

XXVI THE DECISION OF THE BATTLE

It was on that night that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, came, and she was engaged in fomenting strife and sowing dissension between the two camps on either side, and she spoke these words in the twilight between the two encampments: —

“Ravens shall pick
The necks of men!
Blood shall gush
In combat wild!
Skins shall be hacked;
Crazed with spoils!
Men’s sides pierced
In battle brave,
Luibnech near!
Warriors’ storm;
Mien of braves;
Cruachan’s men!
Upon them comes
Ruin complete!
Lines shall be strewn
Under foot;
Their race die out!
Then Ulster hail:
To Erna woe!
To Ulster woe:
Then Erna hail!
(This she said in Erna’s ear.)
Naught inglorious shall they do
Who them await!”

Now Cuchulain was at Fedain Collna nearby. Food was brought to him that night by the purveyors, and they were used to come to converse with him by day. He killed not any of the men of Erin to the left of Ferdiad’s Ford. It was then that Cuchulain spake to Laeg son of Rianganabair. “It would surely be unworthy of thee, O Laeg my master” said Cuchulain “if between the two battle lines there should happen anything today whereof thou hadst no tidings for me.”

“Whatsoever I shall learn, O Cucuc” answered Laeg “will be told thee. But, see yonder a little flock coming forth on the plain from the western camp and station now. Behold a band of henchmen after them to check and to stay them. Behold also a company of henchmen emerging from the eastern camp and station to seize them.”

“Surely, that is so!” exclaimed Cuchulain. “That bodes a mighty combat and is the occasion of a grand battle. The little flock will come over the plain and the

band of henchmen from the east and the band of henchmen from the west will encounter one another betimes about the little flock on the great field of battle." There, indeed, Cuchulain spoke true. And the little flock came forth upon the plain, and the companies of henchmen met in fray. "Who gives the battle now, O Laeg my master" Cuchulain asked.

"The folk of Ulster" Laeg answered: "that is the same as the young warriors of Ulster."

"But how fight they?" Cuchulain asked.

"Like men they fight" Laeg answered. "There where are the heroes of valour from the east in battle, they force a breach through the ranks to the west. There where are the heroes from the west, they lay a breach through the ranks to the eastward."

"It would be a vow for them to fall in rescuing their herds" said Cuchulain; "and now?"

"The beardless youths are fighting now" said the charioteer.

"Has a bright cloud come over the sun yet?" Cuchulain asked.

"Nay, then" the charioteer answered.

"I grieve that I am not yet strong enough to be on my feet amongst them. For, were I able to be on my feet amongst them, my breach would be manifest there today like that of another!"

"But, this avow, O Cucuc" said Laeg: "it is no reproach to thy valour; it is no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast done bravely in time before now and thou wilt do bravely hereafter."

About the hour of sunrise: "It is a haughty folk that now fight the battle" quoth the charioteer; "but there are no kings amongst them, for sleep is still upon them."

"Come, O my master Laeg!" cried Cuchulain; "rouse the men of Ulster to the battle now, for it is time that they come."

Then, when the sun arose, Cuchulain saw the kings from the east putting their crowns on their heads and relieving their men-at-arms. Cuchulain told his charioteer to awaken the men of Ulster. Laeg came and roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he uttered these words there: —

"Arise, ye kings of Macha,
Valiant in your deeds!
Imbel's kine the Badb doth covet:
Blood of hearts pours out!"

Goodly heroes' battle rushes in
With deeds of valour!
Hearts all red with gore:
Brows turned in flight.
Dismay of battle riseth.
For there was never found
One like unto Cuchulain,
Hound that Macha's weal doth work!
If it is for Cualnge's kine,
Let them now arise!"

XXVII NOW OF THE BATTLE OF GARECH

Thereupon arose all the men of Ulster at the one time in the train of their king, and at the word of their prince, and to prepare for the uprising in response to the call of Laeg son of Rianganabair. And in this wise they arose: stark-naked all of them, only their weapons in their hands. Each one whose tent door looked to the east, through the tent westwards he went, for that he deemed it too long to go round about it.

“How arise the Ulstermen now to the battle, O Laeg my master?” asked Cuchulain.

