Cú Chulainn attacked them there. On each of the three nights that they were there he killed a hundred of them. He let fly at them with his sling from Ochaíne near them.

'Our army will not long survive with Cú Chulainn attacking us in this fashion,' said Ailill. 'Let an offer of terms from us be made to him, namely, that he shall have an extent of Mag nAí equal to Mag Muirthemne, the best chariot in Mag nAí and the equipment of twelve men. Or, if he prefer, this plain in which he was reared and thrice seven cumala. And all that has been destroyed in his household or among his cattle shall be made good, and he shall be compensated for it. And let him take service with me, it is better for him than to be in the service of a princeling.' 'Who will go on that mission?' they asked. 'Mac Roth yonder.'

Mac Roth, the messenger of Ailill and Medb—he it is who could go all round Ireland in one day—went to Delga on that mission, for Fergus believed that Cú Chulainn was in Delga.

'I see a man coming towards us,' said Láeg to Cú Chulainn. 'He has yellow hair. He wears the linen garments of his office. In his hand a great club and at his waist an ivory-hilted sword. He wears a hooded tunic with red insertion.'
'That is one of the king's warriors,' said Cú Chulainn.

Mac Roth asked Láeg whose vassal he was. 'Vassal to yonder man below,' said Láeg. Cú Chulainn was sitting stark-naked in the snow which reached up to his thighs, examining his shirt for lice. So Mac Roth asked Cú Chulainn whose vassal he was. 'Vassal of Conchobor mac Nessa,' said Cú Chulainn. 'Have you no more definite description?' 'That is sufficient,' said Cú Chulainn. 'Where is Cú Chulainn then?' asked Mac Roth. 'What would you say to him?' said Cú Chulainn. So Mac Roth told him the whole message as we have (already) related. 'Even if Cú Chulainn were here near at hand, he would not agree to that. He will not exchange his mother's brother for another king.'

Once again Cú Chulainn was visited (by Mac Roth) and he was told that he would be given the noblest of the (captured) women and the dry kine on condition that he should not ply his sling on them by night even if he killed them by day. 'I will not agree,' said Cú Chulainn. 'If our base-born women are carried off, then our noble women will work at querns, and if our milch cows are taken

away we shall be left without milk.’ A third time Cú Chulainn was visited by Mac Roth and he was told that he would get the base-born women and the milch cows. ‘I will not agree,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘The Ulstermen will take their base born women to bed and base offspring will be born to them, and they will use their milch cows for meat in the winter.’ ‘Is there anything else then?’ asked the messenger. ‘There is,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘but I shall not tell you. It will be agreed to if some one (else) tell you.’ ‘I know what it is,’ said Fergus. ‘The man has arranged that I should make it known. But indeed it is of no advantage to you. These then are the terms: that for a day and a night the cattle shall not be taken away from the ford on which he shall fight in single combat, in the hope that help may come from the Ulstermen to him. And I find it strange,’ said Fergus, ‘that they are so long in recovering from their debility.’ ‘It is better for us indeed,’ said Ailill, ‘to lose one man every day than a hundred men every night.’

The death of Etarcomol and the terms offered by the men of Ireland as told to Cú Chulainn by Fergus:

Then Fergus went on that mission. Etarcomol, the son of Ed and Leithrinn, fosterson of Ailill and Medb, followed Fergus. ‘I do not wish you to go,’ said Fergus, ‘and it is not out of hatred of you that I say so, but I dislike the thought of a fight between you and Cú Chulainn because of your pride and insolence and because of the fierceness and violence, the boldness and fury of your opponent, Cú Chulainn. No good will come of your encounter.’ ‘Can you not protect me from him?’ said Etarcomol. ‘I can,’ said Fergus, ‘provided that you do not provoke a quarrel.’

They set off then for Delga in two chariots. At that time Cú Chulainn was playing draughts with Láeg: the back of his head was towards them and Láeg was facing them. ‘I see two chariots coming towards us,’ said Láeg. ‘There is a tall dark man in the first chariot. He has dark bushy hair. He wears a purple cloak in which is a golden brooch, and a hooded tunic with red insertion. He carries a curved shield with a scalloped rim of white gold. In his hand he holds a broad spear with perforations from point to upper shaft (?). Across his thighs a sword as long as a boat's rudder.’ ‘That great rudder carried by my master Fergus is empty,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘for there is no sword in the scabard, only a sword of wood. I have been told,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘that Ailill came unawares upon Fergus and Medb as they slept, and he took away Fergus's sword and gave it into the keeping of his charioteer, and a wooden sword was put into its scabbard.’ At that point Fergus arrived.

‘Welcome, master Fergus,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘If fish swim into the estuaries you shall have a salmon and a half; or else if a flock of birds fly over the plain you shall have a barnacle goose and the half of another; or you shall have a handful of cress or seaweed, a handful of laver, a drink from the sand. I shall to go the ford to encounter an opponent if he challenge (you) and you shall be guarded until you shall have slept.’ ‘I trust your welcome,’ said Fergus, ‘but it is not for food that I have come. I know what provisions you have here.’ Then Cú Chulainn received the message from Fergus, and Fergus departed.

Etarcomol remained behind gazing at Cú Chulainn. ‘What are you looking at?’ said Cú Chulainn.

‘You,’ said Etarcomol. ‘An eye can soon glance over that,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘So I see,’ answered Etarcomol. ‘I see no reason why anyone should fear you. I see in you no horror or fearfulness or

superiority in numbers. You are merely a handsome youth with wooden weapons and fine feats of arms.' 'Though you revile me' said Cú Chulainn, 'I will not kill you because of Fergus. But for your being under his protection, I would have sent back your distended loins and your dismembered body behind your chariot to the encampment.' 'Do not threaten me thus,' said Etarcomol. 'As for the wonderful agreement you made, namely, to engage in single combat, it is I who will be the first of the men of Ireland to fight with you tomorrow.' Then he went away, but he turned back again from Méithe and Ceithe, saying to his charioteer: 'I boasted in the presence of Fergus that I would encounter Cú Chulainn tomorrow. It is not easy for me, however, to wait until then. Turn the horses back again from the hill.'

Láeg saw what was happening and said to Cú Chulainn 'The chariot is coming again and has turned its left side to us.' 'That is a challenge which must be met,' said Cú Chulainn. 'Let us go down to meet him at the ford and find out (what he wants).'

'I do not wish to do what you ask,' said Cú Chulainn (to Etarcomol). 'You must do it, however,' said Etarcomol. Cú Chulainn struck the sod beneath his feet and he fell prostrate with the sod on his belly. 'Begone!' said Cú Chulainn. 'I am loath to dip my hands in your blood. I should have cut you into pieces just now but for Fergus.' 'We shall not part like this,' said Etarcomol, 'until I carry off your head or until I leave my head with you.' 'The latter is what will happen,' said Cú Chulainn. Then Cú Chulainn struck him with his sword under his armpits so that his garments fell off him, but he did not cut his skin. 'Begone then!' said Cú Chulainn. 'No,' said Etarcomol. Cú Chulainn touched him then with the edge of his sword and cut his hair off as cleanly as if it had been shaved off with a razor. He did not even scratch his skin. Then since the fellow was troublesome and pertinacious, he struck him on the crown of his head and clove him down to the navel.

Fergus saw the chariot go past with only one man in it. He turned back to scold Cú Chulainn. 'It was wicked of you, you whippersnapper,' said he, 'to violate my protection (of Etarcomol). You think my club is short.' 'Do not be angry with me, master Fergus,' said Cú Chulainn, '…Do not reproach me, master Fergus.' He bowed down and let Fergus's chariot go past him three times. 'Ask his charioteer if I was the one who instigated the fight.' 'Indeed it was not you,' said Etarcomol's charioteer. 'He said,' went on Cú Chulainn, 'that he would not go away till he carried off my head or left his own head with me. Which would you prefer, master Fergus?' 'Indeed I prefer what has been done,' said Fergus, 'for it is he who was insolent.'

Then Fergus put a spanceling band through Etarcomol's heels and dragged him behind his own chariot to the camp. Whenever Etarcomol's body went over rocks, one half would part from the other; when the path was smooth, the two parts would come together again. Medb looked at him. 'That was not kind treatment for a young hound, Fergus,' said Medb. 'It is no source of annoyance to me,' said Fergus, 'that the mongrel should have waged battle with the great hound for whom he was no match.'

Then Etarcomol's grave was dug and his headstone was planted in the ground; his name was written in ogam and he was mourned. That night Cú Chulainn did not attack them with his sling.

The Death of Nad Crantail

‘What man have you got to encounter Cú Chulainn tomorrow?’ asked Lugaid. ‘They will give you him tomorrow,’ said Maine son of Ailill. ‘We can get no one to encounter him,’ said Medb. ‘Let us make a truce with him till a man be sought for him.’ A truce was granted them. ‘Whither will you send,’ asked Ailill, ‘to seek a man to encounter Cú Chulainn?’ ‘There is no one in Ireland to be got for him,’ said Medb, ‘unless Cú Roí mac Dáire or Nad Crantail the warrior be brought.’

One of Cú Roí's followers was in the tent. ‘Cú Roí will not come,’ said he. ‘He thinks that enough of his people have already come.’ ‘Let a message be sent to Nad Crantail then.’ Maine Andoí went to Nad Crantail. They related their tidings to him. ‘Come with us for the sake of the honour of Connacht.’ ‘I will not,’ said he, ‘unless Findabair is given to me.’ He came with them then. They brought his weapons in a cart from the east of Connacht to the encampment. ‘You shall get Findabair,’ said Medb, ‘as a reward for encountering yonder man.’ ‘I shall do so,’ said he. That night Lugaid came to Cú Chulainn. ‘Nad Crantail is coming to meet you tomorrow. Alas for you! You will not stand out against him.’ ‘That is no matter,’ said Cú Chulainn.

—According to another version it was then that Cú Chulainn chanted the verse: ‘If Nad Crantail should fall.’—

On the morrow Nad Crantail went forth from the camp, taking with him nine stakes of holly, sharpened and charred. Cú Chulainn was there engaged in fowling, with his chariot beside him. Nad Crantail cast a stake at Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn sprang on to the top of that stake but it did not hinder him in his fowling. Similarly with the other eight stakes. When Nad Crantail cast the ninth stake, the flock of birds flew away from Cú Chulainn who went in pursuit of them. Then, like a bird himself, he stepped on to the points of the stakes, going from one stake to another, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him. They were all certain, however, that Cú Chulainn was fleeing from Nad Crantail.

‘That Cú Chulainn of yours,’ said Nad Crantail, ‘has taken to flight before me.’ ‘It was to be expected,’ said Medb, ‘if goodly warriors opposed him, that the sprite would not hold out against bold men.’ Fergus and the Ulstermen were grieved to hear this. Fíacha mac Fir Fhebe was sent by them to upbraid Cú Chulainn. ‘Tell him,’ said Fergus, ‘that it was fine for him to attack the warriors as long as he acted bravely. It is better for him, however, to hide himself when he flees from a single opponent, for it is no greater dishonour for him than for the rest of the Ulstermen.’ ‘Who boasted that I fled?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘Nad Crantail,’ said Fíacha.
‘If he had boasted of the feat I had performed in his presence; it would have become him better,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘But he would not boast if only he had a weapon in his hand. You know that I kill no man unarmed. So let him come tomorrow and stand between Ochaíne and the sea, and however early he come, he shall find me waiting there and I shall not flee from him.’

Cú Chulainn ended the meeting, and he cast his mantle around him after his night watch, but he

did not notice the great pillar-stone as big as himself which was beside him and he covered it over between himself and his mantle and sat down beside it.

Then Nad Crantail arrived. His weapons were brought by him in a wagon. ‘Where is Cú Chulainn?’ he asked. ‘There he is over there,’ said Fergus. ‘That is not how he appeared to me yesterday,’ said Nad Crantail. ‘Are you the famous Cú Chulainn?’ ‘And what if I am?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘If you are,’ said Nad Crantial, ‘then until I carry the head of a little lamb to the camp, I shall not take back your head which is the head of a beardless boy.’ ‘I am not Cú Chulainn at all,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Go round the hill to him.’

Cú Chulainn came to Láeg. ‘Smear a false beard on me. The champion refuses to fight with me since I am beardless.’ So it was done for him. He went to meet Nad Crantail on the hill. ‘I think that better,’ said Nad Crantail. ‘Grant me fair play now.’ ‘You shall have it provided that we know it.’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I will throw a cast at you,’ said Nad Crantail, ‘and do not avoid it.’ ‘I shall avoid it only by leaping upwards,’ said Cú Chulainn. Nad Crantail threw a cast at him and Cú Chulainn leapt upwards as it came. ‘You do ill to avoid the cast,’ said Nad Crantail. ‘Avoid my cast upwards also,’ said Cú Chulainn.

Cú Chulainn threw the spear at him but it was upwards he threw so that the spear came down on the crown of Nad Crantail's head and went through him to the ground. ‘Indeed,’ he cried, ‘you are the best warrior in Ireland! I have twenty- four sons in the encampment. Let me go and tell them what hidden treasures I have. And I shall come back so that you may behead me for I shall die if the spear is taken out of my head.’ ‘Good,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘provided that you come back again.’

Then Nad Crantail went to the encampment. They all came forth to meet him. ‘Where is the head of the distorted one that you have brought?’ they all asked. ‘Stay, O warriors, until I tell my tale to my sons and go back again to fight with Cú Chulainn.’

He went off to meet Cú Chulainn and cast his sword at him. Cú Chulainn leapt up so that the sword struck the pillar-stone and broke in two. Cú Chulainn was distorted as he had been when with the boys in Emain. Thereupon Cú Chulainn leapt on to Nad Crantail's shield and cut off his head. He struck him again on his headless neck (and split him) down to the navel and Nad Crantail fell in four sections to the ground. Then Cú Chulainn spoke these words

1. If Nad Crantail has fallen, there will be increase of strife. Alas that I do not now give battle to Medb with a third of the host!

The Finding of the Bull according to this Version

Then Medb went with a third of the army to Cuib in search of the bull and Cú Chulainn followed them. She went along Slige Midlúachra then as far as Dún Sobairche to harry the Ulstermen and the Cruithne. Cú Chulainn caught sight of Buide mac Báin from Slíab Cuilinn with the bull and fifteen heifers. Sixty warriors of Ailill's household formed his company, each man wrapped in a mantle. Cú Chulainn came towards them. ‘Whence have you brought the cattle?’ asked he. ‘From yonder mountain,’ answered the warrior. ‘Tell me, where is their cow-herd?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘He is where we found him,’ said the warrior. Cú Chulainn gave three leaps to follow them as far as the ford, seeking to have speech with them. Then he spoke to their leader.

‘What is your name?’ said he. ‘One who hates you not, who loves you not, Buide mac Báin,’ said he. ‘Here is this spear for Buide,’ said Cú Chulainn.
He cast a small spear at him and it went into his armpit, and his liver on the other side broke in two at the impact of the spear. Cú Chulainn killed him at his ford. Hence the place-name Áth mBuide. Thereupon the bull was brought into the encampment. Then they decided in debate that if Cú Chulainn were deprived of his javelin, he would be no more formidable (than anyone else)./<poem>

===The Death of Redg the Satirist===

<poem>Then Redg the satirist went, on Ailill's advice, to ask Cú Chulainn for the javelin, that is, Cú Chulainn's spear. ‘Give me your spear,’ said the satirist. ‘No indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘but I will give your treasure.’ ‘I shall not accept that,’ said the satirist. So he wounded the satirist since he did not accept what was offered him, and Redg said that he would bring dishonour on him (by satire) unless he got the javelin. So Cú Chulainn threw the javelin at him and it went right through his head. ‘This treasure was quickly delivered indeed,’ said the satirist. Hence the name Áth Tolam Sét.

There is also a ford to the east of that place where the copper from the spear landed. Umarrith (Umashruth) is the name of that ford.

It was in Cuib that Cú Chulainn killed all those that we have mentioned, namely, Nath Coirpthe at his trees, Cruthen on his ford, Meic Búachalla at their cairn, Marc on his hill, Meille in his stronghold, Bodb in his tower, Bogaine in his marsh.

Cú Chulainn turned back again into Mag Muirthemne. He preferred to guard his own homeland. After going there he killed the men of Crochen (or Crónech), that is, Focherda, he cast off twenty men. He come upon them as they were setting up camp, ten cupbearers and ten warriors.

Medb turned back again from the north when she had remained there for a fortnight, ravaging the province, and when she had fought a battle against Findmór the wife of Celtchar mac Uthidir. After the destruction of Dún Sobairche in the territory of Dál Riada against Findmór she carried off fifty women captives. Wherever in Cuib Medb planted her horsewhip is named Bile Medba. Every ford and every hill by which she spent the night is named Áth Medba and Dindgna Medba. Then they all met at Focherd, Ailill and Medb and the men who drove the bull. His herdsman took the bull from them but by beating their shields with sticks they drove the bull across into a narrow pass and the cattle trampled the herdsman into the ground. His name was Forgemen. And the hill there is called Forgemen.

Their only anxiety that night was to get some one from among them to contend with Cú Chulainn at the ford. ‘Let us ask Cú Chulainn for a truce,’ said Ailill. ‘Let Lugaid go on that mission,’ said they all. So Lugaid went to speak with him. ‘What do the army think of me now?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘They think that the request you made of them is a great disgrace, namely, that they should return to you your women and girls and half your cattle. But they think it more grievous than anything else that you should go on killing them and yet be provided with food by them.’ Then every day for a week a man fell there at Cú Chulainn's hands. Terms of fair play were broken against him; twenty men were sent to attack him all together, but he killed them all.

‘Go to him, Fergus,’ said Ailill, ‘and ask if he will allow us to move camp.’ So they went then to Crónech. In that place there fell by him in single combat two men called Roth, two called Lúan, two female thieves, ten jesters, ten cupbearers, ten men called Fergus, six called Fedelm and six called Fiachrach. All these were killed by him in single combat. Then when they had pitched their tents in Crónech, they debated as to what they should do about Cú Chulainn.

‘I know what is right in this matter,’ said Medb. ‘Send a message asking him to grant a truce with the host and say that he shall have half the cattle that are here.’ That message was taken to him. ‘I shall do so,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘on condition that you do not violate the agreement.’

The Meeting of Cú Chulainn and Finnabair

Aithremail went to him, and he went first to Láeg. ‘Whose vassal are you?’ he asked. Láeg did not address him. Maine asked him the same question three times. ‘I am Cú Chulainn's vassal,’ said Láeg, ‘and do not plague me lest perchance I strike your head off.’ ‘What a bad-tempered fellow !’ said Maine turning away from him. So then Maine went to speak to Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn had taken off his shirt and was sitting in the snow up to his waist while around him the snow had melted a man's length, so great was the fierce ardour of the warrior. Maine asked him three times in the same way whose vassal he was. ‘Conchobor's vassal, and do not plague me. If you bother me any more, I shall cut off your head as the head is cut off a blackbird’. ‘It is not easy to speak to these two,’ said Maine.

He left them then and told Ailill and Medb what had happened. ‘Let Lugaid go to him,’ said Ailill, ‘and speak to him (and offer him) the maid.’

So Lugaid went and gave Cú Chulainn the message. ‘Friend Lugaid,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘this is a trick.’ ‘It is the word of a king,’ said Lugaid. ‘There will be no trickery.’ ‘So be it done,’ said Cú Chulainn. Thereupon Lugaid went from him and told that answer to Ailill and Medb.

