PREFACE

The Gaelic Literature of Ireland is vast in extent and rich in quality. The unedited manuscript materials, if published, would occupy several hundred large volumes. Of this mass only a small portion has as yet been explored by scholars. Nevertheless three saga cycles stand out from the rest, distinguished for their compass, age and literary worth, those, namely, of the gods, of the demigod Cuchulain, and of Finn son of Cumhall. The Cuchulain cycle, also called the Ulster cycle — from the home of its hero in the North of Ireland — forms the core of this great mass of epic material. It is also known as the cycle of Conchobar, the king round whom the Ulster warriors mustered, and, finally, it has been called the Red Branch Cycle from the name of the banqueting hall at Emain Macha in Ulster.

Only a few of the hundred or more tales which once belonged to this cycle have survived. There are some dozen in particular, technically known as *Remscéla* or "Foretales" because they lead up to and explain the great Táin, the Táin Bó Cúalnge, "The Cualnge Cattle Raid," the Iliad of Ireland, as it has been called, the queen of Irish epic tales, and the wildest and most fascinating saga tale, not only of the entire Celtic world, but even of all western Europe.

The mediaeval Irish scholars catalogued their native literature under several heads, probably as an aid to the memory of the professional poets or storytellers whose stock in trade it was, and to one of these divisions they gave the name *Táinte*, plural of *Táin*. By this term, which is most often followed by the genitive plural *bó*, "cows," they meant "a driving," or "a reaving," or even "a drove" or "herd" of cattle. It is only by extension of meaning that this title is applied to the Táin Bó Cúalnge, the most famous representative of the class, for it is not, strictly speaking, with the driving of cattle that it deals but with that of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. But, since to carry off the bull implies the carrying off of the herd of which he was the head, and as the "Brown" is always represented as accompanied by his fifty heifers, there were sufficient grounds for putting the Brown Bull Quest in the class of Cow spoils.

The prominence accorded to this class of stories in the early literature of Ireland is not to be wondered at when the economic situation of the country and the stage of civilization of which they are the faithful mirror is borne in mind[*]. Since all wars are waged for gain, and since among the Irish, who are still very much a nation of cattle raisers, cattle was the chief article of wealth and measure of value[**], so marauding expeditions from one district into another for cattle must have been of frequent occurrence, just as among the North American Indians tribal wars used to be waged for the acquisition of horses.

[*] "L'histoire entière de l'Irlande est une énigme si on n'a pas sans cesse à l'esprit ce fait primordial que le climat humide de l'île est tout à fait contraire à la culture des céréales, mais en revanche éminemment favorable à l'élevage du bétail, surtout de la race bovine, car le climat est encore trop humide pour l'espèce ovine." F. Lot, in *La Grande Encyclopédie*, xx, 956.
[**] As it is to this day in some parts of Ireland, and as for example a female slave was sometimes appraised at three head of cattle among the ancient Gaels.

That this had been a common practice among their kinsmen on the Continent also we learn from Caesar's account of the Germans (and Celts?) who, he says, practised warfare not only for a means of subsistence but also for exercising their warriors. How long lived the custom has been amongst the Gaelic Celts, as an occupation or as a pastime, is evident not only from the plundering incursions or "creaghs" * as they are called in the Highlands and described by Scott in *Waverley* and *The Fair Maid of Perth*, but also from the "cattle-drives" which have been resorted to in our own day in Ireland, though these latter had a different motive than plunder. As has been observed by Sir Henry Sumner Maine, Lord Macaulay was mistaken in ascribing this custom to "some native vice of Irish character," for, as every student of ancient Ireland may perceive, it is rather to be regarded as "a survival, an ancient and inveterate habit" of the race.

One of these many Cattle preys was the Táin Bó Cúalnge**, which, there can be little doubt, had behind it no mere myth but some kernel of actual fact. Its historical basis is that a Connacht chieftain and his lady went to war with Ulster about a drove of cattle. The importance of a racial struggle between the north-east province and the remaining four grand provinces of Ireland cannot be ascribed to it. There is, it is true, strong evidence to show that two chief centres, political, if not cultural and national, existed at the time of the Táin in Ireland, Cruachan Ai, near the present Rathcroghan in Connacht, and Emain Macha, the Navan Fort, two miles west of Armagh in Ulster, and it is with the friendly or hostile relations of these two that the Ultonian cycle of tales deals. Ulster, or, more precisely, the eastern portion of the Province, was the scene of all the Cattle Raids, and there is a degree of truth in the couplet —

> "Leinster for breeding, And Ulster for reaving;
> Munster for reading, And Connacht for thieving."

