The Intoxication of the Ulstermen

- When the sons of Mil of Spain reached Erin,
- "Who shall go there?" asked Cu Roi.

When the sons of Mil of Spain reached Erin,

their sagacity circumvented the Tuatha De Danann, so that Erin was left to the partition of Amergin Glunmar, son of Mil; for he was a king- poet and a king-judge. And he divided Erin into two parts, and gave the part that was underground to the Tuatha De Danann, and the other part to the sons of Mil, his own mortal people.

The Tuatha De Danann went into the hills and fairy places, so that they spoke with the fairy folk underground. They left five of their number before the five provinces of Erin, to excite war and conflict and valor and strife between the sons of Mil. They left five of them before the province of Ulster in particular. The names of these five were: Brea son of Belgan, in Dromana-Breg; Redg Rotbel in the slopes of Mag Itha; Tinnel the son of Boclachtna, in Sliab Edlicon; Grici in Cruachan Aigle; Gulbann the Grey son of Grac, in the Ben of Gulban Gort son of Ungarb.

They excited a quarrel amongst the sections of Ulster, regarding its division into three parts, when the province was at its best, to wit, during the time of Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach. They who shared the province with Conchobar were his own fosterling, Cu Chulainn mac Sualtach, and Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach, from Dun-da-Benn.

The partition that was made of the province was this: from the hills of Uachtar Forcha, which is called Usnech of Meath, to the middle of Traig Baile, was Cu Chulainn's portion of the province. Conchobar's third, moreover, was from Traig Baile to Traig Thola, in Ulster. Fintan's third was from Traig Thola to Rinn Seimne and Latharna.

A year was the province thus, in three divisions, until the feast of Samain was made by Conchobar in Emain Macha. The extent of the banquet was a hundred vats of every kind of ale. Conchobar's officers said that all the nobles of Ulster would not be too many to partake of the banquet, because of its excellence.

The resolution formed by Conchobar was to send his woman messenger, Leborcham, for Cu Chulainn to Dun Delgan, and Findchad Fer Benduma son of Traglethan, for Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach, to Dun-da-Benn.

Leborcham reached Dun Delgan, and told Cu Chulainn to go and speak with his fair guardian, to Emain Macha. Cu Chulainn was then giving a great banquet for the people of his own territory in Dun Delgan; and he said that he would not go, but that he would attend the people of his own country. His wife, the fair-haired Emer, daughter of Forgall Monach, the sixth best woman that Erin contained, said that he should go and speak with his guardian Conchobar.

"Harnessed are the horses, and yoked is the chariot," said Loeg; "wait not for the evil hour, that thou mayest not be hindered of thy valor. Jump into it when thou likest."

Cu Chulainn took his warlike apparel around him; and he leaped into his chariot, and proceeded on by the most direct road, and shortest way to Emain Macha. And Sencha mac Ailill came to bid welcome to Cu Chulainn on the green of Emain Macha. This is the welcome he offered to him:

"Welcome, ever welcome thy coming, thou glorious head of the host of Ulster; thou gem of valor and bravery of the Gael; thou dear, subduing, purple-fisted son of Dechtire."

"That is the welcome of a gift-asking Man," said Cu Chulainn.

"It is indeed," said Sencha mac Ailill.

"Name the gift thou requirest," said Cu Chulainn.

"I will, provided there be fit securities regarding it."

"Say what are the securities thou dost require, in consideration of a counter-gift for me."

"The two Conalls and Loegaire, viz. Conall Anglonnach son of Iriel Glunmar, and Conall the Victorious son of Amergin, and the furious Loegaire the Triumphant."

The boon was secured upon these guarantees, in consideration of a counter-gift for Cu Chulainn.

"What are the securities thou dost desire regarding the counter-gift?" asked Sencha.

"The three young, noble, distinguished gillies: Cormac Conlonges son of Conchobar, Mesdead son of Amergin, and Eochaid Cenngarb son of Celtchar."

"What I ask," said Sencha mac Ailill, "is that thou wouldst cede to Conchobar, for a year, the third of Ulster which is in thy hand."

"If the the province were the better for his having it for a year, it is not hard; for he is the fountain in its proper site that cannot be stained or defiled, the descendant of the kings of Erin and Alba. Therefore if the province were the better for its being in his possession for a year, it is not hard that he should have it; but if it is not the better, we will insist that he must be placed upon his own third at the end of a year."

Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach arrived. The illustrious good druid Cathbad met him and bade him welcome.

"Welcome thy coming, O beautiful, illustrious youth; thou mighty warrior of the great province of Ulster, against whom neither plunderers nor spoilers nor pirates can contend; thou border-man of the province of Ulster."

"That is the welcome of a man that asks a boon," said Fintan.

"It is, truly," said Cathbad.

"Speak, that it may be given thee," said Fintan.

"I will speak, provided that I have my fit securities regarding it."

"Say, what securities requirest thou, in consideration of a return boon for me?" said Fintan.

"Celtchar son of Uthecar; Uma, son of Remanfisech, from the brooks of Cooley; and Ergi Echbel from Bri Ergi."

They bound upon those guarantees.

"Speak now, O Fintan; what securities wilt thou accept regarding thy return boon?"

"The three sons of the valiant Usnech; the three torches of valor of Europe: Naisi, Anli, and Ardan."

Those guarantees were ratified on both sides.