‘Let the jester go disguised as me,’ said Ailill, ‘wearing a king's crown on his head. And let him stand far away from Cú Chulainn that he may not recognize him. And the girl shall go with him and he shall betroth her to Cú Chulainn. They shall come away quickly then and very likely you will deceive Cú Chulainn in that way and he will not hinder you until such time as he comes with the Ulstermen to the great battle.’

So the jester went, accompanied by the maid, to Cú Chulainn and from afar off he addressed him. Cú Chulainn went to meet them. But in fact he recognized by the man's speech that he was a jester. He threw at him a sling-stone which he had in his hand and it went into the jester's head and drove his brains out. He came to the girl. He cut off her two plaits and thrust a stone through her mantle and her tunic. Then he thrust a stone through the middle of the jester. Their two pillar-stones are still there, Finnabair's stone and the jester's stone. Cú Chulainn left them thus.

Messengers came from Ailill and Medb in search of their people, for it seemed to them that they had long been gone. They were found in that plight. The whole story spread through the camp. Thereafter there was no truce between them and Cú Chulainn.

The Combat of Munremar and Cú Roí

When the hosts were there in the evening, they saw one stone thrown at them from the east and another thrown to meet it from the west. The stones collided in the air and they kept falling between Fergus's camp and that of Ailill and that of the Érainn. This performance went on until the same time next day, and the hosts were standing, holding their shields over their heads to protect them from the battle-stones, until the plain was full of stones. Hence the name Mag Clochair. In fact it was Cú Ruí mac Dáire who had done this; he came to help his followers and he was in Cotail facing Munremar mac Gerrcinn. Munremar had come from Emain Macha to Ard Róich to the assistance of Cú Chulainn. Cú Roí knew that there was no one in the army who could withstand Munremar. So they both carried on this performance (with the stones). The host begged them to desist. Then Munremar and Cú Roí made peace and Cú Roí went to his house while Munremar returned to Emain Macha and did not come (again) until the day of the great battle. Cú Roí, however, did not come until the fight with Fer Diad.

‘Ask Cú Chulainn,’ said Medb and Ailill, ‘to allow us to move camp.’ They were given permission and they moved camp. By this time the debility of the Ulstermen was at an end. As they awoke from their torpor, some of them kept still attacking the army until they were once more smitten by their affliction.

The Death of the Youths

Then the youths of Ulster took counsel together in Emain Macha. ‘Alas for us,’ said they, ‘that our friend Cú Chulainn should be left unaided!’ ‘Tell me,’ said Fiachna Fuilech mac Fir Fhebi, a brother of Fíachach Fialdána mac Fir Fhebi, ‘shall I have a band of fighters from among you so that I may go and help him thus?’ Thrice fifty boys, a third of the youths of Ulster, went with him, carrying their hurleys. The army saw them approaching across the plain. ‘There is a great host coming towards us across the plain,’ said Ailill. Fergus went to see them.

‘Those are some of the boys of Ulster,’ he said, ‘and they are coming to help Cú Chulainn.’ ‘Let a band of armed men go to meet them,’ said Ailill, ‘but without Cú Chulainn's knowledge, for if they meet with him, you will not withstand them.’
Thrice fifty warriors went to encounter them. Both sides fell and not one of those splendid boys escaped alive at Lia Toll. Hence the place-name Lia Fiachrach meic Fir Fhebi for it is here he fell. ‘Take counsel,’ said Ailill. ‘Ask Cú Chulainn to let you leave this place for you will hardly escape from him now that his hero's flame has sprung forth.’

For it was usual with him that when his hero's flame sprang forth his feet would turn to the back and his hams turn to the front and the round muscles of his calves would come on to his shins, while one eye sank into his head and the other protruded. A man's head would go into his mouth. Every hair on him would be as sharp as a spike of hawthorn and there would be a drop of blood on every hair. He would recognise neither comrades nor friends. He would attack alike before him and behind him. Hence the men of Connacht named Cú Chulainn the Distorted One.

The Bloodless Fight of Rochad

Cú Chulainn sent his charioteer to Rochad mac Fathemain of Ulster to ask him to come to his aid. Now it happened that Finnabair was in love with Rochad for he was the handsomest of the Ulster warriors of the day. The charioteer went to Rochad and asked him to come and help Cú Chulainn if he had recovered from his debility, and he suggested that they should set a snare for the host to entrap some of them and kill them. Rochad came from the north with a hundred men. ‘Scan the plain for us today,’ said Ailill. ‘I see a troop coming across the plain,’ said the watchman, ‘and a youthful warrior among them. He towers shoulder-high above the other warriors.’

‘Who is that, Fergus?’ asked Ailill.

‘Rochad mac Fathemain,’ said he, ‘and he comes to help Cú Chulainn. I know what you must do,’ said Fergus. ‘Send a hundred men with the maid yonder as far as the middle of the plain, and let the maid go in front of them. A messenger shall go and speak to Rochad and ask him to come alone to talk to the maid, and then let him be seized and that will save us from attack by his followers.’ This was done then. Rochad went to meet the messenger. ‘I have come to you from Finnabair to ask you to go and speak with her.’

So he went alone to speak with her. The host rushed about him on all sides; he was captured and seized. His followers took to flight. Afterwards he was released and bound over not to attack the host until he came with all the Ulstermen. He was promised that Finnabair should be given to him, and then he went away from them. That is the Bloodless Fight of Rochad.

The Death of the Royal Mercenaries

‘Let Cú Chulainn be asked for a truce for us,’ said Ailill and Medb. Lugaid went with that message and Cú Chulainn granted the truce. ‘Send a man to the ford for me tomorrow,’ said Cú Chulainn. There were with Medb six royal mercenaries, that is, six royal heirs of Clanna Dedad, to wit, three called Dub from Imlech, and three called Derg from Sruthair. ‘Why should we not go against Cú Chulainn?’ said they. So they went to meet him on the morrow and Cú Chulainn killed the six of them.

The Death of Cúr

Then Cúr mac Da Lath was asked by them to encounter Cú Chulainn. He from whom Cúr drew blood died before the ninth day. ‘If he kill Cú Chulainn,’ said Medb, ‘it means victory. If he is himself killed, it will be a relief to the host. It is not pleasant to consort with Cúr eating and sleeping.’

So Cúr went forth. But he disliked going to encounter a beardless whipper- snapper of a boy.

‘In truth,’ said he, ‘ye make little account of me. Had I known that I was sent against this man, I should not have stirred to meet him. I should think it enough to send a boy of his own age from my followers to encounter him.’ ‘Nay,’ said Cormac Cond Longas. ‘It would be a wonderful thing for us were you yourself to repel him.’ ‘However that be,’ said Cúr, ‘since I have been entrusted with this task, ye shall go on your way early tomorrow for it will not take me long to kill that young deer.’

So early in the morning on the morrow he went to meet Cú Chulainn, and he told the host to start on their journey for it would be a joyful expedition for him to go and meet Cú Chulainn. So he went off. Cú Chulainn at that time was practising feats.

A List of the Feats

The ball-feat, the blade-feat, the feat with horizontally-held shield, the javelin-feat, the rope-feat, the feat with the body, the cat-feat, the hero's salmon-leap, the cast of a wand, the leap across ..., the bending of a valiant hero, the feat of the gae bolga, the feat of quickness (?), the wheel-feat, the eight-men feat, the overbreath feat, the bruising with a sword, the hero's war-cry, the well-measured blow, the return-stroke, the mounting on a spear and straightening the body on its point, with the bond of a valiant champion.

For a third of the day Cúr was plying his weapons against him protected by the boss of his shield, and no blow or thrust reached Cú Chulainn in the wild excitement of his feats, nor did he realise that the man was attacking him until Fíacha mac Fir Fhebe cried to him: ‘Beware of the man who is attacking you!’ Cú Chulainn glanced at Cúr and cast the ball-feat which he held in his hand so that it went between the boss and the centre of the shield and back through the fellow's head. —According to another version it was in (the battle of) Imshlige Glendamnach that Cúr fell.— Fergus turned to the host.

‘If your surety binds you,’ said he, ‘stay here until tomorrow.’ ‘Not here,’ said Ailill, ‘but we shall go back to our encampment.’ Then Láth mac Da Bró was asked to fight him even as Cúr had been asked. He too fell. Fergus turned again to enforce their surety. So they remained there until there were slain Cúr mac Da Lath and Lath mac Da Bro and Foirc mac Trí nAignech and Srubgaile mac Eóbith. These men were all killed in single combat.

The Death of Fer Baeth

‘Go for me, friend Láeg, to the encampment and consult Lugaid mac Nóis uí Lomairc, and find out who is coming to fight me tomorrow. Question him closely and greet him.’

Láeg went off then. ‘Welcome!’ said Lugaid. ‘Cú Chulainn is indeed in unlucky plight, fighting single handed against the men of Ireland.’ ‘Who is coming to fight him tomorrow?’ ‘It is Fer Báeth—bad luck to him in his fighting!—who goes to meet him tomorrow, Fer Báeth, the comrade of us both. He has been given Finnabair for doing so and sway over his own people.’ Láeg returned to where Cú Chulainn was.

‘My friend Láeg is not glad of the answer he got,’ said Cú Chulainn. Láeg recounted it all to him, telling him how Fer Báeth had been summoned to Ailill and Medb in their tent and told to sit beside Finnabair and that she would be given to him as a reward for fighting with Cú Chulainn, for he was her chosen lover. They considered that he was a match for Cú Chulainn for they had both learnt the same art of war with Scáthach. Fer Báeth was plied with wine until he was intoxicated. He was told that they prized that liquor for only fifty wagon-loads of it had been brought by them. And the maiden used to serve him his share of the wine. ‘I do not wish to go,’ said Fer Báeth. ‘Cú Chulainn is my foster brother and bound to me by solemn covenant. Nevertheless I shall go and oppose him tomorrow and cut off his head.’ ‘You will be the man to do it,’ said Medb.

Cú Chulainn told Láeg to go and ask Lugaid to come and speak with him. Lugaid came to him. ‘So it is Fer Báeth who comes to oppose me tomorrow,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘It is he indeed,’ said Lugaid. ‘It is an evil day,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I shall not survive this encounter. We two are of equal age, of equal swiftness and of equal weight. Leave me now so that we may meet, and tell him that it is unworthy of his valour that he should come against me. Ask him to come and meet me and speak to me tonight.’

Lugaid told this to Fer Báeth. Since Fer Báeth did not avoid the conflict, he went that night accompanied by Fíacha mac Fir Fhbe, to renounce his friendship with Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn adjured him by his foster-brotherhood and by their common foster-mother Scáthach. ‘I must fight,’ said Fer Báeth. ‘I have promised to do so.’ ‘Renounce your bond of friendship then,’ said Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn went away from him in anger. He trampled a sharp shoot of holly into his foot and it came up to his knee and appeared there. Cú Chulainn pulled it out.

‘Do not go away, Fer Báeth, until you see what I have found.’ ‘Throw it here,’ said Fer Báeth.

Then Cú Chulainn threw the holly shoot after Fer Báeth and it struck the depression at the back of his neck and went out through his mouth, and he fell on his back in the glen. ‘That is indeed a throw,’ said Fer Báeth. From this comes the place-name Focherd Muirthemne.

—Or (according to another version), Fíacha said: ‘Your throw is lucky today, Cú Chulainn.’ Whence

the place-name Focherd Muirthemne.— Fer Báeth fell dead at once in the glen. Whence the place-name Glend Fir Baíth.

Fergus was heard saying:

1. O Fer Báeth, foolish is your expedition on this spot wherein is your grave. Ruin has reached you there ... in Cróen Corand. The hill is named Fríthe; forever it will be Cróenech in Muirthemne. Henceforth its name will be Focherd, the place in which you fell,

a Fer Báeth

‘Your opponent has fallen,’ said Fergus. ‘Tell me, will that man give compensation tomorrow?’ ‘He will indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn sent Láeg again to find out how matters stood in the camp and whether Fer Báeth was alive. Lugaid said: ‘Fer Báeth has died, and tell Cú Chulainn to come presently to talk with me.’

The Combat of Láiríne mac Nóis

‘Let one of you go speedily tomorrow to meet your opponent,’ said Lugaid. ‘No one will be got,’ said Ailill, ‘unless ye employ some trickery in this matter. Give wine to every man that comes to you until he is gladdened in mind, and tell him: ‘That is all that is left of the wine that was brought from Crúachain. We are grieved that you should have only water to drink in the camp.’—and let Finnabair be placed at his right hand, and tell him: ‘You shall have her if you bring back to us the head of the distorted one.’’

A message was sent to each warrior on his night, and he was told that. But Cú Chulainn killed each of them in turn. At last no one could be got to oppose him.
Láríne mac Nóis, brother of Lugaid King of Munster, was summoned to them. His pride was over-weening. He was plied with wine and Finnabair was placed at his right hand. Medb looked at the two. ‘I think that couple well matched,’ said she. ‘A marriage between them would be fitting.’ ‘I shall not oppose you,’ said Ailill. ‘He shall have her if he bring me the head of the distorted one.’ ‘I shall do so indeed,’ said Láiríne. Thereupon Lugaid arrived.

‘What man have ye got to send to the ford tomorrow?’ ‘Láiríne is going,’ said Ailill. Then Lugaid went to speak with Cú Chulainn. They met in Glend Fir Baíth. Each greeted the other in friendly fashion. ‘This is why I have come to speak with you,’ said Lugaid. ‘There is a boorish fellow, foolish and arrogant, yonder, my brother who is called Láiríne. He is being tricked about the same girl. By our friendship do not kill him, do not leave me without my brother, for he is being sent to you in order that we two may quarrel. But I am willing for you to give him a sound thrashing, for it is against my wishes he goes.’

On the morrow Láiríne came to meet Cú Chulainn and the maiden came with him to encourage him. Cú Chulainn came unarmed to attack him, and forcibly took his weapons from Láiríne. Then he seized him with both hands and squeezed him and shook him until he drove his excrement out of him and the water of the ford was turbid with his dung and the air of the firmament was polluted with his stench.

Then Cú Chulainn threw him into Lugaid's arms. As long as Láiríne lived, his inward parts never recovered. He was never without chest-disease; he never ate without pain. Yet he is the only man of all those who met Cú Chulainn on the Táin who escaped from him, even though it was a poor escape.

The Conversation of the Mórrígan with Cú Chulainn

Cú Chulainn saw coming towards him a young woman of surpassing beauty, clad in clothes of many colours. ‘Who are you?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘I am the daughter of Búan the king,’ said she. ‘I have come to you for I fell in love with you on hearing your fame, and I have brought with me my treasures and my cattle.’

‘It is not a good time at which you have come to us, that is, our condition is ill, we are starving (?). So it is not easy for me to meet a woman while I am in this strife.’ ‘I shall help you in it.’ ‘It is not for a woman's body that I have come.’

‘It will be worse for you’, said she, ‘when I go against you as you are fighting your enemies. I shall go in the form of an eel under your feet in the ford so that you shall fall.’ ‘I prefer that to the king's daughter,’ said he. ‘I shall seize you between my toes so that your ribs are crushed and you shall suffer that blemish until you get a judgment blessing.’ ‘I shall drive the cattle over the ford to you while I am in the form of a grey she-wolf.’ ‘I shall throw a stone at you from my sling so and smash your eye in your head, and you shall suffer from that blemish until you get a judgment blessing.’ ‘I shall come to you in the guise of a hornless red heifer in front of the cattle and they will rush upon you at many fords and pools yet you will not see me in front of you.’ ‘I shall cast a stone at you,’ said he, ‘so that your legs will break under you, and you shall suffer thus until you get a judgment blessing.’ Whereupon she left him.

—(According to one version) he was a week at Áth nGreacha and every day a man fell by him at Áth nGrencha, that is, at Áth Darteisc.

The Death of Lóch Mac Mo Femis

Then Lóch mac Emonis was summoned like the others and he was promised the extent of Mag Muirthemne in the arable land of Mag nAí, the equipment of twelve men, and a chariot worth seven cumala. But he scorned to encounter a mere lad. He had a brother, namely Long mac Ebonis. The same payment was offered to him, the maiden, the raiment, chariot and land.

Long went to meet Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn killed him and he was brought back dead and set down before his brother Lóch. Then Lóch said that if he knew that it was a bearded man who killed his brother he would himself kill him in revenge. ‘Attack him vigorously,’ said Medb to her men, ‘over the ford from the west, so that ye may cross the river, and let terms of fair play be broken against him.’

The seven Maines, the warriors, went first and saw him on the brink of the ford to the west. That day Cú Chulainn put on his festive apparel. The women kept climbing on the men's shoulders to get a glimpse of him. ‘I am grieved,’ said Medb, ‘that I do not see the lad around whom they gather there.’ ‘You would be no more joyful for seeing him,’ said Lethrend, Ailill's groom. She came then to the ford where he was.

‘Who is that man yonder, Fergus?’ asked Medb. ‘A lad who defends with sword and shield ... if it be Cú Chulainn.’ So Medb too climbed on the men to get a look at him. Then the women told Cú Chulainn that he was jeered at in the camp since he was beardless and goodly warriors did not oppose him, only mere boys. It were better for him to put on a beard of blackberry juice. So this he did in order to seek combat with a grown man, that is, with Lóch. Then Cú Chulainn took a handful of grass and chanted a spell over it and they all thought that he had a beard. ‘Yes,’ said the women, ‘Cú Chulainn is bearded. It is fitting that a warrior should fight with him.’ This they said in order to goad Lóch. ‘I shall not fight with him until the end of seven days from today,’ said Lóch. ‘It is not right for us to leave him unattacked for that length of time,’ said Medb. ‘Let us send a band of warriors to seek him out every night in the hope of catching him unawares.’

It was done thus. Every night a band of warriors would go looking for him and he used to kill them all. These are the names of those that fell there: seven called Conall, seven called Óengus, seven called Úargus, seven called Celtre, eight called Fiac, ten called Ailill, ten called Delbaeth, ten called Tasach. Those were his deeds during that week at Áth nGrencha.

Medb sought counsel as to what she would do against Cú Chulainn, for she was sorely perturbed by the number of her army that was slain by him. The plan she decided on was to send brave and arrogant men to attack him all together when he should come to a rendez-vous with her to parley with her. For she had made a tryst with Cú Chulainn for the next day to make a mock peace with

him and so capture him. She sent a messenger to him asking him to come and meet her, and stipulated that he should come unarmed for she herself would come to him accompanied only by her women attendants.
The messenger, Traigthrén, went to where Cú Chulainn was and gave him Medb's message. Cú Chulainn promised that he would do as she asked. ‘How do you intend to go and meet Medb tomorrow, Cú Chulainn,’ asked Láeg. ‘As Medb asked me,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Many are Medb's treacherous deeds,’ said the charioteer. ‘I fear that she has help behind the scenes.’ ‘What should we do then?’ said he. ‘Gird your sword at your waist,’ said the charioteer, ‘so that you may not be taken unawares. For if a warrior is without his weapons, he has no right to his honour-price, but in that case he is entitled only to the legal due of one who does not bear arms.’ ‘Let it be done so then,’ said Cú Chulainn.