But there are no indications of a racial clash or war of tribes. With the exception of the Oghamic writings inscribed on the pillar stones by Cuchulain, which seem to require interpretation to the men of Connacht by Ulstermen, the description of the warriors mustered by the Connacht warrior queen and those gathered round King Conchobar of Ulster accord quite closely.

The Táin Bó Cúalnge is the work not of any one man but of a corporation of artists known as *filid*. The author of the Táin in its present state, whoever he may have been, was a strong partisan of Ulster and never misses an opportunity of flattering the pride of her chieftains. Later a kind of reaction against the pre-eminence given to Ulster and the glorification of its hero sets in, and a group of stories arises in which the war takes a different end and Cuchulain is shown to disadvantage, finally to fall at the hands of a Munster champion. It is to this southern province that the saga cycle which followed the Cuchulain at an interval of two hundred years belongs, namely, the Fenian saga — the saga of

* In fact the Clan Mackay was known as the Clan of the creaghs, and their perpetuation was enjoined on the rising generation from the cradle; See *The Old Highlands*, vol. III., p. 338, Glasgow.

** Pronounced approximately *Thawin' bow Hooln'ya*.

Finn son of Cumhall, which still flourishes among the Gaelic speakers of Ireland and Scotland, while the Cuchulain stories have almost died out among them. The mingling of the two sagas is the work of the eighteenth century Scots Lowlander, James Macpherson.

The Táin Bó Cúalnge is one of the most precious monuments of the world's literature, both because of the poetic worth it evidences at an early stage of civilization, and for the light it throws on the life of the people among whom it originated and that of their ancestors centuries earlier. It is not less valuable and curious because it shows us the earlier stages of an epic — an epic in the making — which it does better perhaps than any other work in literature. Ireland had at hand all the materials for a great national epic, a wealth of saga material replete with interesting episodes, picturesque and dramatic incidents and strongly defined personages, yet she never found her Homer, a gifted poet to embrace her entire literary wealth, to piece the disjointed fragments together, smooth the asperities and hand down to posterity the finished epic of the Celtic world, superior, perhaps, to the Iliad or the Odyssey. What has come down to us is "a sort of patchwork epic," as Prescott called the Ballads of the Cid, a popular epopee in all its native roughness, wild fantasy and extravagance of deed and description as it developed during successive generations. It resemblesthe frame of some huge ship left unfinished by the builders on the beach and covered with shells and drift from the sea of Celtic tradition. From the historical standpoint, however, and as a picture of the old barbaric Celtic culture, and as a pure expression of elemental passion, it is of more importance to have the genuine tradition as it developed amongst the people, unvarnished by poetic art and uninfluenced by the example of older and alien societies.

According to the Chronicles of Ireland, as formulated in the Annals of Tigernach[*], who died in 1088, King Conchobar of Ulster began to reign in the year 30 B.C., and he is said to have died of grief at the news that Christ had been crucified. His reign therefore lasted about sixty years. Cuchulain died in the year 39 A.D. in the twenty-seventh year of his age, as we learn from the following entry: "The death of Cuchulain, the bravest hero of the Irish, by Lugaid son of Three Hounds, king of Munster, and by Erc, king of Tara, son of Carbre Niafer, and by the three sons of Calatin of Connacht. Seven years was his age when he assumed arms, seventeen was his age when he followed the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge, but twenty seven years was his age when he died." [**]

A very different account is given in the manuscript known as H. 3. 17, Trinity College, Dublin, quoted by O'Curry in his *Manuscript Materials*, page 508. The passage concludes with the statement: "So that the year of the Táin was the fifty ninth year of Cuchulain's age, from the night of his birth to the night of his death." The record first quoted, however, is partly corroborated by the following passage which I translate from the Book of Ballymote, facsimilé edition, page

[*] *Revue Celtique*, 1895, tome xvi. pp. 405-406; *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, ii. 14.