They came into the house in which Conchobar was, to wit, into the Tete Brecc.

"Conchobar is now king of Ulster," said Cathbad, "if Fintan will give him his third."

"Yes," said Sencha, "for Cu Chulainn has given his."

"If so," said Cu Chulainn, "let him come to drinking and delight with me; for that is my counter-request."

"Where are my securities and bonds," asked Fintan, "when that is permitted to be said?"

The guarantees of each of them advanced savagely; and such was the fierceness of the uprising, that nine were covered with wounds, and nine with blood, and nine in death agonies, amongst them on one side and the other.

Sencha mac Ailill arose, and waved the peaceful branch of Sencha, so that the Ulstermen were quiet.

"Too much have you quarrelled," said Sencha, "for Conchobar is not King of Ulster until the end of a year."

"We will agree," said Cu Chulainn, " provided that you come not between us at the end of a year."

"I will not do so, truly," said Sencha.

Cu Chulainn bound him to this.

They remained during three days and nights, drinking that banquet of Conchobar until it was finished. They went then to their houses and forts and good residences.

He that came at the end of a year found the province a fountain of desire and of wealth with Conchobar; so that there was not a residence waste or empty from Rinn Seimne and Latharna to the hill of Uachtar Forcha and to Dub and to Drobais, without a son in the place of his father and his grandfather, serving his hereditary lord.

At this time a conversation occurred between Cu Chulainn and Emer.

"Methinks," said Emer, "Conchobar is now High-King of Ulster."

"Not sad, if it were so," said Cu Chulainn.

"It is time to prepare his banquet of sovereignty for him now," said Emer, "because he is a king forever."

The banquet was prepared; and there were a hundred vats of every kind of ale in it.

It was at the same time that Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach decided to prepare his banquet; and there were a hundred vats of every kind of ale in it. And it was prepared and ready. On the same day both were begun, and on the same day they were ready. On the same day their horses were harnessed for them, and their chariots yoked. Cu Chulainn arrived the first at Emain. He had only unyoked his horses when Fintan arrived. Cu Chulainn was there, inviting Conchobar to his banquet, when Fintan arrived.

"Where are my bonds and guarantees, when that is permitted to be said?" asked Fintan.

"Here we are," said the sons of Usnech, rising up together.

"Even I," said Cu Chulainn, "am not without guarantees."

The Ulstermen advanced furiously to their arms; and because Sencha did not dare to come between them, they were so quarrelsome that Conchobar could do nothing for them but leave to them the royal hall in which they were. And a son of his followed him, whose name was Furbaide, whom Cu Chulainn had fostered. And Conchobar looked upon him.

"Good, O my son," said Conchobar, "if it pleased thee, the pacification of the Ulstermen would come through thee."

"How is that?" said the youth.

"By weeping and grieving in the presence of thy fair guardian, Cu Chulainn; for he was never in any difficulty of battle or conflict, that his mind would not be fixed on thee."

The boy went back and wept and grieved in the presence of his guardian, Cu Chulainn. Cu Chulainn asked what ailed him. The youth said to Cu Chulainn that "Just when the province is a fountain of desire, thou shouldst be disturbing and spoiling it, for the sake of the exchange of one night."

"I have pledged my word regarding it," said Cu Chulainn, "and it shall not be transgressed."

"I have sworn my oath," said Fintan, "that the Ulstermen shall come with me tonight."

"I would find an excellent counsel for you," said Sencha mac Ailill: "the first half of the night to Fintan, and the last half to Cu Chulainn, in order to appease the little boy's grief."

"I will allow it," said Cu Chulainn.

"I will agree, too," said Fintan.

The Ulstermen then rose up about Conchobar; and he sent messengers throughout the province, to muster the people of the province to Fintan's banquet. Conchobar himself went, with the company of the Craeb Ruad (Red Branch) around him, to Dun-da-Benn, to the house of Fintan son of Niall Niamglonnach.

The Ulstermen arrived at the festival assembly, so that there was not a man from a village in Ulster that did not come there. The way in which they came was, each noble with his lady; each king with his queen; each musician with his accompaniments; each hunter with his huntress. As if only a company of nine had reached the place – so were they attended to. There were fair-formed, bright-shaped sleeping-places prepared for them. There were splendid, lofty pavilions, littered with bent and fresh rushes, and long houses for the multitude, and immense, wide, capacious cooking-houses; and a variegated, wide-mouthed hall, which was broad and capacious, protective, square, four-doored, in which the nobles of Ulster, both men and women, might be accommodated at drinking and enjoyment. Provisions of food and ale were poured out for them, so that the allowance of a hundred of food and ale reached every nine of them.

The drinking house was afterwards arranged by Conchobar according to deeds, and parts, and families; according to grades, and arts, and customs, with a view to the fair holding of the banquet. Distributors came to distribute, and cup-bearers to deal, and door-keepers for door-keeping. Their music, and their minstrelsy, and their harmonies were played. Their lays, and their poesies, and their eulogies were chanted for them; and jewels and valuables and treasures were distributed to them.

It was then that Cu Chulainn said to Loeg mac Riangabra: "Go out, my master Loeg; observe the stars of the air and ascertain when the midnight comes; for often hast thou been watching and waiting for me in far distant countries."

Loeg went out. He continued watching and observing until midnight came. As midnight came Loeg proceeded to the place where Cu Chulainn was.

