

## XIII THE COMBAT OF CÛR WITH CUCHULAIN

The men of Erin discussed among themselves who of them would be fit to attack and contend with Cuchulain, and drive him off from them on the ford at the morning-hour early on the morrow. And what they all said was that Cûr ('the Hero') son of Da Loth should be the one to attack him. For thus it stood with Cûr: No joy was it to be his bedfellow or to live with him. He from whom he drew blood is dead ere the ninth day. And the men of Erin[5] said: "Even should it be Cûr that falls, a trouble and care would be removed from the hosts; for it is not easy to be with him in regard to sitting, eating or sleeping. Should it be Cuchulain, it would be so much the better." Cûr was summoned to Medb's tent.

"For what do they want me?" Cûr asked.

"To engage with Cuchulain," replied Medb "to do battle, and ward him off from us on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow."

Cûr deemed it not fitting to go and contend with a beardless boy. "Little ye rate our worth. Nay, but it is wonderful how ye regard it. Too tender is the youth with whom ye compare me. Had I known I was sent against him I would not have come myself. I would have lads enough of his age from amongst my people to go meet him on a ford."

"Indeed, it is easy to talk so" quoth Cormac Conlongas son of Conchobar. "It would be well worth while for thyself if by thee fell Cuchulain."

"Howbeit" said Cûr "since on myself it falls, make ye ready a journey for me at morn's early hour on the morrow, for a pleasure I will make of the way to this fight, agoing to meet Cuchulain. It is not this will detain you, namely the killing of yonder wildling, Cuchulain!"

There they passed the night. Then early on the morrow morn arose Cûr macDa Loth and he came to the ford of battle and combat; and however early he arose, earlier still Cuchulain arose. A cartload of arms was taken along with him wherewith to engage with Cuchulain, and he began to ply his weapons, seeking to kill Cuchulain.

Now Cuchulain had gone early that day to practise his feats of valour and prowess. These are the names of them all: the Apple Feat, and the Edge Feat, and the Level Shield Feat, and the Little Dart Feat, and the Rope Feat, and the Body Feat, and the Feat of Catt, and the Hero's Salmon Leap,[a] and the Pole Cast, and the Leap over a Blow (?), and the Folding of a Noble Chariot Fighter, and the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear') and the Vantage (?) of Swiftness, and the Wheel Feat, and the Rim Feat, and the Over Breath Feat, and the Breaking of a Sword, and the Champion's Cry, and the Measured Stroke, and the Side Stroke, and the Running up a Lance and Standing Erect on its Point, and the Binding of the Noble Hero (around spear points).

Now this is the reason Cuchulain was wont to practise early every morning each of those feats with the agility of a single hand, as best a wild cat may, in order that they might not depart from him through forgetfulness or lack of remembrance.

And macDa Loth waited beside his shield until the third part of the day, plying his weapons, seeking the chance to kill Cuchulain; and not the stroke of a blow reached Cuchulain, because of the intensity of his feats, nor was he aware that a warrior was thrusting at him. It was then Laeg looked at him and spake to Cuchulain “Hark! Cucuc. Attend to the warrior that seeks to kill thee.” Then it was that Cuchulain glanced at him and then it was that he raised and threw the eight apples on high and cast the ninth apple a throw’s length from him at Cûr macDa Loth, so that it struck on the disk of his shield between the edge and the body of the shield and on the forehead of the churl, so that it carried the size of an apple of his brains out through the back of his head. Thus fell Cûr macDa Loth also at the hand of Cuchulain. According to another version it was in Imslige Glendamnach that Cûr fell.

Fergus greeted each one there and this is what he said: “If your engagements and pledges bind you now” said Fergus “another warrior ye must send to him yonder on the ford; else, do ye keep to your camp and your quarters here till the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow, for Cûr son of Da Loth is fallen.”

“We will grant that” said Medb “and we will not pitch tents nor take quarters here now, but we will remain where we were last night in camp. Considering why we have come, it is the same to us even though we remain in those same tents.”

The four great provinces of Erin remained in that camp till Cûr son of Da Loth had fallen, and Loth son of Da Bro and Srub Darè son of Feradach and Morc son of Tri Aigneach. These then fell in single combat with Cuchulain. But it is tedious to recount one by one the cunning and valour of each man of them.

#### XIV THE SLAYING OF FERBAETH ('THE WITLESS')

Then again the men of Erin took counsel who would be fit to fight and do combat with Cuchulain and to ward him off from them on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow. What they each and all said was, that it would be his own friend and companion and the man who was his equal in arms and feats, even Ferbaeth son of Ferbend.

Then was Ferbaeth son of Ferbend summoned to them, to the tent of Ailill and Medb. "Wherefore do ye call me to you?" Ferbaeth asked.