[**] *Mors Conchulaind fortissimi herois Scottorum la Lugaid mac trí on, i. ri Muman, agus la Ercc, i. ri Temrach, mac Coirpri Niad fir, agus la trí maccu Calattin de Chonnachtaib; vii. mbliadna a aes intan rogab gaisced. xvii. mbliadna dano a aes intan mbói indegaid Tána Bó Cúalnge. xxvii. bliadna immorro a aes intan atbath. Revue Celtique*, tome xvi. page 407.

13, col. a, lines 9-21: "In the fourteenth year of the reign of Conairè (killed in 40 B.C.) and of Conchobar, the Blessed Virgin was born. At that time Cuchulain had completed thirteen years; and in the fourth year after the birth of Mary, the expedition of the Kine of Cualnge took place … that is, in the eighteenth year of the reign of Conairè. Cuchulain had completed his seventeenth year at that time. That is, it was in the thirty second year of the reign of Octavius Augustus that the same expedition took place. Eight years after the Táin Bó Cúalnge, Christ was born, and Mary had completed twelve years then, and that was in the fortieth year of the reign of Octavius Augustus; and in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Conairè and Conchobar, and in the second year after the birth of Christ, Cuchulain died. And twenty-seven years was Cuchulain's age at that time."

These apparent synchronisms, of course, may only rest upon the imagination of the Christian annalists of Ireland, who hoped to exalt their ancient rulers and heroes by bringing them into relation with and even making them participate in the events of the life of the Saviour. But in placing the date of the expedition of the Táin at about the beginning of the Christian era, Irish tradition is undoubtedly correct, as appears from the character of the civilization depicted in the Ulster tales, which corresponds in a remarkable degree with what authors of antiquity have recorded of the Celts and with the character of the age which archaeologists call "la Tène," or "Late Celtic," which terminates at the beginning of the first century of our era. Oral tradition was perhaps occupied for five hundred years working over and developing the story of the Táin, and by the close of the fifth century the saga to which it belonged was substantially the one we have now. The text of the tale must have been completed by the first half of the seventh century, and, as we shall see, its oldest extant version, the Book of the Dun, dates from about the year 1100.

But, whatever may be the precise dates of these events, which we are not in a position to determine more accurately, the composition of the Táin Bó Cúalnge antedates by a considerable margin the epic tales of the Anglosaxons, the Scandinavians, the Franks and the Germans. It is the oldest epic tale of western Europe, and it and the cycle of tales to which it belongs form "the oldest existing literature of any of the peoples to the north of the Alps." [*] The deeds it recounts belong to the heroic age of Ireland three hundred years before the introduction of Christianity into the island, and its spirit never ceased to remain markedly pagan. The mythology that permeates it is one of the most primitive manifestations of the personification of the natural forces which the Celts worshipped. Its historical background, social organization, chivalry, mood and thought and its heroic ideal are to a large extent, and with perhaps some pre-Aryan survivals, not only those of the insular Celts of two thousand years ago, but also of the important and wide-spread Celtic race with whom Caesar fought and who in an earlier period had sacked Rome and made themselves feared even in Greece and Asia Minor.

[*] Ridgeway.

The following is the Argument of the Táin Bó Cúalnge, which, for the sake of convenience, is here divided into sections:

I. The Prologue

One night at the palace of Cruachan in Connacht, a dispute arose between Queen Medb, the sometime wife of Conchobar, king of Ulster, and her consort Ailill, as to the amount of their respective possessions. It may be remarked in passing that in those days in Ireland, married women retained their private fortune independent of their husbands, as well as the dowry secured to them in marriage. To procure the evidence of their wealth, the royal pair sent messengers to assemble all their chattels which, on comparison, were found to be equal, excepting only that among Ailill's kine was a lordly bull called Finnbennach, "the Whitehorned," whose match was not to be found in the herds of the queen.

II. The Embassage to Darè and the Occasion of the Táin

As we might expect, Medb was chagrined at the discovery. Now her herald macRoth had told her that Darè macFiachna, a landowner of Cualnge, a district in the territory of her former husband, possessed an even more wonderful bull than Ailill's, called Donn Cualnge, "the Brown Bull of Cualnge." So she despatched macRoth to Darè to pray for the loan of the bull.