"It is midnight now, O Cu of the Feats," said he.

When Cu Chulainn heard this, he informed Conchobar, who was then in the hero-seat in front of him. Conchobar stood up with a speckled-bright bugle-horn. Mute and silent were the Ulstermen when they saw the king standing. Such was the silence that if a needle fell from the roof to the floor it would be heard.

One of the prohibitions of the Ulstermen was to speak before the king; and one of the prohibitions of the king was to speak before his druids.

It was then the excellent druid Cathbad asked, "What is it, O magnificent High-King of Ulster, O Conchobar?"

"Cu Chulainn here; he thinks it time to go and drink his banquet."

"Does he wish to merit the blessings of the assembled Ulstermen, and leave our weaklings and our women and our youths behind?"

"I should like it," said Cu Chulainn, "provided that our fighters, our champions, our warriors, our musicians, our poets, and our minstrels come with us."

The Ulstermen advanced as the advance of one man out upon the hard-surfaced green. "Good, O my master Loeg," said Cu Chulainn, "give a light course to the chariot." The charioteer possessed the three virtues of charioteering in that hour; to wit, turning around and straight backing and "leap over gap."

"Good, O my master Loeg," said Cu Chulainn, " give ardor of speed to the horses."

Cu Chulainn's horses broke into a furious sudden start. The horses of the Ulstermen followed their example. And where they went was into the green of Dun-da-Benn, to Cathar Osrin, to Li Thuaga, to Dun-Rigain, to Ollarbi, and by the shores of Ollarbi, into Mag Macha, into Sliab Fuait, and into Ath an Foraire, to Port Not of Cu Chulainn, into Mag Muirthemne, into Crich Saithi, across Dubid, across the stream of the Boyne, into Mag Breg and Meath, into Mag Lena, into Cliather Cell, across the Brosnas of Bladma; their left towards the gap of Mer daughter of Treg, which is to-day called Bernan Ele; their right to the Hills of Eblinne, daughter of Guaire, across the fair stream which is called the river of Ua Cathbad, into the great plain of Munster, through the middle of Artine, and into Smertaini; their right toward the rocks of Loch Gair; across the pool-stream of Maig, to Cliu Mail maic Ugaine, into the territory of Deise Beg, into the land of Cu Roi mac Dairi. Every hill over which they passed they leveled, so that they left it in low glens; every wood through which they passed, the iron wheels of the chariots cut the roots of the great trees, so that it was open country after them; the streams and fords and pools which they crossed were fully-dry flags after them for a long time, and for long periods, from the quantity which the cavalcades carried away with their own bodies out of the contents of cascade, ford, and pool.

Then it was that Conchobar King of Ulster said, "We have not found this way between Dun-da-Benn and Dun Delgan (Cu Chulainn's stronghold)."

"We pledge our word truly," said Bricriu; "but it is more dignified for us to whisper than for another to cry out loud. It seems to us that it is not in the territory of Ulster that we are at all."

"We give our word," said Sencha mac Ailill, "that it is not in the territory of Ulster at all we are."

"We give our word," said Conall the Victorious, "that it is true."

It was then that the charioteers of the Ulstermen tightened the bits in the mouths of their horses, from the first charioteer to the last charioteer; whereupon Conchobar said, "Who will ascertain for us in what territory we are?"

"Who should ascertain it for thee but Cu Chulainn?" said Bricriu, "for it is he it is that has said that there was not a district in which he had not committed the slaughter of a hundred."

"Of me it comes, O Bricriu," said Cu Chulainn; "I will go."

Cu Chulainn proceeded into Drum Colchailli, which is called Ani Cliach.

"Say, my master Loeg, knowest thou in what territory we are?"

"I know not, indeed," said Loeg.

"But I know," said Cu Chulainn. "This is to the south of Cenn Abrat of Sliab Cain. The mountains of Eblinne are these to the north-east. That bright lake which thou see is the inn of Limerick. This is Drum Colchailli in which we are, which is called Ani Cliach, in the territory of the Deise Beg. Before us, to the south, is the host, in Cliu Mail maic Ugaine, in the land of Cu Roi mac Dairi maic Dedad."

While they were so engaged, tremendous heavy snow poured upon the Ulstermen, until it reached to their shoulders, and to the shafts of the chariots. Defences were made by the charioteers of the Ulstermen, who between them raised stone columns to shelter their horses, between them and the snow; so that the /echlasa/ of the horses of Ulster remain still, from that time to this. And these are the proofs of the story.

Cu Chulainn and his charioteer Loeg advanced to the place where the Ulstermen were.

"Query, then," asked Sencha mac Ailill; "what is the territory in which we are?"

"We are," said Cu Chulainn, "in the territory of the Deise Beg , in the land of Cu Roi mac Dairi; to wit, in Cliu Mail maic Ugaine."

"Woe to us in that case," said Bricriu, "and woe to the Ulstermen."

"Say not so, O Bricriu," answered Cu Chulainn, "for I will give guidance to the Ulstermen in the return of the same way, so that we will reach our enemies before it be day."

"Woe to the Ulstermen," said Celtchar mac Uthecair, "that the one was born who gives this counsel."

"We have never known thee to have, O Cu Chulainn," said Fergna, a valor-chief of the Ulstermen, "a counsel of weakness, timidity, or cowardice for the Ulstermen until this night."

