

VIIA THE SLAYING OF THE SMITH'S HOUND BY CUCHULAIN, AND THE REASON HE IS CALLED CUCHULAIN

Then it was that Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar spake: "Again that little lad performed a second deed in the following year." "What deed was that?" asked Ailill.

"A goodly smith there was in the land of Ulster, Culann the Smith, by name. He made ready a feast for Conchobar and set out for Emain to invite him. He made known to him that only a few should come with him, that he should bring none but a true guest along, forasmuch as it was not a domain or lands of his own that he had, but the fruit of his two hands, his sledges and anvils, his fists and his tongs. Conchobar replied that only a few would go to him.

"Culann went back to the stithy to prepare and make ready meat and drink in readiness for the king. Conchobar sat in Emain till it was time to set out for the feast, till came the close of the day. The king put his fine, light travelling apparel about him, and went with fifty chariot chiefs of those that were noblest and most illustrious of the heroes, and betook him to the boys before starting, to bid them farewell. It was always his custom to visit and revisit them when going and coming, to seek his blessing of the boys. Conchobar came on to the fair green, and he saw a thing that astounded him: Thrice fifty boys at one end of the green and a single boy at the other, and the single boy won the victory at the goal and at hurling from the thrice fifty boys. When it was at hole play they were — a game of hole that used to be played on the fair green of Emain — and it was their turn to drive and his to keep guard, he would catch the thrice fifty balls just outside of the hole, and not one went by him into the hole. When it was their turn to keep guard and his to drive, he would send the thrice fifty balls into the hole without fail, and the boys were unable to ward them off. When it was at tearing off each other's garments they played, he would strip off them their thrice fifty suits so that they were quite naked, and they were not able all of them to take as much as the brooch from his mantle. When it was at wrestling they were, he would throw those same thrice fifty boys to the ground under him, and they did not succeed all of them around him in lifting him up. Conchobar looked with wonder at the little lad. 'O, ye youths' cried Conchobar. 'Hail to the land whence cometh the lad ye see, if the deeds of his manhood shall be such as are those of his boyhood!' 'Tis not just to speak thus' exclaimed Fergus; 'e'en as the little lad grows, so will his deeds of manhood grow with him.' 'The little lad shall be called to us, that he may come with us to enjoy the feast to which we go.' The little lad was summoned to Conchobar. 'Good, my lad' said Conchobar. 'Come thou with us to enjoy the feast whereto we go, for thou art a guest.' 'Nay, but I will not go' the little boy answered. 'How so?' asked Conchobar. 'Forasmuch as the boys have not yet had their fill of games and of sport, and I will not leave them till they have had enough play.' 'It is too long for us to await thee till then, little boy, and by no means shall we wait.' 'Go then before us' said the little boy 'and I will follow after ye.' 'Thou knowest naught of the way, little boy" said Conchobar. 'I will follow the trail of the company and of the horses and chariots.'

"Thereafter Conchobar came to the house of Culann the Smith. The king was waited upon and all were shown honour, as befitted their rank and calling and privileges, nobility and gentle accomplishment. Straw and fresh rushes were spread out under them. They commenced to carouse and make merry. Culann inquired of Conchobar: 'Hast thou, O king, appointed any to come after thee this night to this dún?' 'No, I appointed no one' replied Conchobar, for he had forgotten the little lad whom he had charged to come after him. 'Why so?' asked Conchobar. 'An excellent bloodhound have I, that was brought from Spain. There are three chains upon him, and three men at each chain. Because of our goods and our cattle he is slipped and the liss is closed. When his dog chain is loosed from him, no one dares approach the same cantred with him to make a course or a circuit, and he knows no one but myself. The power of hundreds is in him for strength.' Then spake Conchobar 'Let the dún be opened for the ban dog, that he may guard the cantred.' The dog chain is taken off the ban dog, and he makes a swift round of the cantred. And he comes to the mound whereon he was wont to keep guard of the stead, and there he was, his head couched on his paws, and wild, untameable, furious, savage, ferocious, ready for fight was the dog that was there.

"As for the boys: They were in Emain until the time came for them to disperse. Each of them went to the house of his father and mother, of his foster mother and foster father. Then the little lad went on the trail of the party, till he reached the house of Culann the Smith. He began to shorten the way as he went with his playthings. He threw his ball and threw his club after it, so that it hit the ball. The one throw was no greater than the other. Then he threw his staff after them both, so that it reached the ball and the club before ever they fell. Soon the lad came up. When he was nigh to the green of the fort wherein were Culann and Conchobar, he threw all his playthings before him except only the ball. The watchdog descried the lad and bayed at him, so that in all the countryside was heard the howl of the watchhound. And not a division of feasting was what he was inclined to make of him, but to swallow him down at one gulp past the cavity of his chest and the width of his throat and the pipe of his breast. And it interfered not with the lad's play, although the hound made for him. And the lad had not with him any means of defence, but he hurled an unerring cast of the ball, so that it passed through the gullet of the watchdog's neck and carried the guts within him out through his back door, and he laid hold of the hound by the two legs and dashed him against a pillar stone that was near him, so that every limb of him sprang apart so that he broke into bits all over the ground. Conchobar heard the yelp of the ban dog. Conchobar and his people could not move; they weened they would not find the lad alive before them. 'Alas, O warriors' cried Conchobar; 'in no good luck have we come to enjoy this feast.' 'How so?' asked all. 'The little lad who has come to meet me, my sister's son, Setanta son of Sualtaim, is undone through the hound.' As one man, arose all the renowned men of Ulster. Though a door of the hostel was thrown wide open, they all rushed in the other direction out over the palings of the fortress. But fast as they all got there, faster than all arrived Fergus, and he lifted the little lad from the ground on the slope of his shoulder and bore him into the presence of Conchobar. They put him on Conchobar's knee. A great alarm arose

amongst them that the king's sister's son should have been all but killed. And Culann came out, and he saw his slaughter hound in many pieces. He felt his heart beating against his breast. Whereupon he went into the dūn. 'Welcome thy coming, little lad' said Culann 'because of thy mother and father, but not welcome is thy coming for thine own sake. Yet would that I had not made a feast.' 'What hast thou against the lad?' queried Conchobar. 'Not luckily for me hast thou come to quaff my ale and to eat my food; for my substance is now a wealth gone to waste, and my livelihood is a livelihood lost now after my dog. He hath kept honour and life for me. Good was the friend thou hast robbed me of, even my dog, in that he tended my herds and flocks and stock for me; he was the protection of all our cattle, both afield and at home.' 'Be not angered thereat, O Culann my master' said the little boy. 'It is no great matter, for I will pass a just judgement upon it.' 'What judgement thereon wilt thou pass, lad?' Conchobar asked. 'If there is a whelp of the breed of that dog in Erin, he shall be reared by me till he be fit to do business as was his sire. Till then myself will be the hound to protect his flocks and his cattle and his land and even himself in the meanwhile. And I will safeguard the whole plain of Murthemne, and no one will carry off flock nor herd without that I know it.'

"Well hast thou given judgement, little lad" said Conchobar. "In sooth, we ourselves could not give one that would be better" said Cathba. "Why should it not be from this that thou shouldst take the name Cuchulain, ('Wolfhound of Culann')?" 'Nay, then' answered the lad; 'dearer to me mine own name, Setanta son of Sualtaim.' 'Say not so, lad' Cathba continued; 'for the men of Erin and Alba shall hear that name and the mouths of the men of Erin and Alba shall be full of that name!' 'It pleaseth me so, whatever the name that is given me' quoth the little lad. Hence the famous name that stuck to him, namely Cuchulain, after he had killed the hound that was Culann's the Smith's."

"A little lad did that deed" added Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar, "when he had completed six years after his birth, when he slew the watchdog that hosts nor companies dared not approach in the same cantred. No need would there be of wonder or of surprise if he should cometo the edge of the marches, if he should cut off the four pronged fork, if he should slay one man or two men or three men or four men, now when his seventeen years are completed on the Cattle driving of Cualnge!"

