

The Meeting of Cú Chulainn and Finnabair

Aithremlaigh 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.