"Alas! that the person who gives the counsel should go," said red-hand Lugaid, son of Leit, king of Dal Araide, "without making him a mark of darts and arms and edges."

"Query, however," said Conchobar; "what do you wish?"

"We desire," said Celtchar mac Uthecair, "to be a day and a night in the territory in which we are, because it would be a sign of defeat for us to go out of it; for it is not 'a fox's track' with us in valley or waste or wood."

"Speak then, O Cu Chulainn," said Conchobar; "what is the proper place of encampment for us during this day and night?"

"The fair-green of Senchlochar is here," said Cu Chulainn; "and this rough winter season is not fair-time. And Tara Luachra is on the slopes of eastern Luachar; and in it are residences and houses."

"To go to Tara Luachra, then, is what is right," said Sencha mac Ailill.

They went on in the straight direction of the road to Tara Luachra, and Cu Chulainn as a guide before them.

Now Tara Luachra, if it were empty before or after, it is not that night it was empty. No wonder, indeed, for a son had been born to Ailill and Medb, whose name was Maine Mo Epert, and he was given in fosterage to Cu Roi mac Dairi; and Ailill and Medb had come that night, accompanied by the chieftains of their province, to drink at the end of that son's first month. Though these were all there, Eochaid mac Luchta likewise was there with the men of his province; and Cu Roi mac Dairi was there also, with all the Clan Dedad. And though these were all there, a provident woman was the amazonian Medb, daughter of the High-King of Erin, that is, Eochaid Fedlech; there were two observers and druids guarding her. Their names were Crom Deroil and Crom Darail, two foster-sons of the good, illustrious druid Cathbad.

It happened to them, then, to be on the wall of Tara Luachra at that time, looking and guarding, observing and viewing, on every side from them. It was then that Crom Deroil said, "Have you seen the thing which has appeared to me?"

"What thing?" said Crom Darail.

"It seems to me that it is swords of crimson warfare and the tread of multitudes that I perceive coming over the side of Ir Luachair from the east," answered the other druid.

"I would not think a clot of gore and blood too much in the mouth of him that utters that," said Crom Darail; "for that is not an army or a multitude, but the gigantic oaks past which we came yesterday."

"If it were they, why the immense royal chariots under them?" "They are not chariots," said Crom Darail, "but the royal strongholds past which we came."

"If they are strongholds, why are those splendid all-white shields on them?"

"They are not shields at all," said Crom Darail, "but the columns that are in the doors of those royal strongholds."

"If they are columns," said Crom Deroil, "what is the cause of the profusion of red-armed spears above the great black breasts of the mighty host?"

"They are not spears, either," said Crom Darail, "but the stags and wild beasts of the country, with their horns and antlers above them."

"If they are stags and wild beasts," said Crom Deroil, "what causes the quantity of sods which their horses send from their shoes, so that it is pitch dark to the mighty air over their heads?"

"They are not horses," said Crom Darail, "but the herds and flocks and cattle of the country, after being let out of their sheds, for it is in those pastures the birds and winged animals alight in the snow."

"My conscience, if they are birds and winged animals, they are not a flock of one bird."

> If they are flocks, with the hue of a flock,
> They are not the flock of one bird.
> A white-speckled, golden garment
> Is, you would think, about each bird.
>
> If they are flocks of a rough glen,
> From out of the black clefts,
> Not few are the angry spears
> Above the fierce darts.
>
> Methinks they are not snow showers,
> But stout, active men,
> Who are in threatening bands
> Above the adjusted darts;
> A man under each hard, purple shield.
> Prodigious is the flock.

"And reprove me not therefore," said Crom Deroil, "for it is I that speak the truth. As they come past the points of the trees of Ir Luachair from the east, what would make them stoop, unless they were men?"

. . .

The fair-visaged Cu Roi mac Dairi heard the dispute of the two druids on the walls of Tara Luachra before him. "It is not at one these druids outside are," said the King of the World, the fair-visaged Cu Roi mac Dairi.

It was then the sun rose over the orb of the earth. "Visible to us now is the host," said Crom Deroil.

. . .

Not long were they there, the two watchers, the two druids, until a full, fierce rush of the first band broke thither past the glen. Such was the fury with which they advanced, that there was not left a spear on a rack, nor a shield on a spike, nor a sword in an armory in Tara Luachra, that did not fall down. From every house on which was thatch in Tara Luachra, the thatch fell in immense flakes. One would think that it was the sea that had come over the walls and over the recesses of the world to them.

The forms of countenances were changed, and there was chattering of teeth in Tara Luachra within. The two druids fell in fits and in faintings and in paroxysms; one of them, Crom Derail, fell over the wall outside, and Crom Deroil over the wall inside. And notwithstanding, Crom Deroil got up, and cast an eye over the first band that came into the green.

The host alighted on the green, and sat in one band on the green. The snow dissolved and melted thirty feet on either side of them, from the ardor of the great powerful warriors of Ulster.

Crom Deroil came into the house in which were Medb and Ailill and Cu Roi and Eochaid mac Luchta; and Medb asked whence came the clamor that occurred; whether it was down from the air, or across the sea from the west, or from Erin, from the east.

"It is from Erin, from the east, across the slopes of the Ir Luachair, undoubtedly," said Crom Deroil. "I see a barbaric host, and I know not whether they are Irishmen or foreigners; but if they are Irishmen, and if they are not foreigners, they are Ulstermen."