VII B TAKING OF ARMS BY CUCHULAIN AND THE SLAYING OF THE THREE SONS OF NECHT SCENE IS NOW TOLD HERE

"The little lad performed a third deed in the following year" said Fiachu son of Firaba.

"What deed performed he?" asked Ailill.

"Cathba the druid was with his son, namely Conchobar son of Ness, imparting learning to his pupils in the north east of Emain, and eight eager pupils in the class of druidic cunning were with him. That is the number that Cathba instructed. One of them questioned his teacher, what fortune and presage might there be for the day they were in, whether it was good or whether it was ill. Then spake Cathba: 'The little boy that takes arms this day shall be splendid and renowned for deeds of arms above the youths of Erin and the tales of his high deeds shall be told forever, but he shall be short-lived and fleeting.' Cuchulain overheard what he said, though far off at his play feats south west of Emain; and he threw away all his playthings and hastened to Conchobar's sleeproom to ask for arms. 'All good attend thee, O king of the Fenè!' cried the little lad. 'This greeting is the speech of one soliciting something of some one. What wouldst thou, lad?' said Conchobar. 'To take arms' the lad made answer. 'Who hath advised thee, little boy?' asked Conchobar. 'Cathba the druid' said the lad. 'He would not deceive thee, little boy' said Conchobar. Conchobar gave him two spears and a sword and a shield. The little boy shook and brandished the arms in the middle of the house so that he made small pieces and fragments of them. Conchobar gave him other two spears and a shield and a sword. He shook and brandished, flourished and poised them, so that he shivered them into small pieces and fragments. There where were the fourteen suits of arms which Conchobar had in Emain, in reserve in case of breaking of weapons or for equipping the youths and the boys — to the end that whatever boy assumed arms, it might be Conchobar that gave him the equipment of battle, and the victory of cunning would be his thenceforward — even so, this little boy made splinters and fragments of them all.

"Truly these arms here are not good, O Conchobar my master' the stripling cried. 'Herefrom cometh not what is worthy of me.' Conchobar gave him his own two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook and he brandished, he bent and he poised them so that tip touched butt, and he brake not the arms and they bore up against him, and he saluted the king whose arms they were. 'Truly, these arms are good' said the little boy; 'they are suited to me. Hail to the king whose arms and equipment these are. Hail to the land whereout he is come!'

"Then Cathba the druid chanced to come into the tent, and what he said was, 'Hath he yonder taken arms?' Cathba asked. 'Aye, then, it must be' Conchobar answered. 'Not by his mother's son would I wish them to be taken this day' said Cathba. 'How so? Was it not thyself advised him?' Conchobar asked. "Not I, in faith," replied Cathba. 'What mean'st thou, bewitched elfman?' cried Conchobar to Cuchulain. 'Is it a lie thou hast told us?' 'But be not wroth thereat, O my

master Conchobar'said the little boy. 'No lie have I told; for yet is it he that advised me, when he taught his other pupils this morning. For his pupil asked him what luck might lie in the day, and he said: The youth that took arms on this day would be illustrious and famous, that his name would be over the men of Erin for ever, and that no evil result would be on him thereafter, except that he would be fleeting and short-lived. To the south of Emain I heard him, and then I came to thee.' 'That I avow to be true' spake Cathba. 'Good indeed is the day, glorious and renowned shalt thou be, the one that taketh arms, yet passing and short lived!' 'Noble the gift!' cried Cuchulain. 'Little it recks me, though I should be but one day and one night in the world, if only the fame of me and of my deeds live after me!'"

"Another day one of them asked of the druids for what that day would be propitious. 'The one that mounts a chariot today' Cathba answered 'his name will be renowned over Erin for ever.' Now Cuchulain heard that. He went to Conchobar and said to him, 'O Conchobar my master, give me a chariot!' He gave him a chariot. 'Come, lad, mount the chariot, for this is the next thing for thee.'"

"He mounted the chariot. He put his hands between the two poles of the chariot, and the first chariot he mounted withal he shook and tossed about him till he reduced it to splinters and fragments. He mounted the second chariot, so that he made small pieces and fragments of it in like manner. Further he made pieces of the third chariot. There where were the seventeen chariots which Conchobar kept for the boy troop and youths in Emain, the lad made small pieces and fragments of them and they did not withstand him. 'These chariots here are not good, O my master Conchobar' said the little boy; 'my merit cometh not from them.' 'Where is Ibar son of Riangabair?' asked Conchobar. 'Here, in sooth, am I' Ibar answered. 'Take with thee mine own two steeds for him yonder, and yoke my chariot.' Thereupon the charioteer took the horses and yoked the chariot. Then the little boy mounted the chariot and Conchobar's charioteer with him. He shook the chariot about him, and it withstood him, and he broke it not. 'Truly this chariot is good' cried the lad 'and this chariot is suited to me.' The charioteer turned the chariot under him. 'Prithee, little boy' said Ibar 'come out of the chariot now and let the horses out on their pasture.' 'It is yet too soon, O Ibar' the lad answered. 'The horses are fair. I, too, am fair, their little lad. Only let us go on a circuit of Emain today and thou shalt have a reward therefor, today being my first day of taking arms, to the end that it be a victory of cunning for me.'"

"Thrice they made the circuit of Emain. 'Leave the horses now to their grazing, O little boy' said Ibar. 'It is yet too soon, O Ibar' the little lad answered; 'let us keep on, that the boys may give me a blessing today the first day of my taking arms.' They kept their course to the place where the boys were. 'Is it arms he yonder has taken?' each one asked. 'Of a truth, are they.' 'May it be for victory, for first wounding and triumph. But we deem it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou departest from us at the game feasts.' 'By no means will I leave ye, but for luck I took arms this day.' 'Now, little boy, leave the horses to their grazing' said Ibar. 'It is still too soon for that, O Ibar' the lad answered. 'Ply the

goad on the horses' said he. 'What way, then?' the charioteer asked. 'As far as the road shall lead' answered Cuchulain. 'And this great road winding by us, what way leads it?' the lad asked. 'What is that to thee?' Ibar answered. 'But thou art a pleasant wight, I trow, little lad' quoth Ibar. 'I wish, fellow, to inquire about the high road of the province, what stretch it goes?' To Ath na Foraire ('the Ford of Watching') in Sliab Fuait it goes,' Ibar answered. 'Wherefore is it called the Ford of Watching, knowest thou?' 'Yea, I know it well' Ibar made answer. 'A stout warrior of Ulster is on watch and on guard there every day, so that there come no strange youths into Ulster to challenge them to battle, and he is a champion to give battle in behalf of the whole province. Likewise if men of song leave the Ulstermen and the province in dudgeon, he is there to soothe them by proffering treasures and valuables, and so to save the honour of the province. Again, if men of song enter the land, he is the man that is their surety that they win the favour of Conchobar, so that songs and lays made for him will be the first to be sung after their arrival in Emain.' 'Knowest thou who is at the ford today?' 'Yea, I know' Ibar answered; 'Conall Cernach ('the Triumphant'), the heroic, warlike son of Amargin, royal champion of Erin' Ibar answered. 'Thither guide us, fellow, that so we reach the ford.' "

"Onwards they drove into sight of the ford where was Conall. Now it fell to Conall Cernach to guard the province that day. For each champion of Ulster spent his day on Sliab Fuait to protect him that came with a lay or to fight with a warrior, so that some one would be there to meet him, in order that none might come to Emain unperceived. 'Are those arms he yonder has taken?' asked Conall. 'Of a truth, are they' Ibar made answer. 'May it be for victory and for triumph and first wounding' said Conall; 'but we think it too soon for thee to take arms, because thou art not yet capable of deeds. Were it surety he needed, he that should come hither' he continued 'so wouldest thou furnish a perfect warrant amongst the Ulstermen, and the nobles of the province would rise up to support thee in the contest.' 'What dost thou here, O Conall my master?' asked the lad. 'Watch and ward of the province, lad, I keep here' Conall made answer. 'Do thou go home now, O master Conall' said the lad 'and leave me the watch and guard of the province to keep here.' 'Say not so, little son' replied Conall; ' 'twould be enough, were it to protect one that came with a song; were it to fight with a man, however, that is still too soon for thee; thou art not yet able to cope with a goodly warrior.' 'Then, will I keep on to the south' said the little boy 'to Fertas ('the Bank') of Loch Echtrann for a while; champions are wont to take stand there; perchance I may reddens my hands on friend or on foe this day.' 'I will go, little boy' said Conall 'to save thee, that thou go not alone into peril on the border.' 'Not so' said the lad. 'But I will go' said Conall; 'for the men of Ulster will blame me for leaving thee to go alone on the border."