“Manfully they rise” said Laeg: “stark naked all of them, except for their arms only. Every man whose tent door faces the east, through the tent westwards he goes, for he deems it too long to go round about it.”

“I pledge my word!” cried Cuchulain: “at a fitting hour have they now in the early day risen around Conchobar!”

Then spake Conchobar to Sencha son of Ailill: “Come, O Sencha my master” said Conchobar; “stay the men of Ulster, and let them not go to the battle till there come the strength of a good omen and favourable portent, till the sun mounts to the roof tree of heaven and sunshine fills the glens and lowlands and hills and watchtowers of Erin.”

They tarried there till the strength of a good omen came and a favourable portent, till sunshine filled the glens and slopes and heights and watchtowers of the province.

“Come, O Sencha my master” said Conchobar; “rouse the men of Ulster to battle, for it is time for them to proceed thither.” Sencha roused the men of Ulster to battle, and he spake these words: —

“Now shall Macha’s kings arise,
 Large-hearted folk!
 Weapons let them shatter:
 Let them fight the battle:
 Let them plow the earth in anger:
 Let them strike on shields!
 Wearied all the hands;
 Herds loud bellowing:
 Steadfast the resistance:
 Furious the retainers:
 Battle lines shall prostrate fall
 ’Neath the feet of others!
 Prince and lord prepare for battle.
 Perish shall their race!
 Manful contest there shall be;

Their foes they lie in wait for
 And slay them all today!
 Deep draughts of blood they drink:
 Grief fills the hearts of queens:
 Tender lamentations follow:
Till soaked in blood shall be the grassy sod
 On which they're slain,
 To which they come.
 If for Cualnge's kine it be,
 Let Macha's kings! Let them arise!"

Not long was Laeg there when he witnessed something: the men of Erin all arising at one time, taking their shields and their spears and their swords and their helmets, and urging the men-of-war before them to the battle. The men of Erin, every single man of them, fell to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the others for a long space and while. Thereupon Cuchulain asked of his charioteer, of Laeg son of Rianganabair, at the time that a bright cloud came over the sun: "Look for us! How fight the Ulstermen the battle now, O my master Laeg?"

"Like men they fight" Laeg answered. "Should I mount my chariot, and En, Conall Cernach's ('the Victorious') charioteer, his chariot, and should we go in two chariots from one wing to the other on the points of the weapons, neither hoof nor wheel nor axle tree nor chariot pole would touch the ground for the denseness and closeness and firmness with which their arms are held in the hands of the men-at-arms at this time."

"Alas, that I am not yet strong enough to be amongst them now!" cried Cuchulain; "for, were I able, my breach would be manifest there today like that of another" spake Cuchulain.

"But this avow, O Cucuc" said Laeg: "'tis no reproach to thy valour; 'tis no disgrace to thine honour. Thou hast wrought great deeds before now and thou wilt work great deeds hereafter."

Then began the men of Erin to smite and to batter, to cut and to hew, to slay and to destroy the others for a long space and while. Next came to them the nine chariot fighters of the champions from Norseland, and the three foot warriors along with them, and no swifter were the nine chariot men than the three men on foot.

Then came to them also on the ford of hosting the governors of the men of Erin. And this was their sole office with Medb in the battle: to smite to death Conchobar if it were he that suffered defeat, and to rescue Ailill and Medb if it should be they were defeated. And these are the names of the governors:

XXVIIIA HERE FOLLOWETH THE MUSTER OF THE MEN OF ERIN

The three Conarè from Sliab Mis, the three Lussen from Luachair, the three Niadchorb from Tilach Loiscthe, the three Doelfer from Deill, the three Damaltach from Dergderc, the three Buder from the Buas, the three Baeth from Buagnige, the three Buageltach from Mag Breg, the three Suibnè from the Siuir, the three Eochaid from Anè, the three Malleth from Loch Erne, the three Abatruad from Loch Ri, the three macAmra from Ess Ruaid, the three Fiacha from Fid Nemain, the three Manè from Muresc, the three Muredach from Mairg, the three Loegaire from Lecc Derg, the three Broduinde from the Berba, the three Bruchnech, from Cenn Abrat, the three Descertach from Druim Fornacht, the three Finn from Finnabair, the three Conall from Collamair, the three Carbre from Cliu, the three Manè from Mossa, the three Scathglan from Scairè, the three Echtach from Ercè, the three Trenfer from Taitè, the three Fintan from Femen, the three Rotanach from Rognè, the three Sarchorach from Suidè Lagen, the three Etarscel from Etarbane, the three Aed from Aidnè, the three Guarè from Gabal.