The meeting was in Ard Aignech, which is today called Fochaird. Then Medb came to the meeting and she set in ambush for Cú Chulainn fourteen men, the most valorous of her own household. These are they: two called Glas Sinna, sons of Briccride, two called Ardán, sons of Licc, two called Glas Ogna, sons of Crond, Drúcht and Delt and Dathen, Téa and Tascur and Tualang, Taur and Glese. Then Cú Chulainn came to meet her. The men rose up to attack him and all together they threw fourteen spears at him. Cú Chulainn took shelter from them and not a spear touched his skin or surface. Then he attacked them and killed the fourteen men. Those are the fourteen men of Fochaird, and they are (also) the men of Crónech for they were killed in Crónech at Fochaird.

Of this deed Cú Chulainn said

1. Splendid is my heroic deed. I strike fearsome blows against a brilliant spectral army. I wage battle against many hosts to destroy valiant warriors together with Ailill and Medb ... There comes treachery, coldly impetuous, to strike against valiant warriors who take wise well-judged counsel from one who can well advise them to perform heroic deeds.

So it was from that exploit that Focherd remained as the name of the place, that is, fó cerd, good was the feat of arms which Cú Chulainn performed there. Then Cú Chulainn came and found them pitching camp and he killed two men called Daigre, two called Ánle and four Dúngais Imlich among them. So Medb began to incite Lóch. ‘It is a great shame for you,’ said she, ‘that the man who killed your brother should be destroying our army and that you do not go to do battle with him. For we are sure that a sharp, boastful lad like yonder fellow will not stand out against the rage and fury of such as you, and anyway it was the same fostermother and teacher who taught you both the arts of war.’

So Lóch, since he saw that Cú Chulainn had a beard, came to attack him to avenge his brother's death. ‘Come to the upper ford,’ said Lóch. ‘We shall not meet in the polluted ford where Long fell.’ When Cú Chulainn came to the ford, the men drove the cattle across. ‘There will be lack of water here today,’ said Gabrán, the poet. Hence the names Áth Darteisc and Tír Mór Darteisc ever since for that place. Then when the combatants met on the ford and began to fight and to strike one another and when each began to belabour the other, the eel twined itself in three coils round Cú

Chulainn's feet so that he fell prostrate athwart the ford. Lóch attacked him with the sword until the ford was blood-red with his gore. ‘That is indeed a wretched performance in the presence of the enemy!’ said Fergus. ‘Let one of you taunt the man, my men,’ said he to his people, ‘lest he fall in vain.’

Bricriu Nemthenga mac Carbada rose up and began to incite Cú Chulainn. ‘Your strength is exhausted,’ said he, ‘if a puny opponent overthrows you now that the Ulstermen are on their way to you, recovered from their torpor. It is hard for you to undertake a hero's deed in the presence of the men of Ireland and to ward off a formidable opponent with your weapons in that way.’ Whereupon Cú Chulainn arose and struck the eel and its ribs were broken within it, and the cattle rushed eastwards over the army, carrying off the tents on their horns, so great was the thunder-feat of the two warriors in the ford. The she-wolf attacked him and drove the cattle on him westwards. He threw a stone from his sling and her eye broke in her head. Then she went in the guise of a red hornless heifer and the cattle stampeeded into the streams and fords. Cú Chulainn said then: ‘I cannot see the fords for the streams.’ He cast a stone at the red hornless heifer and her leg broke. Thereupon Cú Chulainn chanted:

1. I am here all alone, guarding the flocks. I neither hold them back nor let them go. In the cold hours I stand alone to oppose many peoples.
2. Let some one tell Conchobar that it is time for him to come to my aid. The sons of Mágu have carried off their cows and shared them out amongst them.
3. One man alone may be defended but a single log will not catch fire. If there were two or three, then their firebrands would blaze up.
4. My enemies have almost overcome me, so many single combats have I fought. I cannot now wage battle against splendid warriors as I stand here alone.

Then it was that Cú Chulainn did against the Mórrígan the three things that he had threatened her with in the Táin Bó Regamna. And he overcame Lóch in the ford with the gáe bolga which the charioteer threw to him downstream. He attacked him with it and it entered his body through the anus, for Lóch had a hornskin when he was fighting with an opponent. ‘Retreat a step from me,’ said Lóch. Cú Chulainn did so, so that it was on the other side (of the ford) that Lóch fell. Hence the place-name Áth Traiged in Tír Mór.

Then the terms of fair play were violated against Cú Chulainn on that day when five men came simultaneously to attack him, namely, two called Crúaid, two called Calad and one named Derothor. Single-handed Cú Chulainn slew them. The place is called Cóicsius Focherda and Cóicer Óengoirt. Or else it is because Cú Chulainn was fifteen days in Focherd that the name Cóicsius Focherda comes in the Tain. Cú Chulainn pelted them (with sling-stones) from Delga so that no living creature, neither man nor beast, could get past him to the south between Delga and the sea.
The Healing of the Mórrígan

While Cú Chulainn lay thus in great weariness, the Mórrígan came to him in the guise of an old crone, one-eyed and half-blind and engaged in milking a cow with three teats. He asked her for a

drink. She gave him the milk of one teat. ‘She who gave it will at once be whole,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘The blessing of gods and of non-gods be on you!’ —The magicians were their gods but the husbandmen were their non- gods.— Thereupon her head was made whole. Then she gave him the milk of the second teat, and her eye was healed. She gave him the milk of the third teat, and her leg was cured.

—And it is suggested that on each occasion he said: ‘The judgment of blessing be on you!’— ‘But you told me,’ said the Mórrígan, ‘that I should never get healing from you.’ ‘Had I known that it was you,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘I should never have healed you.’ —In another version the name of this tale in the Táin is Ríamdrong Con Culainn for Tarthesc.—

Then Fergus demanded of his sureties that Cú Chulainn should get fair play. So they came to oppose him in single combat, and he killed the five men of Cend Coriss or of Dún Chind Coross which is now called Delgu Murthemne. Then Cú Chulainn killed Fota in his field; Bó Mailce on his ford; Salach in his marsh, Muinne in his stronghold; Lúar in Lethbera and Fer Toíthle in Toíthle. Wherever any one of those men fell their names have remained for ever in those districts.

Cú Chulainn also killed Traig and Dorna and Derna, Col and Mebal and Eraise at Méthe and Cethe on this side of Áth Tíre Móir. These were three druids and their wives. Then Medb sent out a hundred men of her household to kill Cú Chulainn but he slew them all at Áth Chéit Chúile. Whereupon Medb said: ‘Indeed we deem it a crime that our people should be slain!’ Whence the place-names Glais Chró and Cuillenn Cind Dúin and Áth Chéit Chúle.

The Scythed Chariot and Breslech Mór Maige Muirthemne

Then the four provinces of Ireland pitched their camp at the place called Breslech Mór in Mag Muirthemne. They sent their share of the cattle and booty on ahead southwards to Clithar Bó Ulad.

Cú Chulainn took up position at the mound in Lerga close beside them, and his charioteer, Láeg mac Ríangabra, kindled a fire for him in the evening of that night. Cú Chulainn saw afar off, over the heads of the four provinces of Ireland, the fiery glitter of the bright gold weapons at the setting of the sun in the clouds of evening. Anger and rage filled him when he saw the host, because of the multitude of his foes and the great number of his enemies. He seized his two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook his shield and brandished his spears and waved his sword, and he uttered a hero's shout deep in his throat. And the goblins and sprites and spectres of the glen and demons of the air gave answer for terror of the shout that he had uttered. And Némain, the war goddess, attacked the host, and the four provinces of Ireland made a clamour of arms round the points of their own spears and weapons so that a hundred warriors among them fell dead of fright and terror in the middle of the encampment on that night.

As Láeg was there he saw a single man coming straight towards him from the north-east across the encampment of the men of Ireland. ‘A single man approaches us now, little Cú,’ said Láeg. ‘What manner of man is there?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘A man fair and tall, with a great head of curly yellow hair. He has a green mantle wrapped about him and a brooch of white silver in the mantle over his breast. Neat to his white skin he wears a tunic of royal satin with red-gold insertion reaching to his knees. He carries a black shield with a hard boss of white-bronze. In his hand a five-pointed spear and next to it a forked javelin. Wonderful is the play and sport and diversion that he makes (with these weapons). But none accosts him and he accosts none as if no one could see him.’

‘That is true, lad,’ said he. ‘That is one of my friends from the fairy mounds come to commiserate with me, for they know of my sore distress as I stand now alone against the four great provinces of Ireland on the Foray of Cúailnge.’ It was indeed as Cú Chulainn said. When the warrior reached the spot where Cú Chulainn was he spoke to him and commiserated with him. ‘Bravo, Cú Chulainn,’ said he. ‘That is not much indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I shall help you,’ said the warrior. ‘Who are you?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘I am your father, Lug mac Ethlend, from the fairy mounds.’ ‘My wounds are indeed grievous. It were time that I should be healed.’ ‘Sleep now for a little while, Cú Chulainn,’ said the warrior, ‘your heavy slumber at the mound in Lerga for three days and three nights, and during that time I shall fight against the hosts.’ Then he chanted a low melody to him

which lulled him to sleep until Lug saw that every wound he bore was quite healed. Then Lug spoke:

The Incantation of Lug

‘Arise, O son of mighty Ulster now that your wounds are healed ... Help from the fairy mound will set you free ... A single lad is on his guard ... Strike ... and I shall strike with you. They have no strong length of life, so wreak your furious anger mightily on your vile(?) enemies. Mount your safe chariot, so then arise.’

For three days and three nights Cú Chulainn slept. It was right that the length of his sleep should correspond to the greatness of his weariness. From the Monday after Samain until the Wednesday after the festival of Spring Cú Chulainn had not slept except when he dozed for a little while after midday, leaning against his spear with his head resting on his clenched fist and his fist holding his spear and his spear on his knee, but he kept striking and cutting down, slaying and killing the four great provinces of Ireland during all that time. Then the warrior from the fairy mound put plants and healing herbs and a curing charm in the wounds and cuts, in the gashes and many injuries of Cú Chulaihn so that he recovered during his sleep without his perceiving it at all.

It was at this time that the youths came southwards from Emain Macha, thrice fifty of the kings' sons of Ulster led by Fallamain, the son of Conchobar. Thrice they gave battle to the host and three times their own number fell by them, but the youths fell too, all except Fallamain mac Conchobair. Fallamain vowed that he would never go back to Emain until he carried off Ailill's head with its golden diadem. No easy task was it that faced him. For the two sons of Beithe mac Báin, the sons of Ailill's fostermother and fosterfather, came up with him and wounded him so that he fell dead at their hands. That is the Death of the Youths from Ulster and of Fallamain mac Conchobair./P[gt]

Cú Chulainn, however, lay in a deep sleep at the mound in Lerga until the end of three days and three nights. Then he rose up from his sleep and passed his hand over his face and blushed crimson from head to foot. His spirits were as high as if he were going to an assembly or a march or a tryst or a feast or to one of the great assemblies of Ireland. ‘How long have I been asleep now, O warrior?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘Three days and three nights,’ answered the warrior. ‘Woe is me then!’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Why is that?’ asked the warrior. ‘Because the hosts have been left unattacked for that length of time,’ said Cú Chulainn.
‘They have not indeed,’ said the warrior. ‘Why, how was that?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘The youths came south from Emain Macha, thrice fifty of the kings' sons of Ulster, led by Fallamain mac Conchobair and during the three days and three nights that you were asleep, they fought three times with the hosts, and three times their own number fell by them and the youths themselves fell, all except Fallamain mac Conchobair. Fallamain swore that he would carry off Ailill's head, but that proved no easy task for he was killed himself.’ ‘Alas that I was not in my full strength, for had I been, the youths would not have fallen as they did, nor would Fallamain have fallen.’ ‘Fight on, little Cú, it is no reproach to your honour, no disgrace to your valour.’ ‘Stay here with us tonight, O warrior,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘that together we may take vengeance on the host for the death of the boys.’

‘Indeed I shall not stay,’ said the warrior, ‘for though a man do many valorous and heroic deeds in your company, the fame and glory of them will redound not on him but on you. Therefore I shall not stay. But exert your valour, yourself alone, on the hosts, for not with them lies any power over your life at this time.’

‘What of the scythed chariot, my friend Láeg?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Can you yoke it and have you its equipment? If you can yoke it and have its equipment, then do so. But if you have not its equipment, do not yoke it.’

Then the charioteer arose and put on his warlike outfit for chariot-driving. Of this outfit which he donned was his smooth tunic of skins, which was light and airy, supple and filmy, stitched and of deerskin, which did not hinder the movement of his arms outside. Over that he put on his overmantle black as raven's feathers. Simon Magus had made it for Darius King of the Romans, and Darius had given it to Conchobar and Conchobar had given it to Cú Chulainn who gave it to his charioteer. This charioteer now put on his helmet, crested, flat- surfaced, rectangular with variety of every colour and form, and reaching past the middle of his shoulders. This was an adornment to him and was not an encumbrance. His hand brought to his brow the circlet, red-yellow like a red-gold plate of refined gold smelted over the edge of an anvil, which was a sign of his charioteer status to distinguish him from his master. In his right hand he took the long spancel of his horses and his ornamented goad. In his left he grasped the thongs to check his horses, that is, the reins of his horses which controlled his driving.
Then he put on his horses their iron inlaid armour, covering them from forehead to forehand and set with little spears and sharp points and lances and hard points, and every wheel of the chariot was closely studded with points, and every corner and edge, every end and front of the chariot lacerated as it passed.

Then he cast a protective spell over his horses and over his companion, so that they were not visible to anyone in the camp, yet everyone in the camp was visible to them. It was right that he should cast this spell, for on that day the charioteer had three great gifts of charioteering, to wit, léim dar boilg, foscul ndírich and imorchor ndelind.

Then the champion and warrior, the marshalled fence of battle of all the men of earth who was Cú Chulainn, put on his battle-array of fighting and contest and strife. Of that battle-array which he put on were the twenty-seven shirts, waxed, board-like, compact, which used to be bound with strings and ropes and thongs next to his fair body that his mind and understanding might not be deranged whenever his rage should come upon him. Outside these he put on his hero's battle-girdle of hard leather, tough and tanned, made from the choicest part of seven yearling ox-hides which covered him from the thin part of his side to the thick part of his armpit. He wore it to repel spears and points and darts and lances and arrows, for they used to glance from it as if they had struck on stone or rock or horn. Then he put on his apron of filmy silk with its border of variegated white gold against the soft lower part of his body. Outside his apron of filmy silk he put on his dark apron of pliable brown leather made from the choicest part of four yearling ox-hides with his battle-girdle of cows' hides about it. Then the royal hero took up his weapons of battle and contest and strife. Of these weapons were his eight small swords together with his ivory- hilted bright-faced sword. He took his eight little spears with his five-pronged spear. He took his eight little javelins with his ivory-handled javelin. He took his eight little darts together with his deil chliss. He took his eight shields

together with his curved dark-red shield into the boss of which a show boar would fit, with its sharp, keen razor-like rim all around it, so sharp and keen and razor-like that it would cut a hair against the current. Whenever the warrior did the ‘edge-feat’ with it, he would slash alike with shield or spear or sword. Then he put on his head his crested war-helmet of battle and strife and conflict. From it was uttered the shout of a hundred warriors with a long-drawn-out cry from every corner and angle of it. For there used to cry from it alike goblins and sprites, spirits of the glen and demons of the air before him and above him and around him wherever he went, prophesying the shedding of the blood of warriors and champions. He cast around him his protective cloak made of raiment from Tír Tairngire, brought to him from his teacher of wizardry.

Then a great distortion came upon Cú Chulainn so that he became horrible, many-shaped, strange and unrecognizable. All the flesh of his body quivered like a tree in a current or like a bulrush in a stream, every limb and every joint, every end and every member of him from head to foot. He performed a wild feat of contortion with his body inside his skin. His feet and his shins and his knees came to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams came to the front. The sinews of his calves came on to the front of his shins, and each huge round knot of them was as big as a warrior's fist. The sinews of his head were stretched to the nape of his neck and every huge immeasurable, vast, incalulable round ball of them was as big as the head of a month-old child. Then his face became a red hollow (?). He sucked one of his eyes into his head so deep that a wild crane could hardly have reached it to pluck it out from the back of his skull on to his cheek. The other eye sprang out on to his cheek. His mouth was twisted back fearsomely. He drew back his cheek from his jawbone until his inward parts were visible. His lungs and his liver fluttered in his mouth and his throat. His upper palate clashed against the lower in a mighty pincer-like movement(?) and every stream of fiery flakes which came into his mouth from his throat was as wide as a ram's skin. The loud beating of his heart against his ribs was heard like the baying of a bloodhound ... or like a lion attacking bears. The torches of the war-goddess, virulent rain-clouds and sparks of blazing fire, were seen in the air over his head with the seething of fierce rage that rose in him. His hair curled about his head like branches of red hawthorn used to re-fence a gap in a hedge. If a noble apple-tree weighed down with fruit had been shaken about his hair, scarcely one apple would have reached the ground through it, but an apple would have stayed impaled on each separate hair because of the fierce bristling of his hair above his head. The hero's light rose from his forehead, as long and as thick as a hero's fist and it was as long as his nose, and he was filled with rage as he wielded the shields and urged on the charioteer and cast sling-stones at the host. As high, as thick, as strong, as powerful and as long as the mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose up from the very top of his head and dissolved into a dark magical mist like the smoke of a palace when a king comes to be waited on in the evening of a winter's day.

After being thus distorted, the hero Cú Chulainn sprang into his scythed chariot, with its iron points, its thin sharp edges, its hooks and its steel points, with its nails which were on the shafts and thongs and loops and fastenings in that chariot. Thus was the chariot: it had a framework of narrow and compact opening, high enough for great feats, sword-straight, worthy of a hero. In it would fit eight sets of royal weapons, and it moved as swiftly as a swallow or as the wind or as a deer across the level plain. It was drawn by two swift horses, fierce and furious, with small round pointed heads, with pricked ears, with broad hoofs, with roan breast, steady, splendid, easily harnessed to the beautiful shafts(?) of Cú Chulainn's chariots. One of these horses was lithe(?) and swift-leaping,

eager for battle, arched of neck, with great hoofs which scattered the sods of the earth. The other horse had a curling mane, and narrow, slender feet and heels.

Then Cú Chulainn performed the thunderfeat of a hundred and the thunderfeat of two hundred, the thunderfeat of three hundred and the thunderfeat of four hundred. And at the thunderfeat of five hundred he ceased for he thought that that was a sufficient number to fall by him in his first attack and in his first contest of battle against the four provinces of Ireland. And in that manner he came forth to attack his enemies and drove his chariot in a wide circuit outside the four great provinces of Ireland. And he drove his chariot furiously so that the iron wheels sank deep into the ground casting up earth sufficient to provide fort and fortress, for there arose on the outside as high as the iron wheels dykes and boulders and rocks and flagstones and gravel from the ground. He made this warlike encirclement of the four great provinces of Ireland so that they might not flee from him nor disperse around him until he pressed them close to take vengeance on them for the deaths of the youths of Ulster. And he came across into the middle of their ranks and three times he threw up great ramparts of his enemies' corpses outside around the host. And he made upon them the attack of a foe upon his foes so that they fell, sole of foot to sole of foot, and headless neck to headless neck, such was the density of the carnage. Three times again he encircled them in this way leaving a layer of six corpses around them, that is, the soles of three men to the necks of three men, all around the encampment. So that the name of this tale in the Táin is Sesrech Breslige, the Sixfold Slaughter. It is one of the three slaughters in which the victims cannot be numbered, the three being Sesrech Breslige and Imshlige Glennamnach and the battle at Gáirech and Irgáirech. But on this occasion hound and horse and man suffered alike.

