

## IX THE PROPOSALS

The four grand provinces of Erin proceeded till they pitched camp and took quarters in Druim En ('Birds' Ridge') in the land of Conalle Murthemni, and they slept there that night, as we said before, and Cuchulain held himself at Ferta Illergaib ('the Burial-mound on the Slopes') hard by them that night, and he, Cuchulain, shook, brandished and flourished his weapons that night. Every night of the three nights they were there he made casts from his sling at them, from Ochaine nearby, so that one hundred warriors of the host perished of fright and fear and dread of Cuchulain. "Not long will our host endure in this way with Cuchulain" quoth Ailill.

Medb called upon Fiachu son of Ferfebè of the Ulstermen to go parley with Cuchulain, to come to some terms with him. "What terms shall be given him?" asked Fiachu son of Ferfebè.

"Not hard to answer," Medb replied: "He shall be recompensed for the loss of his lands and estates, for whosoever has been slain of the Ulstermen, so that it be paid to him as the men of Erin adjudge according to the will of the Ulstermen and of Fergus and of the nobles of the men of Erin who are in this camp and encampment. Entertainment shall be his at all times in Cruachan; wine and mead shall be poured out for him. He shall have from the plain of Ai the equal of the plain of Murthemne and the best chariot that is in Ai and the equipment of twelve men. Offer, if it please him more, the plain wherein he was reared and thrice seven bondmaids. And he shall come into my service and Ailill's, for that is more seemly for him than to be in the service of the lordling with whom he is, even of Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathatch.

Accordingly this was the greatest word of scorn and insult spoken on the Cow Raid of Cualnge, to make a lordling of the best king of a province in Erin, even of Conchobar.

Then came Fiachu son of Ferfebè to converse with Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "Welcome thy coming and thine arrival, O Fiachu" said Cuchulain.

"I regard that welcome as truly meant" said Fiachu.

"It is truly meant for thee" replied Cuchulain; "and thou shalt have a night of hospitality this night."

"Victory and a blessing attend thee, O fosterling" replied Fiachu. "Not for hospitality am I come, but to parley with thee am I come from Medb, and to bring thee terms."

"What hast thou brought with thee?"

“Thou shalt be recompensed for whatsoever was destroyed of Ulster which shall be paid thee as best the men of Erin adjudge. Entertainment shalt thou enjoy in Cruachan; wine and mead shall be poured out for thee and thou shalt enter the service of Ailill and Medb, for that is more seemly for thee than to be in the service of the lordling with whom thou art.”

Nay, of a truth” answered Cuchulain “I would not sell my mother’s brother for any other king!”

“Further” continued Fiachu “that thou comest tomorrow to a tryst with Medb and Fergus in Glenn Fochaine.

Therewith Fiachu left behind a wish for long life and health with Cuchulain.

Accordingly, early on the morrow, Cuchulain set forth for Glenn Fochaine. Likewise Medb and Fergus went to meet him. And Medb looked narrowly at Cuchulain, and her spirit chafed her at him that day, for no bigger than the bulk of a stripling did he seem to her. “Is that yonder the renowned Cuchulain thou speakest of, O Fergus?” asked Medb “of whom it is said amongst ye Ulstermen that there is not in Erin a warrior for whom he is not a match and mighty combat?”

“Not in Erin alone, did we say” Fergus made answer; “but there is not in the world a warrior for whom he is not a match and mighty combat.” And Medb began to address Fergus and she made this lay: —

Medb:                                “If that be the noble Hound,  
  Of whom ye of Ulster boast,  
  What man e’er stout foe hath faced,  
  Will fend him from Erin’s men!”

Fergus:                                “Howe’er young the Hound thou seest,  
  That Murthemne’s Plain doth course,  
  That man hath not stood on earth  
  Whom he’d crush not with his might!”

Medb:                                “We will bring this warrior terms;  
  If he slight them, he is mad:  
  Half his cows, his women, half.  
  He shall change his way of fight!”

Fergus:                                “My wish, that yell not o’ercome  
  This Hound from proud Murthemne!  
  Deeds he fears not — fierce and bright —  
  This I know, if it be he!”

“Accost Cuchulain, O Fergus” said Medb.

“Nay, then” quoth Fergus “but do thou accost him thyself, for ye are not asunder here in the valley, in Glenn Fochaine.” And Medb began to address Cuchulain and she made a lay, to which he responded:

Medb:           “Culann’s Hound, whom quatrains praise,  
                  Keep thy staff-sling far from us;  
                  Thy fierce, famed fight hath us ruined,  
                  Hath us broken and confused!”

Cuchulain:       “Medb of Mur, he, Maga’s son,  
                  No base arrant wight am I.  
                  While I live I’ll never cease  
                  Cualnge’s raid to harass sore!”

Medb:           “If thou wilt take this from us,  
                  Valiant chief, thou Cualnge’s Hound;  
                  Half thy cows, thy women, half,  
                  Thou shalt have through fear of thee!”

Cuchulain:       “As by right of thrusts am I  
                  Ulster’s champion and defence,  
                  Naught I’ll yield till I retrieve  
                  Cow and woman ta’en from Gael!”

Medb:           What thou askest is too much,  
                  After slaughtering our fair troops,  
                  That we keep but steeds and gauds,  
                  All because of one sole man!”

Cuchulain:       “Eocho’s daughter, fair, of Fal,  
                  I’m not good at wars of words;  
                  Though a warrior — fair the cheer —  
                  Counsel mine is little worth!”

Medb:           “Shame thou hast none for what thou sayest,  
                  O Dechtirè’s lordly son!  
                  Famous are the terms for thee,  
                  O thou battling Culann’s Hound!”

When this lay was finished, Cuchulain accepted none of the terms which she had offered. In such wise they parted in the valley and withdrew in equal anger on the one side and on the other.

The warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin pitched camp and took quarters for three days and three nights at Druim En (‘Birds’ Ridge’) in Conalle Murthemni, but neither huts nor tents did they set up, nor did they engage in feasts or repasts, nor sang they songs nor carols those three nights. And Cuchulain destroyed a hundred of their warriors every night ere the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.

“Our hosts will not last long in this fashion” said Medb “if Cuchulain slays a hundred of our warriors every night. Wherefore is a proposal not made to him and do we not parley with him?”

“What might the proposal be?” asked Ailill.

“Let the cattle that have milk be given to him and the captive women from amongst our booty. And he on his side shall check his staff sling from the men of Erin and give leave to the hosts to sleep, even though he slay them by day.”