Then said Medb to Fergus. "It were truly a thing to boast of for thee, O Fergus" said she "werest thou to use thy mightiness of battle vehemently without stint amongst us today, forasmuch as thou hast been driven out of thine own land and out of thine inheritance; amongst us hast thou found land and domain and inheritance, and much goodwill hath been shown thee!"

Thereupon Fergus uttered this oath: "I swear" *et reliqua*, "jaws of men I would break from necks, necks of men with arms, arms of men with elbows, elbows of men with wrists, wrists of men with fists, fists of men with fingers, fingers of men with nails, nails of men with scalps, scalps of men with trunks, trunks of men with thighs, thighs of men with knees, knees of men with calves, calves of men with feet, feet of men with toes, toes of men with nails, so that heads of men over shields would be as numerous with me as bits of ice on the miry stamping-ground between two dry fields that a king's horses would course on. Every limb of the Ulstermen would I send flying through the air before and behind me this day like the flitting of bees on a day of fine weather, if only I had my sword!"

At that Ailill spoke to his own charioteer, Ferloga, to wit: "Fetch me a quick sword that wounds the skin, O gilla" said Ailill. "A year today I put that sword in thy hand in the flower of its condition and bloom. I give my word, if its bloom and condition be the worse at thy hands this day than the day I gave it thee on the hillside of Cruachan Ai in the borders of Ulster, though thou hadst the men of Erin and of Alba to rescue thee from me today, they would not all save thee!"

Ferloga went his way, and he brought the sword with him in the flower of its safekeeping, and fair flaming as a candle. And the sword was placed in Ailill's hand, and Ailill put it in Fergus' hand, and Fergus offered welcome to the sword: "Welcome, O Calad Colg ('Hardblade'), Letè's sword!" said he. "Weary, O champion of Badb! On whom shall I ply this weapon?" Fergus asked.

“On the men-of-war around thee,” Medb answered. “No one shall find indulgence nor quarter from thee today, unless some friend of thy bosom find it!”

Whereupon, Fergus took his arms and went forward to the battle, and he cleared a gap of an hundred in the battle ranks with his sword in his two hands. Ailill seized his weapons. Medb seized her weapons and entered the battle. The Manè seized their arms and came to the battle. The macMagach seized their arms and came to the battle, so that thrice the Ulstermen were routed before them from the north, till Cualgae and sword drove them back again. Or it was Cuchulain that drove the men of Erin before him, so that he brought them back into their former line in the battle.

Conchobar heard that from his place in the line of battle, that the battle had gone against him thrice from the north. Then he addressed his bodyguard, even the inner circle of the Red Branch: “Hold ye here a while, ye men!” cried he; “even in the line of battle where I am, that I may go and learn by whom the battle has been thus forced against us thrice from the north.”

Then said his household: “We will hold out” said they, “in the place wherein we are: for the sky is above us and the earth underneath and the sea round about us, and unless the heavens shall fall with their showers of stars on the man face of the world, or unless the furrowed, blue bordered ocean break o’er the tufted brow of the earth, or unless the ground yawns open, will we not move a thumb’s breadth backward from here till the very day of doom and of everlasting life, till thou come back to us!”

Conchobar went his way to the place where he heard the battle had gone three times against him from the north. Then Conchobar made a rush at Fergus, and he lifted shield against shield there, namely against Fergus mac Roig, even Ochain (‘the Fair Ear’) of Conchobar with its four ears of gold and its four bracings of red gold. Therewith Fergus gave three stout blows of Badb on the Ochain of Conchobar, so that Conchobar’s shield cried aloud on him and the three chief waves of Erin gave answer, the Wave of Clidna, the Wave of Rudraige and the Wave of Tuag, to wit. Whenever Conchobar’s shield cried out, the shields of all the Ulstermen cried out. However great the strength and power with which Fergus smote Conchobar on the shield, so great also was the might and valour wherewith Conchobar held the shield, so that the ear of the shield did not even touch the ear of Conchobar.

