

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 twelve sons of Gaile Dána and his sister's son. Then said Súaltaim: 'Is it the sky that cracks, or the sea that overflows its boundaries, 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 Súaltain 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.

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