“Who shall go with that proposal?” Ailill asked.

“Who” answered Medb “but macRoth the chief runner!”

“Nay, but I will not go” said macRoth “for I am in no way experienced and know not where Cuchulain may be, and even though I should meet him, I should not know him.”

“Ask Fergus” quoth Medb; “like enough he knows where he is.”

“Nay, then, I know it not” answered Fergus; “but I trow he is in the snow between Fochain and the sea, taking the wind and the sun after his sleeplessness last night, killing and slaughtering the host single handed.” And so it truly was. Then on that errand to Delga macRoth set forth, the messenger of Ailill and Medb. He it is that circles Erin in one day. There it is that Fergus opined that Cuchulain would be, in Delga.

Heavy snow fell that night so that all the five provinces of Erin were a white plane with the snow. And Cuchulain doffed the seven score waxed, boardlike tunics which were used to be held under cords and strings next his skin, in order that his sense might not be deranged when the fit of his fury came on him. And the snow melted for thirty feet all around him, because of the intensity of the warrior’s heat and the warmth of Cuchulain’s body. And the gilla remained a good distance from him for he could not endure to remain near him because of the might of his rage and the warrior’s fury and the heat of his body. “A single warrior approacheth, O Cuchulain” cried Laeg to Cuchulain.

“What manner of warrior is he?” asked Cuchulain.

“A brown, broad-faced, handsome fellow; a yellow head of hair and a linen ornament round it; a splendid, brown, hooded cloak, with red ornamentation, about him; a fine, bronze pin in his cloak; a leathern three-striped doublet next his skin; two gapped shoes between his two feet and the ground; a white hazel dog staff in one of his hands; a single edged sword with ornaments of walrus tooth on its hilt in the other.

“Good, O gilla” quoth Cuchulain “these be the tokens of a herald. One of the heralds of Erin is he to bring me message and offer of parley.”

Now was macRoth arrived at the place where Laeg was, "How now! What is thy title as vassal, O gilla?" macRoth asked.

"Vassal am I to the youth up yonder" the gilla made answer.

MacRoth came to the place where Cuchulain was. Cuchulain was sitting in the snow there up to his two hips with nothing about him ... his mantle. "How now! What is thy name as vassal, O warrior?" asked macRoth.

"Vassal am I to Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathach, son of the High King of this province."

"Hast not something, a name more special than that?"

"Tis enough for the nonce" answered Cuchulain.

"Haply, thou knowest where I might find that famous Cuchulain of whom the men of Erin clamour now on this foray?"

"What wouldst thou say to him that thou wouldst not to me?" asked Cuchulain.

"To parley with him am I come on the part of Ailill and Medb, with terms and friendly intercourse for him."

"What terms hast thou brought with thee for him?"

"The milk kine and the bondwomen of the booty he shall have, and for him to hold back his staff sling from the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder feat he works every evening upon them."

"Even though the one thou seekest were really at hand, he would not accept the proposals thou askest."

"How so, then," said macRoth; "for the Ulstermen, as amends for their honour and in reprisal for injuries and satires and hindrances and for bands of troops and marauders, will kill for meat in the winter the milk cows ye have captured, should they happen to have no yeld cattle. And, what is more, they will bring their bondwomen to bed to them, and thus will grow up a base progeny on the side of the mothers in the land of Ulster, and loath I am to leave after me such a disgrace on the men of Ulster.

MacRoth went his way back to the camp of the men of Erin to where Ailill and Medb and Fergus were. "What! Didst thou not find him?" Medb asked.

"Verily, I know not, but I found a surly, angry, hateful, wrathful gilla in the snow betwixt Fochain and the sea. Sooth to say, I know not if he were Cuchulain."

“Hath he accepted these proposals from thee?”

“Nay then, he hath not.” And macRoth related unto them all his answer, the reason why he did not accept them. “It was he himself with whom thou spakest” said Fergus.

“Another offer shall be made him” said Medb.

“What is the offer?” asked Ailill.

“There shall be given to him the yeld cattle and the noblest of the captive women of the booty, and his sling shall be checked from the hosts, for not pleasant is the thunder feat he works on them every evening.”

“Who should go make this covenant?” said they.

“Who but macRoth the king’s envoy” said every one.

“Yea, I will go” said macRoth “because this time I know him.”

Thereupo] macRoth arose and came to parley with Cuchulain. “To parley with thee am I come this time with other terms, for I wis it is thou art the renowned Cuchulain.”

“What hast thou brought with thee now?” Cuchulain asked.

“What is dry of the kine and what is noblest of the captives shalt thou get, and hold thy staff sling from the men of Erin and suffer the men of Erin to go to sleep, for not pleasant is the thunder feat thou workest upon them every evening.”

“I accept not that offer, because, as amends for their honour, the Ulstermen will kill the dry cattle. For the men of Ulster are honourable men and they would remain wholly without dry kine and milk kine. They would bring their free women ye have captured to the querns and to the kneading-troughs and into bondage and other serfdom besides. This would be a disgrace. Loath I should be to leave after me this shame in Ulster, that slave girls and bondmaids should be made of the daughters of kings and princes of Ulster.”

“Is there any offer at all thou wilt accept this time?” said macRoth.

“Aye, but there is” answered Cuchulain.

“Then wilt thou tell me the offer?” asked macRoth.

“By my word” Cuchulain made answer “’tis not I that will tell you.”

“It is a question, then” said macRoth.

“If there be among you in the camp,” said Cuchulain “one that knows the terms I demand, let him inform you, and I will abide thereby.”

“And if there be not?” said macRoth.

“If there be not” said Cuchulain “let no one come near me any more with offers or with friendly intercourse]or concerning aught other injunction, for, whosoever may come, it will be the term of his life!”

MacRoth came back to the camp and station of the men of Erin, to where Ailill, Medb, and Fergus were, and Medb asked his tidings. “Didst thou find him?” Medb asked.

“In truth, I found him” macRoth replied.

“Hath he accepted the terms?”

“He hath not accepted” replied macRoth.

“How so;” said Ailill “is there an offer he will accept?”

“There is one, he said” answered macRoth.

“Hath he made known to thee this offer?”

“This is his word” said macRoth “that he himself would not disclose it to ye.”

“Tis a question, then” said Medb.

“But” (macRoth continued) “should there be one in our midst that knows his terms, that one would tell it to me.”