Darè received the queen's messengers hospitably and readily granted her request, but in the course of the entertainment, one of the messengers, deep in his cups, spoke against Darè, and he, hearing this, withdrew his promise and swore that he would never hand over the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

III. The Gathering of Medb's Forces

The impetuous queen, enraged at the failure of her mission, immediately mustered a formidable army, composed not only of her Connachtmen but also of allies from all parts of Ireland, wherewith to undertake the invasion of Ulster. On her side were the Ulster chieftains who had gone into exile into Connacht after the treacherous slaughter of the sons of Usnech by King Conchobar of Ulster. Chief among them was Fergus, who, moreover, had a personal grievance against Conchobar. For, while Fergus was king of Ulster, he had courted the widow Ness and, in order to win her, promised to abdicate for the term of one year in favour of her son Conchobar. But when the term had elapsed, the youth refused to relinquish the throne, and Fergus in anger entered the service of Medb of Connacht. There he was loaded with favours, became the counsellor of the realm and, as appears from more than one allusion in the tale, the more than friend of the wife of King Ailill.

The four leagued provinces of Ireland being gathered at Cruachan, the guidance of the host was entrusted to Fergus, because he was acquainted with

the province of Ulster through which they were to march, and at the beginning of winter — a point emphasized by the exponents of the Sun Theory — the mighty host, including in its ranks the king and queen and some of the greatest warriors of Ireland, with the princess Finnabair as a lure, set forth on the raid into Ulster.

They crossed the Shannon near Athlone and, marching through the province of Meath, arrived at the borders of Cualnge. Fortunately for the invaders, the expedition took place while the Ulstermen lay prostrate in their *cess*, or "Pains," a mysterious state of debility or torpor which was inflicted on them periodically in consequence of an ancient curse laid upon Conchobar and the warriors of Ulster as a punishment for a wrong done to the goddess Macha. This strange malady, resembling the couvade among certain savage nations, ordinarily lasted five days and four nights, but on this occasion the Ulstermen were prostrate from the beginning of November till the beginning of February. During all that time the burden of defending the province fell on the shoulders of the youthful champion Cuchulain, who had in his particular charge the plain of Murthemne, the nearest district to Cualnge, the goal of the expedition. For Cuchulain and his father Sualtaim were alone exempt from the curse and the "Pains" which had befallen the remainder of the champions of Ulster.

IV. The Youthful Exploits of Cuchulain

The Connacht host had not proceeded far when they came upon evidence of some mighty force that opposed them. In answer to the inquiries of Ailill and Medb, Fergus explains that it is Cuchulain who disputes their further advance, and, as evidence of the superhuman strength and prowess of the Ulster youth, then in the seventeenth year of his age, the Ulster exiles recount the mighty deeds he had performed in his boyhood, chief among which is the tale according to which, as eric for the killing of the hound of Culann the Smith, the boy hero Setanta assumed the station and the name which ever after clung to him of Cuchulain, "the Hound of Culann."

V. The Single Combats of Cuchulain

Cuchulain agrees to allow the Connacht host to continue their march on condition that every day they send one of their champions to meet him in single combat. When he shall have killed his opponent, the host shall halt and pitch camp until the following morning. Medb agrees to abide by these terms. In each of the contests which ensue, the heroic youth is victorious and slays many of the most celebrated warriors on the side of Connacht. The severest of all these single combats was the one in which he had as opponent his former friend and foster-brother Ferdiad. At the end of a four days' battle, in which both adversaries exhibited astounding deeds of valour, Ferdiad fell by the hands of Cuchulain.

Impatient at these delays, Medb broke the sacred laws of ancient Irish chivalry and led her army into Ulster, overrunning the province, pillaging and burning as she went, even up to the walls of Emain Macha, the residence of Conchobar, and finally took possession of the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

VI. The Gathering of the Ulstermen and the Final Battle of the Táin

By this time King Conchobar and his warriors have come out of their debility and summoned their forces to an eminence in Slane of Meath. The great gathering of the Ulstermen is reported to Medb by her trusty herald macRoth, and from his description of the leaders and their troops, their exiled countryman Fergus designates them to the nobles of Connacht. In the final battle Medb's army is repulsed and retreats in flight into Connacht. Thus each host has had its share of the fortunes of war: Medb has laid waste the lands of her divorced husband and carried off the Brown Bull of Cualnge, the prize of war, while on the other hand, Conchobar has won the victory in the great battle of Garech and Ilgarech.