“Hearken, ye men of Erin!” cried Fergus; “who opposes a shield to me today on this day of battle when four of the five grand provinces of Erin come together on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Cattle Raid of Cualnge?”

“Why, then, a gilla that is younger and mightier and comelier than thyself is here” Conchobar answered “and whose mother and father were better! The man that hath driven thee out of thy borders, thy land and thine inheritance; the

man that hath driven thee into the lairs of the deer and the wild hare and the foxes; the man that hath not granted thee to take the breadth of thy foot of thine own domain or land; the man that hath made thee dependent upon the bounty

of a woman; the man that of a time disgraced thee by slaying the three bright lights of the valour of the Gael, the three sons of Usnech that were under thy safeguard and protection; the man that will repel thee this day in the presence of the men of Erin; Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach son of Ross Ruad son of Rudraige, High King of Ulster and son of the High King of Erin; and though any one should insult thee, there is no satisfaction nor reparation for thee, for thou art in the service of a woman!”

“Truly hath this happened to me.” Fergus responded. And Fergus placed his two hands on Calad Colg (‘Hardblade’), and he heaved a blow with it backwards behind him, so that its point touched the ground, and he thought to strike his three fateful blows of Badb on the men of Ulster, so that their dead would be more in number than their living.

Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that and he rushed to his foster father, namely to Fergus, and he closed his two royal hands over him outside his armour. “Ungentle, not heedful is this, Fergus my master! Full of hate, not of friendship is this, O Fergus my master! Let not the Ulstermen be slain and destroyed by thee through thy destructive blows, but take thou thought for their honour today on this day of battle!”

“Get thee away from me, boy! Whom then should I strike?” exclaimed Fergus; “for I will not remain alive unless I deliver my three fateful strokes of Badb on the men of Ulster this day, till their dead be more in number than their living.”

“Then turn thy hand slantwise” said Cormac Conlongas “and slice off the hill-tops over the heads of the hosts on every side and this will be an appeasing of thine anger.”

“Tell Conchobar also to fall back again to his place in the battle” said Fergus; “and I will no longer belabour the hosts.”

Cormac told this to Conchobar: “Go to the other side, O Conchobar” said Cormac to his father “and this man will not visit his anger any longer here on the men of Ulster.” So Conchobar went to his place in the battle. In this manner Fergus and Conchobar parted.

Fergus turned away. He slew a hundred warriors of Ulster in the first onslaught with the sword. He met Conall Cernach. “Too great is this rage” said Conall, “upon people and kindred because of the whim of a wanton.”

“What would ye have me do, ye warriors?” asked Fergus. “Smite the hills crosswise and the bushes around” Conall Cernach made answer.

Thus it was with that sword, which was the sword of Fergus: The sword of Fergus, the sword of Letè from Faery: Whenever he desired to strike with it, it became the size of a rainbow in the air. Thereupon Fergus turned his hand slantwise over the heads of the hosts, so that he smote the three tops of the three hills, so that they are still on the moor in sight of the men of Erin. And these are the three Maels ('the Balds') of Meath in that place, which Fergus smote as a reproach and a rebuke to the men of Ulster.

Now as regards Cuchulain. He heard the Ochain of Conchobar smitten by Fergus macRoig. "Come, O Laeg my master" cried Cuchulain: "who dares thus smite with those strong blows, mighty and faraway, the Ochain of Conchobar my master, and I alive?"

Then Laeg made answer, saying: "The choice of men, Fergus macRoig, the very bold, smites it: —

"Blood he sheds — increase of slaughter —
Splendid the hero, Fergus macRoig!
Hidden had lain Fairyland's chariot-sword!
Battle now hath reached the shield,
Shield of my master Conchobar!"

"How far have the hosts advanced, O Laeg?" Cuchulain asked.