“And if there be not” said Ailill.

“And if there be not” (answered macRoth) “let no one go seek him any more. But, there is one thing I promise thee” said macRoth; “even though the kingdom of Erin were given me for it, I for one would not go on these same legs to that place to parley with him again.”

“Belike, Fergus knows” quoth Ailill. Therewith Medb looked at Fergus.

“What are the terms yonder man demands, O Fergus?” Medb asked.

“I know what the man meant to disclose. I see no advantage at all for ye in the terms he demands” Fergus replied.

“But what are those terms?” asked Medb.

“Not difficult to say” replied Fergus.

“That a single champion of the men of Erin be sent to fight and contend with him every day. The while he slayeth that man, the army will be permitted to continue its march. Then, when he will have slain that man, another warrior shall be sent to meet him on the ford. Either that, or the men of Erin shall halt and camp there till sunrise’s bright hour in the morning. And, by the ford whereon his single handed battle and fight takes place, the cattle shall not be taken by day or by night, to see if there come to him help from the men of Ulster. And I wonder” continued Fergus “how long it will be till they come out of their ‘Pains.’ Whatever Ulstermen are injured or wounded nearby him, your leeches shall heal them and ye shall not be paid for the price of their healing. Whatever daughter of kings or of princes of the men of Erin shall love him, ye shall bring her to him together with her purchase and bride price. And further, Cuchulain’s food and clothing shall be provided by you, so long as he will be on this expedition.”

“Good, O Fergus” asked Ailill “will he abate aught of these terms?”

“In sooth, will he” replied Fergus; “namely, he will not exact to be fed and clothed by you, but of himself will provide food and clothing.”

“By our conscience” said Ailill “this is a grievous proposal.”

“What he asks is good” replied Medb; “and he shall obtain those terms, for we deem it easier to bear that he should have one of our warriors every day than a hundred every night.”

“Who will go and make known those terms to Cuchulain?”

“Who, then, but Fergus?” replied Medb. “Come now, O Fergus” said Medb; “take upon thee to fulfil and make good those terms to him.”

“Nevermore!” said Fergus.

“Why not?” asked Ailill.

“I fear ye will not make true and fulfil them for me.”

“They will truly be fulfilled,” said Medb.

(Then said Fergus:) “Bonds and covenants, pledges and bail shall be given for abiding by those terms and for their fulfilment towards Cuchulain.”

“I abide by it” said Medb, and she fast bound Fergus to them in like manner.

## X THE VIOLENT DEATH OF ETARCUMUL

Fergus' horses were brought and his chariot was hitched and Fergus set forth on that errand. And two horses were brought for Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn, a soft youth of the people of Medb and of Ailill. Now Etarcumul followed Fergus. "Whither goest thou?" Fergus demanded.

"We go with thee," Etarcumul made answer.

"And why goest thou with me?" asked Fergus.

"To behold the form and appearance of Cuchulain, and to gaze upon him, for he is unknown to me."

"Wilt thou do my bidding" said Fergus "thou wilt in no wise go thither."

"Why shall I not, pray?"

"I would not have thee go" said Fergus; "and it is not out of hatred of thee, only I should be loath to have combat between thee and Cuchulain. Thy lightheartedness, thy haughtiness and thy pride and thine overweeningness (I know), but (I also know) the fierceness and valour and hostility, the violence and vehemence of the youth against whom thou goest, even Cuchulain. And methinks ye will have contention before ye part. No good will come from your meeting."

"Art thou not able to come between us to protect me?"

"I am, to be sure" Fergus answered "provided thou thyself seek not the combat and treat not what he says with contempt."

"I will not seek it" said Etarcumul "till the very day of doom!"

Then they went their ways in two chariots to Delga, to come up to Cuchulain where Cuchulain was between Fochain and the sea. There it is that he was that day, with his back to the pillar-stone at Crich Rois, playing draughts with Laeg, to wit, his charioteer. The back of his head was turned towards them that approached and Laeg faced them. And not a living thing entered the entire plain without Laeg perceiving it and, notwithstanding, he continued to win every other game of draughts from Cuchulain. "A lone warrior cometh towards us over the plain, my master Cucuc" spake Laeg.

"What manner of warrior?" queried Cuchulain.

"A fine, large chariot is there" said he.

"But what sort of chariot?"

“As large as one of the chief mountains that are highest on a great plain appears to me the chariot that is under the warrior; and I would liken to the battlements of one of the vast, royal seats of the province the chariot that is in the trappings of those horses; as large as one of the noble trees on a main fort’s green meseems the curly, tressed, fair yellow, all golden hair hanging loose around the man’s head; a purple mantle fringed with thread of gold wrapped around him; a golden, ornamented brooch in the mantle over his breast; a bright-shining, hooded shirt, with red embroidery of red gold trussed up on his white skin; a broad and grey shafted lance, perforated from *mimasc* to ‘horn’ flaming red in his hand; over him, a bossed, plaited shield, curved, with an engraved edge of silvered bronze, with applied ornaments of red gold thereon, and a boss of red gold; a lengthy sword, as long as the oar of a huge currach on a wild, stormy night, resting on the two thighs of the great haughty warrior that is within the chariot.”

“Holla! Welcome the coming of this guest to us!” cried Cuchulain. “We know the man; it is my master Fergus that cometh hither. Empty is the great paddle that my master Fergus carries,” said Cuchulain; “for there is no sword in its sheath but a sword of wood. For I have heard” Cuchulain continued “that Ailill got a chance at him and Medb as they lay, and he took away Fergus’ sword from him and gave it to his charioteer to take care of, and the sword of wood was put into its sheath.”

“Yet another single chariot-fighter I see coming towards us. With fullness of skill and beauty and splendour his horses speed.”

“A young, tender gilla in armour is in the chariot.”

“One of the youths of the men of Erin is he, O my master Laeg,” responded Cuchulain. “To scan my appearance and form is that man come, for I am renowned amongst them in the midst of their camp, and they know me not at all.”

Fergus came up to where Cuchulain was and he sprang from the chariot, and Cuchulain bade him a hearty welcome. “Welcome to thine arrival and thy coming, O my master Fergus!” cried Cuchulain; “and a night’s lodging shalt thou have here this night.”

“Thy hospitality and eke thy welcome I take for true” Fergus responded.