VII. The End of the two Bulls

On the way back to Connacht, the Brown Bull of Cualnge emitted such terrible bellowings that they reached the ears of the Whitehorned remaining at home in his stall in Cruachan, whence he rushed at full speed to attack the other. A furious battle took place between the bulls, but the Brown was the stronger, and raising his rival on his horns he shook the Whitehorned into fragments over all Ireland. He then returned in fury to Ulster, and in his wild rage dashed his head against a rock and was killed.

The Táin Bó Cúalnge has been preserved, more or less complete, in a score of manuscripts ranging in date from the beginning of the twelfth to the middle of the nineteenth century. There probably existed other manuscripts containing not only the Táin as we have it but even episodes now wanting in it. All of the extant manuscripts go back to versions which date from the seventh century or earlier. No manuscript of the Táin is wholly in the language of the time when it was copied, but, under the cloak of the contemporaneous orthography, contains forms and words so obsolete that they were not understood by the copyist, so that glossaries had to be compiled to explain them.

It is by a singular good fortune that this, the greatest of all the epic tales of the Irish, has been handed down to our day in the two most ancient and, for that reason, most precious of the great Middle Irish collections of miscellaneous contents known as the *Leabhar na hUidhre*, "the Book of The Dun (Cow)," and the Book of Leinster. The former and older of these vellum manuscripts (abbreviated LU.) is kept in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy at Dublin. It must have been written about the beginning of the twelfth century, for its compiler and writer, Moelmuire macCeilechair (Kelleher), is known to have been

slain at Clonmacnois in the year 1106; some of its linguistic forms, however, are as old as the eighth century glosses. Unfortunately, LU.'s account of the Táin is incomplete at the beginning and the end, but the latter portion is made good by the closely related, though independent, version contained in the manuscript known as the Yellow Book of Lecan (abbreviated YBL.). This manuscript was written about the year 1391 and it is also kept in Dublin in the Library of Trinity College. To the same group as LU. and YBL., which for the sake of convenience we may call version A, belong also the British Museum MSS., Egerton 1782, a large fragment, and Egerton 114, both dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Version B comprises the closely related accounts of the Táin as contained in the Book of Leinster (abbreviated LL.) and the following MSS.: Stowe 984 (Royal Irish Academy), written in the year 1633 and giving, except for the loss of a leaf, a complete story of the Táin; H. 1. 13 (Trinity College, Dublin), written in the year 1745 and giving the Táin entire; Additional 18748 (abbreviated Add.), British Museum, copied in the year 1800 from a 1730 original; Egerton 209 and Egerton 106 (British Museum), both fragments and dating from the eighteenth century. Fragments of a modern version are also found in MS. LIX, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

To version C belong only fragments: H. 2. 17 (Trinity College, Dublin), dating from the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century; the almost identical Egerton 93 (British Museum), consisting of only ten leaves and dating from nearly a century later, and H. 2. 12 (Trinity College, Dublin), consisting of only two pages.[*]

The manuscripts belonging to each of these versions, A, B, and C, have sufficient traits in common to place them in a group by themselves. The question of the relationship of these manuscripts to one another and of the character of the suppositional archetype from which they are all descended is a most intricate one and one which has given rise to considerable discussion. The question still awaits a definite answer, which may never be forthcoming, because of the disappearance not only of the first draft of the Táin, but also of that of some of its later redactions. We must not overlook the possibility, either, of an otherwise faithful copyist having inserted in the text before him a passage, or even an entire episode, of his own fabrication. This, no doubt, happened not infrequently, especially in the earlier period of the copying of Irish manuscripts, and a single insertion of this kind, or the omission, intentionally or by oversight, of a part of the original from the copy might, it will easily be seen, lead one to conclude that there once existed a form of the story which as a matter of fact never existed.

The version of the Táin which I have chosen as the basis for my translation is the one found in the Book of Leinster (*Leabhar Laighneach*), a voluminous

[*] See H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Essai d'un catalogue de la littérature épique de l'Irlande*, Paris, 1883, pages 214-216, and the Supplement to the same by G. Dottin, *Revue Celtique*, t. xxxiii, pages 34-35; Donald Mackinnon, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, Edinburgh, 1912, pp. 174, 220; E. Windisch, Táin Bó Cúalnge, *Einleitung und Vorrede*, S. lx. ff.