"They have come to Garech" Laeg answered.

"I give my word for that" Cuchulain cried; "they will not come as far as Ilgarech, if I catch up with them! Quickly unloose the bands, gilla!" cried Cuchulain. "Blood covers men. Feats of swords shall be done. Men shall be spent therefrom!"

Since Cuchulain's going into battle had been prevented, his twisting fit came upon him, and seven and twenty skin tunics were given to him that used to be about him under strings and cords when going into battle. Then Cuchulain gave a mighty spring, so that the bindings of his wounds flew from him to Mag Tuag ('the Plain of the Bows') in Connacht. His bracings went from him to Bacca ('the Props') in Corcomruad in the district of Boirenn. His supports sprang from him to Rath Cinn Bara ('the Rath of Spithead') in Ulster, and likewise his pins flew from him to Rath Clo ('the Rath of the Nails') in the land of the tribe of Conall. The dry wisps that were stuffed in his wounds rose to the roof of the air and the sky as highest larks fly on a day of sunshine when there is no wind. Thereupon, his bloody wounds got the better of him, so that the ditches and furrows of the earth were full of streams of blood and torrents of gore.

Some of the narrators aver that it was the strength of the warrior and champion that hurled these things to the aforementioned places; but it was not that, but his powerful friends, the fairy folk, that brought them thither, to the end to make famous his history, so that from them these places are named.

This was the first exploit of valour that Cuchulain performed on rising out of his weakness: The two women lampoonists that made a feint of weeping and wailing over his head, Fethan and Collach to wit, he smote each of them against the head of the other, so that he was red with their blood and grey with their brains. These women had come from Medb to raise a pretended lamentation over him, to the end that his bloody wounds might burst forth on him, and to tell him that the men of Ulster had met with defeat and that Fergus had fallen in meeting the battle. His arms had not been left near him, except his chariot only. And he took his chariot on his back with its frame and its two axle trees, and he set out to attack the men of Erin, and he smote them with the chariot, until he reached the place where Fergus macRoig was. "Turn hither, O Fergus my master!" he cried. Fergus did not answer, for he heard not. He spoke again, "Turn hither, turn hither, O Fergus my master!" he cried; "and if thou turn not, I swear to god what the Ulstermen swear, will grind thee as a mill grinds fresh grain; I will wash thee as a cup is washed in a tub; I will bind thee as the woodbine binds the trees; I will pounce on thee as hawk pounces on fledglings; I will go over thee as its tail goes over a cat; I will pierce thee as a tool bores through a tree trunk; I will pound thee as a fish is pounded on the sand!"

"Truly this is my lot!" spake Fergus. "Who of the men of Erin dares to address these stiff, vengeful words to me, where now the four grand provinces of Erin are met on Garech and Ilgarech in the battle of the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge?"

"Thy fosterling is before thee" he replied "and fosterling of the men of Ulster and of Conchobar as well, Cuchulain son of Sualtair and sister's son to Conchobar," replied Cuchulain. "And thou didst promise to flee before me what time I should be wounded, in pools of gore and riddled in the battle of the Táin. For, when thou hadst not thy sword with thee, I did flee before thee in thine own combat on the Táin; and do thou avoid me," said he.

"Even that did I promise" Fergus answered.

"Away with thee, then!" cried Cuchulain.

"'Tis well," replied Fergus; "thou didst avoid me; now thou art pierced with wounds."

Fergus gave ear to that word of Cuchulain, and he turned and made his three great strides of a hero back from Cuchulain and turned in flight from him. And as he turned with his company of three thousand warriors and the Leinstermen following after Fergus — for it is under Fergus' warrant they had come — and the men of Munster, there turned all the men of Erin.

Then the men of Erin broke their ranks westwards over the hill. The battle raged around the men of Connacht, around Ailill and his division and around Medb with hers and around the Manè with theirs and the mac Magach with theirs. At midday Cuchulain came to the battle. At the time of sunset at the ninth hour as the sun entered the tresses of the wood, when man and tree were

no more to be known apart, Medb and the last company of the men of Connacht fled in rout westwards over the hill.