“Verily, it is truly meant for thee” said Cuchulain; “for comes there a brace of birds into the plain, thou shalt have a wild goose with half the other. If fish rise to the river-mouths, to the stones or waterfalls, thou shalt have a salmon with as much again. Thou shalt have a handful of watercress and a handful of sea-grass and a handful of laver and a drink from the sand afterwards. If thou hast a fight or combat with warrior before thee, I myself will go in thy stead to the ford. I will bear the fight that thou mayest return safe to the camp and the fort of the men of Erin on the morrow, and thou shalt lie on a litter of fresh rushes

till heavy sleep and slumber come on thee, and I will watch and guard thee as long as thou sleepest.”

“Well, then, mayest thou have victory and blessing, O fosterling” said Fergus. “We know of what sort is thy hospitality on this occasion, on the Cow spoil of Cualnge. But, not to claim that are we come, a night’s hospitality of thee, but to fulfil and make good the terms thou askest. As for this compact which thou hast asked of the men of Erin, single handed combat with one man, thou shalt have it. It is for that I am come, to bind thee thereto, and do thou take it upon thee.”

“I pledge myself truly” said Cuchulain “provided fair play and single-handed combat be granted to me. And, O, my master Fergus, do thou take upon thee the pact?” said Cuchulain.

“I bind myself to it” replied Fergus. And no longer than that did he remain in parley, lest the men of Erin should say they were betrayed or deserted by Fergus for his disciple. Fergus’ two horses were brought and his chariot was harnessed and he went back.

Etarcumul tarried behind gazing for a long time at Cuchulain. “At what starest thou, gilla?” asked Cuchulain.

“I look at thee,” said Etarcumul.

“In truth then, thou hast not far to look,” said Cuchulain. “There is no need of straining thine eye for that; not far from thee within sight, thine eye seeth what is not smaller than I nor bigger. If thou but knewest how angered is the little creature thou regardest, myself, to wit! And how then do I appear unto thee gazing upon me?”

“Thou pleasest me as thou art; a comely, shapely, wonderful, beautiful youth thou art, with brilliant, striking, various feats. Yet as for rating thee where goodly warriors are or forward youths or heroes of bravery or sledges of destruction, we count thee not nor consider thee at all. I know not why thou shouldst be feared by any one. I behold nothing of terror or fearfulness or of the overpowering of a host in thee. So, a comely youth with arms of wood and with showy feats is all thou art!”

“Though thou revilest me” said Cuchulain “it is a surety for thee that thou camest from the camp under the protection of Fergus, as thou well knowest. For the rest, I swear by my gods whom I worship, were it not for the honour of Fergus, it would be only bits of thy bones and shreds of thy limbs, thy reins drawn and thy quarters scattered that would be brought back to the camp behind thy horses and chariot!”

“But threaten me no longer in this wise, Cuchulain!” cried Etarcumul; “for the wonderful terms thou didst exact of the men of Erin, that fair play and combat with one man should be granted thee, none other of the men of Erin

but mine own self will come tomorrow at morn's early hour on the ford to attack thee."

"Come out, then" said Cuchulain "and howso early thou comest, thou wilt find me here. I will not fly before thee. Before no man have I put foot in flight till now on the Plunder of the Kine of Cualnge and neither will I fly before thee!"

Etarcumul returned from Methè and Cethè, and began to talk with his driver. "I must needs fight with Cuchulain tomorrow, gilla" said Etarcumul "for I gave my word to go."

"Tis true, thou didst" quoth the charioteer. "Howbeit, I know not wilt thou fulfil it."

"But what is better for us, to fulfil it tomorrow or forthwith tonight?"

"To our thinking" said the gilla "albeit no victory is to be won by fighting tomorrow, there is still less to be gained by fighting tonight, for thy combat and hurt is the nearer."

"Be that as it may" said he; "turn the horses and chariot back again from the hill for us, gilla, till we go to the ford of combat, for I swear by the gods whom I worship, I will not return to the camp till the end of life and time, till I bring with me the head of that young wildling, even the head of Cuchulain, for a trophy!"

The charioteer wheeled the chariot again towards the ford. They brought the left board to face the pair in a line with the ford. Laeg marked this and he cried to Cuchulain: ("Wist thou) the last chariot fighter that was here a while ago, O Cucuc?"

"What of him?" asked Cuchulain.

"He has brought his left board towards us in the direction of the ford."

"It is Etarcumul, O gilla, who seeks me in combat. I owe no refusal, but far from pleased am I thereat that he should come and seek combat of me. And unwelcome is his coming, because of the honour of my foster father Fergus under whom he came forth from the camp of the men of Erin. But not that I would protect him do I thus. Fetch me my arms, gilla, to the ford. Bring me my horse and my chariot after me. I deem it no honour for myself if the fellow reaches the ford before me." And straightway Cuchulain betook himself to the ford, and he bared his sword over his fair, well-knit spalls and he was ready on the ford to await Etarcumul.

Then, too, came Etarcumul. "What seekest thou, gilla?" demanded Cuchulain.

"Battle with thee I seek," replied Etarcumul.

“Hadst thou been advised by me,” said Cuchulain, “thou wouldst never have come. I do not desire what thou demandest of me. I have no thought of fighting or contending with thee, Etarcumul. Because of the honour of Fergus under whom thou camest out of the camp and station of the men of Erin, and not because I would spare thee, do I behave thus.”

“Thou hast no choice but to fight,” replied Etarcumul.

Thereupon Cuchulain gave him a long blow whereby he cut away the sod that was under the soles of his feet, so that he was stretched out like a sack on his back, and his limbs in the air and the sod on his belly. Had Cuchulain wished it it is two pieces he might have made of him. “Hold, fellow. Off with thee now, for I have given thee warning. It mislikes me to cleanse my hands in thee. I would have cloven thee into many parts long since but for Fergus.”

“I will not go. We will fight on” said Etarcumul.

Cuchulain dealt him a well aimed edge stroke. With the edge of his sword he sheared the hair from him from poll to forehead, from one ear to the other, as if it were with a light, keen razor he had been shorn. Not a scratch of his skin gave blood. “Hold, fellow. Get thee home now” said Cuchulain, “for a laughing stock I have made of thee.”

“I go not” rejoined Etarcumul. “We will fight to the end, till I take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee, or till thou takest my head and my spoils and boastest over me!”

“So let it be, what thou saidst last, that it shall be. I will take thy head and thy spoils and boast over thee!” When now the churl became troublesome and persistent, Cuchulain sprang from the ground, so that he alighted on the edge of Etarcumul’s shield, and he dealt him a cleaving-blow on the crown of the head, so that it drove to his navel. He dealt him a second crosswise stroke, so that at the one time the three portions of his body came to the ground. Thus fell Etarcumul son of Fid and of Lethrinn.