"Conall's horses were caught for him and his chariot was yoked and he set out to protect the little boy. When Conall came up abreast of him, Cuchulain felt certain that, even though a chance came to him, Conall would not permit him to use it. He picked up a hand stone from the ground which was the full of his grasp. He hurled it from him from his sling the length of a stone shot at the yoke of Conall's chariot, so that he broke the chariot collar in two and thereby Conall fell to the ground, so that the nape of his neck went out from his

shoulder. ‘What have we here, boy?’ asked Conall; ‘why threwest thou the stone?’ It is I threw it to see if my cast be straight, or how I cast at all, or if I have the stuff of a warrior in me.’ ‘A bane on thy cast and a bane on thyself as well. E’en though thou leavest thy head this time with thine enemies, I will go no further to protect thee.’ ‘Twas what I craved of thee’ answered he; ‘for it is geis amongst you men of Ulster to proceed, after a mishap has befallen your chariots. Go back to Emain, O Conall, and leave me here to keep watch.’ That pleaseth me well’ replied Conall. Conall turned back northwards again to the Ford of Watching. Thereafter Conall Cernach went not past that place.

As for the little boy, he fared southwards to Fertas Locha Echtrann. He remained there till the end of the day and they found no one there before them. ‘If we dared tell thee, little boy’ spoke Ibar ‘it were time for us to return to Emain now; for dealing and carving and dispensing of food is long since begun in Emain, and there is a place assigned for thee there. Every day it is appointed thee to sit between Conchobar’s feet, while for me there is naught but to tarry among the hostlers and tumblers of Conchobar’s household. For that reason, methinks it is time to have a scramble among them.’ ‘Fetch then the horses for us.’ The charioteer fetched the horses and the lad mounted the chariot. ‘But, O Ibar, what hill is that there now, the hill to the north?’ the lad asked. ‘Now, that is Sliab Moduirn’ Ibar answered. ‘Let us go and get there’ said Cuchulain. Then they go on till they reach it. When they reached the mountain, Cuchulain asked ‘And what is that white cairn yonder on the height of the mountain?’ ‘And that is Finncharn (‘the White Cairn’) of Sliab Moduirn’ Ibar answered. ‘But yonder cairn is beautiful’ exclaimed the lad. ‘It surely is beautiful’ Ibar answered. ‘Lead on, fellow, till we reach yonder cairn.’ ‘Well, but thou art both a pleasant and tedious inquisitor, I see’ exclaimed Ibar; ‘but this is my first journey and my first time with thee. It shall be my last time till the very day of doom, if once I get back to Emain.’

“Howbeit they went to the top of the hill. ‘It is pleasant here, O Ibar’ the little boy exclaimed. ‘Point out to me Ulster on every side, for I am no wise acquainted with the land of my master Conchobar.’ The horseman pointed him out Ulster all around him. He pointed him out the hills and the fields and the mounts of the province on every side. He pointed him out the plains and the dūns and the strongholds of the province. ‘Tis a goodly sight, O Ibar’ exclaimed the little lad. ‘What is that indented, angular, bordered and glenny plain to the south of us?’ ‘Mag Breg’ replied Ibar. ‘Tell thou to me the buildings and forts of that plain.’ The gilla taught him the name of every chief dūn between Temair and Cenannas, Temair and Taltiu, Cletech and Cnogba and Brug (‘the Fort’) of Mac ind Oc. He pointed out to him then the dūn of the three sons of Necht Scenè (‘the Fierce’): Foill and Fandall and Tuachall, their names; Fer Ulli son of Lugaid was their father, and Necht from the mouth of the Scenè was their mother. Now the Ulstermen had slain their father; it was for that reason they were at war with Ulster. ‘But are those not Necht’s sons, that boast that not more of the Ulstermen are alive than have fallen at their hands?’ The same, in sooth answered the gilla. ‘On with us to the dūn of the macNechta’ cried the little boy. ‘Alas, in truth, that thou sayest so’ quoth Ibar; ‘tis a peril for us.’ Truly, not to avoid it do we go’ answered Cuchulain. ‘We know it is an act of great folly for us

to say so, but whoever may go' said Ibar 'it will not be myself.' 'Living or dead, go there thou shalt' the little boy cried. ' 'Tis alive I shall go to the south' answered Ibar 'and dead I shall be left at the dún, I know, even at the dún of the macNechta.'

"They push on to the dún and they unharness their horses in the place where the bog and the river meet south of the dún of the macNechta. And the little boy sprang out of the chariot onto the green. Thus was the green of the dún, with a pillar stone upon it and an iron band around that, and a band for prowess it was, and there was a writing in ogam at its joint, and this is the writing it bore: 'Whoever should come to the green, if he be a champion, it is geis for him to depart from the green without giving challenge to single combat. The lad deciphered the writing and put his two arms around the pillar stone. Just as the pillar stone was with its ring, he flung it with a cast of his hand into the moat, so that a wave passed over it. 'Methinks' spake Ibar 'it is no better now than to be where it was. And we know thou shalt now get on this green the thing thou desirest, even the token of death, yea, of doom and destruction!' For it was the violation of a geis of the sons of Necht Scenè to do that thing. 'Good, O Ibar, spread the chariot coverings and its skins for me that I may snatch a little sleep.' 'Woe is me, that thou sayest so' answered the gilla; 'for a foeman's land is this and not a green for diversion.' And Cuchulain said to the gilla 'Do not awaken me for a few but awaken me for many.' The gilla arranged the chariot coverings and its skins under Cuchulain, and the lad fell asleep on the green.

"Then came one of the macNechta on to the fair-green, to wit, Foill son of Necht. Then was the charioteer sore afraid, for he durst not waken him, for Cuchulain had told him at first not to waken him for a few. 'Unyoke not the horses, gilla' cried Foill. 'I am not fain to, at all' answered Ibar; 'the reins and the lines are still in my hand.' 'Whose horses are those, then?' Foill asked. 'Two of Conchobar's horses' answered the gilla; 'the two of the dappled heads.' That is the knowledge I have of them. And what hath brought these steeds here to the borders?' 'A tender youth that has assumed arms amongst us today for luck and good omen' the horseboy answered 'is come to the edges of the marshes to display his comeliness.' 'May it not be for victory nor for triumph, his first taking of arms' exclaimed Foill. 'Let him not stop in our land and let the horses not graze here any longer. If I knew he was fit for deeds, it is dead he should go back northwards to Emain and not alive!' 'In good sooth, he is not fit for deeds' Ibar answered; 'it is by no means right to say it of him; it is the seventh year since he was taken from the crib. Think not to earn enmity' Ibar said further to the warrior; 'and moreover the child sleepeth.'