vellum manuscript sometime called the Book of Glendalough and now kept in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, catalogue number H. 2. 18. Only a part of the original book remains. It dates from about the year 1150. This date is established by two entries in the manuscript itself: "Aed son of Crimthann (Hugh macGriffin) hath written this book and out of many books hath he compiled it" (facsimilé, at the bottom of page 313). Who this Aed was will be clear from the other entry. It appears that he had lent the manuscript while still unfinished to Finn macGorman, who was Bishop of Kildare from 1148 and died in the year 1160, and who on returning the book wrote in it the following laudatory note in Irish to Aed: "(Life) and health from Finn, the Bishop of Kildare, to Aed son of Crimthann, tutor of the chief king (i.e. of King Dermod macMurrogh, the infamous prince who half a century later invited Strongbow and the Normans to come over from Wales to Ireland) of Mug Nuadat's Half (i.e. of Leinster and Munster), and successor of Colum son of Crimthann (this Colum was abbot of Tir da ghlass, the modern Terryglas, on the shore of Lough Derg, in the County Tipperary — and died in the year 548), and chief historian of Leinster in respect of wisdom and intelligence, and cultivation of books, science and learning. And let the conclusion of this little tale (i.e. the story of Ailill Aulom son of Mug Nuadat, the beginning of which was contained in the book which Finn returns) be written for me accurately by thee, O cunning Aed, thou man of the sparkling intellect. May it be long before we are without thee. My desire is that thou shouldst always be with us. And let macLonan's Songbook be given to me, that I may understand the sense of the poems that are in it. *Et vale in Christo.*" *

It would seem from another note in the manuscript** that the Book of Leinster afterwards belonged to some admirer of King Dermod, for he wrote: "O Mary! Great was the deed that was done in Ireland this day, the kalends of August (1166) — Dermod, son of Donnoch macMurrogh, King of Leinster and of the (Dublin) Danes to be banished by the men of Ireland over the sea eastwards. Woe, woe is me, O Lord, what shall I do!" ***

My reason for founding the translation on the LL. version, in spite of the fact that its composition is posterior by half a century to that of LU., was not merely out of respect for the injunction of the scribe of the *ne varietur* and to merit his blessing (page 369), but also because LL.'s is the oldest *complete* version of the Táin extant. Though as a rule (and as is easily discernible from a comparison of LU. and LL.), the shorter, terser and cruder the form of a tale is, the more primitive it is, yet it is not always the oldest preserved form of a work that represents the most ancient form of the story. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that LL. contains elements which represent a tradition antedating the composition of LU. At all events, LL. has these strong points in its favour, that, of all the versions, it is the most uniform and consistent, the most artistically

* Facsimilé, page 288, foot margin.
** Facsimilé, page 275, top margin.
*** Vd. Robert Atkinson, *The Book of Leinster*, Introduction, pages 7-8; J.H. Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 1867, Introduction, pages ix and ff. Eugene O'Curry, *On the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History*, page 186; Ernst Windisch, *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, pages 910-911.

arranged, the one with most colour and imagination, and the one which lends itself most readily to translation, both in itself and because of the convenient Irish text provided by Professor Windisch's edition. In order to present the Táin in its completest form, however, I have adopted the novel plan of incorporating in the LL. account the translations of what are known as conflate readings. These, as a rule, I have taken from no manuscript that does not demonstrably go back to a twelfth or earlier century redaction. Some of these additions consist of but a single word: others extend over several pages. This dovetailing could not always be accomplished with perfect accuracy, but no variants have been added that do not cohere with the context or destroy the continuity of the story. Whatever slight inconsistencies there may be in the accounts of single episodes, they are outweighed, in my opinion, by the value and interest of the additions. In all cases, however, the reader can control the translation by means of the foot-notes which indicate the sources and distinguish the accretions from the basic text. The numerous passages in which Eg. 1782 agrees with LU. and YBL. have not all been marked. The asterisk shows the beginning of each fresh page in the lithographic facsimilé of LL., and the numbers following "W" in the upper left hand margin show the corresponding lines in the edition of the Irish text by Windisch.