—Other versions say that Lug mac Eithlend fought beside Cú Chulainn in the battle of Sesrech Breslige.

Their number is not known nor is it possible to count how many of the common soldiery fell there, but their leaders alone have been reckoned. Here follow their names: two men called Crúaid, two called Calad, two called Cír, two called Cíar, two called Ecell, three called Crom, three called Caurath, three called Combirge, four called Feochar, four called Furachar, four called Cass, four called Fota, five called Caurath, five called Cerman, five called Cobthach, six called Saxan, six called Dách, six called Daíre, seven called Rochaid, seven called Rónán, seven called Rúrthech, eight called Rochlad, eight called Rochtad, eight called Rindach, eight called Cairpre, eight called Mulach, nine called Daigith, nine called Dáire, nine called Dámach, ten called Fiac, ten called Fíacha, ten called Fedelmid.

Seven score and ten kings did Cú Chulainn slay in the battle of Breslech Mór in Mag Muirthemne, and a countless number besides of hounds and horses, of women and boys and children, and of the common folk. For not one man in three of the men of Ireland escaped without his thigh-bone or the side of his head or one eye being broken or without being marked for life. Then Cú Chulainn, after he had fought that battle against them, came from them with no wound or gash inflicted upon himself or his charioteer or on either of his horses.

The Description of Cú Chulainn

Cú Chulainn came on the morrow to survey the host and to display his gentle and beautiful form to women and girls and maidens, to poets and men of art, for he held not as honourable or dignified the dark magical appearance in which he had appeared to them the previous night. So for that reason he now came on this day to display his beautiful fair appearance. Beautiful indeed was the youth who thus came to display his form to the hosts, namely, Cú Chulainn mac Súaltaim. He seemed to have three kinds of hair: dark next to his skin, blood-red in the middle and hair like a crown of gold covering them outside. Fair was the arrangement of that hair with three coils in the hollow in the nape of his neck, and like gold thread was each fine hair, looseflowing, bright-golden, excellent, long-tressed, splendid and of beautiful colour, which fell back over his shoulders. A hundred bright crimson ringlets of flaming red-gold encircled his neck.

Around his head a hundred strings interspersed with carbunclegems. Four shades (?) in each of his cheeks, a yellow shade and a green, a blue shade and a purple. Seven brilliant gem-like pupils in each of his noble eyes. Seven toes on each of his feet; seven fingers on each of his hands with the grasp of a hawk's claws and the grip of a hedghog's claws in each separate toe and finger.

So on that day he donned his festive apparel, namely, a fair mantle, well- fitting, bright purple, fringed, five-folded. A white brooch of silver inset with inlaid gold over his white breast as it were a bright lantern that men's eyes could not look at by reason of its brilliance and splendour. Next to his skin he wore a tunic of silky satin reaching to the top of his dark apron, dark- red, soldierly, of royal satin. He carried a dark-red purple shield with five concentric circles of gold and a rim of white bronze. At his girdle hung, ready for action, a golden-hilted, ornamented sword with great knobs of red gold at its end. In the chariot beside him was a long shining-edged spear together with a sharp attacking javelin with rivets of burning gold. In one hand he held nine heads, in the other ten, and these he brandished at the hosts. Those were the trophies of one night's fighting by Cú Chulainn.

Then the women of Connacht climbed up on the hosts and the women of Munster climbed on men's shoulders that they might behold the appearance of Cú Chulainn. But Medb hid her face and dared not show her countenance, but through fear of Cú Chulainn she sheltered under a cover of shields. That is why Dubthach Dóel Ulad said (these verses):

1. If this is the distorted one, men's corpses will lie here and cries will be heard around the courts. There will be tales in the lands(?).

2. Headstones will be erected over graves. More and more kings will be slain. Not well do ye fight on the battle-field against that champion.
3. I see how he drives around with eight severed heads on the cushions of his chariot. I see the shattered spoils he brings and ten heads as trophies.
4. I see how your woman-folk raise their heads above the battle (to see him), but I see that your great queen does not seek to come to the fight.
5. Were I your counseller, then warriors would lie in ambush all around him so that they might cut short his life, if this is the distorted. one.

Then Fergus chanted these verses:

1. Take Dubthach Déoltengaid away. Drag him to the rear of the army. He has done nought of good since he slew the maidens (in Ulster).
2. He performed a wicked and ill-omened deed when he killed Fíacha, the son of Conchobar. Nor was the slaying of Coirpre, son of Fedelmid, any less wicked.
3. Dubthach, the son of Lugaid mac Casruba, does not contend for the lordship of Ulster, but this is how he treats them; those not killed he sets at loggerheads.
4. The Ulster exiles will grieve if their beardless lad is slain. If the Ulster army come upon you, they will turn back the herds.
5. The debility of the Ulstermen will be greately prolonged before they finally recover.
6. Messengers will bring great tidings. Great queens will be there. Men's wounded bodies will be mangled and many slaughtered.
7. Corpses will be trampled underfoot. Vultures will feast. Shields will lie flat on the battle fields. Marauders will find shelter.
8. Warriors' blood will be spilt on the ground by this army of curs in human shape. If they get there, the exiles will penetrate far into Ulster. He cannot heed the prophecy of what lies before you. Take Dubthach Dóeltenga away.
9. Thereupon Fergus hurled Dubthach away from him and he landed flat on his face outside those who stood there.

Then Ailill was heard saying: ‘O Fergus, do not fight against the women and cattle of Ulster. I can see by their mountain passes that many will be killed there. Strike even though they will be struck down only one by one. He slays them in the ford every day.’ Then Medb was heard: ‘O Ailill, arise with war-bands ... (Your) sons will kill in passes(?) and on fords, in great sandy places and in dark pools. And Fergus the brave and the exiled warriors will be victorious. After the battle there will be restitution ...’ Then Fergus spoke: ‘Do not listen to the foolish counsels of a woman. Hear them not...’ Then Gabrán the poet spoke: ‘Speak no words ... do not earn hatred.’ ‘Refuse not your opponent. Come to meet him at the ford,’ said Fergus. ‘Hear Ailill!’ said Medb. Ailill was heard speaking: ‘Fergus knows ...’ Then Fergus was heard: ‘O Medb, do not send the great heroes of your mighty exiles...’

The Mis-throw at Belach Eóin

Fíacha Fíaldána Dimraith came to have speech with the son of his mother's sister, whose name was Maine Andóe. Dócha mac Mágach came with Maine Andóe and Dubthach Dóel Ulad came with Fíacha Fíaldána Dimraith. Dócha cast a spear at Fíacha and it went into Dubthach. Then Dubthach cast a spear at Maine and it went into Dócha. The mothers of Dubthach and Dócha were also two sisters. Hence the name Imroll Belaig Eúin, the Miscast at Belach Eúin.

—Or, according to another version, the origin of the name Imroll Belaig Eúin is as follows:

The hosts came to Belach Eóin. Both armies halted there. Diarmait mac Conchobair came from the north from Ulster. ‘Send a messenger,’ said Diarmait, ‘asking Maine to come with one man to parley with me, and I shall go with one man to meet him.’ Then they met. ‘I have come from Conchobar,’ said Diarmait, ‘to ask you to tell Medb and Ailill that they must let all the cattle (they have taken) go and their depredations will be overlooked. And let the bull from the west be brought hither to the bull (Donn Cúailnge) that they may encounter each other, for so Medb has promised.’ ‘I shall go and tell them,’ said Maine. So he gave the message to Medb and Ailill. ‘These terms cannot be got from Medb,’ said Maine. ‘Well then, let us exchange weapons,’ said Diarmait, ‘if you prefer.’ ‘I am willing,’ said Maine. Each of them cast a spear at the other and both of them died, so that Imroll Belaig Eóin is the name of that place. The army rushed upon the opposing force. Three score of them fell on each side. Hence the name Ard in Dírma.

The Death of Taman the Jester

Ailill's people put his king's crown on Taman the Jester. Ailill himself did not venture to wear it. Cú Chulainn cast a stone at him at the place called Áth Tamuin and smashed his head. Whence the names Áth Tamuin and Tuga im Thamun.

The Death of Óengus mac Óenláime

Then Óengus mac Óenláime Gaibe, a bold warrior of the Ulstermen, turned back the whole army at Moda Loga (which is the same name as Lugmod) as far as Áth Da Fherta. He did not allow them to go farther and he pelted them with stones. Learned men say that he would have driven them on before him to be put to the sword at Emain Macha if only they had encountered him in single combat. But they did not grant him fair play. They killed him as he fought against odds.

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.

The Fight with Mand

Medb sent Mand Muresci, the son of Dáire of the Domnannaig, to fight against Cú Chulainn. Mand was own brother to Damán, the father of Fer Diad. This Mand was a violent fellow, excessive in eating and sleeping. He was scurrilous and foul-spoken like Dubthach Dóel Ulad. He was strong and active and mighty of limb like Munremar mac Errcind. He was a fierce champion like Triscod, the strong man of Conchobar's household. ‘I shall go forth unarmed and crush him in my bare hands, for I scorn to use weapons against a beardless whippersnapper.’ So Mand went to attack Cú Chulainn who, with his charioteer, was on the plain keeping a look-out for the host. ‘A man comes towards us,’ said Láeg to Cú Chulainn. ‘What manner of man?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘A dark, strong, fierce man who comes unarmed.’ ‘Let him go past,’ said Cú Chulainn. Thereupon Mand came to them.

‘I have come to fight against you,’ said Mand. Then they fell to wrestling for a long time and thrice did Mand throw Cú Chulainn, so that the charioteer urged him on, saying: ‘If you were striving for the hero's portion in Emain,’ said Láeg, ‘you would be powerful over the warriors there.’ So then his hero's rage and his warrior's fury arose in Cú Chulainn, and he dashed Mand against the pillarstone and shattered him into fragments. Hence the name Mag Mandachta, that is, Mand Échta, which means the death of Mand was there.

The next day Medb sent twenty-nine men against him to Cú Chulainn's bog. Fuiliarn is the name of the bog which is on this side of Áth Fhir Diad. These men were Gaile Dáne and his twenty-seven sons and his sister's son, Glas mac Delgna. At once they cast their twenty-nine spears at Cú Chulainn. Then as they all reached for their swords, Fíacha mac Fir Fhebe came after them out of the encampment. He leapt from his chariot when he saw all their hands raised against Cú Chulainn, and he struck off their twenty-nine forearms. Then said Cú Chulainn ‘What you have done is timely help.’ ‘Even this little,’ said Fíacha, ‘is in breach of our covenant for us Ulstermen. If any one of them reach the encampment (to tell of it), our whole division will be put to the sword.’ ‘I swear my people's oath,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘that now that I have drawn my breath, not one of those men shall get there alive.’

Thereupon Cú Chulainn killed the twenty-nine men, with the two sons of Ficce helping him in the killing. These were two brave warriors of Ulster who had come to exert their might against the host. That was their exploit on the Foray until they came with Cú Chulainn to the great battle. In the stone in the middle of the ford there is still the mark of the boss of their (twenty-nine) shields and of their fists and knees. Their twenty-nine headstones were erected there.

The Fight of Fer Diad and Cú Chulainn

Then they debated among themselves as to which man would be capable of repelling Cú Chulainn. The four provinces of Ireland named and confirmed and decided whom they should send to the ford to meet Cú Chulainn. They all declared that it was the hornskinned man from Irrus Domnann, the one whose attack cannot be endured, the battle-stone of doom, Cú Chulainn's own dear fosterbrother. Cú Chulainn possessed no feat that Fer Diad had not, except only the feat of the gáe bulga. And they thought that Fer Diad could avoid even that and protect himself from it, for he had a horn-skin which weapons and swords could not pierce. Medb sent messengers for Fer Diad, but he did not come with those messengers. Then Medb sent to fetch him poets and artists and satirists who might satirise him and disgrace him and put him to shame, so that he would find no resting- place in the world until he should come to the tent of Medb and Ailill on the Foray. So for fear that he should be put to shame by them Fer Diad came with those messengers.

Finnabair, the daughter of Medb and Ailill was placed at his side. It was she who handed Fer Diad every goblet and cup; it was she who gave him three kisses with every one of those cups; it was she who gave him fragrant apples over the bosom of her tunic. She kept saying that Fer Diad was her beloved, her chosen lover from among all the men of the world. When Fer Diad was sated and cheerful and merry, Medb said ‘Well now, Fer Diad, do you know why you have been summoned to this tent?’ ‘I know not indeed,’ said Fer Diad, ‘except that the nobles of the men of Ireland are here, so why should it be less fitting for me to be here than any other nobleman?’ ‘That is not why, indeed,’ said Medb, ‘but (you have been summoned for us) to give you a chariot worth thrice seven cumala, the equipment of twelve men, the equivalent of Mag Muirthemne in the arable land of Mag nAí, permission to remain at all times in Crúachu with wine poured for you there, and your descendants and your race to be free for ever from tax or tribute, and my leaf-shaped brooch of gold in which there are ten score ounces and ten score half-ounces and ten score crosachs and ten score quarters bestowed on you, and Finnabair, my daughter and Ailill's, as your wedded wife, and my own intimate friendship. And in addition to that, if you require it, you will get the gods as guarantee.’ ‘Those gifts are great,’ said they all. ‘That is true,’ said Fer Diad. ‘They are indeed great. But great though they be, Medb, you will keep them yourself if I am to go and fight with my foster-brother.’
‘O my men,’ said Medb, intending to stir up strife and dissension and speaking as if she had not heard Fer Diad at all, ‘what Cú Chulainn said is true.’ ‘What did he say, Medb?’ asked Fer Diad. ‘He said, my friend, that he thought you should fall by his choicest feat of arms in the province to which he would go.’ ‘It was not right for him to say that for he never found weakness or cowardice in me, day or night. I swear by my people's god that I shall be the first man to come tomorrow morning to the ford of combat.’ ‘A blessing on you!’ said Medb. ‘I prefer that rather than finding weakness or cowardice in you. Every man has kindly feeling for his own people. So is it any more fitting for him to work for Ulster's weal since his mother was of Ulster, than for you to seek the good of Connacht,

for you are the son of a Connacht king?’

Even as they bound their covenants and made this compact, they made a song there:

1. You shall have a reward of many bracelets, and a share of plain and forest, together with freedom for your posterity from today until doomsday. O Fer Diad mac Damáin, you shall receive beyond all expectation. It is right for you to accept what all others accept.
2. I shall not accept anything without surety for no warrior without skill in casting am I. It will be an oppressive task for me tomorrow. The exertion will be hard for me. A Hound called the Hound of Culann, it will not be easy to resist him. Hard the task, great the disaster.
3. What avails it for you to delay? Bind it as it may please you by the right hand of kings or princes who will go surety for you … You shall have all that you ask, for it is certain that you will kill him who will come to encounter you.
4. I shall not consent unless I get six sureties—let it not be less— before performing my exploits in the presence of the army. Were I to have my wish … I shall go to fight with brave Cú Chulainn.
5. O Medb great in boastfulness! The beauty of a bridegroom does not touch you. I am certain that you are master in Crúachu of the mounds. Loud your voice, great your fierce strength. Bring me satin richly variegated. Give me your gold and your silver in the amount that they were offered to me.
6. Take landowner or reaver, take the bardic folk as sureties. You will certainly have them. Take Morand as security if you wish for fulfilment (of my promises).Take Cairbre Nia Manand, and take our two sons.
7. I shall take those sureties as guarantees, and I shall sing a requiem for brave Cú Chulainn.
8. You are the heroic leader to whom I shall give my circular brooch. You shall have until Sunday, no longer shall the respite be. O strong and famous warrior, all the finest treasures on earth shall thus be given to you. You shall have them all.
9. Finnabair of the champions, the queen of the west of Inis Elga, when the Hound of the Smith has been killed, you shall have, O Fer Diad.

A wonderful warrior of the Ulstermen, Fergus mac Róig, was present when they made that compact.

Fergus came to his tent. ‘Woe is me for the deed that will be done tomorrow morning!’ ‘What deed is that?’ asked those in the tent. ‘The killing of my noble foster-son, Cú Chulainn.’ ‘Why, who makes such a boast?’ ‘His own dear foster-brother, Fer Diad mac Damáin. Why do ye not take my blessing and one of you go with a friendly warning to Cú Chulainn in the hope that he might not come to the ford tomorrow morning.’ ‘We swear,’ said they, ‘that even if you yourself were at the ford, we would not go there to you.’ ‘Well, driver,’ said Fergus, ‘harness our horses and yoke the chariot.’ The charioteer arose and harnessed the horses and yoked the chariot. They came forward to the ford of combat where Cú Chulainn was. ‘A single chariot is coming towards us, little Cú,’ said Láeg. For the charioteer had his back turned to his master.—He used to win every second game of draughts and chess from his master. Apart from that he acted as sentinel and watchman on the

four airts of Ireland. ‘What manner of chariot?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘A chariot like a great palace, with yoke of solid gold and a strong panel of copper, with its shafts of bronze, its frame with narrow compact opening, high and sword-straight, fit for a hero, drawn by two black horses, active, spirited, vigorous, easily yoked, ... A single royal, wide-eyed warrior is driven in the chariot. He has a thick, forked beard reaching down past the soft lower part of his navel. It would protect fifty warriors on a day of storm and rain if they were under the deep shelter of the hero's beard. He carries a curved variegated shield with white shoulder piece and three beautiful concentric circles. A litter-bed for four bands of ten men would fit upon the hide which stretches across the broad circumference of the warrior's shield. He has a long, hard-edged, broad, red sword in a sheath with interlaced design of bright silver ... Over the chariot he holds a strong, three ridged spear with rings and bands of pure white silver.’ ‘It is not hard to recognize him,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘That is my master Fergus, coming to give me a friendly warning against all the four provinces of Ireland.’

Fergus arrived and descended from his chariot. Cú Chulainn bade him welcome. ‘Your arrival is welcome, master Fergus,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I trust that welcome,’ said Fergus. ‘You may well trust it,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘If a flock of birds fly across the plain, you shall have a wild goose and a half: or if fish come to the estuaries, you shall have a salmon and a half, or else a handful of watercress, a handful of laver and a handful of seaweed, and after that a drink of cold sandy water.’ ‘That is a meal fit for an outlaw,’ said Fergus. ‘That is so. I have an outlaw's portion,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘for from the Monday after Samain until now I have not spent a night entertained as guest, but have been strongly holding back the men of Ireland on the Foray of Cúailnge.’ ‘If we had come for hospitality,’ said Fergus, ‘we should be all the better pleased to get it, but that is not why we have come.’

‘Why then have you come?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘To tell you that a warrior will come to fight and do combat with you tomorrow morning,’ said Fergus. ‘Let us know who it is and hear it from you,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘It is your own foster-brother, Fer Diad mac Damáin,’ ‘I vow that he is not the one we would prefer to meet,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘not through fear of him indeed, but rather because of our great love for him.’ ‘It is right to fear him,’ said Fergus, ‘for he has a horn-skin when he fights with an opponent, and neither weapons nor sharp points can pierce it.’