"The little lad raised his face from the ground and drew his hand over his face, and he became as one crimson wheelball from his crown to the ground. 'Not a child am I, at all, but it is to seek battle with a man that this child here is come. Aye, but I am fit for deeds!' the lad cried. 'That pleaseth me well' said the champion; 'but more like than what thou sayest, meseemeth, thou art not fit for deeds.' 'Thou wilt know that better if we go to the ford. But, go fetch thy weapons, for I see it is in the guise of a churl thou art come, and I slay nor

charioteers nor grooms nor folk without arms.' The man went apace after his arms. 'Now thou shouldst have a care for us against yonder man that comes to meet thee, little lad' said Ibar. 'And why so?' asked the lad. "Foill son of Necht is the man thou seest. Neither points nor edges of weapons can harm him.' 'Not before me shouldst thou say that, O Ibar' quoth the lad. 'I will put my hand to the lath rick for him, namely, to the apple of twice melted iron, and it will light upon the disc of his shield and on the flat of his forehead, and it will carry away the size of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it will make a sieve hole outside of his head, till the light of the sky will be visible through his head.'

"Foill son of Necht came forth. Cuchulain took the lath trick in hand for him and threw it from him the length of his cast, so that it lighted on the flat of his shield and on the front of his forehead and carried away the bulk of an apple of his brain out through the back of his head, so that it made a sieve hole thereof outside of his head, till the light of the sky might be seen through his head. He went to him then and struck off the head from the trunk. Thereafter he bore away his spoils and his head with him.

"Then came the second son out on the green, his name Tuachall ('the Cunning') son of Necht. 'Aha, I see thou wouldest boast of this deed,' quoth Tuachall. 'In the first place I deem it no cause to boast for slaying one champion' said Cuchulain; 'thou shalt not boast of it this time, for thou shalt fall by my hand. 'Off with thee for thine arms, then, for 'tis not as a warrior thou art come.' The man rushed after his arms. 'Thou shouldst have a care for us against yon man, lad' said Ibar. 'How so?' the lad asked. 'Tuachall son of Necht is the man thou beholdest. And he is nowise misnamed, for he falls not by arms at all. Unless thou worstest him with the first blow or with the first shot or with the first touch, thou wilt not worst him ever, because of his craftiness and the skill wherewith he plays round the points of the weapons.' 'That should not be said before me, O Ibar' cried the lad. 'I swear by the god by whom my people swear, he shall never again ply his skill on the men of Ulster. I will put my hand on Conchobar's well-tempered lance, on the Craisech Nemè ('the Venomous Lance'). It will be an outlaw's hand to him. It will light on the shield over his belly, and it will crush through his ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart in his breast. That would be the smiting cast of an enemy and not the friendliness of a fellow countryman! From me he shall not get sick nursing or care till the brink of doom.'

"Tuachall son of Necht came forth on the green, and the lad laid his hand on Conchobar's lance against him, and it struck the shield above his belly and broke through the ribs on the farther side after piercing his heart within his breast. He struck off his head or ever it reached the ground. Thereafter Cuchulain carried off his head and his spoils with him to his own charioteer.

"Then came the youngest of the sons forth on the green, namely, Fandall son of Necht. 'Fools were the folk who fought with thee here' cried Fandall. 'How, now!' cried the lad. 'Come down to the pool, where thy foot findeth not bottom.' Fandall rushed on to the pool. 'Thou shouldst be wary for us of him, little boy'

said Ibar. ‘Why should I then?’ asked the lad. ‘Fandall son of Necht is the man whom thou seest. For this he bears the name Fandall (‘the Swallow’): like a swallow or weasel he courseth the sea; the swimmers of the world cannot reach him.’ ‘Thou shouldst not speak thus before me, O Ibar,’ said the lad. ‘I swear, never again will he ply that feat on the men of Ulster. Thou knowest the river that is in our land, in Emain, the Callann. When the boys frequent it with their games of sport and when the water is not beneath them, if the surface is not reached by them all, I do carry a boy over it on either of my palms and a boy on either of my shoulders, and I myself do not even wet my ankles under the weight of them.’

“They met upon the water and they engaged in wrestling upon it, and the little boy closed his arms over Fandall, so that the sea came up even with him, and he gave him a deft blow with Conchobar’s sword and chopped off his head from the trunk, and left the body to go down with the stream, and he carried off the head and the spoils with him.

“Thereupon Cuchulain went into the dún and pillaged the place and burned it so that its buildings were no higher than its walls. And they turned on their way to Sliab Fuait and carried the three heads of Necht’s sons with them. Soon Cuchulain heard the cry of their mother after them, of Necht Scenè, namely. ‘Now I will not give over my spoils’ cried Cuchulain ‘till I reach Emain Macha.’ Thereupon Cuchulain and Ibar set out for Emain Macha with their spoils. It was then Cuchulain spoke to his charioteer: ‘Thou didst promise us a good run’ said Cuchulain ‘and we need it now because of the storm and pursuit that is after us.’ Forthwith they hasten to Sliab Fuait. Such was the speed of the course they held over Breg, after the urging of the charioteer, that the horses of the chariot overtook the wind and the birds in their flight and Cuchulain caught the throw he had cast from his sling or ever it reached the ground.

When they came to Sliab Fuait they espied a herd of wild deer before them. ‘What are those many cattle, O Ibar, those nimble ones yonder?’ asked the lad; ‘are they tame or are they other deer?’ ‘They are real wild deer, indeed’ Ibar answered; ‘herds of wild deer that haunt the wastes of Sliab Fuait.’ ‘Which’ asked Cuchulain ‘would the men of Ulster deem best, to bring them dead or alive?’ ‘More wonderful, alive’ answered the charioteer; ‘not every one can do it so; but dead, there is none of them cannot do it. Thou canst not do this, carry off any of them alive.’ ‘Truly I can’ said Cuchulain. ‘Ply the goad for us on the horses into the bog, to see can we take some of them.’ The charioteer drove a goad into the horses. It was beyond the power of the king’s overfat steeds to keep up with the deer. Soon the horses stuck in the marsh. The lad got down from the chariot and as the fruit of his run and his race, in the morass which was around him, he caught two of the swift, stout deer. He fastened them to the back poles and the bows and the thongs of the chariot.

“They continued their way to the mound seat of Emain, where they saw flocks of white swans flying by them. ‘What are those birds there, O Ibar?’ the lad asked; ‘are yonder birds tame or are they other birds?’ ‘Indeed, they are real wild birds’ Ibar answered; ‘flocks of swans are they that come from the rocks

and crags and islands of the great sea without, to feed on the plains and smooth spots of Erin.' Which would be stranger to the Ulstermen, O Ibar, for them to be fetched alive to Emain or dead?' asked the lad. 'Stranger far, alive' Ibar answered, 'for not every one succeeds in taking the birds alive, while they are many that take them dead.' Then did the lad perform one of his lesser feats upon them: he put a small stone in his sling, so that he brought down eight of the birds; and then he performed a greater feat: he threw a large stone at them and he brought down sixteen of their number. With his return stroke all that was done. He fastened them to the hind poles and the bows and the thongs and the ropes and the traces of the chariot.

"Take the birds along with thee, O Ibar" cried the lad to his charioteer. If I myself go to take them' he added 'the wild deer will spring upon thee.' I am in sore straits' answered Ibar; 'I find it not easy to go.' What may it be?' asked the lad. 'Great cause have I. The horses have become wild, so that I cannot go by them. If I stir at all from where I am, the chariot's iron wheels will cut me down because of their sharpness and because of the strength and the power and the might of the career of the horses. If I make any move, the horns of the deer will pierce and gore me, for the horns of the stag have filled the whole space between the two shafts of the chariot' 'Ah, no true champion art thou any longer, O Ibar' said the lad; 'step thus from his horn. I swear by the god by whom the Ulstermen swear, because of the look I shall give at the horses they will not depart from the straight way; at the look I shall give at the deer they will bend their heads in fear and awe of me; they will not dare move, and it will be safe for thee e'en though thou goest in front of their horns.' And so it was done. Cuchulain fastened the reins Then the charioteer went and collected the birds, and he bound them to the hind poles and to the thongs and the traces of the chariot. Thus it was that he proceeded to Emain Macha: the wild deer behind his chariot, and the flock of swans flying over the same, and the three heads of the sons of Necht Scenè and the jewels, treasures and wealth of their enemies arranged in his chariot.