At that time there did not remain in Cuchulain's hand of the chariot but a handful of its spokes around the wheel, and a handbreadth of its poles around the shell, with the slaying and slaughtering of the four grand provinces of Erin during all that time.

Then Medb betook her to a shield shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Thereafter Medb sent off the Brown Bull of Cualnge along with fifty of his heifers and eight of her runners with him around to Cruachan, to the end that whoso might and whoso might not escape, the Brown Bull of Cualnge should get away safely, even as she had promised.

Then it was that the issue of blood came upon Medb, and she said: "Do thou, Fergus, undertake a shield shelter in the rear of the men of Erin till I let my water flow from me."

"By my troth" replied Fergus "'tis an ill hour for thee to be taken so."

"Howbeit there is no help for me" Medb answered; "for I shall not live if I do not void water!" Fergus accordingly came and raised a shield shelter in the rear of the men of Erin. Medb voided her water, so that it made three large dikes, so that a mill could find room in each dike. Hence the place is known as Fual Medbha ('Medb's Water').

Cuchulain came upon her as she was thus engaged, on his way to the battle, and he did not attack her. He would not strike her a blow from behind. He spared her then because it was not his wont to slay women. "Spare me!" cried Medb.

"If I should slay thee, it were just for me" Cuchulain answered. "Arise from hence" said he; "for I deem it no honour to wound thee from behind with my weapons."

"I crave a boon of thee this day, O Cuchulain," spake Medb.

"What boon cravest thou of me?" asked Cuchulain.

"That this host be under thine honour and thy protection till they pass westwards over Ath Mor ('the Great Ford')."

"Yea, I promise that," said Cuchulain. Then went Cuchulain around the men of Erin, and he undertook a shield defence on one side of them, in order to protect the men of Erin. On the other side went the governors of the men of Erin. Medb went to her own place and assumed a shield defence in the rear of the men of Erin, and in this manner they convoyed the men of Erin over Ath Mor westwards.

Then Laeg son of Rianganabair brought Cuchulain's sword unto him, the 'Hardheaded Stealing' to wit, and Cuchulain took the sword in his hand. Then he stood still and gave a blow to the three bald topped hills of Ath Luain over against the three Maela ('the Bald Tops') of Meath, so that he struck their three heads off them. And they are in the bog as a witness ever since. Hence these are the Maolain ('the Flat Tops') of Ath Luain. Cuchulain cut them off as a reproach and affront to the men of Connacht, in order that every time men should speak of Meath's three Bald Tops, these in the west should be the answer the 'Three Flat Tops of Ath Luain.'

Then when the battle had been lost, Fergus began to view the host as it went westwards of Ath Mor. "It was thus indeed it behoved this day to prove, for following in the lead of a woman" said Fergus.

"Faults and feuds have met here toda," said Medb to Fergus.

"Betrayed and sold is this host today" Fergus answered. "And even as a brood mare leads her foals into a land unknown, without a head to advise or give counsel before them, such is the plight of this host to-day in the train of a woman that hath ill counselled them."

Then Cuchulain turned to where Conchobar was with the nobles of Ulster before him. Conchobar bewailed and lamented Cuchulain, and then he uttered this lay: —

"How is this, O Cualnge's Hound,
Hero of the Red Branch, thou:
Great woe, champion, hast thou borne,
Battling in thy land's defence!

"Every morn a hundred slain,
Every eve a hundred more,
While the host purveyed thy fare,
Feeding thee with cooling food!

"Five score heroes of the hosts,
These I reckon are in graves.
While their women — fair their hue —
Spend the night bewailing them!"

XXVIII THE BATTLE OF THE BULLS

As regards Medb, it is related here: She suffered not the hosts to disperse forthwith, but she gathered the men of Erin and led them forth to Cruachan to behold the battle of the bulls and in what manner they would part from one another. For during the while the battle was being fought, the Brown Bull of Cualnge with fifty heifers in his company had been brought to Cruachan.