"Should not the descriptions of the Ulstermen be known to Cu Roi there?" asked Medb; "for often has he been on raids, and on hostings, and on journeyings along with them."

"I would know them," said Cu Roi, "if I could obtain a description of them."

"The description of the first band that came into the place I have, indeed," said Crom Deroil.

"Give it to us then," said Medb.

"I saw before the stronghold to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "a royal, immense band; the equal of a king was every man in the band. There were three in front of the band, and a broad-eyed, royal, gigantic warrior between them in the middle. Comparable to a moon in its great fifteenth was his countenance, his visage, and his face. His beard was fair, forked, and pointed; his bushy, reddish-yellow hair was looped to the slope of his hood. A purple-bordered garment encircled him, a brooch of wrought gold being in the garment over his white shoulder. Next to his white skin was a shirt of kingly satin. A purple-brown shield, with rims of yellow gold, was over him. He had a gold-hilted, embossed sword; a purple-bright, well-shaped spear in his white firm right hand, accompanied by its forked dart. At his right stood a true warrior; brighter than snow was his countenance, his visage, and his face. At his left side a little black-browed man, greatly resplendent. A fair, very-brilliant man was playing the edge-feat over them; his sharp inlaid sword in the one hand, his large warrior-like sword in the other hand. These he sent up and down past one another, so that they would touch the hair and forehead of the great central hero; but before they could reach the ground the same man would catch their points, both backs and edges."

"Regal is the description," said Medb.

"Regal is the band whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"What, then; who are they?" asked Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "That great central hero is Conchobar, son of Fachtna Fathach, the lawful, worthy king of Ulster, descendant of the kings of Erin and Alba. On his right side is Fintan, son of Niall Niamglonnach, the man of the third of Ulster, whose countenance and face is more bright than snow. The little black-browed man is Cu Chulainn son of Sualtam. Ferchertne, son of Corpre, son of Ilia, is the fair beaming man who is playing warlike feats over them. A king-poet of the king-poets of Ulster is he, and a rear-guard of Conchobar when he goes into his enemies' country. Whoever would wish to solicit or speak to the king, it is not permitted until that man is appeased."

"Here before these to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I saw a splendid, active trio, clothed in warrior's dress. Two of them were young, child-like; the third had a forked, purple-brown beard. They would not remove the dew from the grass, for the celerity and lightness with which they came; as if not one of the great host perceived them, and they see the whole host."

"Gentle and light and peaceful is the description," said Medb.

"Gentle and peaceful is the band whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"Who are they?" asked Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "Three noble youths of the Tuatha De Danann are there: Delbaeth son of Ethliu, and Angus Oc son of the Dagda, and Cermat Honey-mouth. They came at the end of night this day, to excite valor and battle, and they have mixed themselves through the host. And it is true that the hosts do not perceive them; but they see the hosts."

"Here before them to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I see a warlike, valorous company, with three distinguished persons advancing in front of them. A wrathful brown hero is there; sad a fair truly-splendid hero; and a valiant, king-stout, mighty champion, with thick red-yellow hair; and comparable to a honey-comb at the end of harvest, or clasps of fair gold, is the bright glistening of his hair; two-forked, black-brown is his beard, which is equal to the measure of a hero's hand in length; like the purple hue of the gilly-flower, or sparkles of fresh fire, his countenance, his visage, and his face. They bear three knightly, brown-red shields; three immense, whizzing, warlike spears; three heavy, stout-striking swords. Three shapely suits of purple apparel about them."

"Heroic and knightly, by our conscience, is the description," said Medb.

"Heroic and knightly is the band whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"What, then; who are they?" said Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "Three prime heroes of Ulster are they—the two Conalls and Loegaire—viz., Conall Anglonnach son of Iriel Glunmar, and Conall the Victorious son of Amergin, and Loegaire the Triumphant from Rath Immil."

"Here before them to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I saw a hideous, unknown trio in the front of the band, with three linen shirts girding their bodies; three hairy, dark-gray garments in folds about them; three iron pins in the garments over their bosoms; three coarse dark-brown heads of hair on them; three bright-grey shields, with hard osier bindings upon them; three broad-bladed lances with them; three gold-hilted swords have they. Like the baying of a, foreign hound in the chase is the loud heart-bellowing of each warrior of them when hearing of their enemies in this fortress."

"Fierce and warlike is the description," said Medb.

"Fierce is the band whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"What, then; who are they?" said Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "Three leaders of battle of the Ulstermen are they—Uma son of Remanfisech, from Fedan of Cooley; Ergi Echbel, from Bri Ergi; and Celtchar the Great, son of Uthecar, from Rath Celtchar, from Dun da Lethglas."

"Here in front of them to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I saw a large-eyed, large-thighed, noble-great, immensely-tall man, with a splendid gray garment about him; with seven short, black, equally-smooth cloaklets around him; shorter was each upper one, longer each lower. At either side of him were nine men. In his hand was a terrible iron staff, on which were a rough end and a smooth end. His play and amusement consisted in laying the rough end on the heads of the nine, whom he would kill in the space of a moment. He would then lay the smooth end on them, so that he would reanimate them in the same time."

"Wonderful is the description," said Medb.

"Great is the person whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"What, then; who is he?" said Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "The great Dagda son of Ethliu, the good god of the Tuatha De Danann. To magnify valor and conflict he wrought confusion upon the host in the morning this day; and no one in the host sees him."