"Thereupon they went on till bravely, boldly, battle victoriously, boastingly, blade redded, they reached the fair plain of Emain. It was then Lebarcham, the watch in Emain Macha, came forth and discerned them, she, the daughter of Aue ('Ear') and of Adarc ('Horn') and she hastened to Conchobar's house, her eye restless in her head and her tongue faltering in her jaw. "A single chariot fighter is here, coming towards Emain Macha" cried Lebarcham 'and his coming is fearful. The heads of his foes all red in his chariot with him. Beautiful, all-white birds he has hovering around in the chariot. With him are wild, untamed deer, bound and fettered, shackled and pinioned. And I give my word, if he be not attended to this night, blood will flow over Conchobar's province by him and the youths of Ulster will fall by his hand.' 'We know him, that chariot fighter' spake Conchobar; 'belike it is the little gilla, my sister's son, who went to the edge of the marches at the beginning of the day, who has reddened his hands and is still unsated of combat, and unless he be attended to, all the youths of Emain will fall by his hand.' Soon he turned the left side of his chariot towards Emain, and this was geis for Emain. And Cuchulain cried, 'I swear by the god

by whom the Ulstermen swear, if a man be not found to engage with me, I will spill the blood of every one in the dún!"

"And this was the counsel they agreed to follow: to let out the womenfolk to meet the youth, namely, thrice fifty women, even ten and seven score bold, stark naked women, at one and the same time, and their chieftainess, Scannlach ('the Wanton') before them, to discover their persons and their shame to him. 'Let the young women go' said Conchobar 'and bare their paps and their breasts and their swelling bosoms, and if he be a true warrior he will not withstand being bound, and he shall be placed in a vat of cold water until his anger go from him.' Thereupon the young women all arose and marched out, and these are the names of those queens: Sgamalus and Sgannlach and Sgiathan, Feidlim and Deigtini Finnchas, and Finngheal and Fidniam and Niam, daughter of Celtchar son of Uthechar; and they discovered their nakedness and all their shame to him. 'These are the warriors that will meet thee to-day' quoth Mugain, wife of Conchobar son of Ness. The lad hid his face from them and turned his gaze on the chariot, that he might not see the nakedness or the shame of the women. Then the lad was lifted out of the chariot. He was placed in three vats of cold water to extinguish his wrath; and the first vat into which he was put burst its staves and its hoops like the cracking of nuts around him. The next vat into which he went boiled with bubbles as big as fists therefrom. The third vat into which he went, some men might endure it and others might not. Then the boy's wrath went down.

"Thereupon he came out, and his festive garments were put on him by Mugain the queen. His comeliness appeared on him and he made a crimson wheelball of himself from his crown to the ground.]A shout was raised at the bluish purple about him. Beautiful then was the lad that was raised up in view. Seven toes he had to each of his two feet, and seven fingers to each of his two hands, and seven pupils to each of his two kingly eyes, and seven gems of the brilliance of the eye was each separate pupil. Four spots of down on either of his two cheeks: a blue spot, a purple spot, a green spot, a yellow spot. Fifty strands of bright yellow hair from one ear to the other, like to a comb of birch twigs or like to a brooch of pale gold in the face of the sun. A clear, white, shorn spot was upon him, as if a cow had licked it. A fair, laced green mantle about him; a silver pin therein over his white breast, so that the eyes of men could not look at it for its gleam and its brightness. A hooded tunic of thread of gold about him. A magnificent, fair coloured, dark purple shield he bore. Two hard, five pointed spears in his hand. A diadem of gold round his head. And the lad was seated between the two feet of Conchobar, and that was his couch ever after, and the king began to stroke his close shorn hair.

"A mere lad accomplished these deeds at the end of seven years after his birth" continued Fiachu son of Fiarba; "for he overcame heroes and battle champions at whose hands two thirds of the men of Ulster had fallen, and these had not got their revenge on them until that scion rose up for them. No need then is there of wonder or of surprise, though he came to the border, though he slew one man or two men or three men or four men, though he cut off the four

headed pole with one cut and one blow of his shining sword when now are fulfilled his seventeen years at the time of the Táin Bó Cúalnge."

Albeit gladness, joy and happiness was the part of the men of Ulster for that, sorrow, grief and unhappiness was the part of the men of Erin, for they knew that the little lad that had done those deeds in the time of his boyhood, it would be no wonder if he should do great deeds of valour in the time of his manhood.

These, accordingly, are some of the youthful exploits of Cuchulain on the Raid for the Kine of Cualnge, and the Prologue of the Tale, and the Names of the Roads and the March of the Host up to this Point.

The Story proper is this which follows now.

VIIc BELOW IS A SEPARATE VERSION AS FAR AS THE SLAYING OF ORLAM

"Let us fare forth now" quoth Ailill. Thereafter they reached Mag Mucceda ('the plain of the Swineherd.') Cuchulain lopped off an oak that was before him in that place and set an ogham-writing on its side. This is what was on it: 'That no one should pass by till a chariot warrior with a chariot should overleap it.'

They pitch there their tents and proceed to leap over the oak in their chariots. Thereat thirty horses fall and thirty chariots are broken. Now, Belach Anè ('the Pass of Sport') is the name of that place forever.

They bide there till morning. Fraech son of Fidach was summoned to them. "Help us, O Fraech" spake Medb; "deliver us from the strait we are in. Rise up for us to meet Cuchulain, if perchance thou wilt fight him."

Betimes in the morning, with nine men Fraech went out from thence till he arrived at Ath Fuait, when he saw the youth Cuchulain bathing in the river. "Bide here" spake Fraech to his people "till I fight with yonder man; he is not good in the water" said he. He doffs his clothes and goes into the water to meet him.

"Come not before me" cried Cuchulain; "it shall be thy death and it would grieve me to kill thee."

"Nay, but I will go" answered Fraech "so that we come together in the water, and it behoves thee to engage with me."

"Settle that as seemeth thee good" Cuchulain made answer.

"Each of us with his arms round the other" said Fraech. They fall to wrestling for a long time in the water and Fraech is thrust under.

Cuchulain brings him above again. "This time" spake Cuchulain "wilt thou acknowledge that I saved thee?"

"I will not," Fraech answered. Cuchulain thrusts him under again, so that Fraech is destroyed.

He is placed on the ground. His people bear the body with them to the camp. Ath Fraeich ('Fraech's Ford') is the name of that ford for ever. All the army keen their Fraech, till they see a troop of women, in green tunics standing over the corpse of Fraech son of Fidach. These women bear him into the fairy dwelling. Sid Fraeich ('Fraech's Mound') is the name of the Elfmound ever since.

Fergus leaps over the oak stump in his own chariot and knocks off its head. According to another version, they proceed till they reach Ath Meislir. Cuchulain destroys six of them there, namely, Meislir *et reliqua*, the six Dungals of Irrus.

They go thence to Fornocht. Medb had a whelp named Baiscnè. Cuchulain made a cast at him, so that he struck off his head. Now, Druim ('Ridge') is the name of that place ever after.

According to another version, however, it is there that the youth who was in the chariot by the side of Medb and the pet bird were slain by the casts, but, according to this version, that happened after the slaying of Orlam.

VIII THE SLAYING OF ORLAM

The four grand provinces of Erin set forth on the morrow eastwards over Cronn ('the Round'), which is a mountain. Cuchulain had gone out before them, till he came upon the charioteer of Orlam son of Aililla and of Medb. This was at Tamlacht Orlaim ('Orlam's Gravestone') a little to the north of Disert Lochaid ('Lochat's Hermitage'). The charioteer was engaged in cutting chariot poles from a holly tree in the wood. But according to another version it is the hind pole of Cuchulain's chariot that was broken and it was to cut a pole he had gone when Orlam's charioteer came up. According to this version, it was the charioteer who was cutting the pole.