‘Do not say that,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘for I swear the oath of my people that his every joint and limb will bend beneath my swordpoint as pliantly as a rush in mid-stream, if he once appear before me on the ford.’ As they spoke thus, they made a lay:

1. O Cú Chulainn—clear covenant—I see that it is time for you to rise. Fer Diad mac Damáin of the ruddy countenance comes here to meet you in his wrath.
2. I am here strongly holding back the men of Ireland—no easy task. I do not retreat one step to avoid encounter with a single opponent.
3. It is not that I attribute cowardice to you, O famed Cú Chulainn, but Fer Diad of the many followers has a hornskin against which no fight or combat can prevail.
4. When I and Fer Diad the valorous meet at the ford, it will not be a fight without fierceness. Our sword-fight will be wrathful.

5. Strong is his hand which wreaks his anger with his hard red sword. There is the strength of a hundred in his body; brave is the hero. The point of weapons wounds him not, the edge of weapons cuts him not.
6. Hold your peace! Do not argue the matter, O Fergus of the mighty weapons. Over every land and territory there will be no fight against overwhelming odds for me.
7. O Cú Chulainn of the red sword, I should prefer above any reward that you were the one to take the spoils of proud Fer Diad eastwards.
8. I vow clearly, though I am not given to vaunting, that I shall be the one to triumph over the son of Damán mac Dáire.
9. It was I who, in requital for the wrong done me by the Ulsterman, collected and brought these forces to the east. With me the heroes and the warriors came from their own lands.
10. Were it not that Conchobar lies in his debility, our meeting would indeed be hard. Medb of Mag in Scáil has never come on a more uproarious march.
11. A greater deed now awaits your hand-to fight with Fer Diad mac Damáin. Have with you, O Cú Chulainn, weapons harsh and hard and famed in song.

After that, Cú Chulainn asked: ‘Why have you come, master Fergus?’ ‘That is my message,’ said Fergus. ‘It is a happy augury,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘that it was not someone else from among the men of Ireland who brought that message. But unless all the four provinces of Ireland join together (to attack me), I think nothing of a warning against the coming of a single warrior.’ Thereafter Fergus came back to his tent. Concerning Cú Chulainn: ‘What will you do tonight?’ asked Láeg. ‘What indeed?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Fer Diad will come against you freshly beautified, washed and bathed, with hair plaited and beard shorn, and the four provinces of Ireland will come with him to watch the fight. I should like you to go to where you will get the same adorning, to the spot where Emer Fholtchaín is, to Cairthenn Clúana Da Dam in Slíab Fuait.’

So on that night Cú Chulainn came to that place and spent the night with his own wife. His doings apart from that are not recorded here now, but those of Fer Diad. Fer Diad came to his tent. Sullen and dispirited were those in Fer Diad's tent that night. They felt certain that when the two world champions met, they would both fall, or else that the result would be the fall of their own lord. For it was no easy matter to encounter Cú Chulainn on the Foray.

That night great anxieties preyed upon Fer Diad's mind and kept him awake. One great anxiety was the fear that he would lose all the treasures and the maid offered to him for engaging in single combat. For if he did not fight that one man, he must fight with six warriors on the next day. But there weighed upon him a greater anxiety than all that: he was sure that if he once appeared before Cú Chulainn on the ford, he would no longer have power over his own body or soul.

And Fer Diad arose early on the morrow. ‘My lad,’ said he, ‘harness our horses and yoke the chariot.’ ‘On my word,’ said the charioteer, ‘it is no more advisable for us to go on this expedition than not to go at all.’
As Fer Diad spoke to the charioteer, he made this little song to urge him on:

1. Let us go to this encounter, to contend with this man, until we reach that ford above which the war-goddess will shriek. Let us go to meet Cú Chulainn, to wound his slender body, so that a spear-point may pierce him and he may die thereof.
2. It were better for us to stay here. The threats ye will exchange will not be mild. There will be one to whom sorrow will come. Your fight will be short. An encounter with a fosterling of the Ulstermen is one from which harm will come. It will long be remembered. Woe to him who goes on that course!
3. What you say is wrong, for diffidence does not become a warrior. You must not show timidity. We shall not stay here for you. Be silent, lad! We shall presently be brave, for stoutness of heart is better than cowardice. Let us go to the encounter.

The charioteer harnessed the horses and prepared the chariot, and they drove forward out of the camp. ‘My lad,’ said Fer Diad, ‘it is not right for us to go without bidding farewell to the men of Ireland. Turn back the horses and chariot to face the men of Ireland.’ Three times the charioteer turned horses and chariot to face the men of Ireland. Medb was urinating on the floor of the tent. ‘Is Ailill asleep now?’ asked Medb. ‘No indeed,’ said Ailill. ‘Do you hear your new son-in-law bidding you farewell?’ ‘Is that what he is doing?’ asked Ailill. ‘It is indeed,’ said Medb. ‘But I swear my people's oath that he who is so bidding you farewell will not return to you on his own feet.’ ‘Because of what we have gained by this marriage,’ said Ailill, ‘we care not if both of them fall, provided that Cú Chulainn is killed by him. But indeed we should be the better pleased if Fer Diad escaped.’ Fer Diad came forward to the ford of combat. ‘Look and see, lad, if Cú Chulainn is at the ford.’ said Fer Diad. ‘He is not,’ said the charioteer. ‘Look closely for us,’ said Fer Diad. ‘Cú Chulainn is no small hidden trifle, wherever he might be.’ said the charioteer.
‘That is so, driver. Until today Cú Chulainn never heard of a brave warrior or a noble opposing him on the Foray, and when he did hear of one, he went from the ford.’ ‘It is shameful to revile him in his absence, for do you remember how ye both fought against Germán Garbglas above the shores of the Tyrrhene Sea and you left your sword with the enemy hosts, and how Cú Chulainn slew a hundred warriors to get it back for you, and how he gave it to you? And do you remember where we were that night?’ ‘I do not know,’ said Fer Diad. ‘We were in the house of Scáthach's steward,’ said the charioteer, ‘and you were the first of us to go eagerly and proudly into the house. The churlish fellow struck you in the small of your back with the three-pronged fork and pitched you out the door. Cú Chulainn came in and struck the fellow with his sword and clove him in twain. As long as ye remained in that stead, I acted as your steward. If it were that day now, you would not say that you were a better warrior than Cú Chulainn.’ ‘You have done wrong (not to speak before this), driver,’ said Fer Diad, ‘for if you had told me that at first, I should not have come to the fight. Why do you not pull the shafts of the chariot under my side and the skin- coverings beneath my head that I may sleep a while?’ ‘Alas!’ said the charioteer, ‘such a sleep is the sleep of a doomed one faced by stag and hounds.’ ‘Why then, driver, are you not capable of keeping watch for me?’ ‘I am,’ said the driver, ‘and unless they come out of the clouds and the air to attack you, none shall come from east or from west to fight with you without due warning.’ The shafts of his chariot were pulled beneath his side, and his skin-coverings placed under his head, and yet he slept not at all.

Now as regards Cú Chulainn ‘Good, my friend Láeg, harness the horses and prepare the chariot. If Fer Diad is awaiting us, he will deem it long.’ The charioteer arose. He harnessed the horses and he

yoked the chariot. Cú Chulainn mounted the chariot and they drove forward towards the ford. As for Fer Diad's charioteer, he was not long on the watch when he heard the rumble of a chariot approaching them. As he awoke his master, he made this lay:

1. I hear the sound of a chariot with fair yoke of silver. (I perceive) the form of a man of great size, rising above the front of the strong chariot. Past Broinfeirste Broine they advance along the road, past the side of Baile in Bile. Victorious is their triumph.
2. A plundering Hound drives, a bright chariot-fighter harnesses, a noble hawk lashes his steeds towards the south. I am certain that he will come ... He will give us battle.
3. Woe to him who is on the hill awaiting the worthy Hound. Last year I foretold that he would come at some time, the Hound of Emain Macha, the Hound with beauty of every colour, the Hound of spoils, the Hound of battle. I hear him and he hears(us).

A description of Cú Chulainn's chariot, one of the three principal chariots in story-telling, on the Foray of Cúailnge:

‘How does Cú Chulainn look to you?’ said Fer Diad to his charioteer. ‘I see,’ he answered, ‘a beautiful roomy chariot of white crystal, with solid gold yoke, with great sides of copper, with shafts of bronze, with lungeta of white gold, with framework of narrow compact opening and fair awning, a framework in which heroic feats are displayed and which would hold seven sets of weapons fit for princes. Beautiful is the seat for its lord which that chariot contains, the chariot of Cú Chulainn which travels with the swiftness of a swallow or a great deer hastening across a plain on high ground, such is the speed and swiftness with which they drive for it is towards us they travel. That chariot is drawn by two horses with small round heads, round-eyed, prick-eared, broad-hoofed, redchested, steady, splendid, easily harnessed ... One of these horses is strong, swift-jumping, battlesome, with great hoofs and skittish ... The other horse has curling mane, narrow slender feet, small heels, ... The chariot has two dark black wheels and there is a chariotpole of bronze with enamel of beautiful colour. There are two ornamented golden bridles.’

‘In the chief place in that chariot is a man with long curling hair. He wears a dark purple mantle and in his hand he grasps a broadheaded spear, bloodstained, fiery, flaming. It seems as if he has three heads of hair, to wit, dark hair next to the skin of his head, blood-red hair in the middle and the third head of hair covering him like a crown of gold. Beautifully is that hair arranged, with three coils flowing down over his shoulders. Like golden thread whose colour has been hammered out on an anvil or like the yellow of bees in the sunshine of a summer day seems to me the gleam of each separate hair. Seven toes on each of his feet; seven fingers on each of his hands.

A warrior's grasp in each of his hands (gloss)
. In his eyes the blazing of a huge fire. His horses' hoofs maintain a steady pace.’

‘In front of him is a charioteer fully worthy of his master. He has curling jet-black hair, a great head of hair. He wears a fullskirted hooded cape with an opening at his elbows and a light-grey mantle.

In his hand he holds a beautiful golden horsewhip

In his hand a goad of white silver (alternative reading incorporated in text)
with which he goads the horses along whatever road the valorous warrior

He is his friend (gloss, incorporated in text)
in the chariot travels...' And Fer Diad said to his charioteer: 'Arise, lad,' said Fer Diad. 'Too highly do you extol that man. Prepare the weapons for our encounter with him at the ford.' 'If I were to turn my face in the direction to which my back is now turned, I think that the shafts of the chariot would pierce the nape of my neck.' 'O lad,' said Fer Diad, 'too highly do you extol Cú Chulainn, for he has not given you a reward for your praise.' And as he described him, he said

1. It is time now for help for this is no deed of friendship (?). Be silent. Do not praise him for he is no overhanging doom. If you see the hero of Cúailnge with his proud feats, then he shall be dealt with by us. Since it is for reward, he shall soon be destroyed.
2. If I see the hero of Cúailnge with his proud feats, he does not flee from us but towards us he comes. Though skilful, he is not grudging. For his excellence we praise him. He runs and not slowly but like the swift thunderbolt.
3. So greatly have you praised him that it is almost ground for a quarrel. Why have you chosen him (for praise) since he came forth from his dwelling? Now they are challenging him and attacking him, and only cowardly churls come to attack him.

Not long afterwards they met in the middle of the ford, and Fer Diad said to Cú Chulainn 'Where do you come from, Cúa?'

For Cúa is the word for squinting in old Irish and Cú Chulainn had seven pupils in his royal eyes, two of which were asquint. But this was more an adornment than a disfigurement to Cú Chulainn, and if he had had a greater bodily blemish, Fer Diad would undoubtedly have taunted him with that. And as Fer Diad proclaimed this, he made a lay and Cú Chulainn made answer until the lay was ended.

1. Whence do you come, O Cúa, to fight with fresh strength? Your flesh will be blood-red above the steam of your horses. Woe to him who comes as you do, for it will be as vain as the kindling of a fire with one stick of firewood. You will be in need of healing if you reach your home again.
2. I have come, a wild boar of troops and herds, before warriors, before battalions, before hundreds, to thrust you beneath the waters of the pool. In anger against you and to prove you in a many-sided encounter, so that harm may come to you as you defend your life.
3. How shall we meet? Shall we groan over corpses as we meet at the ford? Shall it be with strong spear-points or with hard swords that you will be slain before your hosts if your time has come?
4. Before sunset, before nightfall, if you are in straits ... When you meet with Boirche, the battle will be bloody. The Ulstermen are calling you. They have taken you unawares(?) Evil

will be the sight for them. They will be utterly defeated.

5. You have come to the gap of danger. The end of your life is at hand. Sharp weapons will be wielded on you. It will be no gentle purpose. A great champion will slay (you). Two shall meet in conflict. You shall not be the leader of even three men from now until doomsday.
6. When we were with Scáthach, by dint of our wonted valour we would fare forth together and traverse every land. You were my loved comrade, my kith and kin. Never found I one dearer to me. Sad will be your death.
7. Leave off your warning. You are the most boastful man on earth. You shall have neither reward nor remission for you are no outstanding hero. Well I know that you are but a nervous lad, you with the heart of a fluttering bird, without valour, without vigour.
8. Too much do you neglect your honour that we may not do battle, but before the cock crows your head will be impaled on a spit. O Cú Chulainn of Cúailnge, frenzy and madness have seized you. All evil shall come to you from us, for yours is the guilt.

Then Cú Chulainn asked his charioteer to urge him on when he was overcome and to praise him when he was victorious fighting against his opponent. So his charioteer said to him ‘Your opponent goes over you as a tail goes over a cat. He belabours you as flag-heads(?) are beaten in a pond. He chastises you as a fond woman chastises her son.’ Then they betook themselves to the ‘ford-feat,’ and did all that Scáthach had taught both of them. They performed wonderful feats. After that Cú Chulainn leapt on to Fer Diad's shield, and Fer Diad cast him off three times into the ford, so that the charioteer kept on inciting him once more. Cú Chulainn swelled and grew big as a bladder does when inflated. His size increased so that he was bigger than Fer Diad.

‘Look out for the gaí bulga!’ cried the charioteer and cast it to him downstream. Cú Chulainn caught it between his toes and cast it at Fer Diad into his anus. It was as a single barb it entered but it became twenty-four (in Fer Diad's body). Thereupon Fer Diad lowered his shield. Cú Chulainn struck him with the spear above the shield, and it broke his ribs and pierced Fer Diad's heart.

1. Strong is the spear-shaft cast by your right hand. My ribs like spoils are broken; my heart is gore. Well did I fight, but I have fallen, O Cúa!
2. Alas, O noble warrior! O brave Fer Diad! O strong and beautiful smiter, your arm was victorious.
3. Our friendship was fair, O delight of my eyes! Your shield had a golden rim. Your sword was beautiful.
4. Your ring of white silver on your noble hand. Your chess-set of great worth. Your cheeks were rosy and beautiful.
5. Your curling yellow hair was thick—a fair jewel. Your girdle, supple and ornamented, you wore around your side.
6. Alas! my loved one, that you should fall at the hand of Cú Chulainn! Your shield which you wore against force afforded you no protection.
7. Our fight ... our sorrow, the din of our battle. Fine was the great champion. Every army was defeated and trampled underfoot. Alas! O noble warrior, Fer Diad!

1. All was play and pleasure until I met with Fer Diad in the ford. Alas for the noble champion laid low there at the ford.
2. All was play and sport until I met with Fer Diad at the ford. I thought that beloved Fer Diad would live after me for ever.

While the enemy hosts were going south from Áth Fhit Diad, Cú Chulainn lay there wounded until Senoll Úathach came to him ahead of the others and Senoll was there with the two Meic Fhice. They brought Cú Chulainn back to the streams of Conaille Muirthemne to heal and bathe his wounds therein. These are the names of those rivers: Sás, Buan Bithshlán, Finnglas, Gleóir, Bedg, Tadg, Talaméd, Rind, Bir, Breinide, Cumang, Cellend, Gaenemain, Dichu, Muach, Miliuc, Den, Delt, Dubglaise. While Cú Chulainn went to bathe in those rivers, the army went south past him and made their encampment at Imorach Smiromrach. Mac Roth left the army and went north to watch out for the men of Ulster, and he came to Slíab Fúait to find out if he might see anyone pursuing them. He told them that he saw only one chariot.

The Chief Episodes of the Táin

The Hard Fight of Cethern mac Fintain, the Tooth-fight of Fintan, the Red Shame of Mend, the Bloodless Fight of Rochad, the Humorous Fight of Iliach, the Missile-throwing of the Charioteers, the Trance of Aimirgin, the Repeated Warning of Súaltaim, the Mustering of the Ulstermen, the Trance of Dubthach, the Trance of Cormac Con Longes, the Array of the Companies, the Final Decision in Battle, the Fight of the Bulls, the Adventures of Dub Cúailnge on the Foray.

The Hard Fight of Cethern

‘I see a chariot coming across the plain from the north today,’ said Mac Roth, ‘and (in the chariot) a grey-haired man, unarmed except for a silver spike which he holds in his hand. It seems as if the mist of May surrounds the chariot. With the spike he pricks both charioteer and horses, for he thinks he will scarcely reach the host alive. Before him runs a brindled hunting-dog.’ ‘Who is that, Fergus?’ asked Ailill. ‘Is it likely to be Conchobar or Celtchair?’ ‘It is not likely,’ said Fergus. ‘But I think it might be Cethern, the generous, red-sworded son of Fintan.’ And so indeed it was.

Then Cethern attacked them throughout the encampment and killed many. And he himself was grievously wounded and came from the fighting to Cú Chulainn, with his entrails lying about his feet. Cú Chulainn had compassion on him for his wounding. ‘Get me a physician,’ said Cethern to Cú Chulainn. A litter-bed of fresh rushes with a pillow on it was prepared for him. Then Cú Chulainn sent Láeg to Fiacha mac Fir Fhebe in the encampment of the banished Ulstermen to seek physicians, and said that he would kill them all even if they were to take refuge underground in the encampment unless they came to him to cure Cethern. The physicians found this no pleasant prospect for there was none in the camp whom Cethern would not wound. However the physicians came forth to see Cethern. The first physician who came to him examined him.

‘You will not live,’ said he. ‘Neither will you,’ said Cethern, and struck him a blow with his fist which caused his brains to gush out over his ears. In the same way he killed fifty physicians, or he killed fifteen of them. The last man received only a glancing blow which caused him to swoon. He was later rescued by Cú Chulainn. They sent messengers then to Fíngin, the seer-physician, Conchobar's own physician, asking him to come and examine Cú Chulainn and Cethern.
‘It is not right for you,’ said Cú Chulainn to Cethern, ‘to kill the physicians. It will not be possible to get any (more) of them to come to you.’ ‘It was not right for them to give me a bad prognosis.’ For each physician who examined him used to say that he would not live, that he was not curable, so then Cethern used to strike him with his fist. They saw Fíngin's chariot approaching, for he had been told that Cú Chulainn and Cethern were in distress. Cú Chulainn went to meet him. ‘Examine Cethern for us,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘but do so from a distance, for he has killed fifteen of their physicians.’ Fíngin came to Cethern. He examined him from afar off.