. . .

"Here before them, to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I saw a band of their rabble. One man in their midst, with a black, pointed thick head of hair, having large, subtle, all-white eyes in his head, and a smooth-blue Ethiopian countenance; a ribbed garment in folds about him; a brazen clasp in his garment, over his breast; a large bronze wand in his hand, and a melodious little bell beside him, which he touches with his wand before the host, so that it gives pleasure and delight to

the High-King and to the whole host."

"Laughable and amusing is the description," said Medb.

"Laughable is the person whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"Who is he?" said Ailill.

"Not hard to tell," said Cu Roi. "That is the royal fool Roimid, Conchobar's fool. There never was fatigue or sorrow on any man of the Ulstermen that he would heed, if only he saw the royal fool, Roimid."

. . .

"Here before them, to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I saw a prodigious royal band. One man in front of it, with coarse, black hair. An expression of gentleness in one of his eyes; foam of crimson blood in the other eye; that is, at one time a gentle, friendly aspect, at another time a fierce expression. An open-mouthed otter on each of his two shoulders. A smooth, white-surfaced shield upon him. A white-hilted sword with him. A large, warrior-like spear to the height of his shoulder. When its spear-ardor seized it, he would deal a blow of the handle of the mighty spear upon his hand when the full measure of a sack of fiery particles would burst over its side and edge. A blood-black cauldron of horrid, noxious liquid before him, composed, through sorcery, of the blood of dogs, cats, and druids. And the head of the spear was plunged in that poisonous liquid when its spear-ardor came."

"By our conscience, the description is venomous," said Medb.

"Venomous is he whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"Who, then, is he?" asked Ailill.

"That is Dubtach Chafertongue, of Ulster," said Cu Roi; "a man who never merited thanks from anyone; and when a prey falls to the Ulstermen, a prey falls to him alone. The quick, deedful spear (/Luin/) of Celtchar is in his hand, on loan, and a cauldron of crimson blood is before it, for it would burn its handle, or the man that is bearing it, unless it was bathed in the cauldron of noxious blood. And foretelling battle it is."

"Here before them, to the east, outside," said Crom Deroil, "I see another band there. A sedate, gray-haired man in front thereof . A fair bright garment about him, with borders of all- white silver. A beautiful white shirt next to the surface of his skin; a white-silver belt around his waist; a bronze branch at the summit of his shoulder; the sweetness of melody in his voice; his utterance loud but slow."

"Judicial and sage, by our conscience, is the description," said Medb.

"Sage and judicial the person whose description it is," said Cu Roi.

"Who, then, is he?" asked Ailill.

"Not hard to tell. Sencha the Great, son of Ailill son of Maelchloid, from Carn Mag of Ulster; the most eloquent man of the men of earth, and the peace-maker of the hosts of the Ulstermen. The men of the world, from the rising to the setting, he would pacify with his three fair words."

. . .

That is the description of the first division that came into the fair-green. The great druid was not able to describe them further.

"They are the Ulstermen," said Medb.

"They are indeed," said Cu Roi.

"Was it imagined before or after; or is it in prediction or prophecy with you?"

"That we know not," said Cu Roi.

"Is there in the stronghold any one that knows?" asked Medb.

"There is," said Cu Roi, "the senior of the Clan Dedad, to wit, Gabalglinni son of Dedad, who has been, and he blind, maintained thirty years in this stronghold."

"Let some one go and ask him if they were expected; and let it be asked of him what preparation was made for them."

"Who shall go there?" asked Cu Roi.

"Let Crom Deroil and Faenglinni, son of Dedad, go."

They went to the house where Gabalglinni was maintained.

"Who is this?" asked he.

"Crom Deroil and Faenglinni, son of Dedad, are here," said they, "to inquire of thee if the coming of the Ulstermen was in prediction or in prophecy; or if so, whether there is any preparation for them?"

"Long has their coming been in prophecy. That they may be attended to, this is the provision. An iron house, and two wooden houses about it; and a subterranean house under it, and a strong iron flag upon that; and all the faggots and inflammable materials and coal that were found were collected into the subterranean house, so tilt it is quite full. It is what was prophecied for us, that the nobles of Ulster would be congregated in one night in that house. There are seven chains of good iron here under the feet of this bed. Let them be firmly fastened to the seven pillar-stones that are on the green outside."

Then Crom Deroil and Faenglinni came into the house in which were Medb and Ailill of Connacht and the nobles of the province of Munster, and related to them how the Ulstermen were awaited.

"Let one from me and one from thee go to bid them welcome, O Cu Roi," said Medb.

"Who shall go there?" asked Cu Roi.

"These same two," said Medb, "that welcome may be given to them from me with the nobles of the province of Connacht, and from thee with the nobles of the two provinces of Munster."

"I shall know," said Cu Roi, "by the person that answers whether they come with peace or with battle; for if it is Dubtach Chafertongue of Ulster that answers, it is with discord they come; if it is Sencha mac Mill that answers, it is with peace they come."

The messengers went on to the place where the Ulstermen were on the green.

"Welcome, ever-welcome, thy coming, O high-puissant, high-noble High-King of Ulster, from Medb and from Ailill, and from the chieftains of the province of Connacht along with them," said Crom Deroil.