Not long was the battle victorious Hound there when he heard a sound and an uproar. "Behold, O Laeg" cried Cuchulain; "who of the host of the foe have come into this land to carry off a share of cattle and booty from the province wherein they came? How bold are the ways of the Ulstermen, if it be they that cut down the woods in this fashion in the face of the men of Erin. But, check the horses and hold the chariot. Tarry thou here a little, till I know who cuts down the woods in this manner." Then Cuchulain went on till he came up to Orlam's charioteer, to stop him; he thought he was one of the men of Ulster. "What dost thou here, gilla?" asked Cuchulain.

"Indeed, then" answered the gilla "I cut chariot-poles from this holm, because our chariots were broken yesterday in pursuit of that famous wildling, namely Cuchulain. And for thy manhood's sake, young warrior, pray come to my aid, so that that famous Cuchulain come not upon me."

"Take thy choice, gilla" said Cuchulain "to gather or to trim them, either."

"I will see to gathering them, for it is easier" the gilla answered. Cuchulain started to cut the poles and he drew them between the forks of his feet and his hands against their bends and their knots, so that he made them smooth and straight and slippery and trimmed; he polished them so that not even a midge could find footing thereon when he had passed them away from him. Then full sure the gilla gazed upon him. "Far then, meseems, from fitting is the task I put on thee. And for love of thy valour, who art thou, say, O warrior?" the gilla asked, for he was sore affrighted.

"That same renowned Cuchulain am I of whom thou spakest a while ago in the morning."

"Woe is me then, by reason of this" cried the gilla; "for this am I lost forever."

"Whence comest thou and who art thou?" Cuchulain asked.

"Charioteer am I of Orlam, Ailill's son and Medb's" said he.

"Fear nothing; I will not slay thee at all, boy," said Cuchulain; "for I slay nor charioteers nor horseboys nor persons unarmed. But, prithee, where is thy master, gilla?"

"Over yonder by the trench, with his back to the pillar stone," answered the gilla.

"Off with thee thither to him and bear him a warning that he be on his guard. For if we meet he shall fall by my hand."

Thereupon the charioteer repaired by one way to his master, and Cuchulain went by another, and fast as the gilla sped to Orlam, faster still Cuchulain did reach him and offered him combat and he struck off his head, and raising it aloft displayed it to the men of Erin, and he flourished it in the presence of the host. Then he put the head on the charioteer's back and said, "Take this with thee, and so go to the camp. Unless thou goest so, a stone out of my sling will reach thee."

When the charioteer came nigh to the camp he took the head from his back and told his adventures to Ailill and Medb. "It is not the same, this exploit and the catching of birds," quoth she.

"And he told me" (said the boy) "unless I brought it on my back to the camp, he would break my head with a stone." Hence Leaca Orlaim ('Orlam's Flagstones') to the north of Disert Lochaid is the name of the place where he fell. Tamlachta

('Gravestones') is another name for it, and it is for this reason it is so called because of the little gravestones and the violent deaths which Cuchulain worked on it."

VIIIA THE SLAYING OF THE THREE MacARACH

Then came the three macArach on to the ford at Ard Ciannacht to encounter Cuchulain: Lon ('Ousel'), Uala ('Pride'), and Diliu ('Deluge'); — Meslir ('Lir's Fosterling'), and Meslaoc ('Hero's Fosterling'), and Meslethain ('Lethan's Fosterling') were the names of their charioteers. This is why they came to engage with Cuchulain, for the deed he had done the day before they deemed past bearing, when the two sons of Nera son of Nuatar, son of Tacan, were slain at Ath Gabla ('Fork-ford'), and Orlam, Ailill's son and Medb's, was slain withal and his head displayed to the men of Erin, so that their desire was to kill Cuchulain in the same manner in revenge for him, and that they should be the ones to rid the host of that pest and bring his head with them to set it aloft. They went into the wood and cut off three great white hazelwood strips (and put them) into the hands of their charioteers, so that the six of them might engage in battle at one and the same time with Cuchulain. Cuchulain turned on them and smote their six heads from them. Thus fell the macArach at the hands of Cuchulain, because they observed not fair fight with him. At that same time Orlam's charioteer was between Ailill and Medb. Cuchulain slung a stone at him, so that it broke his head and his brains came out over his ears. Fertedil was his name. Hence it is not true that Cuchulain slew no charioteers. Albeit he slew them not without fault.

VIIIB THE COMBAT OF LETHAN AND CUCHULAIN

There came also Lethan ('the Broad') to his ford on the Nith in the land of Conalle Murthemni, to fight with Cuchulain. He was angered at what Cuchulain had wrought. He came upon him at the ford. Ath Carpait ('Chariot Ford') is the name of the ford where they fought, for their chariots were broken in the combat on the ford. It is there that Mulcha, Lethan's charioteer, fell on the shoulder of the hill between the two fords, for he had offered battle and combat to Laeg son of Riangabair. Hence it is called Guala Mulchi ('Mulcha's Shoulder') ever since. It is there, too, that Cuchulain and Lethan met, and Lethan fell at Cuchulain's hands and he smote his head from his neck on the ford and left it therewith, that is, he left the head with the trunk. Wherefore the name of the ford of the Nith was called Ath Lethain ('Lethain's Ford') ever since in the district of Conalle Murthemni.

Then came unto them the Crutti Cainbili ('the Tuneful Harpers'), from Ess Ruaid in the north to amuse them, out of friendship for Ailill and Medb. They opined it was to spy upon them they were come from Ulster. When they came within sight of the camp of the men of Erin, fear, terror, and dread possessed them, and the hosts pursued them as never men pursued, far and wide, till they escaped them in the shapes of deer near the standing stones at Lia Mor ('Great Stone') in the north. For though they were known as the 'Mellifluous Harpers' they were druids, men of great cunning and great power of augury and magic.

VIIIC THE KILLING OF THE SQUIRREL AND OF THE TAME BIRD

Then Cuchulain made a threat in Methè that wherever he saw Medb he would cast a stone at her and that it would not go far from the side of her head. That he also fulfilled. In the place where he saw Medb west of the ford he cast a stone from his sling at her, so that it killed the pet bird that was on her shoulder. Medb passed over the ford eastwards, and again he cast a stone from his sling at her east of the ford, so that it killed the tame squirrel that was on her shoulder. Hence the names of those places are still, Meide in Togmail ('Squirrel's Neck') and Meide ind Eoin ('Bird's Neck'). And Ath Srethe ('Ford of the Throw') is the name of the ford over which Cuchulain cast the stone from his sling.

Then Reuin was drowned in his lake. Hence is Loch Reuin. "Your companion is not afar off from you" cried Ailill to the Manè. They stood up and looked around. When they sat down again, Cuchulain struck one of them so that his head was split.

"It is well it was thou hast essayed that; thy mirth was not seemly" quoth Manè the fool; "it is I would have taken his head off." Cuchulain flung a stone at him, so that his head was split. Thus these people were slain: Orlam, first of all, on his hill; the three sons of Arach on their ford; Fertidil in his ... (?); Maenan on his hill.

"I swear by the god by whom my people swear" cried Ailill; "the man that scoffs at Cuchulain here I will make two halves of. But above all let us hasten our way by day and by night" Ailill continued "till we come to Cualnge. That man will slay two thirds of your host in this fashion."

Then did the men of Erin deliberate about going to ravage and lay waste Mag Breg and Meath and the plain of Conall and the land of Cuchulain; and it was in the presence of Fergus macRoig they discussed it.

The four grand provinces of Erin moved out on the morrow, and began to harry the plains of Breg and Murthemne. And the sharp, keen edged anxiety for Cuchulain came over his fosterer Fergus. And he bade the men of Erin be on their guard that night, for that Cuchulain would come upon them. And here again he sang in his praise, as we wrote it before, and he uttered the lay: —

"If Cuchulain, Cualnge's Hound,
And Red Branch chiefs on you come,
Men will welter in their blood,
Laying waste Murthemne's plain!"