As regards the Brown Bull of Cualnge, it is now recounted in this place: When he saw the beautiful, strange land, he sent forth his three bellowing calls aloud. And Finnbennach Ai ('the Whitehorned of Ai') heard him. Now no male beast durst send forth a low that was louder than a moo in compare with him within the four fords of all Ai, Ath Moga and Ath Coltna, Ath Slissen and Ath Bercha. And the Whitehorned lifted his head with fierce anger at the bellowing of the Brown of Cualnge, and he hastened to Cruachan to look for the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

It was then the men of Erin debated who would be fitted to witness the fight of the bulls. They all agreed that it should be Bricriu son of Carbad that were fitted for that office. For, a year before this tale of the Cualnge Cattle Raid, Bricriu had gone from the one province into the other to make a request of Fergus. And Fergus had retained him with him waiting for his treasures and goods. And a quarrel arose between him and Fergus at a game of chess. And he spake evil words to Fergus. Fergus smote him with his fist and with the chessman that was in his hand, so that he drave the chessman into his head and broke a bone

in his head. Whilst the men of Erin were on the foray of the Táin, all that time Bricriu was being cured at Cruachan. And the day they returned from the expedition was the day Bricriu rose. He came with the rest to witness the battle of the bulls. And this is why they selected Bricriu, for that Bricriu was no fairer to his friend than to his foe. "Come, ye men of Erin!" cried Bricriu; "Permit me to judge the fight of the bulls, for it is I shall most truly recount their tale and their deeds afterwards." And he was brought before the men of Erin to a gap whence to view the bulls.

So they drove the Brown Bull the morning of the fight till he met the Whitehorned at Tarbga in the plain of Ai: or Tarbguba ('Bull Groan'), or Tarbgleo ('Bull Fight'); Roi Dedond was the first name of that hill. Every one that had lived through the battle cared for naught else than to see the combat of the two bulls.

Each of the bulls sighted the other and there was a pawing and digging up of the ground in their frenzy there, and they tossed the earth over them. They threw up the earth over their withers and shoulders, and their eyes blazed red in their heads like firm balls of fire, and their sides bent like mighty boars on a hill. Their cheeks and their nostrils swelled like smith's bellows in a forge. And each of them gave a resounding, deadly blow to the other. Each of them began to hole and to gore, to endeavour to slaughter and demolish the other. Then the

Whitehorned of Ai visited his wrath upon the Brown Bull of Cualnge for the evil of his ways and his doings, and he drave a horn into his side and visited his angry rage upon him. Then they directed their headlong course to where Bricriu was, so that the hoofs of the bulls drove him a man's cubit deep into the ground after his destruction. Hence, this is the Tragical Death of Bricriu son of Carbad.

Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar saw that, and the force of affection arose in him, and he laid hold of a spearshaft that filled his grasp, and gave three blows to the Brown Bull of Cualnge from ear to tail, so that it broke on his thick hide from ear to rump. "No wonderful, lasting treasure was this precious prize for us" said Cormac "that cannot defend himself against a stirk of his own age!" The Brown Bull of Cualnge heard this — for he had human understanding — and he turned upon the Whitehorned. Thereupon the Brown of Cualnge became infuriated, and he described a very circle of rage around the Whitehorned, and he rushed at him, so that he broke his lower leg with the shock. And thereafter they continued to strike at each other for a long while and great space of time, and so long as the day lasted they watched the contest of the bulls till night fell on the men of Erin. And when night had fallen, all that the men of Erin could hear was the bellowing and roaring. That night the bulls coursed over the greater part of all Erin. For every spot in Erin wherein is a 'Bulls' Ditch,' or a 'Bulls' Gap,' or a 'Bulls' Fen,' or a 'Bulls' Loch,' or a 'Bulls' Rath,' or a 'Bulls' Back,' it is from them those places are named.

XXIX ACCOUNT OF THE BROWN BULL OF CUALNGE

A journey of a day and a night the Brown Bull carried the remains of the Whitehorned till he came to the loch that is by Cruachan. And he came thereout with the loin and the shoulderblade and the liver of the other on his horns. It was not long before the men of Erin, as they were there in the company of Ailill and Medb early on the morrow, saw coming over Cruachan from the west the Brown Bull of Cualnge with the Whitehorned of Ai in torn fragments hanging about his ears and horns. The men of Erin arose, and they knew not which of the bulls it was. "Come, ye men!" cried Fergus; "leave him alone if it be the Whitehorned that is there; and if it be the Brown of Cualnge, leave him his trophy with him!"