‘Examine me,’ said Cethern. ‘This first thrust that I received I find painful.’ ‘Those are wounds inflicted by a proud and foolish woman,’ said Fíngin. ‘It is likely that it is so,’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me a tall beautiful woman with pale, tender face and long cheeks. She had long fair hair and two golden birds on her shoulder. She wore a dark purple hooded mantle. On her back she carried a shield five hands in breadth and overlaid with gold. In her hand a javelin, keen, sharp-edged and light. A sword with pointed hilt across her shoulders. Great was her beauty. She it was who first came to me and wounded me.’ ‘Aye indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘That was Medb from Crúachu.’ ‘These are slight wounds inflicted unwillingly by a kinsman. They will not prove fatal,’ said the physician. ‘That is so,’ said Cethern. ‘A warrior came to me. He carried a curved shield with scalloped rim. In his hand a spear with bent point, across his shoulders an ivory-hilted sword. He

had a crest of hair and wore a brown cloak in which was a silver pin wrapped about him. He got a slight wound from me.’ ‘I know him,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘That was Illann, the son of Fergus mac Róig.’ ‘This is the attack of two warriors,’ said the physician. ‘That is true,’ said Cethern. ‘Two men came to me. They bore long shields, each with two hard chains of silver and a silver boss. They had two five-pronged spears round which was a silver ring. They had thick heads of hair and each man wore a necklet of silver.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Those were Oll and Oichne, the two foster-sons of Ailill and Medb. They never go to an assembly but that they are sure to kill someone. It was they who wounded you.’

‘Two other warriors came to me,’ said Cethern. ‘They had splendid bright equipment and they themselves were manly.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Those were Bun and Mecon of the king's household.’ ‘These wounds are grave,’ said the physician. ‘They have gone right through your heart and pierced it tranversely. I cannot undertake to heal them. Yet I have such skill that they may not prove fatal.’ ‘This is the bloody onset of the two sons of the King of Caill,’ said the physician. ‘That is true,’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two grey-haired warriors, each carrying a wooden vessel on his back. Indeed,’ said Cethern, ‘this spear pierced one of them.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They were noble warriors from Medb's great household. They were Bróen and Láiréne, the two sons of three lights, the two sons of the King of Caill.’ ‘This is the attack of three warriors,’ said Fíngin, the physician. ‘That is true,’ said he. ‘There came to me three men of equal size, linked together with a chain of bronze ... ’ ‘Those were the three warriors of Banba, followers of Cú Raí mac Dáire.’ ‘This is the onset of three champions,’ said Fíngin. ‘That is true,’ said he. ‘Three champions came to me bearing the equipment of warriors. Each had a silver chain around his neck and carried a handful of javelins. Each man of them thrust a spear into me, and I thrust this spear into each of them.’

‘Those were three of the warriors of Irúath,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘For their fierceness they were chosen to kill you,’ said the physician. ‘Indeed they have severed the sinews of your heart within you so that it rolls about in you like a ball of thread in an empty bag.’ ‘I cannot cure (you) (?),’ said Fíngin. ‘This is the attack of three bloody-minded men,’ said Fíngin. ‘That is so,’ said Cethern. ‘Three tall stout men came to me. They were inciting me even before they reached me. They had three grey heads of hair.’ ‘Those were the three stewards of Medb and Ailill, Scenb and Rand and Fodail,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘These are three hostile blows,’ said Fíngin
‘True,’ said Cethern. ‘Three warriors came to me. Each had a head of thick black hair and wore a vari-coloured cape. They carried in their hands three iron clubs.’ ‘Those were the three called Fráech Baíscne, the three tableservants of Medb,’ said Cú Chulainn.

‘This is the attempt of two brothers,’ said Fíngin. ‘That is true,’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two choice warriors. They wore dark-grey mantles and carried curved shields with scalloped rim. Each had in his hand a broad shining spear on a slender shaft.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘They were Cormac Colomon ind Ríg, and Cormac Maíle Ogath.’ ‘Numerous indeed are the wounds they both inflicted on you,’ said the physician. ‘They have pierced your throat and their spears moved about within you.’ ‘These are the wounds inflicted by two brothers,’ said the physician. ‘That is likely,’ said Cethern. ‘Two warriors came to me. One had curling yellow hair, the other curling brown hair. They bore white shields ornamented with animal designs in gold. Each had a white-hilted sword across his shoulder. They wore hooded tunics with red insertion.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Those were Maine Aithremail and Maine Máithremail.’ ‘These are the thrusts

delivered by father and son,’ said the physician. ‘That is so,’ said Cethern. ‘There came to me two huge men with shining eyes, wearing golden diadems on their heads. Each man had at his waist a golden- hilted sword. Scabbards reaching to the haft of each sword and a ring of variegated gold around each.’ ‘I know them,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘That was Ailill with his son, Maine Condasgeb Uile.’ ‘What prognosis do you give me, master Fíngin?’ asked Cethern.

‘In truth,’ said Fíngin, ‘you should not exchange your grown cows for yearlings now. As long as your attackers were numbered only in twos and threes, it were easy to cure you. But when you bear wounds inflicted by many, you are destined to die in any case,’ With that Fíngin turned the chariot away from him. ‘You pronounce judgment on me like the rest,’ (said Cethern). So he struck Fíngin a blow of his fist so that he fell across the shafts of the chariot and the whole chariot resounded.

Then said Cú Chulainn ‘That is a wicked kick of yours for an old man (?).’ Hence is still the name Ú;achtar Lúa in Crích Rois. ‘You should have attacked enemies rather than physicians,’ said Cú Chulainn. Then the physician Fíngin offered Cethern a choice: either to lie sick for a year and then survive, or straightaway to have sufficient strength for three days and three nights to attack his enemies. The latter is what Cethern chose. Then Cú Chulainn asked for marrow for the physician to cure Cethern. He made a marrow-mash from the bones of the cattle he encountered. Hence the name Smirommair in Crích Rois. After absorbing the marrow, Cethern slept for a day and a night. ‘I have no ribs,’ complained Cethern. ‘Put the ribs of the chariot frame in me.’ ‘You shall have that,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘If I had my own weapons,’ said Cethern, ‘the deeds I should perform would be remembered for ever.’ ‘What I see now seems fine,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘What do you see?’ asked Cethern. ‘I think it is the chariot of your wife Find Bee, the daughter of Eochu, coming towards us.’

They saw the woman bringing Cethern's weapons in the chariot. Cethern seized his weapons and attacked the host then with the framework of his chariot bound to his belly to give him more strength. That physician, who had escaped from Cethern and lain unconscious among the corpses of the other physicians now carried a warning of Cethern's arrival into the encampment. Then through fear of Cethern, Ailill's crown was put upon the pillar-stone. Cethern rushed at the pillar-stone and drove his sword through it and his fist after the sword. Hence the place-name Lia Toll in Crích Rois. ‘This is a trick!’ he cried. ‘I shall not cease to attack you until I see this diadem of Ailill on one of you.’ Then for a day and a night he attacked them, until Maine put the diadem on his head and came forward in his chariot. Cethern threw after Maine his shield which split him and his charioteer and went right through the horses into the ground. Then the host hemmed Cethern in on all sides and he attacked them and fell dead among them so doing.

The Tooth-Fight of Fintan

Fintan came then to avenge his son's death on them. Thrice fifty armed men was the number of his company. They had two spear-heads on each shaft and they were wrapt in mantles. Fintan fought seven battles with the enemy and none of his men escaped, only he himself and his son. Then through fear of Fintan his son was separated from him and was rescued by Ailill under a shelter of shields on condition that Fintan should not attack them until he came with Conchobar to the great battle. So Fintan made a truce with them for delivering his son to him.

The Red Shame of Mend

Then there came to them Mend mac Sálchada with a band of thirty armed men. Twelve of them fell at Mend's hand and twelve of his own people fell too. Mend himself was grievously wounded while his men were red with blood. Hence the name Ruadrucca Mind, the Red Shame of Mend. Afterwards they evacuated the encampment for Mend and he killed no more of them save only the twelve. He was told that no guilt attached to them for they had not gone near his dwelling by the Boyne in Coirenna. For in fact it was no disgrace to yield the encampment to him until he should come with Conchobar to the great battle.

The Bloodless Fight of Rochad

Then there came to them Rochad Rigderg mac Faithemain of Ulster with thirty armed men. He took up his position on a hillock near them, and his arrival was announced in the encampment. Then Finnabair said that he was her first love. ‘If you have loved him,’ said Ailill and Medb, ‘crave a truce of him until such time as he comes with Conchobar to the great battle, and spend tomorrow night with him.’ All this was done, though it was not easy to get him to come. Rochad's tent was pitched for him at the place called Finnabair, and he spent the night with the girl.

This was told to the seven kings from Munster. One of them said: ‘I was promised this girl on the surety of fifteen men, in requital for coming on this hosting.’
All seven of them confessed that the same bargain had been made with each of them. So they went to take revenge for it on the sons of Ailill in Glenn Domain where they were guarding the rear of the army. Medb rushed to the rescue. So did the division of the Leinstermen. So too Ailill and Fergus. Seven hundred fell there in the battle of Glenn Domain. That is Bángleó Rochada and Imshlige Glenndomnach. Finnabair heard of this, namely, that seven hundred men had died because of her. She fell dead there of shame. Hence the place-name Finnabair Sléibe.

The Humorous Fight of Iliach

There came then to them at Áth Feidle Iliach, the grandfather of Lóegaire Búadach who was son of Connad Buide meic Iliach. Iliach was being cared for with filial piety by his grandson in Ráith Immail. He announced to the host that they would die at his hand in revenge.

So he came in this wise: in his shaky, worn-out chariot, without rugs or covering, drawn by two old sorrel nags. And he filled his chariot with stones as high as the skin-coverings. He kept striking all those who came to gaze at him, stark-naked as he was, long- membered, with the clapar down through the frame of the chariot. Then the host noticed in what manner he came and they mocked the naked man. Dócha mac Mágach checked the jeering of the rabble. And for that Iliach told Dócha that at the day's end he, Dócha, should take Iliach's sword and strike his head off, provided only that Iliach had exerted all his strength against the host. At that point Iliach noticed the marrow-mash. He was told that it had been made from the bones of the cows of Ulster. So then he made another marrow-mash from the bones of the men of Connacht beside it, so that the two marrow-mashes are there together. Then in the evening Dócha struck off Iliach's head and carried it to his grandson. He made peace with him and Láegaire kept Iliach's sword. That is Mellgleó Iiach, (so called) because the host laughed at him.
The Missile-throwing of the Charioteers

The army came to Tailtiu then. The charioteers of Ulster, in number thrice fifty, attacked them. Three times their own number fell by the charioteers, and they themselves fell.

Roí Arad is the name of the spot where they fell together with their tackle on the Foray.

The Trance of Aimirgin

This then is the trance of Aimirgin in Tailtiu. In his trance Aimirgin pelted them so that no man could be found to raise his head in Tailtiu. Then came Cú Raí mac Dáire to the host to fight against Cú Chulainn. He was told how Cú Chulainn had opposed the men of Ireland single-handed during the three months of winter. Cú Raí thought it did not befit a man to attack one stabbed and wounded, for Cú Chulainn had been wounded and lost much blood. So then Cú Raí hurled stones directly against Aimirgin, instead of Cú Chulainn, and the stones collided in the air. Cú Raí asked Aimirgin to let the cattle go past Tailtiu. Aimirgin permitted it. However it was not to be wondered at that they were carried off with difficulty. Cú Raí promised Aimirgin that he would not remain with the host from that time on. So it was done. Cú Raí went away from the host at once. When Aimirgin saw that they challenged him by turning the left board of their chariots to Tailtiu and Ráith Airthir, he began once more to pelt them.

This is one of the three (slaughters) which cannot be counted, namely, the great number of them that he killed. And his son Conall Cernach remained by him, furnishing him with stones and darts.
The Repeated Warning of Súaltaim

While these events which we have related were taking place, Súaltaim from Ráith Súaltaim in Mag Muirthemne heard how his son had been harassed by the twleve sons of Gaile Dána and his sister's son. Then said Súaltaim: ‘Is it the sky that cracks, or the sea that overflows its bounderies, or the earth that splits, or is it the loud cry of my son fighting against odds?’ Then he went to his son. But Cú Chulainn was not pleased that he should come to him, for though he was wounded, Súaltaim would not be strong enough to avenge him.

‘Go to the men of Ulster,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘and let them give battle to the warriors at once. If they do not, vengeance will never be taken on them.’ Then his father saw that there was not on Cú Chulainn's body a spot which the tip of a rush could cover which was not pierced, and even his left hand which the shield protected bore fifty wounds. Súaltaim came to Emain and called out to the men of Ulster ‘Men are slain, women carried off, cattle driven away!’ His first shout was from the side of the court, his second from the ramparts of the royal residence, his third from the Mound of the Hostages in Emain. No one answered, for it was tabu for the Ulstermen that any of them should speak before Conchobar, and Conchobar, spoke only before the three druids. ‘Who carries them off? Who drives them away? Who slays them?’ asked the druid. ‘Ailill mac Máta slays them, carries them off, drives them away, with the guidance of Fergus mac Róig,’ said Súaltaim. ‘Your people have been harassed as far as Dún Sobairche. Their cows, their women-folk and their cattle have been carried off. Cú Chulainn has not let them come into Mag Muirthemne and Crích Rois during the three months of winter. Bent hoops (of wood) hold his mantle (from touching him). Dry wisps plug his wounds. He has been wounded and bled profusely (?).’ ‘It were right,’ said the druid, ‘that one who so incited the king should die.’ ‘It is right that he should,’ said Conchobar. ‘It is right,’ said the Ulstermen. ‘What Súaltaim says is true,’ said Conchobar. ‘From the Monday on the eve of Samain until the Monday on the eve of Spring we have been ravaged.’

Thereupon Súaltaim leapt forth, unsatisfied with the answer he had got, and he fell on to his shield and the scalloped rim of the shield cut off his head. The horse brought his head on the shield back into Emain, and the head uttered the same words.—Though others say that he had been asleep on the stone and on waking had fallen from it on to his shield. ‘Too loud was that shout indeed,’ said Conchobar. ‘(I swear by) the sea before them, the sky above them, the earth beneath them that I shall restore every cow to its byre and every woman and boy to their own homes after victory in battle.’ Then Conchobar laid an injunction on his son Findchad Fer Bend.—He was so called because he bore horns of silver.

The Muster of the Ulstermen

‘Arise, O Findchad! I send you to Dedad in his inlet, to Leamain, to Fallach, to Illann mac Fergusa, to Gabar, to Dorlunsa, to Imchlár, to Feidlimid Cilair Cétaig, to Fáeladán, to Rochaid mac Faithemain at Rigdonn, to Lugaid, to Lugda, to Cathbath in his inlet, to the three Cairpres, to Aela, to Láeg at his causeway, to Geimen in his valley, to Senoll Úathach at Diabul Arda, to Cethern mac Fintain at Carlag, to Torathor, to Mulaig in his fortress, to the royal poet Aimirgin, to the Úlathadach Fodoblaid, to the Mórrigan at Dún Sobairche, to Ieth, to Roth, to Fiachna at his mound, to Dam Dremed, to Andiaraid, to Maine mac Braitharge, to Dam Derg, to Mod, to Maithes, to Irmaithes, to Corp Cliath, to Gabarleig in Líne, to Eochaid Sainmech in Saimne, to Eochaid Lathach at Latharna, to Uma mac Remarbisi in Fedan, to Muinremur mac Gerrgind, to Senlobair at Canainn Gall, to Follamain, to Lugaid rí Fer mBolc, to Laige Líne, to Búaidgalach, to Ambúach, to Fergna, to Barrene, to Áine, to Errgi Echbél at his hill, to Celtchar mac Cuithechair in Lethglais, to Láegaire Milbél at Breo Láegairi, to the three sons of Dromscalt mac Dregamm, to Drenda, to Drendas, to Cimb, to Cimling, to Cimmene, to Fána Caba, to Fachtna mac Senchath in his rath, to Senchaid at Senchairthe, to Briccir, to Bricirne, to Breic, to Buan, to Bairech, to Óengus mac Leiti, to Fergus mac Leiti, to Óengus Fer mBolg, to Bruachur, to Alamiach the warrior at Slánge, to the three sons of Fiachna in Cúailnge, to Conall Cernach in Midlúachair, to Connad mac Morna in Callainn, to Cú Chulainn mac Súaltaim in Muirthemne, to Aimirgin at Eas Rúaid, to Lóeg, to Léiri, to Menn mac Salcholca at Coirenna, to Cú Rí mac Armargin in his rath, to Óengus Fer Berm Umai, to Ogma Grianainech, to Brecc, to Eo mac Oircne, to Toillchenn to Saithe, to Mogoll Echbél in Magna, to Conla Sáeb, to Carba, to Láegaire Buadach in Immail, to Alile Amargine in Tailtiu, to Furbaide Fer Benn, to Seil, to Manes, to Cuscraid Menn Macha, to Fíngin at Finngabra, to Cremath, to Blae Fichit, to Blae Brugaich, to Fesair, to Eógan mac Durthacht in Fernmag, to Ord, to Seirid, to Serthe, to Oblán, to Cuilén, to Curether at Liana, to Eithbenne, to Fernél, to Finnchath at Slíab Betha, to Talgobain at Bernas, to Menn mac Fer Calca, of Maig Dula, to Íroll, to Bláirige at Tibraite mac Ailchatha, to Ialla Ingraimme of Mag Dobla, to Ros mac Ailchatha, to Mane mac Cruinn, to Nindich mac Cruinn, to Dipsemilid, to Mál mac Rochraidi, to Muinne mac Munremair, to Fiatach Fer nDohre mac Dubthaig, to Muirne Menn.’

It was not difficult, however, for Findchad to deliver that summons, for all of the province of Conchobar, every lord among them, was awaiting Conchobar. All those who were east or north or west of Emain came now to Emain Macha. When they had assembled they heard that Conchobar had recovered from his debility in Emain. They went on past Emain to the south in pursuit of the (enemy) host. The first stage of their journey was from Emain to Iraird Cuillenn. ‘What are you waiting for here?’ asked Conchobar. ‘We are waiting for your sons,’ said the host. ‘They have gone with a company of soldiers to Tara to seek Erc, the son of Cairbre Nia Fer and of Feidelm Noíchride. We shall not leave this spot, until the two companies come to join us.’ ‘I shall not wait, indeed,’ said Conchobar, ‘until the men of Ireland learn that I have recovered from the debility in which I have been.’

So Conchobar and Celtchair went off with thrice fifty chariot fighters, and brought back eight score

(enemy) heads from Áth Airthir Mide. Hence the name Áth Féne. These men had been there keeping guard against Conchobar's army. Their share of the booty was eight score women. Their heads were brought there and Conchobar and Celtchair sent them to the encampment. Then Celtchair said to Conchobar: ‘Ramparts with bloodstained sides and a valorous king … with spoils of war ... On Conchobar's behalf we prepare for battle. His warriors rouse themselves. Battle will be fought(?) at Gáirech and Irgáirech,’ said he. —Or it may have been Cúscraid Menn Macha, the son of Conchobar, who chanted this song of exhortation on the night before the great battle, after Láegaire Buadach had chanted his song ‘Arise, kings of Macha. Be on your guard etc.’, and it may have been sung in the eastern encampment. That was the night when Dubthach Dóel Mad saw a vision in which the army stood at Gáirech and Irgáirech, and in his trance he spoke:

The Vision of Dubthach

‘A wonderful morning for a battle, a wonderful time when armies will be thrown into confusion, kings will be overthrown, men's necks will be broken and the sand will be red with blood. Three armies will be overcome in the wake of the army led by Conchobar.
They will defend their womenfolk. Their herds will come on the morning after. Heroes will be slain. Hounds will be checked. Horses will be destroyed … from the assemblies of great tribes.’
Thereupon he awoke from his trance. The war-goddess attacked the host. A hundred of them fell dead. When they fell silent(?) they heard Cormac Con Longes once more—Or it may have been Ailill mac Máta chanting in the encampment in the west.