"Welcome, ever-welcome, thy coming, O high-puissant, high-noble High-King of Ulster, from Cu Roi mac Dairi, with the nobles of the two provinces of Munster, who are yonder in the stronghold," said Faenglinni mac Dedad.

"It is pleasing to us and pleasing to the king," said Sencha mac Ailill; "and it was not to commit injury or conflict the Ulstermen came but in a drunken escapade, from Dun-da-Benn to Cliu Mail maic Ugaine; and they deemed it not honorable to get out of the district until they should be a night encamped in it."

The messengers proceeded to the place in which were Medb and Ailill and Cu Roi and Eochaid, with the nobles of the three provinces, and they related the news to them.

The poets, the minstrels, and the entertainers were sent to the Ulstermen, while a house was being arranged for them, to furnish amusement for them.

Messengers were then sent to them, to inform them that the best hero of the Ulstermen might select the choicest house for them. A quarrel arose about that among the Ulstermen. A hundred powerful warriors rose up together upon their arms; but Sencha mac Ailill pacified them.

"Let Cu Chulainn go there," said Sencha; "about the measure of his house you have come; and you shall be under his guarantee until you return again."

Cu Chulainn went. The Ulstermen advanced as one man after Cu Chulainn. Cu Chulainn looked upon the largest house that was in the place; it happened to be the iron house, about which the two wooden houses were.

Their attendants came to them, and an enormous bonfire was lighted for them; and provisions of food and ale were dealt to them. As night approached, their attendants and servants stole away from them one by one, until the last man, who closed the door after him. And the seven chains of iron were fixed upon the house, and fastened to the seven pillars that were upon the green outside. Thrice fifty smiths were brought, with their smith's-bellows, to blow the fire. Three circles were made around the house; and the fire was ignited from above and from below, in the house, until the heat from the fire came through the house from below. Then the hosts shouted loudly about the house, so that the Ulstermen were silent, speechless, until Bricriu said, "What, O Ulstermen, is the great heat that seizes our feet? But it is fitter that I should know than any other person. It seems to me they are burning us from below, and from above; and the house is closed fast."

"There will be a means by which we shall know," said Triscatal Strongman, getting up and delivering a blow with his foot on the iron door. But the door neither creaked nor resounded nor was injured.

"Not well hast thou made thy banquet for the Ulstermen, O Cu Chulainn," said Bricriu; "thou hast brought them into an enemy's pen."

"Say not so, O Bricriu," answered Cu Chulainn. "I will do my hero feat, a deed through which the Ulstermen will all get out."

Cu Chulainn plunged his sword up to the hilt through the iron house, and through the two houses of boards.

"An iron house here," said Cu Chulainn, " between two houses of boards."

"Worse than all, alas!" said Bricriu.

> *(The conclusion of this form of the story is lost. There is. however, another version, the beginning of which is lost, in one of our oldest manuscripts, which dates from the eleventh century. This fragment begins with the dispute of the Ulstermen over which of them should lead the way into the enclosure. There is apparently no iron house in this version. The visitors are lodged in a wooden house and besieged by the hosts of the Erna. Ailill and his sons try to protect the Ulstermen.)*

"'Tis I," said Triscoth."[1] Any man of them whom I shall look fiercely at—his lips shall die."

"'Tis I" said the fool Reorda.[2]

"'Tis I" said Nia na Trebuin-cro.

"'Tis I," said Daeltenga (Chafertongue.)

"Either of us shall go," said Dub and Rodub.

Each man rose against the other, regarding it.

"Can you not decide that thing?" asked Sencha. "The man whom the Ulstermen honor, though he were not the best warrior here, 'tis he should go."

"Which of us is that?" asked the Ulstermen.

"Cu Chulainn there; even though he were not the best warrior here, 'tis he should go."

They then advanced into the enclosure of the fort, and Cu Chulainn in front of them.

"Is this the youth that is the best warrior among the Ulstermen?" asked Fintan.

Thereupon Cu Chulainn jumped up until he was on the summit of the enclosure, and leaped valorously on the bridge, so that the weapons that were in the stronghold fell from their racks. The Ulstermen were afterwards taken into a secure oaken house, with a yew door, three feet thick, having two iron hooks, and an iron spit through them. The house was furnished with flock-beds and bed-clothes. Crom Deroil sent their weapons after them; and they sat down; and Cu Chulainn's weapons were elevated over them.

"Let water for washing be heated for them," said Ailill. And ale and food were given them until they were intoxicated. Crom Deroil visited them again, to know if there was anything they would wish.

When they were merry drunk Sencha clapped his hands. They all listened to him. "Give now your blessing on the prince who has protected you, who has been generous to you. It is not 'a hand in a poor, garnered field.' Plentiful are food and ale for you with the prince who has protected you. It was not necessary to wait for cooking."

"It is true," said Chafertongue. "I swear by my people's gods that there shall never reach your country anything but what birds may carry away of you in their claws; but the men of Erin and Alba will possess your land, and take your women and treasures and break your children's heads against stones."

It was of him Fergus said thus in the "Cattle-Raid":

> Let off Dubtach Chafertongue,
> Behind the host drag him;
> No good has he done.
> He slew the maiden-band.
>
> He did a hateful, hideous act—
> The killing of Fiacha, Conchobar's son.
> Not more famous for him, it was heard,

> The killing of Maine son of Fedlimid.
>
> The kingship of Ulster he contest not,—
> The son of Lugaid son of Casruba;
> What he does against men is,
> To attack them when they sit.