"In sooth, it would please us" Medb answered "for thee to do battle and contend with Cuchulain, and to ward him off from us on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow."

Great rewards they promised to him for making the battle and combat. Finnabair is given to him for this and the kingdom of his race, for he was their choice to combat Cuchulain. He was the man they thought worthy of him, for they both had learned the same service in arms with Scathach.

"I have no desire to act thus," Ferbaeth protested. "Cuchulain is my foster brother and of everlasting covenant with me. Yet will I go meet him tomorrow, so shall I strike off his head!"

"It will be thou that canst do it" Medb made answer.

Then it was that Cuchulain said to his charioteer, namely to Laeg: "Betake thee thither, O master Laeg" said Cuchulain "to the camp of the men of Erin, and bear a greeting from me to my comrades and foster brothers and age mates. Bear a greeting to Ferdiad son of Daman, and to Ferdet son of Daman, and to Brass son of Ferb, and to Lugaid son of Nos, and to Lugaid son of Solamach, to Ferbaeth son of Baetan, and to Ferbaeth son of Ferbend, and a particular greeting withal to mine own foster brother, to Lugaid son of Nos, for that he is the one man that still has friendliness and friendship with me now on the hosting. And bear him a blessing. Let it be asked diligently of him that he may tell thee who of the men of Erin will come to attack me on the morrow."

Then Laeg went his way to the camp of the men of Erin and brought the aforementioned greetings to the comrades and foster brothers of Cuchulain. And he also went into the tent of Lugaid son of Nos. Lugaid bade him welcome. "I take that welcome to be truly meant" said Laeg.

"'Tis truly meant for thee" replied Lugaid.

"To converse with thee am I come from Cuchulain" said Laeg "and I bring these greetings truly and earnestly from him to the end that thou tell me who comes to fight with Cuchulain today."

“Truly not lucky is it for Cuchulain” said Lugaid “the strait wherein he is alone against the men of Erin. The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood and of his friendship and affection and of his arms be upon that man; even his own real foster brother himself, even the companion of us both, Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. He it is that comes to meet him tomorrow. He was invited into the tent of Ailill and Medb a while since. The daughter Fínnabair was set by his side. It is she who fills up the drinking horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink that he takes; it is she who serveth the food to him. Not for every one with Medb is the ale that is poured out for Ferbaeth till he is drunk. Only fifty wagon loads of it have been brought to the camp.”

Then with heavy head, sorrowful, downcast, heaving sighs, Laeg retraced his steps to Cuchulain. “With heavy head, sorrowful, downcast and sighing, my master Laeg comes to meet me” said Cuchulain. “It must be that one of my brothers-in-arms comes to attack me.” For he regarded as worse a man of the same training in arms as himself than aught other warrior. “Hail now, O Laeg my friend” cried Cuchulain; “who comes to attack me today?”

“The curse of his fellowship and brotherhood, of his friendship and affection be upon him; even thine own real foster brother himself, namely Ferbaeth son of Ferbend. A while ago he was summoned into the tent of Medb. The maiden was set by his side; It is she who fills up the drinking horns for him; it is she who gives him a kiss with every drink; it is she who serveth his food. Not for every one with Medb is the ale that is poured out for Ferbaeth. Only fifty wagon-loads of it have been brought to the camp.”

Cuchulain bade Laeg go to Lugaid, that he come to talk with him. Lugaid came to Cuchulain. “So Ferbaeth comes to oppose me tomorrow” said Cuchulain.

“Aye, then” answered Lugaid.

“Evil is this day” cried Cuchulain. “I shall not be alive thereafter. Two of the same age are we, two of equal deftness, two of equal weight, when we come together. O Lugaid, greet him for me. Tell him, also, it is not the part of true valour to come to oppose me. Tell him to come meet me tonight to speak with me.”

Lugaid brought back this word to Ferbaeth. Now inasmuch as Ferbaeth shunned not the parley, he by no means waited till morn but he went straightway to the glen that night to recant his friendship with Cuchulain, and Fiachu son of Ferfebè went with him. And Cuchulain called to mind the friendship and fellowship and brotherhood that had been between them, and Scathach, the nurse of them both; and Ferbaeth would not consent to forego the fight.

“I must fight” said Ferbaeth. “I have promised it to Medb.”

“Friendship with thee then is at an end” cried Cuchulain, and in anger he left him and drove the sole of his foot against a holly spit in the glen, so that it pierced through flesh and bone and skin and came out by his knee. Thereat Cuchulain became frantic, and he gave a strong tug and drew the spit out from its roots, from sinew and bone, from flesh and from skin.

“Go not, Ferbaeth, till thou seest the find I have made.”

“Throw it then” cried Ferbaeth. And Cuchulain threw the holly spit over his shoulder after Ferbaeth, and he would as life that it reached him or that it reached him not. The spit struck Ferbaeth in the nape of the neck, so that it passed out through his mouth in front and fell to the ground, and thus Ferbaeth fell backward into the glen.

