

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:

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