"That is not false, however," said Dubtach. "Observe the strength of the house and the fastening that is on the house. See you not that though you be anxious to leave it, you cannot? I am now deceived, unless there is a, contest about our being brought out. However, that hero who is the best warrior among the Ulstermen—let him bring some news from the opponents."

Cu Chulainn advanced, and made a somersault upwards, carried away the upper roof of the house, and was on the roof of another house, when he saw the multitude down below. They formed into a battle-throng to attack the Ulstermen inside. Ailill placed his back to the door to protect them. His seven sons joined hands with him before the door. The multitude burst into the middle of the enclosure; Cu Chulainn returned to his people, and gave the door a kick, so that his leg went through it up to the knee. "lf it were to a woman that was given," said Chafertongue, "she would be in her bed." Cu Chulairm delivered another kick, and the door fell down before him. "May I be saved," said Sencha; "it is Cu Chulainn that is here this time. Every virtue that is a virtue to heroes fighting, you shall have. Your companions are coming to you here.

"What is your counsel?" asked Sencha.

"Put your back, all, against the wall, and let everyone have his weapons in front of him; and send one man to speak with them."

Heavy as it was, they threw the house from off them.

"Who shall speak to them?" asked Sencha.

"I will speak to them," said Triscoth. "Any one of them that I look upon—his lips shall die."

The others were holding their council outside.

"Query: who shall speak to them, and, go the first to them into the house?" said the warriors outside.

"I shall go," said Lopan.

Lopan then went into the house to them, accompanied by nine persons. "Is that pleasant, O heroes?" asked he.

"Yes," said the heroes.

"Man against man?" said Triscoth.

"True, true."

"Triscoth here, speaking for the Ulstermen! They have not good speakers besides." Triscoth looked fiercely at him so that he fainted.

Fer Caille came into the house; nine men with him. "Is that pleasant, O warriors?" said he.

"The full pleasure," said Triscoth, "is one man against another."

Triscoth looked fiercely at him, and he fainted.

Mianach "the unknown" came into the house; nine men with him.

"Pale to us," said he, "appear the sick that are on the floor."

Triscoth looked at him.

"Look at me," said Mianach, "and see if I would die of it."

The other took him by the leg and dashed him against the three nines that were in the house, so that not one of them escaped alive. The multitude outside gathered around the house, to take it against the Ulstermen. But the Ulstermen upset the house, so that three hundred of the host outside it fell under the house. The battle closed between them. They were engaged in battle until mid-day on the morrow. The Ulstermen were wounded, however, and they were fewer in number.

Ailill was on the rampart of the stronghold, looking at them. "The stories of the Ulstermen were stories worth telling me until today," said he. "It was told me that not in Erin were there heroes equal to them. But I perceive that they do nought but treachery today. It has long been a proverb 'no battle should be fought without a king.' If it were about me that battle were going on, it would not continue long. You see," said Ailill to the Ulstermen, "I am not able for them; and I have been profaned regarding you."

Thereupon Cu Chulainn dashed suddenly through the multitude and assailed them thrice. Furbaide Ferbenn son of Conchobar attacked them also all around. The others would not wound him because of his beauty.

"Why do you not wound this warrior?" said one of them. "Not agreeable the deeds he performs. I swear by my people's gods, though it were a head of gold he had, I would slay him when he slew my brother." Furbaide pierced him with a spear and he died thereof. The battle was subsequently gained over the Erna; only three of them escaped from it.

The Ulstermen then plundered the entire stronghold, but protected Ailill and his seven sons, because they were not in the battle against them. From that time forth Tara Luachra was not inhabited.

Crimthann Nia Nair of the Erna escaped. from the battle. He met with Richis, a female satirist, westwards of the Laune. "Was my son lost?" asked she.

"Yes," said Crimthann.

"Come with me," said she, "until you avenge him."

"What revenge?" asked Crimthann.

"That you slay Cu Chulainn for his sake," replied she.

"How can that be done?" asked Crimthann.

"Not difficult. If you only use your two hands upon him, you will need nothing more; for you will find him unprepared."

They then went in pursuit of the host of the Ulstermen, and found Cu Chulainn on a ford before them in the country of Owney. Richis took off her clothes in presence of Cu Chulainn, who hid his face downwards, that he might not see her nakedness. "Attack him now, O Crimthann," said Richis.

"The man approaches thee," said Loeg.

"Not so, indeed," said Cu Chulainn. "Whilst the woman is in that condition I shall not rise up."

Loeg took a stone out of the chariot and cast it at her, which hit her across the /luthan/, so that her back was broken in two; and she died thereof afterwards.

Cu Chulainn then advanced against Crimthann and fought with him and carried away his head and spoils.

Then Cu Chulainn and his charioteer went after the host until all arrived at Cu Chulainn's stronghold, where they rested that night. They were all entertained to the end of forty nights on the same feast by Cu Chulainn. And they afterwards departed from him and left a blessing with him.

Ailill came from the south towards the Ulstermen and remained as a friend with them. The width of his face was given to him of gold and silver and the worth of seven bondmaids was given to each of his sons. He subsequently went to his own country in peace and unity with the Ulstermen.

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1. Triscatal in the other version.
2. Roimid in the other version.

Conchobar was afterward without destruction of his kingship whilst he lived.