Then Etarcumul’s charioteer went his way after Fergus, and Fergus knew not that the combat had been. For thus was his wont: From the day Fergus took warrior’s arms in hand, he never for aught looked back, whether at sitting or at rising or when travelling or walking, in battle or fight or combat, lest some one might say it was out of fear he looked back, but ever he looked at the thing that was before and beside him. Fergus saw the chariot go past him and a single man in it. And when Etarcumul’s squire came up abreast of Fergus, Fergus asked, “But, where is thy lord, gilla?”

“He fell a while since at the ford by the hand of Cuchulain” the gilla made answer.

“That indeed was not fair!” exclaimed Fergus “for that elf-like sprite to wrong me in him that came under my safeguard and protection from the camp and

fort of the men of Erin. Turn the chariot for us, gilla," cried Fergus, "that we may go to the ford of fight and combat for a parley with Cuchulain."

Thereupon the driver wheeled the chariot. They fared thither towards the ford. Fergus turned to rebuke Cuchulain. "How darest thou offend me, thou wild, perverse, little elf-man" cried Fergus "in him that came under my safeguard and protection? Thou thinkest my club short."

"Be not wroth with me, my master Fergus" said Cuchulain. "After the nurture and care thou didst bestow on me [and the Ulstermen bestowed and Conchobar tell me, which wouldst thou hold better, for the Ulstermen to be conquered without anyone to punish them but me alone and for him to triumph and boast over me, or for me to triumph and boast over him? And yet more, of his own fault he fell. Ask his own gilla which of us was in fault in respect of the other; it was none other but he. Reproach me not, O Fergus my master." He bent down so that Fergus' chariot went past him thrice. "Ask his charioteer, is it I that have caused it?"

"Not thou indeed" answered his charioteer.

"He said" Cuchulain went on "he would not go till either he took my head or he left me his own."

Then Etarcumul's gilla related to Fergus how it all befel. When Fergus heard that, what he said was: "Liefer to me what thou hast done, O fosterling," said Fergus, "that Etarcumul is slain, and a blessing on the hand that smote him, for it is he that was overweening."

So then they bound two spancels about the ankle joints of Etarcumul's feet and he was dragged along behind his horses and chariot. At every rock that was rough for him, his lungs and his liver were left on the stones and the rugged places. At every place that was smooth for him, his skilfully severed limbs came together again round the horses. In this wise he was dragged through the camp to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb: "There's your young warrior for you" cried Fergus, "for 'Every restoration together with its restitution' is what the law saith."

Medb came forth to the door of her tent and she raised her quick, splitting, loud voice of a warrior. Quoth Medb. "Truly, methought that great was the heat and the wrath of this young hound on leaving us awhile since at the beginning of the day as he went from the camp. It is no fortune for a tender youth that falls on thee now. We had thought that the honour under which he went, even the honour of Fergus, was not the honour of a dastard!"

"What hath crazed the virago and wench?" cried Fergus "Good lack, is it fitting for the mongrel to seek the Hound of battle whom the warriors and champions of four of the five grand provinces of Erin dare not approach nor withstand? What, I myself was glad to escape whole from him!"

Etarcumul's grave was then dug and his tombstone erected; his name was written in ogham and they raised the keens over him. Cuchulain shot not from his sling at them that night and the women and maidens were brought over to him and half the cattle, and they brought provision to him by day. In this manner fell Etarcumul and such was the combat of Etarcumul with Cuchulain.

XI THE SLAYING OF NATHCRANTAIL

Then the men of Erin held counsel who would be fit to fight and contend with Cuchulain and drive him off from the men of Erin. "What man have ye to face Cuchulain tomorrow?" asked Lugaid.

"They will give him to thee tomorrow" answered Manè son of Ailill.

"We find no one to meet him" quoth Medb; "let us have a truce with him then till a man be found to oppose him." This they obtain.

"Whither will ye turn" asked Ailill "to find the man to oppose Cuchulain?"

"There is not in Erin" Medb answered "one that could be got to meet him unless Curoi macDarè come, or Nathcrantail the warrior."

A man of Curoi's people was in the tent. "Curoi will not come" said he; "he weens enough of his people have come!"

"Let a message be sent then for Nathcrantail." Then arose a huge warrior of Medb's people, Nathcrantail by name.

Manè Andoe ('the Unslow') goes to him. They tell him their message. "Come with us for the sake of the honour of Connacht."

"I will not go" said he "unless they give Finnabair to me." Afterwards he goes with them. They bring his armour in a car from the east of Connacht and place it in the camp. Then was Nathcrantail called into the tent of Ailill and Medb. "Wherefore am I summoned to ye?" Nathcrantail asked.

"It would please us well" Medb replied "werest thou to fight and contend with Cuchulain on the ford and ward him off from us at the morning hour early on the morrow. Thou shalt have Finnabair" said Medb "for going to fight yonder man."

"I will do it" said he. He engaged to undertake the battle and combat and that night be made ready, and early on the morrow Nathcrantail arose for the battle and combat and he took his warlike implements with him to the fight, and though early he arose, Cuchulain arose still earlier.

That night Lugaid came to Cuchulain. "Nathcrantail comes to meet thee tomorrow. Alas for thee, thou wilt not withstand him."

"That matters not" Cuchulain made answer.

On the morrow Nathcrantail went forth from the camp and he came to attack Cuchulain. He did not deign to bring along arms but thrice nine spits of holly after being sharpened, burnt and hardened in fire. And there before him on the

pond was Cuchulain afowling and his chariot hard by him, and there was no shelter whatever. And when Nathcrantail perceived Cuchulain he straightway cast a dart at Cuchulain. Cuchulain sprang from the middle of the ground till he came on the tip of the dart. And he performed a feat on the point of the dart and it hindered him not from catching the birds. And again Nathcrantail threw a second dart. Nathcrantail threw a third dart and Cuchulain sprang on the point of the second dart and so on till he was on the point of the last dart. It was then, when Nathcrantail threw the ninth dart, that the flock of birds which Cuchulain pursued on the plain flew away from Cuchulain. Cuchulain chased them even as any bird of the air. He hopped on the points of the darts like a bird from each dart to the next, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him but that they might leave behind a portion of food for the night. For this is what sustained and served Cuchulain, fish and fowl and game on the Cualnge Cow spoil. Something more remains to be told: Nathcrantail deemed full surely that Cuchulain went from him in rout of defeat and flight. And he went his way till he came to the door of the tent of Ailill and Medb and he lifted up his loud voice of a warrior: "That famous Cuchulain that ye so talk of ran and fled in defeat before me when he came to me in the morning."