“Now that was a good throw, Cucuc!” cried Fiachu son of Ferfebè, who was on the mound between the two camps, for he considered it a good throw to kill that warrior with a spit of holly. Hence it is that Focherd Murthemni (‘the good Cast of Murthemne’) is the name of the place where they were.

Straightway Ferbaeth died in the glen. Hence cometh Glenn Ferbaeth. Something was heard. It was Fergus who sang: —

“Fool’s emprise was thine, Ferbaeth,  
That did bring thee to thy grave.  
Ruin hath come on anger here;  
Thy last end in Croen Corann!

Fithi was the hill’s old name,  
In Croenech in Murthemne.  
‘Ferbaeth’ now shall be the name  
Of the plain where Ferbaeth fell!”

XIVA THE COMBAT OF LARINE MacNOIS

Lugaid spake: “Let one of you be ready on the morrow to go against that other.”

“There shall not any one at all be found to go” quoth Ailill “unless guile be used. Whatever man comes to you, give him wine, so that his soul may be glad, and let him be told that that is all the wine that has been brought to Cruachan: ‘It would grieve us that thou shouldst drink water in our camp.’ And let Finnabair be placed on his right hand and let him be told, ‘She shall go with thee if thou bring us the head of the Contorted.’” So a summons was sent to each warrior, one on each night, and those words used to be told him. Cuchulain killed every man of them in turn. At length no one could be got to attack him.

“Good, my master Laeg” said Cuchulain “go for me to the camp of the men of Erin to hold converse with Lugaid macNois, my friend, my companion and my foster-brother, and bear him a greeting from me and bear him my blessing, for he is the one man that keeps amity and friendship with me on the great hosting of the Cattle Raid of Cualnge. And discover in what way they are in the camp, whether or no anything has happened to Ferbaeth, whether Ferbaeth has reached the camp; and inquire for me if the cast I made a while ago reached Ferbaeth or did not reach, and if it did reach him, ask who of the men of Erin comes to meet me to fight and do battle with me at the morning hour early on the morrow.”

Laeg proceeds to Lugaid’s tent. Lugaid bids him welcome. “Welcome to thy coming and arrival, O Laeg” said Lugaid.

“I take that welcome as truly meant” Laeg replied.

“It is truly meant for thee” quoth Lugaid “and thou shalt have entertainment here tonight.”

“Victory and blessing shalt thou have” said Laeg; “but not for entertainment am I come, but to hold converse with thee am I come from thine own friend and companion and foster brother, from Cuchulain, that thou mayest tell me whether Ferbaeth was smitten.”

“He was” answered Lugaid “and a blessing on the hand that smote him, for he fell dead in the valley a while ago.”

“Tell me who of the men of Erin comes to-morrow to combat and fight with Cuchulain at the morning hour early on the morrow?”

“They are persuading a brother of mine own to go meet him, a foolish, haughty arrogant youth, yet dealing stout blows and stubborn. And he has agreed to do the battle and combat. And it is to this end they will send him to

fight Cuchulain, that he, my brother, may fall at his hands, so that I myself must then go to avenge him upon Cuchulain. But I will not go there till the very day of doom. Larinè great grandson of Blathmac is that brother. And, do thou tell Cuchulain to come to Ferbaeth's Glen and I will go thither to speak with Cuchulain about him," said Lugaid.

Laeg betook him to where Cuchulain was. Lugaid's two horses were taken and his chariot was yoked to them and he came to Glen Ferbaeth to his tryst with Cuchulain, so that a parley was had between them. The two champions and battle warriors gave each other welcome. Then it was that Lugaid spake: "There is no condition that could be promised to me for fighting and combating with thee" said Lugaid "and there is no condition on which I would undertake it, but they are persuading a brother of mine to come fight thee on the morrow, to wit, a foolish, dull, uncouth youth, dealing stout blows. They brought him into the tent of Ailill and Medb and he has engaged to do the battle and combat with thee. He is befooled about the same maiden. And it is for this reason they are to send him to fight thee, that he may fall at thy hands, so that we two may quarrel, and to see if I myself will come to avenge him upon thee. But I will not, till the very day of doom. And by the fellowship that is between us, and by the rearing and nurture I bestowed on thee and thou didst bestow on me, bear me no grudge because of Larinè. Slay not my brother lest thou shouldst leave me brotherless."

"By my conscience, truly" cried Cuchulain, kill him I will not, but the next thing to death will I inflict on him. No worse would it be for him to die than what I will give him."

"I give thee leave. It would please me well shouldst thou beat him sorely, for to my dishonour he comes to attack thee."