The Trance of Ailill

‘Great is the truce, the truce of Cuillenn. Great the parleys, the parleys of Delend. Great the cavalcades (?), the cavalcades of Asal. Great the afflictions, the afflictions of Túath Bressi.’

The March of the Companies

Now while these prophetic visions were happening the men of Connacht, on the advice of Ailill and Medb and Fergus, decided to send messengers to see if the men of Ulster had reached the plain. Then said Ailill: ‘Go, Mac Roth, and find out for us if those men are in this plain of Meath where we now are, I have carried off their cattle and their prey. They will give me battle if they so wish. But if they have not reached the plain, I shall not await them here any longer.’ So Mac Roth went to reconnoitre the plain. He returned again to Ailill and Medb and Fergus. The first time Mac Roth gazed into the distance around Slíab Fúait, he saw that all the wild beasts had come out of the wood into the whole plain. ‘The second time I looked out over the plain,’ said Mac Roth, ‘I saw that a dense mist had filled the glens and valleys, so that the hills between them rose up like islands in lakes. Then I saw sparks of fire flashing in that dense mist, and I seemed to see the variegation of every colour in the world. Then I saw the lightning and I heard the din and the thunder, and I felt a great wind which almost blew the hair from my head and threw me on my back, and yet the wind that day was not strong.’

‘What was that, Fergus?’ said Ailill. ‘Identify it.’ ‘It is not hard for me to recognize what it is,’ said Fergus. ‘Those are the men of Ulster now recovered from their debility. It was they who rushed into the wood. It was the multitiude, the greatness and the violence of the warriors that shook the wood. It is from them the wild beasts fled into the plain. The dense mist you saw which filled the valleys was the breath of those champions which filled the glens and made the hills to rise among them like islands in lakes. The lightning and the flashes of fire and the varied colours that you saw, Mac Roth’, said Fergus, ‘were the eyes of the warriors flashing in their heads like sparks of fire. The thunder and the din and the great uproar that you heard, that was the whistling of swords and ivory-hilted rapiers, the clatter of weapons, the creaking of chariots, the hoof-beats of the horses, the might of the chariot- fighters, the loud roaring of the warriors, the shouts of the soldiers, the ardour and anger and fierceness of the heroes as they rushed in fury to battle. So great is their anger and excitement that they think they will never arrive.’ ‘We shall await them,’ said Ailill. ‘We have warriors to encounter them.’ ‘You will need them,’ said Fergus. ‘For not in all Ireland nor in the western world from Greece and Scythia westwards to the Orkneys and the Pillars of Hercules and to Tor Breogain and the Islands of Gades, will anyone be found who can withstand the men of Ulster when they are in their rage and anger.’

After that Mac Roth went once more to survey the march of the men of Ulster and came to their encampment in Slemain Mide. He came back to Ailill and Medb and Fergus, and gave them a detailed description, and describing them he spoke as follows: ‘There came on to the hill at Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth, ‘a great company, fierce, powerful, proud. I think that it numbered three thousand. At once they cast off their garments and dug up a turfy mound as a seat for their leader. A warrior, fair, slender, tall, pleasant, led that company. Fairest in form among kings was he. He had yellow hair, curled, well-arranged, trimmed and wavy, which reached to the hollow between his shoulders. He wore a purple mantle wrapped about him with a beautful brooch of red gold in the mantle over his breast. He had shining, beautiful eyes. His countenance was crimson

and comely, narrow below, broad above. He had a forked beard, very curly, golden-yellow. He wore a white hooded tunic with red insertion. Across his shoulders he had a gold-hilted sword, and he carried a white shield with animal designs in gold. In his hand he held a broad shining spear on a slender shaft. His array was the finest of all the princes of the world, alike as regards followers and fierceness and beauty, equipment and garments, as regards terror and battle and triumph, prowess and fearsomeness and dignity.’

‘There came too another company,’ said Mac Roth. ‘They were almost the same as the other in numbers and arrangement and equipment, in dreadfulness and fearsomeness. A fair heroic warrior in the van of that company. A green cloak wrapped about him and a golden brooch on his shoulder. He had yellow curling hair. He carried an ivory-hilted sword at his left side. He wore a bordered(?) tunic reaching to his knee. He carried a smiting shield with scalloped rim. In his hand a spear like a palace torch with a silver band around it which runs now back from shaft to spearhead, now down again to the grip. That company took up position on the left hand of the leader of the first band. And the position they took was with knee to ground and shield-rim held to chin. It seemed to me that the tall haughty warrior who led that band stammered in his speech.’

‘There came yet another band,’ said Mac Roth. ‘It looked to be more than three thousand. A valiant man, handsome and broad headed, was in the van. He had brown curling hair and a long, forked, fine-haired beard. A dark-grey fringed cloak was wrapped about him, with a leaf-shaped brooch of white gold over his breast. He wore a white hooded tunic reaching to his knee. He carried a variegated shield with animal designs. A sword of bright silver with rounded hilt at his waist, and a five-pronged spear in his hand. He sat down in front of the leader of the first company.’

‘Who were those, Fergus?’ asked Ailill. ‘We know those companies indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘It was Conchobar, the king of a province in Ireland, who sat down on the mound of turf. It was Sencha mac Ailella, the eloquent speaker of Ulster, who sat down in front of Conchobar. It was Cúscraid Menn Macha, Conchobar's son, who sat at his father's hand. That spear which Cúscraid has is wont to behave thus before victory; at no other time does the ring run (up and down). Those who came there were goodly men to inflict wounds in the attack of every conflict,’ added Fergus. ‘They will find men to answer them here,’ said Medb. ‘I swear by my people's god,’ said Fergus, ‘that until now there has not been born in Ireland an army which could ever check the Ulstermen.’

‘There came still another company,’ said Mac Roth, ‘in number more than three thousand. In the van was a tall, valiant warrior, hideous, fearsome, swarthy and with fiery countenance. He had dark brown hair which lay smooth and fine over his forehead. He carried a curved shield with scalloped rim. In his hand he had a five-pronged spear and with it a pronged javelin. He bore across his back a bloodstained sword. Around him was wrapped a purple mantle with a golden brooch on his shoulder. He wore a white hooded tunic reaching to his knee.’ ‘Who was that, Fergus?’ asked Ailill. ‘He who came there is the starting of strife, a warrior for conflict, the doom of enemies, to wit, Eógan mac Durrthacht, King of Farney,’ said Fergus.

‘Another great, haughty band came on to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘They cast off their garments. In truth they marched valiantly to the hill. Great the horror and vast the fear they brought with them. Terrible the clatter of arms they made as they marched. In the van of the company a man, bigheaded, valiant, heroic, fierce and hideous. He had fine grizzled hair and great

yellow eyes. A yellow mantle with a white border wrapped around him. Outside this he carried a smiting shield with scalloped rim. In his hand he held a spear, broad-bladed and longheaded with a drop of blood on its shaft, and a similar spear with the blood of enemies along its edge. A great smiting sword across his shoulders.' 'Who was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'The warrior who came there shuns not battle nor conflict nor contest. It was Lóegaire Búadach mac Connaid meic Iliach from Immail in the north,' said Fergus.

'Another great company came to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth. 'A handsome warrior, thick-necked, corpulent, led that company. He had black curling hair and he was swarthy-faced with ruddy cheeks. Shining grey eyes in his head. He wore a duncoloured mantle of curly wool in which was a brooch of white silver. He carried a black shield with boss of bronze, and in his hand he held a shimmering perforated(?) spear. He wore a plaited tunic with red insertion. Outside his garments he carried an ivoryhilted sword.' 'Who was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'He who came is the stirring up of strife. He is the stormy wave which overwhelms streamlets. He is the man of three shouts. He is the threatening doom of enemies,' said Fergus. 'That was Munremur mac Gerrcind from Modorn in the north.'

'There came still another great company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth. 'A company beautiful and splendid in numbers and arrangement and equipment. Proudly they made for the hill. The clatter of arms they made as they advanced shook the whole army. A handsome and noble warrior led that company. Most beautiful of men was his appearance, alike for hair and eyes and skin, alike for equipment and appearance, and voice and fairness, for dignity, size and honour, for arms and excellence and for garments and weapons and proportion, for worth and wisdom and lineage.' 'That is his (exact) description,' said Fergus. 'That handsome man Feidlimid who came there is the brilliance of fire, the proud hero, the stormy wave which engulfs, the force, which cannot be endured, with victories in other lands after he has slaughtered his enemies (at home). That was Feidlimid Cilair Cétaig.'

'There came still another band to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth, 'no fewer than three thousand in number. In the front of the band a tall, valiant warrior, of dusky complexion, well-proportioned … He had black curling hair, round eyes, dull and haughty in his head. He was a strong, bull- like, rough man. He wore a grey mantle with a silver pin on his shoulder, and a white hooded tunic was wrapped around him. He carried a sword on his thigh and bore a red shield with a boss of hard silver. In his hand was a broad-bladed spear with three rivets.' 'Who was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'He who came there is the fierce ardour of anger, the one who dares(?) every conflict, who wins every battle. That was Connad mac Mornai from Callann,' said Fergus.

'There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth. 'In size it appears an army. Not often is found a hero finer in form and equipment and garments than the leader in the van of that company. He had trimmed auburn hair. His face was comely, ruddy, well-proportioned, a face narrow below and broad above. His lips were red and thin, his teeth shining and pearl-like, his voice loud and clear. His was the most beautiful of the forms of men. He wore a purple mantle wrapped around him with a brooch inlaid with gold over his white breast. On his left side a curved shield with animal emblems in many colours and a boss of silver. In his hand a long spear with shining edge and a sharp, aggressive dagger. On his back a sword with golden hilt. A tunic, hooded and with red insertion, wrapped about him.' 'Who was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'We know him

indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘He who came there is indeed a worthy adversary, he is the dividing of a combat, he is the fierce ardour of a blood- hound. That was Rochaid mac Faithemain from Brig Dumae, your son-in-law, he who wedded your daughter Finnabair.’

‘There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘A warrior brawny-legged, thick-thighed and tall in the forefront of that company. Each of his limbs was almost as thick as a man. In truth he was every inch a man,’ said he. ‘He had black hair and a ruddy, scarred countenance. A noble eye of many colours in his head. A splendid, eager man was he thus with fearsomeness and horror. He had wonderful equipment in clothes and weapons and raiment and splendour and attire ... with the triumphant exploits of a warrior, with splendid deeds, with eager pride, avoiding equal combat to vanquish overwhelming numbers, with fierce anger towards enemies, attacking many enemy lands without protection (?). In truth the company came boldly to Slemain Mide.’ ‘He had(?) valour and prowess indeed,’ said Fergus, ‘he had(?) hot- bloodedness and violence, strength and diginity in the armies and troops. It was my own foster-brother, Fergus mac Leiti, King of Líne, the point of perfection in battle in the north of Ireland.’

‘There came another great, haughty company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘They wore wonderful garments. A handsome, noble warrior in the van. He had every endowment of beauty in hair and eyes and fairness, in size and demeanour and proportion. He carried a shield made of five concentric circles of gold. He wore a green mantle wrapped about him with a golden brooch in the mantle above his shoulder, and a white hooded tunic. A spear like the turret of a royal palace in his hand, a gold-hilted sword across his shoulders.’ ‘Fierce is the anger of the victorious hero who came there,’ said Fergus. ‘That was Amorgene mac Eccetsalaig from Búas in the north.’

‘There came another company on to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth, ‘in size like the overwhelming sea, in brightness like fire, in fierceness like a lion, in numbers a battalion, in greatness like a cliff, in strength like a rock, in combativeness like doom, in violence like thunder. A coarse-visaged, fearsome warrior in the forefront of that company, big-bellied, thick-lipped, big-nosed, redlimbed, with coarse grizzled hair. He wore a striped cloak pinned with an iron stake, and carried a curved shield with scalloped rim. He wore a rough plaited tunic and in his hand he held a great grey spear with thirty rivets. Across his shoulders he carried a sword tempered seven times by fire. All the army rose up to meet him and the host was thrown into confusion as he went towards the hill.’
‘He who came there is the leader of battle,’ said Fergus. ‘He is a worthy adversary. He is a hero in prowess. He is (like) a stormy wave which overwhelms. He is (like) the sea pouring across boundaries. That was Celtchair mac Cuithechair from Dún Lethglaise in the north.’

‘There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘A warrior, altogether fair led them. Fair in all points was he, hair and eyebrows and beard and clothing. He carried a shield with golden boss and a sword with ivory hilt. In his hand he had a great perforated spear. Bravely did the troop advance.’ ‘Splendid indeed is the strong-smiting hero who came there,’ said Fergus, ‘the valiant warrior who performs great deeds against enemies and destroys men! That was Feradach Find Fechtnach from Nemed Sléibe Fúait in the north.’ ‘There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘A fearsome warrior in front of that company, bigbellied, thick-lipped. His lips were as thick as those of a horse. He had brown curling hair, bright

cheeks too, and a broad head and long arms. A black swinging mantle around him with a round brooch of bronze over his shoulder. A grey shield across his left side. A great spear with neck-rings in his right hand, a long sword across his shoulders.' 'He who came is (like) a lion fiercely combative with bloodstained paws,' said Fergus. 'He is the warlike, valorous hero of heroic deeds. He is (like) a fiery, unendurable blast of heat across the land. That was Eirrge Echbél from Brí Eirrge in the north,' said Fergus.

'There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth, 'led by two fair, youthful warriors, both alike. They had yellow hair. They carried two white shields with animal designs in silver. A slight difference of age between them. Together they raised and set down their feet; it is not their wont for one to lift his foot before the other.' 'Who are those, Fergus?' asked Ailill. 'Those are two warriors, two bright flames, two points of perfection in battle, two heroes, two combative chiefs, two dragons, two fiery ones, two champions, two fighters, two scions, two bold ones, the two beloved by the Ulstermen around their king. They are Fiachna and Fíacha, two sons of Conchobar mac Nesa, the two loved ones of the north of Ireland.'

'There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth. 'At their head three noble, fiery swarthy-faced warriors. They had three heads of long yellow hair. Three mantles of the same colour wrapped about them with three golden brooches above their shoulders. They wore three ... tunics with red insertion. They carried three similar shields, with golden-hilted swords across their shoulders and broad shining spears in their right hands. There was a slight difference of age between them.' 'Those are the three great champions of Cuib, the three valorous ones of Midlúachair, the three chiefs of Roth, the three veterans of Airther Fúata;' said Fergus. 'Those are the three sons of Fiachna who have come in purusit of the Bull, to wit, Rus and Dáire and Imchad,' said Fergus.

'There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth. 'A fine and fierce man in the forefront. Red eyes full of courage in his head. A vari-coloured mantle around him in which was a circular brooch of silver. He carried a grey shield on his left side, a sword with silver hilt on his thigh, and in his avenging right hand a splendid spear with sharp points (?). He wore a white hooded tunic reaching to his knee. Around him was a company bloodstained and wounded, and he too was covered with blood and wounds.' 'That,' said Fergus, 'is the bold and ruthless one. He is the daring one (?)who rends. He is the boar(?) of battle. He is the mad bull. He is the victorious one from Baile, the valorous one from Bernas, the champion of Colptha, the protector of the north of Ireland, namely, Menn mac Sálchada from Coranna. It is to take vengeance on you for their wounds that that man has come.'

'There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,' said Mac Roth, 'and they were heroic and eager. At their head a tall, sallow-faced, long-cheeked warrior. He had brown, bushy hair. He wore a red mantle of fine wool and a golden brooch in the mantle over his shoulder. He wore a fine tunic. On his left side he had a splendid sword with bright silver hilt. He carried a red shield and in his hand he held a broad shining spear on a beautiful shaft (?) of ash.' 'It was the man of three stout blows who came there,' said Fergus, 'the man of three roads, the man of three paths, the man of three highways, the man of three triumphs, the man of three battle-cries who is victorious over foes in other lands. That was Fergna mae Findchoíme from Coronn.'

‘There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘It appeared greater than three thousand in number. A handsome, fair- breasted warrior in the van of that company. He was like Ailill yonder in size and dignity, in dress and equipment. He wore a golden diadem on his head. A beautiful cloak was wrapped around him with a golden brooch in the cloak over his breast. He wore a tunic with red insertion. He carried a smiting shield with golden rims and in his hand a spear like the turret of a palace. Across his shoulders he had a goldhilted sword.’ ‘The man who came there is (like) the sea inundating rivers,’ said Fergus. ‘It is the fierce ardour of a warrior. His rage against his foes cannot be borne. That was Furbaide Fer Benn.’

‘There came still another company to the hill in Slemain Mide, heroic, countless in number,’ said Mac Roth. ‘They wore strange garments unlike those of the other companies. Glorious were their weapons and their equipment and their raiment as they came. In this company was a great, proud army led by a little freckled lad. His form was the most beautiful of all men's forms. In his hand a white-bossed, gold-studded shield with rim of gold. He held a light sharp spear which shimmered. He was wrapped in a purple, fringed mantle, with a silver brooch in the mantle over his breast. He wore a white hooded tunic with red insertion and carried outside his garments a golden-hilted sword.’ Thereupon Fergus fell silent.

‘Indeed I know not,’ said Fergus, ‘anyone like that little lad among the Ulstermen, but in fact I should think it likely that those might be the men of Tara with the fine, noble lad who is Erc, the son of Cairpre Nia Fer and of Conchobar's daughter ... Without asking permission of his father, that boy has come to the assistance of his grandfather. It is because of that lad that you will be defeated in battle. He will experience neither dread nor fear as he makes for you in the middle of your own army. Bravely will the warriors of Ulster roar as they hew down the army before them, rushing to rescue their beloved lad. They will all feel the ties of kinship when they see the boy in that great conflict. Like the baying of a blood-hound will be heard the sound of Conchobar's sword as he comes to the boy's rescue. Cú Chulainn will cast up three ramparts of (dead) men around the battle as he rushes towards that little lad. Mindful of their kinship with the boy, the warriors of Ulster will attack the vast (enemy) host.’ ‘I find it tedious,’ said Mac Roth, ‘to recount all that I saw, but I have come at any rate to bring you tidings.’ ‘You have (indeed) brought (tidings),’ said Fergus. ‘Conall Cernach, however, did not come with his great company,’ said Mac Roth, ‘nor did the three sons of Conchobar with their three divisions. Nor did Cú Chulainn come for he has been wounded fighting against odds. Except only that a single chariot-warrior who came there is probably he.’