"We knew" spake Medb "it would be even so when able warriors and goodly youths met him, that this beardless imp would not hold out; for when a mighty warrior, Nathcrantail to wit, came upon him, he withstood him not but before him he ran away!"

And Fergus heard that, and Fergus and the Ulstermen were sore angered that any one should boast that Cuchulain had fled. And Fergus addressed himself to Fiachu, Feraba's son, that he should go to rebuke Cuchulain. "And tell him it is an honour for him to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as he does deeds of valour upon them, but that it were fitter for him to hide himself than to fly before any one of their warriors, forasmuch as the dishonour would be not greater for him than for the rest of Ulster."

Thereupon Fiachu went to address Cuchulain. Cuchulain bade him welcome. "I trow that welcome to be truly meant, but it is for counsel with thee I am come from thy fosterer Fergus. And he has said, 'It would be a glory for thee to oppose the hosts for as long or as short a space as thou doest valiantly with them; but it would be fitter for thee to hide thyself than to fly before any one of their warriors!'"

"How now, who makes that boast among ye?" Cuchulain asked. "Nathcrantail, of a surety" Fiachu answered. "How may this be? Dost not know, thou and Fergus and the nobles of Ulster, that I slay no charioteers nor heralds nor unarmed people? And he bore no arms but a spit of wood. And I would not slay Nathcrantail until he had arms. And do thou tell him, let him come here early in the morning, till he is between Ochainè and the sea, and however early he comes, he will find me here and I will not fly before him!"

Fiachu went back to the camp and to the station of the men of Erin, and he bound Nathcrantail to go to the ford of combat on the morrow. They bided there

that night, and it seemed long to Nathcrantail till day with its light came for him to attack Cuchulain. He set out early on the morrow to attack Cuchulain. Cuchulain arose early and came to his place of meeting and his wrath bided with him on that day. And after his night's vigil, with an angry cast he threw his cloak around him, so that it passed over the pillar stone near by, the size of himself, and snapped the pillar-stone off from the ground between himself and his cloak. And he was aware of naught because of the measure of anger that had come on and raged in him. Then, too, came Nathcrantail. His arms were brought with him on a wagon, and he spake "Where is this Cuchulain?" shouted Nathcrantail.

"Why, over yonder near the pillar stone before thee" answered Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar.

"Not such was the shape wherein he appeared to me yesterday" said Nathcrantail. "Repel yon warrior" quoth Cormac "and it will be the same for thee as if thou repellst Cuchulain!"

"Art thou Cuchulain?"

"And if I am?" answered Cuchulain.

"If thou be truly he" said Nathcrantail "I would not bring a lambkin's head to the camp. I will not take thy head, the head of a beardless boy."

"It is not I at all" said Cuchulain; "go find him around the hill!" Cuchulain hastens to Laeg. "Rub a false beard on me; I cannot get the warrior to fight with me beardless." This was done for him. He goes to meet Nathcrantail on the hill.

"Methinks that more fitting. Now fight with me fairly" said Nathcrantail.

"Thou shalt have thy wish, if only we know it" Cuchulain made answer. "I will make a cast at thee," said Nathcrantail, "and thou shalt not avoid it."

"I will not avoid it except on high" said Cuchulain. Nathcrantail makes a cast at him. Cuchulain springs on high before it.

"Tis ill of thee to avoid the cast" cried Nathcrantail.

"Avoid then my cast on high!" quoth Cuchulain. Cuchulain lets the spear fly at him and it went on high, so that from above it alighted on Nathcrantail's crown and through him it went to the ground.

"Alas" said he "the best warrior in Erin art thou" spake Nathcrantail. "Four and twenty sons have I in the camp. I will go and tell them what hidden treasure I have and then return for thee to behead me, for I shall die if the spear be taken out of my head."

"It is well" quoth Cuchulain; "thou shalt come back."

Then Nathcrantail returns to the camp. They all come to meet him. “Where is the madman’s head with thee?” everyone asks.

“Wait, ye warriors, till I tell my tale to my sons and return to do battle with Cuchulain.”

Soon came Nathcrantail to seek Cuchulain and he made a wide sweep with his sword at Cuchulain. Cuchulain leaps on high, so that the sword encountered the pillar of stone that was between Cuchulain and his cloak, and the sword broke atwain on the pillar stone. Then Cuchulain became filled with rage, as he had been with the boys in Emain, and he sprang from the ground and alighted on the top of the boss of Nathcrantail’s shield and dealt him a side stroke over the upper edge of the shield, so that he struck off his head from his trunk. He raised his hand quickly again and gave him another blow on the top of the trunk so that he cleft him in twain down to the ground. His four severed parts fell to the ground. Thus fell Nathcrantail slain by Cuchulain. Whereupon Cuchulain spoke the verse: —

“Now that Nathcrantail has fallen,  
There will be increase of strife!  
Would that Medb had battle now,  
And the third part of the host!”

## XII THE FINDING OF THE BULL

Thereafter on the morrow Medb proceeded with a third of the host of the men of Erin about her, and she set forth by the highroad of Midluachair till she reached Dûn Sobairche in the north. And Cuchulain pressed heavily on Medb that day. Medb went on to Cuib to seek the bull and Cuchulain pursued her. Now on the road to Midluachair she had gone to invade Ulster and Cruthne as far as Dûn Sobairche. There it is that Cuchulain slew all those we have mentioned in Cuib. Cuchulain killed Fer Taidle, whence cometh Taidle; and as they went northwards he killed the macBuachalla ('the Herdsman's sons') at their cairn, whence cometh Carn macBuachalla; and he killed Luasce on the slopes, whence Lettre Luasc ('the Watery Slopes of Luasc'); and he slew Bobulge in his marsh, whence Grellach ('the Trampled Place') of Bubulge; and he slew Murthemne on his hill, whence Delga ('the Points') of Murthemne; he slew Nathcoirpthe at his trees, Cruthen on his ford, Marc on his hill, Meille on his mound and Bodb in his tower. It was afterwards then that Cuchulain turned back from the north to Mag Murthemni, to protect and defend his own borders and land, for dearer to him was his own land and inheritance and belongings than the land and territory and belongings of another.