"Woe to him possesses wealth,
Less he find a way to 'scape;
And your wives will be enslaved,
And your chiefs fill pools of blood!"

“Far away he[c] held his course,
Till he reached Armenia’s heights;
 Battle dared he, past his wont,
And the Burnt-breasts put to death!

“Hardest for him was to drive
Necht’s sons from their chieftest haunts;
And the smith’s hound — mighty deed —
 Hath he slain with single hand!

“More than this I’ve naught to say,
 As concerns Dechtirè’s son;
 My belief, in troth, is this:
 Ye will now meet with your fate.”

After this lay, that was the day that Donn (“the Brown Bull”) of Cualnge came into the land of Marginè to Sliab Culinn and with him fifty heifers of the heifers of Ulster; and there he was pawing and digging up the earth in that place, in the land of Marginè, in Cualnge; that is, he flung the turf over him with his heels. While the hosts were marching over Mag Breg, Cuchulain in the meanwhile laid hands on their camps. It was on the same day that the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, the prophetess of the fairy folk, came in the form of a bird, and she perched on the standing-stone in Temair of Cualnge giving the Brown Bull of Cualnge warning and lamentations before the men of Erin. Then she began to address him and what she said was this: “Good, now, O luckless one, thou Brown Bull of Cualnge” so spake the Morrigan; “take heed; for the men of Erin. are on thy track and seeking thee and they will come upon thee, and if thou art taken they will carry thee away to their camp like any ox on a raid, unless thou art on thy guard.” And she commenced to give warning to him in this fashion, telling him he would be slain on the Táin, and she delivered this judgement and spake these words aloud: —

“Knows not the restless Brown of the truly deadly fray that is not uncertain? — A raven’s croak — The raven that doth not conceal — Foes range your checkered plain — Troops on raids — I have a secret — Ye shall know ... The waving fields — The deep-green grass ... and rich, soft plain — Wealth of flowers’ splendour — Badb’s cow-lowing — Wild the raven — Dead the men — A tale of woe — Battle-storms on Cualnge evermore, to the death of mighty sons — Kith looking on the death of kin!”

When the Brown Bull of Cualnge heard those words he moved on to Glenn na Samaisce (‘Heifers’ Glen’) in Sliab Culinn (‘Hollymount’) in the north of Ulster, and fifty of his heifers with him, and his herdsman accompanied him; Forgemen was the name of the cowherd. And he threw off the thrice fifty boys who were wont to play on his back and he destroyed two thirds of the boys.[5] This was one of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge: Fifty heifers he would cover every day. These calved before that same hour on the next day and such of them that calved not at the due time burst with the calves, because they could not suffer the begetting of the Brown Bull of Cualnge. One of the

magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge were the fifty grown youths who engaged in games, who on his fine back found room every evening to play draughts and assembly and leaping; he would not put them from him nor would he totter under them. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was the hundred warriors he screened from the heat and the cold under his shadow and shelter. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was that no goblin nor boggart nor sprite of the glen dared come into one and the same cantred with him. Another of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge was his musical lowing every evening as he returned to his haggard, his shed and his byre. It was music enough and delight for a man in the north and in the south, in the east and the west, and in the middle of the cantred of Cualnge, the lowing he made at even as he came to his haggard, his shed, and his byre. These, then, are some of the magic virtues of the Brown Bull of Cualnge.

Thereupon on the morrow the hosts proceeded among the rocks and dunes of the land of Conalle Murthemni. Cuchulain killed no one from Sailé ('the Sea') around Dorthè in the land of Conalle, until he reached Cualnge. At that time Cuchulain was in Cuincè, that is a mountain. He had threatened that, where he would see Medb, he would hurl a stone at her head. It was not easy to do this, for it was thus Medb went, with half the host around her and their canopy of shields over her head. And Medb ordered a canopy of shields to be held over her head in order that Cuchulain might not strike her from the hills or hillocks or heights. Howbeit on that day, no killing nor attack came from Cuchulain upon the men of Erin, in the land of Murthemne among the rocks and dunes of Conalle Murthemni.

VIIID THE SLAYING OF LOCHE

The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin bided their time in Redē Lochē in Cualnge and pitched camp and took quarters therein for that night. Medb bade her fair handmaiden from amongst her attendants to go for her to the river for water for drinking and washing. Lochē was the name of the maiden. Thereupon Lochē went, and fifty women in her train and the queen's diadem of gold on her head. And Cuchulain espied them and he put a stone on his sling and cast a stone from his staff sling at her, so that he broke the diadem of gold in three pieces and killed the maiden on her plain. Thence is Redē Lochē ('the Plain of Lochē') in Cualnge. For Cuchulain had thought, for want of acquaintance and knowledge, that it was Medb that was there.

From Finnabair of Cualnge the hosts divided and set the country on fire. They gathered all their women and boys and girls and cattle in Cualnge together so that they all were in Finnabair. "Ye have not fared well" quoth Medb; "I see not the bull amongst you."

"He is not in the land at all" replied every one. They summoned Lothar, the cowherd, to Medb.

"Where, thinkest thou, is the bull?" she asked.

"I have great fear to tell," said the cowherd. "The night" said he, "that the Ulstermen fell into their 'Pains,' the Donn went and three score heifers along with him; and he is at Dubcaire Glinni Gat ('the Black Corrie of the Osier-glen')."

"Rise" said Medb "and take a withy between each two of you." And they do accordingly. Hence is the name, Glenn Gatt, of that glen.

Then they led the bull to Finnabair. In the place where the bull saw Lothar, the cowherd, he attacked him, and soon he carried his entrails out on his horns and together with his thrice fifty heifers he attacked the camp, so that fifty warriors perished. Hence this is the Tragical Death of Lothar on the Táin and the Finding of the Bull according to this version. Thereafter the bull went from them away from the camp and they knew not whither he had gone from them and they were ashamed. Medb asked the cowherd if he might know where the bull was. "I trow he is in the wilds of Sliab Culinn." Then they turned back ravaging Cualnge and they found not the bull there.[5]

VIIIIE THE KILLING OF UALA

Early on the morrow the hosts continued their way to lay waste the plain of Murthemne and to sack Mag Breg and Meath and Machaire Conaill ('Conall's Plain') and the land of Cualnge. It was then that the streams and rivers of Conalle Murthemni rose to the tops of the trees, and the streams of the Cronn rose withal, until the hosts arrived at Glaiss Cruinn ('Cronn's Stream'). And they attempted the stream and failed to cross it because of the size of its waves, so that they slept on its bank. And Cluain Carpat ('Chariot Meadow') is the name of the first place where they reached it. This is why Cluain Carpat is the name of that place, because of the hundred chariots which the river carried away from them to the sea. Medb ordered her people that one of the warriors should go try the river. And on the morrow there arose a great, stout, wonderful warrior of the particular people of Medb and Ailill, Uala by name, and he took on his back a massy rock, to the end that Glaiss Cruinn might not carry him back. And he went to essay the stream, and the stream threw him back dead, lifeless, with his stone on his back and so he was drowned. Medb ordered that he be lifted out of the river then by the men of Erin and his grave dug, and his keen made, and his stone raised over his grave, so that it is thence Lia Ualann ('Uala's Stone') on the road near the stream in the land of Cualnge.

Cuchulain clung close to the hosts that day provoking them to encounter and combat. Four and seven score kings fell at his hands at that same stream, and he slew a hundred of their armed, kinglike warriors around Roen and Roi, the two chroniclers of the Táin. This is the reason the account of the Táin was lost and had to be sought afterwards for so long a time.

Medb called upon her people to go meet Cuchulain in encounter and combat for the sake of the hosts. "It will not be I" and "It will not be I" spake each and every one from his place. "No caitiff is due from my people. Even though one should be due, it is not I would go to oppose Cuchulain, for no easy thing is it to do battle with him."