‘The chariot was drawn by two strong-haunched steeds, with flowing tail and broad hoofs, broad in back and thin in flank, with head held high and arched neck, with thin mouth and flaring nostrils. Two black, firm(?) wheels, smooth easily-running rims, framework high and creaking and a green ornamented awning. There was a warrior, broad, ruddy-faced, in that chariot. He had a curly jet-black head of hair reaching to the hollow between his shoulders. He wore a red girded mantle. In each hand he carried four daggers and at his left side a gold- hilted sword. He had both shield and spear. He wore twenty-four shirts tied wth cords and ropes. In front of him was a charioteer whose back was turned to the horses and who held the reins between his fingers in front of him. A chess-board spread between the two, half the chessmen of yellow gold, the other half of white gold. His thighs rested on another boardgame, a búanbach. He cast nine feats aloft (?).’ ‘Who were those, Fergus?’ asked Ailill. ‘Easy to tell,’ said Fergus. ‘Those were Cú Chulainn the son of Súaltaim from the fairy mounds and Lóeg mac Riangabra, Cú Chulainn's charioteer.’ ‘Many hundreds indeed and

many thousands,’ said Mac Roth, ‘came to this encampment of the Ulstermen. Many heroes and champions and warriors raced their horses to the assembly. Many more companies who had not arrived at the encampment when I (first) came were coming there now. But indeed wherever my eye fell on hill or height in all the space visible to me between Áth Fhir Diad and Slemain Mide, I saw nothing save men and horses.’

‘It was indeed a brave(?) company that you saw,’ said Fergus. Then Conchobar and his army went and made camp beside the others. He asked Ailill for a truce until sunrise on the morrow, and Ailill guaranteed it on behalf of the men of Ireland and the exiled Ulstermen while Conchobar guaranteed it for the men, of Ulster. The men of Ireland's tents were pitched, and before sunset there was scarcely a bare patch of earth between them and the encampment of the Ulstermen. Then the Mórrígan spoke in the dusk between the two encampments, saying ‘Ravens gnaw the necks of men. Blood flows. Battle is fought ... Hail to the men of Ulster! Woe to the Érainn! Woe to the men of Ulster! Hail to the Érainn!’ These were the words she whispered to the Érainn : ‘Woe to the men of Ulster for they have not won(?) the battle.’

Cú Chulainn was beside them in Fedain Collna. Food was brought to him from the hospitallers that night. They used to go and converse with him by day. He killed no one north of Áth Fhir Diad. ‘See a little flock coming from the western encampment to the encampment in the east,’ said the charioteer to Cú Chulainn, ‘and see a band of youths come to meet them.’ ‘Those youths will meet and the flock will go across the plain. He who will not accept quarter will go to help the youths.’ It happened afterwards as Cú Chulainn had said. ‘How do the youth of Ulster fight the battle?’ ‘Bravely,’ said the charioteer. ‘It were right that they should fall in rescuing their flock,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘And now?’ ‘The beardless young warriors are fighting now,’ said the charioteer. ‘Has a bright cloud come across the sun yet?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘No indeed,’ said the charioteer. ‘Alas that I have not the strength to go to them!’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘There is fighting here already today,’ said the charioteer at sunrise. ‘It is proud folk who are now fighting the battle, but there are no leaders for they are still asleep.’ It was at sunrise that Fachtna spoke. —Or (according to another account) Conchobar chanted these words in his trance: ‘Arise, O valiant kings of Macha, generous people! Sharpen your swords. Fight the battle. Dig a trench. Strike your shields. Men's hands are weary. Their flocks are loud voiced ... They all fight with one another ... Sorrow will fill the heart of their queen so that the grassy sod on which they might strike, and on which they might go should be covered with blood. Arise, kings of Macha.’

‘Who has chanted these words?’ asked they all. ‘Conchobar mac Nesa,’ they answered. ‘Or Fachtna chanted them. —Sleep on, sleep on but set your sentinels.’ Láegaire Búadach was heard speaking: ‘Arise, kings of Macha. Strike your kine with the sword. Protect your booty ... He will smite all the world on the plain of Gáirech.’
‘Who has chanted that?’they all asked. ‘Láegaire Búadach mac Connaid Buidi meic Iliach. Sleep on, sleep on but set your sentinels.’ ‘Wait on a while,’ said Conchobar, ‘until the sun has risen well above the glens and mounds of Ireland.’ When Cú Chulainn saw the chiefs from the east putting on their diadems and coming to the rescue of the troops, he told his charioteer to arouse the men of Ulster.

The charioteer spoke. —Or else it was the poet Amargin mac Eicit who spoke: ‘Arise, valiant kings of Macha! A generous people. The wargoddess desires the kine of Immail. The blood from men's

hearts spreads around … None like Cú Chulainn was found. Arise!’ ‘I have aroused them,’ said the charioteer. ‘They have come into battle stark-naked except for their weapons. He whose tent-opening faces east, has (in his eagerness) come out westwards through the tent.’ ‘That is speedy help in time of need,’ said Cú Chulainn.

The doings of the men of Ulster are not described for a while. But as for the men of Ireland, Badb and Bé Néit and Némain shrieked above them that night in Gáirech and Irgáirech so that a hundred of their warriors died of terror. That was not the most peaceful night for them.

The Muster of the Men of Ireland

That night before the battle Ailill mac Máta chanted these words: ‘Arise, O Traigthrén! I send you to the three Conaires from Slíab Mis, the three Lesfinds from Lúachair; the three Meid Corpthe Loste, the three called Bodar from the river Búas, the three called Bodb from the river Búaidnech, the three called Búageltach from the river Barrow, the three Muiredachs from Mairge, the three Láegaires from Lee Derg, the three Suibnes from the river Suir, the three Échtachs from Áine, the three Doíl Eirrig, the three called Damach from Loch Derg, the three Bratrúaid from Lough Ree, the three Mielleths from Lough Erne, the three called Bresal Bodgna, the three Amalgaids from Mag nAí, the three Fiachras from Fid Némain, the three Nechtans from Mag Muirisce, the three Mac Amras from Es Rúaid, the three Ruirechs from Crúacha Aigle, the three called Bruchar from Glais Febrat, the three Conalls from Collamair, the three called Fiac from Finnabair, the three Cairbres of Clíu, the three called Mane Milscoth, the three Descertachs of Dromm Fornochta, the three Fintans from Femen, the three Rathachs from Mag Raigne, the three Eterscéls of Etarbán, the three Guaires of Fid Gaible, the three Aeds from Mag nAidne, the three Mongachs of Mitain, the three Dúadaid Áine, the three Gairb Glunnaidi, the three Deiscirt Uaga, the three Lethluind Linti, the three Coinchind Shile, the three Dauich of Líamain, the three Celtchair of Umall, the three Coscrachs of Clothra, the three Barrchais from Eille, the three Dáires from Tipra Find, the three Arts from Ard Ladrann, the three Muiredachs from Mag Femin, the three Congbaidi of Cliu, the three Morda Mosad, the three Roir of Ros Buite, the three Ánrad of Tráig Thuirbe, the three Eterscéls of Tara, the three Galgaidi Goain, the three Feradaig Fholtchais, the three Feidmnig Rotail, the three Scáil Sobail, the three Ailill Uaiti, the three Gortaig Granaisc, the three Mesaig Maethla, the three Uilleith of Ard Airthir, the three called Corb from Clár, the three called Art from Ard, the three called Foimdech from Irrus, the three Illands of Ireland, the three Sochaide from Shannon, the three Brónachs from Bethra, the three Mongachs from Mag Mucruma, the three Mochmaidne from Mag nAí, the three called Tigemmas from Túath Ambrais, the three Échtachs from Finnabair, the three Cormacs of Uiscre, the three called Odar from Buaile, the three Ruis Ruscae, the three Ferad Find, the three Athchuirp Tulcha, the three Tuathail Tanni, the three Maccáech Femrag, the three Láegaires from Berramain, the three Fidaig Saigthi, the three called Cormac Cúanach, the three called Cairbre Luingi, the three called Odar Conchobair, the three Glais meic Cathbad, the three Duib Drúad, the three Airrig Cluichiur, the three Laitne Luiged, the three called Conchobar Collsen, the three Elair Deiuais, the three Fiadail Duinergin (?), the three Airig Inse Uan, the three Níths from Áth Craibe, the three called Óengus Uisce, the three Fiach Fema nImbais, the three called Dom, the three Bailcbroindi from Móenmag, the three Cais Cuile, the three called Trén from Mag Éle, the three called Sruthmar from Mag nOchtair, the three called Glonnmar from Mag Lethan, the three called Dornmar from Mag nUisci, the three Glaisderg from Tethba, the three Tigirn Taince from Tiprait Talindi.’

These triads made up what was called the Ferchuitred of the men of Ireland, not counting those of them whom Cú Chulainn had previously killed. Tidings of Cú Chulainn are now told: ‘Look for us, my

friend Láeg, and see how are the men of Ulster fighting now.'
'Bravely (they fight),' answered the charioteer, 'If I were to go today in my chariot and Óen, the charioteer of Conall Cernach, in his chariot and if we were to travel from one wing (of the army) to the other, no hoof of horse or wheel of chariot would go through (to the ground).' 'The makings of a great fight are there,' said Cú Chulainn. 'Let nothing be done in the battle,' said he to his charioteer, 'that I shall not hear an account of from you.' 'That will be so insofar as I can do it,' said the charioteer. 'Now as for the warriors from the west, they make a breach eastwards through the battle- line. The same number of warriors from the east breach the battle-line westwards.' 'Alas that I am not healed,' said Cú Chulainn, 'or my breach too would be clearly seen there like that of all the others.'

Then came the ferchuitred, the triads of that second mustering. When the warriors came afterwards to the battle at Gáirech and Irgáirech, there also arrived the nine chariots of the warriors from Irúath. In front of them were three men on foot who travelled no more slowly than the chariots. Medb allowed them into battle only to drag Ailill out of the conflict if the enemy defeated him, or to kill Conchobar if it were he who was overcome. Then his charioteer told Cú Chulainn that Ailill and Medb were begging Fergus to go into battle. They said that it was not wrong of him to do so for they had shown him great generosity in his exile.

'If I had my own sword,' said Fergus, 'men's heads cut off by me would be as numerous on their shields as hailstones in a swamp to which the king's horses come when they have travelled swiftly into the land.' Then Fergus swore this oath: 'I swear my people's oath that I would strike men's jawbones from their necks, men's necks from shoulders, men's shoulders from elbows, men's elbows from forearms, men's forearms and their fists, men's fists and their fingers, men's fingers and their nails, men's nails and the crowns of their heads, men's crowns and their trunks, men's trunks and their thighs, men's thighs and their knees, men's knees and their calves, men's calves and their feet, men's feet and their toes, men's toes and their nails. Their headless necks would sound in the air(?) like a bee flying to and fro on a day of fine weather.'

Then said Ailill to his charioteer: 'Bring me the sword that cuts (men's) flesh. I swear the oath of my people that, if its condition be worse with you today than on the day I gave it to you on the hillside in the territory of Ulster, even though the men of Ireland were protecting you against me, they would not save you.'. Then his sword was given to Fergus and Ailill said: 'Take your sword. Though you may smite Ireland, a great warrior of her sons will fight at Gáirech ... For honour's sake do not wreak your fierce anger on us in the presence of the chariot-fighters of Ulster...' 'Welcome, O hard blade, the sword of Leite! ... My sword shall not inflict slaughter on you. I am a proud leader as I stand before the men of Ireland.' 'A pity that you should fall on a crowded(?) field of battle!' said Fergus to Ailill. That night Badb and Bé Néit and Mémain shrieked above them at Gáirech and Irgáirech so that a hundred of their warriors fell dead of fright. That was not the most peaceful night for them.

Then Fergus seized his weapons and turned towards the fighting, and holding his sword in both hands he cleared a passage for a hundred through the line of battle. Medb too, took up her weapons and rushed into battle. Thrice she was victorious until a phalanx of spears turned her back. 'I wonder,' said Conchobar to his people, 'who is it who is victorious in the fight against us in the north. Do ye stay here in the battle until I go against him.' 'We shall hold the spot where we now stand,' said the warriors, 'but unless the ground quakes beneath us or the heavens fall down

on us, we shall not flee from here.’

Then Conchobar went to meet Fergus. He raised against him his shield, the Óchaín, which had four golden points and four coverings of gold. Fergus struck three blows on it but not even the rim of the shield above his head touched Conchobar. ‘Who of the men of Ulster raises the shield (against me)?’ asked Fergus. ‘One who is better (than you),’ said Conchobar. ‘One who drove you into exile to dwell with wolves and foxes, one who today will hold you at bay in the presence of the men of Ireland by dint of his own prowess.’ Thereupon Fergus, holding the sword in both hands, aimed a vengeful blow at Conchobar, and the point of the sword touched the ground behind him (as he swung it back). Cormac Con Loinges laid hands on him and grasped him by the arm.
‘That is harsh yet not harsh, friend Fergus,’ said Cormac. ‘That is cautious yet not over-cautious, friend Fergus. Friendship proves hostile. Behold your enemies, your friends have been destroyed. Wicked are these blows that you strike, friend Fergus.’ ‘Tell me,’ said Fergus, ‘whom shall I strike?’ ‘Strike the three hills above them. Turn your hand and strike on all sides of you. Heed them not (?). Remember the honour of the Ulstermen which has not been lost. It will not be lost unless it be through your fault today.’ ‘Go in some other direction, Conchobar,’ said Cormac to his father. ‘This man will no longer wreak his fierce anger here on the men of Ulster.’

Fergus turned away. With his sword he slew a hundred warriors among the Ulstermen in his first onslaught, until he came face to face with Conall Cernach. ‘Too great is that force which you exert against (your own) people and race, following a wanton woman as you do,’ said Conall Cernach. ‘What shall I do, O warrior?’ asked Fergus. ‘Strike the hills beyond them and the trees about them,’ said Conall Cernach. Then Fergus smote the hills and with three blows struck off the (tops of the) three hills in Meath (now called) Máela Midi, the flattopped hills of Meath. Cú Chulainn heard the blows which Fergus had struck on the hills, or (those he had struck) on the shield of Conchobar.

‘Who strikes those great strong blows in the distance?’ asked Cú Chulainn. ‘Blood seals up the heart. Anger destroys the world. Quickly it loosens the dressings of my wounds.’ Láeg answered saying: ‘The finest of men strikes them, Fergus mac Róig, the dauntless. The (coming of the) hero Fergus mac Róig means wounds and increase of slaughter. The sword was hidden in the chariot-pole so that the cavalcade of my master Conchobar did not arrive at the great battle.’ Then said Cú Chulainn: ‘Quickly unfasten the hoops over my wounds. Men are covered in blood. Swords will be wielded. Men's lives will be ended.’ Thereupon the dry wisps which plugged his wounds sprang out of him (and rose up) as high as a lark soars in the air, and the wooden hoops (túaga) sprang from him as far as Mag Túag in Connacht. They flew out of him in all directions. His wounds took violent effect on him and he struck the heads of the two handmaidens one against the other so that each of them was grey with the brains of the other. —These handmaidens had been sent by Medb to pretend to lament over him so that his wounds might break out afresh and to tell him that the Ulstermen had been defeated and that Fergus had fallen opposing them because Cú Chulainn had been unable to join the battle. —Then Cú Chulainn was distorted (with rage). The twenty-seven shirts which he used to wear going into battle, tied to him with ropes and cords, were now brought to him, and he took on his back his chariot with its framework and two wheels and went round the battle towards Fergus. ‘Turn hither, master Fergus!’ cried Cú Chulainn, but (though he said this) three times Fergus did not answer. ‘I swear by the god by whom Ulstermen swear,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘that I shall drub you as flax-heads(?) are beaten in a pool. I shall go over you as a tail goes over a cat. I shall smite you as a fond woman smites her son.’ ‘Who among the men of Ireland speaks to me thus?’ said Fergus. ‘Cú Chulainn mac Suáltaim, the son of Conchobar's sister,’ said Cú

Chulainn, ‘and hold back from me now.’ ‘I have promised to do that,’ said Fergus. ‘Begone then,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘I agree,’ said Fergus, ‘for you refused to encounter me when you were pierced with wounds.’ So at that juncture Fergus and his division of three thousand went away. The men of Leinster and the men of Munster went away too, and nine divisions, those of Medb and of Ailill and of their seven sons, were left in the battle. It was midday when Cú Chulainn came to the battle. When the sun was sinking behind the trees in the wood, he overcame the last of the bands, and of the chariot there remained only a handful of the ribs of the framework and a handful of the shafts round the wheel.

Then Cú Chulainn overtook Medb going from the battle-field. ‘Spare me!’ cried Medb. ‘If I were to kill you, it would be only right for me,’ said Cú Chulainn. But he spared her life then because he used not to kill women. He convoyed them west to Áth Lúain and across the ford too. He struck three blows of his sword upon the flagstone in Áth Luain. They (i.e. the hills) are called Máelana Áth Lúain. Now when they were finally routed Medb said to Fergus: ‘Men and lesser men(?) meet here today, Fergus.’
‘That is what usually happens,’ said Fergus, ‘to a herd of horses led by a mare. Their substance is taken and carried off and guarded as they follow a women who has misled them.’ In the morning after the battle the bull was taken away, and he met the bull Finnbennach in combat in the place now called Tarbga in Mag nAí.—Tarbga means Bull-sorrow or Bull-battle.—Roí Dedond was the former name of that hill. Everyone who had survived the battle now did nothing except to watch the two bulls fighting. Bricriu Nemthenga had been in the west convalescing after Fergus had fractured his skull with the chessmen. He came now with all the rest to watch the bulls' fight. In their violent struggle the two bulls trampled on Bricriu and so he died. That is the tragical death of Bricriu.

The Donn Cúailnge's foot was impaled on the horn of the other bull. For a day and a night he did not draw his foot away, until Fergus urged him on and struck his hide with a rod. ‘It was bad luck,’ said Fergus, ‘that the belligerent old calf that was brought here and because of whom many now lie dead should dishonour his clan and lineage.’ Thereupon Donn Cúailnge drew back his foot. His leg broke and his opponent's horn sprang out on to the mountain beside him. So Slíab nAdarca was afterwards the name of that place.

He carried off the Finnbennach then for a day and a night's journey and plunged into the lake beside Cruachu, and he came out of it with the loin and shoulder blade and liver of his opponent on his horns. The hosts advanced then with intent to kill him, but Fergus did not allow it and insisted that he should go wherever he pleased. So then the bull made for his own land. As he came he drank a draught in Finnleithe and left there the shoulder-blade of his opponent. That land was afterwards called Finnleithe. He drank another draught at Áth Lúain and left the other bull's loin there. Hence the name Áth Lúain. At Iraird Cuillinn he bellowed so loudly that he was heard throughout the province. He drank again in Troma. There the liver of his opponent fell from his horns. Hence the name Troma. He went then to the place called Étan Tairb and rested his forehead against the hill at Áth Dá Fherta. Hence the name Étan Tairb in Mag Muirthemne. Thereafter he travelled along Slige Midlúachra to Cuib—it was in Cuib he used to abide with the dry cows of Dáire—and there he pawed up the earth. Hence the place-name Gort mBúraig. Then he went on and died in Druim Tairb between Ulster and Uí Echach. That place is called Druim Tairb.
Ailill and Medb made peace with the Ulstermen and Cú Chulainn. For seven years after that no one was killed between them in Ireland. Finnabair remained with Cú Chulainn and the men of Connacht

returned to their own land, while the Ulstermen went in triumph to Emain Macha.

Finit. Amen.