In general, I believe it should be the aim of a translator to give a faithful rather than a literal version of his original. But, owing to the fact that so little of Celtic scholarship has filtered down even to the upper strata of the educated public and to the additional fact that the subject matter is so incongruous to English thought, the first object of the translator from the Old Irish must continue to be, for some time to come, rather exactness in rendering than elegance, even at the risk of the translation appearing laboured and puerile. This should not, however, be carried to the extent of distorting his own idiom in order to imitate the idiomatic turns and expressions of the original. In this translation, I have endeavoured to keep as close to the sense and the literary form of the original as possible, but when there is conflict between the two desiderata, I have not hesitated to give the first the preference. I have also made use of a deliberately archaic English as, in my opinion, harmonizing better with the subject. It means much to the reader of the translation of an Old Irish text to have the atmosphere of the original transferred as perfectly as may be, and this end is attained by preserving its archaisms and quaintness of phrase, its repetitions and inherent crudities and even, without suppression or attenuation, the grossness of speech of our less prudish ancestors, which is also a mark of certain primitive habits of life but which an over fastidious translator through delicacy of feeling might wish to omit. These side lights on the semi-barbaric setting of the Old Irish sagas are of scarcely less interest and value than the literature itself.

The Táin Bó Cúalnge, like most of the Irish saga-tales as they have come down to us in their Middle Irish dress, is chiefly in prose, but interspersed with verse. The verse-structure is very intricate and is mostly in strophic form composed of verses of fixed syllabic length, rhymed and richly furnished with alliteration. There is a third form of speech which is neither prose nor verse, but partakes of the character of both, a sort of irregular, rhymeless verse,

without strophic division and exceedingly rich in alliteration, internal rhyme and assonance. This kind of speech, resembling in a way the dithyrambic passages in the Old Testament, was known to the native Irish scholars as *rosc* and it is usually marked in the manuscripts by the abbreviation *R*. It was used in short, impetuous outbursts on occasions of triumph or mourning.

While, on the whole, I believe the student will feel himself safer with a prose translation of a poem than with one in verse, it has seemed to me that a uniform translation of the Táin Bó Cúalnge in prose would destroy one of its special characteristics, which is that in it both prose and verse are mingled. It was not in my power, however, to reproduce at once closely and clearly the metrical schemes and the rich musical quality of the Irish and at the same time compress within the compass of the Irish measure such an analytic language as English, which has to express by means of auxiliaries what is accomplished in Early Irish by inflection. But I hope to have accomplished the main object of distinguishing the verse from the prose without sacrifice of the thought by the simple device of turning the verse-passages into lines of the same syllabic length as those of the original — which is most often the normal seven-syllable line — but without any attempt at imitating the rhyme-system or alliteration.

In order not to swell the volume of the book, the notes have been reduced to the indispensable minimum, reserving the commentary and the apparatus of illustrative material for another volume, which we hope some day to be able to issue, wherein more definitely critical questions can be discussed. There are a few Irish words which have been retained in the translation and which require a word of explanation: The Old Irish *geis* (later, also *geas*[*]; plural *geasa*) has as much right to a place in the English vocabulary as the Polynesian word *tabu*, by which it is often translated. It is sometimes Englished "injunction," "condition," "prohibition," "bond," "ban," "charm," "magical decree," or translated by the Scots Gaelic "spells," none of which, however, expresses the idea which the word had according to the ancient laws of Ireland. It was an adjuration by the honour of a man, and was either positive or negative. The person adjured was either compelled or made in duty bound to do a certain thing, or, more commonly, was prohibited from doing it. The Old Irish *gilla* is often translated "vassal," "youth," "boy," "fellow," "messenger," "servant," "page," "squire" and "guide," but these words bear false connotations for the society of the time, as does the Anglicised form of the word, "gillie," which smacks of modern sport. It meant originally a youth in the third of the six ages of man. Compare the sense of the word *varlet* or *valet* in English, which was once "a more honourable title; for all young gentlemen, untill they come to be eighteen years of age, were termed so" (Cotgrave), and of the same word in Old French, which was "un jeune homme de condition honorable" (J. Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, I, page 40, note). A *liss* or *rath* is a fortified place enclosed by a circular mound or trench, or both. A *dûn* is a fortified residence surrounded by an earthen rampart. In the case of names of places and persons, I have thought it best to adhere as closely as possible to the spellings used in the LL. Manuscript itself. It is of the utmost importance to get the names of Irish places

[*] Pronounced *gesh* or *gas*.

and of Irish heroes correctly determined and to discard their English corrupted spellings. There are certain barbarisms, however, such as Slane (Slemain), Boyne (Boann), and perhaps even Cooley (Cualnge), which have been stereotyped in their English dress and nothing is to be gained by reforming them. The forms *Erin* (dative of *Eriu*, the genuine and poetic name of the island) and *Alba* have been retained throughout instead of the hybrids "Ireland" and "Scotland." Final *e* is occasionally marked with a grave (*e.g.* Manè, Darè) to show that it is not silent as it often is in English.