It was then too that he came upon the Fir Crandce ('the men of Crannach') from whom cometh Crannach in Murthemne; to wit, the two Artinne and the two sons of Lecc, the two sons of Durcride, the two sons of Gabul, and Drucht and Delt and Dathen, Tae and Tualang and Turscur, and Torc Glaisse and Glass and Glassne, which are the same as the twenty men of Fochard. Cuchulain surprised them as they were pitching camp in advance of all others — ten cup bearers and ten men of arms they were — so that they fell by his hand.

Then it was that Buide ('the Yellow') son of Ban Blai ('the White') from Sliab Culinn ('Holymount'), the country of Ailill and Medb, and belonging to the special followers of Ailill and Medb, met Cuchulain. Four and twenty warriors was their strength. A blue mantle enwrapping each man, the Brown Bull of Cualnge plunging and careering before them after he had been brought from Glenn na Samaisce ('Heifers' Glen') to Sliab Culinn, and fifty of his heifers with him. Cuchulain advances to meet them. "Whence bring ye the drove, ye men?" Cuchulain asks.

"From yonder mountain," Buide answers.

"Where are its herdsmen?" Cuchulain asks.

"One is here where we found him" the warrior answers. Cuchulain made three leaps after them, seeking to speak with them, as far as the ford. Then it was he spoke to the leader "What is thine own name?" said Cuchulain.

"One that neither loves thee nor fears thee" Buide made answer; "Buide son of Ban Blai am I, from the country of Ailill and Medb."

“Well a day, O Buide” cried Cuchulain; “haste to the ford below that we exchange a couple of throws with each other.” They came to the ford and exchanged a couple of throws there. “Lo, here for thee this short spear” said Cuchulain, and he casts the spear at him. It struck the shield over his belly, so that it shattered three ribs in his farther side after piercing his heart in his bosom. And Buide son of Ban Blai fell on the ford. So that thence is Ath Buidi (‘Athboy’) in Crich Roiss (‘the land of Ross’).

For as long or as short a space as these bold champions and battle warriors[3] were engaged in this work of exchanging their two short spears — for it was not in a moment they had accomplished it — the Brown Bull of Cualnge was carried away in quick course and career by the eight great men to the camp of the men of Erin as swiftly as any beeve can be brought to a camp. They opined then it would not be hard to deal with Cuchulain if only his spear were got from him. From this accordingly came the greatest shame and grief and madness that was brought on Cuchulain on that hosting.

As regards Medb: every ford and every hill whereon she stopped, Ath Medba (‘Medb’s Ford’) and Dindgna Medba (‘Medb’s Hill’) is its name. Every place wherein she pitched her tent, Pupall Medba (‘Medb’s Tent’) is its name. Every spot she rested her horselash, Bili Medba (‘Medb’s Tree’) is its name.

On this circuit Medb turned back from the north after she had remained a fortnight laying waste the province and plundering the land of the Picts and of Cualnge and the land of Conall son of Amargin, and having offered battle one night to Findmor (‘the Fair-large’) wife of Celtchar son of Uthechar at the gate of Dûn Sobairche; and she slew Findmor and laid waste Dûn Sobairche; and, after taking Dûn Sobairche from her, she brought fifty of her women into the province of Dalriada. Then she had them hanged and crucified. Whence cometh Mas na Righna (‘Queen’s Buttock’) as the name of the hill, from their hanging.

Then came the warriors of four of the five grand provinces of Erin at the end of a long fortnight[a] to camp and station at Fochard, together with Medb and Ailill and the company that were bringing the bull.

XIIIA THE DEATH OF FORGEMEN

And the bull's cowherd would not allow them to carry off the Brown Bull of Cualnge, so that they urged on the bull, beating shafts on shields, till they drove him into a narrow gap, and the herd trampled the cowherd's body thirty feet into the ground, so that they made fragments and shreds of his body. Forgemén was the neatherd's name. And this is the name of the hill, Forgemén. This then is the Death of Forgemén on the Cattle prey of Cualnge. Now there was no peril to them that night so long as a man was got to ward off Cuchulain from them on the ford.

XII<sup>B</sup> HERE IS NARRATED THE SLAYING OF REDG THE LAMPOONIST

When the men of Erin had come together in one place, both Medb and Ailill and the force that was bringing the bull to the camp and enclosure, they all declared Cuchulain would be no more valiant than another of the men of Erin were it not for the wonderful little trick he possessed, the spearlet of Cuchulain. Accordingly the men of Erin despatched from them Redg, Medb's jester, to demand the light javelin of Cuchulain.

So Redg came forward to where Cuchulain was and asked for the little javelin, but Cuchulain did not give him the little javelin at once; he did not deem it good and proper to yield it. ["Give me thy spear" said the jester.

"Nay then, I will not" answered Cuchulain; "but I will give thee treasure."

"I will not take it" said the jester. Then he wounded the jester because he would not accept from him what he had offered him. Redg declared he would deprive Cuchulain of his honour unless he got the little javelin. Thereupon Cuchulain hurled the javelin at him, so that it struck him in the nape of the neck and fell out through his mouth on the ground. And the only words Redg uttered were these, "This precious gift is readily ours" and his soul separated from his body at the ford. Therefrom that ford is ever since called Ath Solom Shet ('Ford of the Ready Treasure'). And the copper of the javelin was thrown into the river. Hence is Uman-Sruth ('Copperstream') ever after.

"Let us ask for a sword truce from Cuchulain" says Ailill. "Let Lugaid go to him" one and all answer. Then Lugaid goes to parley with him.

"How now do I stand with the host?" Cuchulain asks. "Disgraceful indeed is the thing thou hast demanded of them," Lugaid answers, "even this, that thou shouldst have thy women and maidens and half of thy kine. But more grievous than all do they hold it that they themselves should be killed and thou provisioned."

Every day there fell a man by Cuchulain till the end of a week. Then faith is broken with Cuchulain. Twenty are despatched at one time to attack him and he destroys them all. "Go to him, O Fergus" says Ailill "that he may vouchsafe us a change of place." A while after this they proceed to Cronech. These are they that fell in single combat with him in that place, to wit: the two Roth, the two Luan, two women-thieves, ten fools, ten cup bearers, the ten Fergus, the six Fedelm, the six Fiachu. Now these were all killed by him in single combat.