When they had failed to find the Donn Cualnge, the hosts kept their way along the river around the river Cronn to its source, being unable to cross it, till they reached the place where the river rises out of the mountains, and, had they wished it, they would have gone between the river and the mountain, but Medb would not allow it, so they had to dig and hollow out the mountain before her in order that their trace might remain there forever and that it might be for a shame and reproach to Ulster.

They tarried there three days and three nights till they had dug out the earth before them. And Bernais ('the Gap') of the Foray of Medb and the Gap of the Foray of Cualnge is another name for the place ever since, for it is through it the drove afterwards passed. There Cuchulain killed Cronn and Coemdele and ...

The warriors of the four grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and took quarters that night at Belat Aileain ('the Island's Crossway'). Belat Aileain was its name up to then, but Glenn Tail ('Glen of Shedding') is henceforth its name because of the abundance of curds and of milk and of new warm milk which the droves of cattle and the flocks of the land of Conalle and Murthemne yielded there that night for the men of Erin. And Liasa Liac ('Stone Sheds') is another name for it to this day, and it is for this it bears that name, for it is there that the men of Erin raised cattle-stalls and byres for their herds and droves between Cualnge and Conalle. Botha is still another name for it, for the men of Erin erected bothies and huts there.

The four of the five grand provinces of Erin took up the march until they reached the Sechair in the west on the morrow. Sechair was the name of the river hitherto; Glaiss Gatlaig ('Osier Water') is its name henceforward. And Glaiss Gatlaig rose up against them. Now this is the reason it had that name, for it was in osiers and ropes that the men of Erin brought their flocks and droves over across it, and the entire host let their osiers and ropes drift with the stream after crossing. Hence the name, Glaiss Gatlaig. Then they slept at Druim Fenè in Conalle. These then are their stages from Cualnge to the plain (of Conalle Murthemni) according to this version. Other authors of this Work and other books aver that they followed another way on their journeyings from Finnabair to Conalle.

VIIIF THE HARRYING OF CUALNGE FOLLOWETH HERE BELOW

After every one had come with their spoils and they were all gathered in Finnabair of Cualnge, Medb spake: "Let the camp be divided here" said Medb; "the foray cannot be carried on by a single road. Let Ailill with half his force go by Midluachair. We and Fergus will go by Bernas Bo Ulad ('the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster')."

"Not fair is the part that has fallen to us of the force" said Fergus; "the cattle cannot be driven over the mountain without dividing." This then is done. Hence cometh Bernas Bo Ulad ('the Pass of the Cattle of Ulster').

Then spake Ailill to his charioteer Cuillius: "Find out for me today Medb and Fergus. I wot not what hath led them to keep thus together. I would fain have a token from thee." Cuillius went where Medb and Fergus wantedon. The pair dallied behind while the warriors continued their march. Cuillius stole near them and they perceived not the spy. It happened that Fergus' sword lay close by him. Cuillius drew it from its sheath and left the sheath empty. Then Cuillius betook himself to Ailill. "Well?" said Ailill.

"Well, then" replied Cuillius; "thou knowest the signification of this token. As thou hast thought" continued Cuillius "it is thus I discovered them, lying together."

"It is so, then." Each of them laughs, at the other.

"It is well so" said Ailill; "she had no choice; to win his help on the Táin she hath done it. Keep the sword carefully by thee" said Ailill; "put it beneath thy seat in the chariot and a linen cloth wrapped round it."

When Fergus got up to take his sword, "Alas!" cried he.

"What aileth thee?" Medb asked.

"An ill deed have I done Ailill" said he. "Wait thou here till I come out of the wood" said Fergus "and wonder not though it be long till I come." It happened that Medb knew not of the loss of the sword. Fergus went out taking his charioteer's sword with him in his hand, and he fashioned a sword from a tree in the wood. Hence is Fid Mor Thruailli ('Great Scabbard Wood') in Ulster.

"Let us hasten after our comrades" said Fergus. The forces of all came together in the plain. They raised their tents. Fergus was summoned to Ailill for a game of chess. When Fergus entered the tent Ailill laughed at him.

Cuchulain came so that he was before Ath Cruinn ('the Ford of the Cronn'). "O master Laeg" he cried to his driver "here are the hosts for us."

"I swear by the gods" said the charioteer "I will do a mighty feat in the eyes of chariot fighters, in quick spurring on of the slender steeds; with yokes of silver and golden wheels shall they be urged on in triumph. Thou shalt ride before heads of kings. The steeds I guide will bring victory with their bounding."

"Take heed, O Laeg" said Cuchulain; "hold the reins for the great triumph of Macha, that the horses drag thee not over the mass at the ... (?) of a woman. Let us go over the straight plain of these ... (?). I call on the waters to help me," cried Cuchulain. "I beseech heaven and earth and the Cronn above all."

Then the Cronn opposes them,
Holds them back from Murthemne,
Till the heroes' work is done
On the mount of Ocainè!

Therewith the water rose up till it was in the tops of the trees.

Manè son of Ailill and Medb marched in advance of the rest. Cuchulain slew him on the ford and thirty horsemen of his people were drowned. Again Cuchulain laid low twice sixteen warriors of theirs near the stream. The warriors of Erin pitched their tents near the ford. Lugaid son of Nos grandson of Lomarc Allcomach went to parley with Cuchulain. Thirty horsemen were with him. "Welcome to thee, O Lugaid" cried Cuchulain. "Should a flock of birds graze upon the plain of Murthemne, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. Should fish come to the falls or to the bays, thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have the three sprigs, even a sprig of cresses, a sprig of laver, and a sprig of sea-grass; there will be a man to take thy place at the ford."

"This welcome is truly meant" replied Lugaid; "the choice of people for the youth whom I desire!"

"Splendid are your hosts" said Cuchulain. "It will be no misfortune" said Lugaid "for thee to stand up alone before them."

"True courage and valour have I" Cuchulain made answer. "Lugaid, my master" said Cuchulain "do the hosts fear me?"

"By the god" Lugaid made answer "I swear that no one man of them nor two men dares make water outside the camp unless twenty or thirty go with him."

"It will be something for them" said Cuchulain "if I begin to cast from my sling. He will be fit for thee, O Lugaid, this companion thou hast in Ulster, if the men oppose me one by one. Say, then, what wouldst thou?" asked Cuchulain.

"A truce with my host."

"Thou shalt have it, provided there be a token therefor. And tell my master Fergus that there shall be a token on the host. Tell the leeches that there shall

be a token on the host, and let them swear to preserve my life and let them provide me each night with provision."

Lugaid went from him. It happened that Fergus was in the tent with Ailill. Lugaid called him out and reported that (proposal of Cuchulain's) to him. Then Ailill was heard:

"I swear by the god, I cannot," said Fergus "unless I ask the lad. Help me, O Lugaid" said Fergus. "Do thou go to him, to see whether Ailill with a division may come to me to my company. Take him an ox with salt pork and a keg of wine." Thereupon Lugaid goes to Cuchulain and tells him that.

"Tis the same to me whether he go" said Cuchulain. Then the two hosts unite. They remain there till night, or until they spend thirty nights there. Cuchulain destroyed thirty of their warriors with his sling.

"Your journeyings will be ill starred" said Fergus (to Medb and Ailill); "the men of Ulster will come out of their 'Pains' and will grind you down to the earth and the gravel. Evil is the battle corner wherein we are." He proceeds to Cul Airthir ('the Eastern Nook'). Cuchulain slays thirty of their heroes on Ath Duirn ('Ford of the Fist'). Now they could not reach Cul Airthir till night. Cuchulain killed thirty of their men there and they raised their tents in that place. In the morning Ailill's charioteer, Cuillius to wit, was washing the wheel bands in the ford. Cuchulain struck him with a stone so that he killed him. Hence is Ath Cuillne ('Ford of Destruction') in Cul Airthir.'