I quite perceive that I have not always succeeded in reproducing the precise shade of meaning of words certain of which had become antiquated and even unintelligible to the native scholars of the later Middle Irish period themselves. This is especially true of the passages in *rosc*, which are fortunately not numerous and which were probably intentionally made as obscure and allusive as possible, the object being, perhaps, as much the music of the words as the sense. Indeed, in some cases, I have considered myself fortunate if I have succeeded in getting their mere drift. No one takes to heart more than the present writer the truth of Zimmer's remark, that "it needs no great courage to affirm that *not one* of the living Celtic scholars, *with* all the aids at their disposal, possesses such a ready understanding of the contents of, for example, the most important Old Irish saga text, "The Cualnge Cattle Raid," as was required thirty or more years ago in Germany of a good Gymnasium graduate in the matter of the Homeric poems and *without* aids of any kind." [*] However, in spite of its defects, I trust I have not incurred the censure of Don Quijote[**] by doing what he accuses bad translators of and shown the wrong side of the tapestry, thereby obscuring the beauty and exactness of the work, and I venture to hope that my translation may prove of service in leading students to take an interest in the language and literature of Ireland.

[*] "Es gehört keine grosse Kühnheit dazu zu behaupten, dass keener der lebenden Keltologen beispielsweise von dem wichtigsten altirischen Sagentext 'Der Rinderraub von Cualnge' … mit allen vorhandenen Hilfsmitteln ein solches fortlaufendes Verständnis des Inhalts hat, wie von einem guten Gymnasialabiturienten hinsichtlich der homerischen Gedichte ohne jegliches Hilfsmittel vor gut 30 Jahren in Deutschland verlangt wurde." —*Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, herausgegeben von Paul Hinneberg, Berlin, 1909. Teil I, Abt. xi, I. S. 75.

[**] Part II, chap, lxii (Garnier Hermanos edition, page 711).

WORKS ON THE TÁIN BÓ CÚALNGE

(OUR BIBLIOGRAPHY HAS NO PRETENSION AT BEING COMPLETE)

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The Táin has been translated by Bryan O'Looney in a manuscript entitled "Tain Bo Cualnge. Translated from the original vellum manuscript known as the Book of Leinster, in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. To which are added the ancient Prologues, Prefaces, and the Pretales or Stories, Adventures which preceded the principal Expedition or Tain, from various vellum MSS. in

the Libraries of Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1872." (A good translation, for its time. For O'Looney's works on the Táin, see the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Second Series, Vol. i, No. 11, Polite Literature and Antiquities, Dublin, 1875; for W.J. Hennessy's, see The Academy, No. 873, Lee, "Dictionary of National Biography," xxv, 1891, pages 424-425, and V. Tourneur, "Esquisse d'une histoire des études celtiques," page 90, note 5.) The Royal Irish Academy contains another manuscript translation of the Táin (24, M, 39), by John O'Daly, 1857. It is a wretched translation. In one place, O'Daly speaks of William Rily as the translator. L. Winifred Faraday's "The Cattle-Raid of Cualnge," London, 1904, is based on LU. and YBL. Two copies of a complete translation of the LL. text dating from about 1850 is in the possession of John Quinn, Esq., of New York City. H. d'Arbois de Jubainville translated the Táin from the LL. text, but with many omissions: "Enlèvement [du Taureau Divin et] des Vaches de Cooley," Revue Celtique, tomes xxviii-xxxii, Paris, 1907 and fl. Eleanor Hull's "The Cuchullin Saga," London, 1898, contains (pages 111-227) an analysis of the Táin and a translation by Standish H. O'Grady of portions of the Add. 18748 text. "The Táin, An Irish Epic told in English Verse," by Mary A. Hutton, Dublin, 1907, and Lady Augusta Gregory's, "Cuchulain of Muirthemne," London, 1903, are paraphrases. The episode "The Boyish Feats of Cuchulinn" was translated by Eugene O'Curry, "On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish," Vol. i, Introduction, pages 359-366, and the episode "The Fight of Ferdiad and Cuchulaind," was translated by W.K. Sullivan, ibid., Vol. ii, Lectures, Vol. i, Appendix, pages 413-463.

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