When their tents were pitched by them in Cronech they discussed what they had best do with Cuchulain. "I know," quoth Medb "what is best here. Let some one go to him from us for a sword pact from him in respect of the host, and he shall have half the cattle that are here." This message they bring to him.

"I will do it" said Cuchulain "provided the bond is not broken by you tomorrow."

XIIc HERE IS TOLD THE MEETING OF CUCHULAIN AND FINNABAIR

“Let a message be sent to him” said Ailill “that Finnabair my daughter will be bestowed on him, and for him to keep away from the hosts.”

Manè Athramail (‘Fatherlike’) goes to him. But first he addresses himself to Laeg. “Whose man art thou?” spake Manè. Now Laeg made no answer. Thrice Manè addressed him in this same wise.

“Cuchulain’s man” Laeg answers “and provoke me not, lest it happen I strike thy head off thee!”

“This man is mad” quoth Manè as he leaves him. Then he goes to accost Cuchulain. It was there Cuchulain had doffed his tunic, and the deep snow was around him where he sat, up to his belt, and the snow had melted a cubit around him for the greatness of the heat of the hero. And Manè addressed him three times in like manner, whose man he was?

“Conchobar’s man, and do not provoke me. For if thou provokest me any longer I will strike thy head off thee as one strikes off the head of a blackbird!”

“No easy thing” quoth Manè “to speak to these two.” Thereupon Manè leaves them and tells his tale to Ailill and Medb.

“Let Lugaid go to him” said Ailill “and offer him the girl.” Thereupon Lugaid goes and repeats this to Cuchulain.

“O master Lugaid” quoth Cuchulain “it is a snare!”

“It is the word of a king; he hath said it” Lugaid answered; “there can be no snare in it.”

“So be it,” said Cuchulain. Forthwith Lugaid leaves him and takes that answer to Ailill and Medb.

“Let the fool go forth in my form” said Ailill “and the king’s crown on his head, and let him stand some way off from Cuchulain lest he know him; and let the girl go with him and let the fool promise her to him, and let them depart quickly in this wise. And methinks ye will play a trick on him thus, so that he will not stop you any further till he comes with the Ulstermen to the battle.”

Then the fool goes to him and the girl along with him, and from afar he addresses Cuchulain. The Hound comes to meet him. It happened he knew by the man’s speech that he was a fool. A slingstone that was in his hand he threw at him so that it entered his head and bore out his brains. He comes up to the maiden, cuts off her two tresses and thrusts a stone through her cloak and her tunic, and plants a standing stone through the middle of the fool. Their two

pillar stones are there, even the pillar stone of Finnabair and the pillar stone of the fool.

Cuchulain left them in this plight. A party was sent out from Ailill and Medb to search for their people, for it was long they thought they were gone, when they saw them in this wise. This thing was noised abroad by all the host in the camp. Thereafter there was no truce for them with Cuchulain.

XII<sup>D</sup> HERE THE COMBAT OF MUNREMAR AND CUROI

While the hosts were there in the evening they perceived that one stone fell on them coming from the east and another from the west to meet it. The stones met one another in the air and kept falling between Fergus' camp, the camp of Ailill and the camp of Nera. This sport and play continued from that hour till the same hour on the next day, and the hosts spent the time sitting down, with their shields over their heads to protect them from the blocks of stones, till the plain was full of the boulders, whence cometh Mag Clochair ('the Stony Plain'). Now it happened it was Curoi macDarè did this. He had come to bring help to his people and had taken his stand in Cotal to fight against Munremar son of Gerrcend. The latter had come from Emain Macha to succour Cuchulain and had taken his stand on Ard ('the Height') of Roch. Curoi knew there was not in the host a man to compete with Munremar. These then it was who carried on this sport between them. The army prayed them to cease. Whereupon Munremar and Curoi made peace, and Curoi withdrew to his house and Munremar to Emain Macha and Munremar came not again till the day of the battle. As for Curoi, he came not till the combat of Ferdiad.

"Pray Cuchulain" said Medb and Ailill "that he suffer us to change our place." This then was granted to them and the change was made.

The 'Pains' of the Ulstermen left them then. When now they awoke from their 'Pains,' bands of them came continually upon the host to restrain it again.

## XIIIE THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BOY TROOP

Now the youths of Ulster discussed the matter among themselves in Emain Macha. "Alas for us" said they "that our friend Cuchulain has no one to succour him!"

"I would ask then" spake Fiachu Fulech ('the Bloody') son of Ferfebè and own brother to Fiachu Fialdana ('the Generous daring') son of Ferfebè, "shall I have a company from you to go to him with help?"

Thrice fifty youths accompany him with their play clubs, and that was a third of the boy troop of Ulster. The army saw them drawing near them over the plain. "A great army approaches us over the plain," spake Ailill.

Fergus goes to espy them. "Some of the youths of Ulster are they" said he, "and it is to succour Cuchulain they come."

"Let a troop go to meet them" said Ailill "unknown to Cuchulain; for if they unite with him ye will never overcome them." Thrice fifty warriors went out to meet them. They fell at one another's hands, so that not one of them got off alive of the number of the youths of Lia Toll. Hence is Lia ('the Stone') of Fiachu son of Ferfebè, for it is there that he fell.

"Take counsel" quoth Ailill; "inquire of Cuchulain about letting you go from hence, for ye will not go past him by force, now that his flame of valour has risen." For it was usual with him, when his hero's flame arose in him, that his feet would turn back on him and his buttocks, before him, and the knobs of his calves would come on his shins, and one eye would be in his head and the other one out of his head. A man's head would have gone into his mouth. There was not a hair on him that was not as sharp as the thorn of the haw, and a drop of blood was on each single hair. He would recognize neither comrades nor friends. Alike he would strike them before and behind. Therefrom it was that the men of Connacht gave Cuchulain the name Riastartha ('the Contorted One').

XIIF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE KING'S BODYGUARD

“Let us ask for a sword truce from Cuchulain” said Ailill and Medb. Lugaid goes to him and Cuchulain accords the truce.

“Put a man for me on the ford tomorrow,” said Cuchulain. There happened to be with Medb six royal hirelings, to wit: six princes of the Clans of Deda, the three Dubs (‘the Blacks’) of Imlech, and the three Dergs (‘the Reds’) of Sruthair, by name.

“Why should it not be for us” quoth they “to go and attack Cuchulain?” So the next day they went and Cuchulain put an end to the six of them.