Then it was that the seven Manè arose to take vengeance on the Brown Bull of Cualnge for his violence and his valour. "Whither go yonder men?" asked Fergus.

"They go to kill the Brown of Cualnge," said all "because of his evil deeds."

"I pledge my word," shouted Fergus: "what has already been done in regard to the bulls is a small thing in compare with that which will now take place, unless with his spoils and victory ye let the Brown of Cualnge go from you into his own land."

Then the Brown Bull of Cualnge gave forth the three chiefest bellowings of his throat in boast of his triumph, and fear of Fergus held back the men of Erin from attacking the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

Then went the Brown Bull of Cualnge to the west of Cruachan. He turned his right side towards Cruachan, and he left there a heap of the liver of the Whitehorned, so that thence is named Cruachan Ai ('Liver Reeks').

Next he came to his own land and reached the river Finnglas ('Whitewater'), and, on coming, he drank a draught from the river, and, so long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow by him. Then he raised his head, and the shoulderblades of the Whitehorned fell from him in that place. Hence, Sruthair Finnlethe ('Stream of the White Shoulderblade') is the name given to it.

He pursued his way to the river Shannon, to the brink of Ath Mor ('the Great Ford'), and he drank a draught from it, and, as long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow past him. Then he raised his head, so that the two haunches of the Whitehorned fell from him there; and he left behind the loin of the Whitehorned in that place, so that thence cometh Athlone ('Loinford'). He continued eastwards into the land of Meath to Ath Truim. He sent forth his roar at Iraird Cuillinn; he was heard over the entire province. And he drank in Tromma. As long as he drank the draught, he let not one drop of the river flow past him. And he left behind there the liver of the Whitehorned.

Some learned men say, it is from the liver of the Whitehorned which fell from the Brown of Cualnge, that Ath Truim ('Liverford') is called.

He raised his head haughtily and shook the remains of the Whitehorned from him over Erin. He sent its hind leg away from him to Port Largè ('Port of the Hind Leg'). He sent its ribs from him to Dublin, which is called Ath Cliath ('Ford of the Ribs' or 'of the Hurdles').

He turned his face northwards then, and went on thence to the summit of Sliab Breg, and he saw the peaks and knew the land of Cualnge, and a great agitation came over him at the sight of his own land and country, and he went his way towards it. In that place were women and youths and children lamenting the Brown Bull of Cualnge. They saw the Brown of Cualnge's forehead approaching them. "The forehead of a bull cometh towards us!" they shouted. Hence is Taul Tairb ('Bull's Brow') ever since. Then he went on the road of Midluachar to Cuib, where he was wont to be with the yeld cow of Darè, and he tore up the earth there. Hence cometh Gort Buraig ('Field of the Trench').

Then turned the Brown of Cualnge on the women and youths and children of the land of Cualnge, and with the greatness of his fury and rage he effected a great slaughter amongst them. He turned his back to the hill then and his heart broke in his breast, even as a nut breaks, and he belched out his heart like a black stone of dark blood. He went then and died between Ulster and Ui Echach at Druim Tairb. Druim Tairb ('Bull's Back') is the name of that place.

Such, then, is the account of the Brown Bull of Cualnge, and the end of the Táin by Medb of Cruachan daughter of Eocho Fedlech, and by Ailill son of Maga, and by all the men of Ulster up to this point. Ailill and Medb made peace with the men of Ulster and with Cuchulain. For seven years there was no killing of men amongst them in Erin. Finnabair remained with Cuchulain, and the Connachtmen went to their own land, and the men of Ulster returned to Emain Macha with their great triumph. *Finit. Amen.*

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A blessing be upon all such as shall faithfully keep the Táin in memory as it stands here and shall not add any other form to it.

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I, however, who have copied this history, or more truly legend, give no credence to various incidents narrated in it. For, some things herein are the feats of jugglery of demons, sundry others poetic figments, a few are probable, others improbable, and even more invented for the delectation of fools.

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