Thereupon Cuchulain went back and Lugaid returned to the camp lest the men of Erin should say it was betraying them or forsaking them he was if he remained longer parleying with Cuchulain.

Then on the next day it was that Larinè son of Nos, brother of Lugaid king of Munster, was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Finnabair was placed by his side. It was she that filled up the drinking horns for him and gave him a kiss with each draught that he took and served him his food. "Not to every one with Medb is given the drink that is poured out for Ferbaeth or for Larinè" quoth Finnabair; "only the load of fifty wagons of it was brought to the camp."

Medb looked at the pair. "Yonder pair rejoiceth my heart" said she.

"Whom wouldst thou say?" asked Ailill.

"The man yonder, in truth" said she.

"What of him?" asked Ailill.

“It is thy wont to set the mind on that which is far from the purpose (Medb answered). It were more becoming for thee to bestow thy thought on the couple in whom are united the greatest distinction and beauty to be found on any road in Erin, namely Finnabair, my daughter, and Larinè macNois. ’Twould be fitting to bring them together.”

“I regard them as thou dost” answered Ailill; “I will not oppose thee herein. He shall have her if only he brings me the head of Cuchulain.”

“Aye, bring it I will” said Larinè. It was then that Larinè shook and tossed himself with joy, so that the sewings of the flock bed burst under him and the mead of the camp was speckled with its feathers.

They passed the night there. Larinè longed for day with its full light to go to attack Cuchulain. At the early day-dawn on the morrow he came, and the maiden came too to embolden him, and he brought a wagon load of arms with him, and he came on to the ford to encounter Cuchulain. The mighty warriors of the camp and station considered it not a goodly enough sight to view the combat of Larinè; only the women and boys and girls, thrice fifty of them, went to scoff and to jeer at his battle.

Cuchulain went to meet him at the ford and he deemed it unbecoming to bring along arms or to ply weapons upon him, so Cuchulain came to the encounter unarmed except for the weapons he wrested from his opponent. And when Larinè reached the ford, Cuchulain saw him and made a rush at him. Cuchulain knocked all of Larinè’s weapons out of his hand as one might knock toys out of the hand of an infant. Cuchulain ground and bruised him between his arms, he lashed him and clasped him, he squeezed him and shook him, so that he spilled all the dirt out of him, so that the ford was defiled with his dung and the air was fouled with his dust and an unclean, filthy wrack of cloud arose in the four airts wherein he was. Then from the middle of the ford Cuchulain hurled Larinè far from him across through the camp till he fell into Lugaid’s two hands at the door of the tent of his brother. Howbeit from that time forth for the remainder of his life he never got up without a sigh and a groan, and he never lay down without hurt, and he never stood up without a moan; as long as he lived he never ate a meal without complaint, and never thenceforward was he free from weakness of the loins and oppression of the chest and without cramps and the frequent need which obliged him to go out. Still he is the only man that made escape, yea though a bad escape, after combat with Cuchulain on the Cualnge Cattle Raid. Nevertheless that maiming took effect upon him, so that it afterwards brought him his death. Such then is the Combat of Larinè on the Táin Bó Cualnge.

XIV<sup>B</sup> THE COLLOQUY OF THE MORRIGAN AND CUCHULAIN

Then Cuchulain saw draw near him a young woman with a dress of every colour about her and her appearance was most surpassing. "Who art thou?" Cuchulain asked.

"Daughter of Buan ('the Eternal'), the king" she answered. "I am come to thee; I have loved thee for the high tales they tell of thee and have brought my treasures and cattle with me."

"Not good is the time thou hast come. Is not our condition weakened through hunger? Not easy then would it be for me to foregather with a woman the while I am engaged in this struggle."

"Herein I will come to thy help."

"Not for the love of a woman did I take this in hand."

"This then shall be thy lot" said she "when I come against thee what time thou art contending with men: In the shape of an eel I will come beneath thy feet in the ford; so shalt thou fall."

"More likely that, methinks, than daughter of a king! I will seize thee" said he "in the fork of my toes till thy ribs are broken, and thou shalt remain in such sorry plight till there come my sentence of blessing on thee."

"In the shape of a grey she-wolf will I drive the cattle on to the ford against thee."

"I will cast a stone from my sling at thee, so shall it smash thine eye in thy head" (said he) "and thou wilt so remain maimed till my sentence of blessing come on thee."

"I will attack thee" said she "in the shape of a hornless red heifer at the head of the cattle, so that they will overwhelm thee on the waters and fords and pools and thou wilt not see me before thee."

"I will" replied he "fling a stone at thee that will break thy leg under thee, and thou wilt thus be lamed till my sentence of blessing come on thee."

Therewith she went from him.

XV HERE FOLLOWETH THE COMBAT OF LOCH AND CUCHULAIN ON THE TÁIN, AND THE SLAYING OF LOCH SON OF MOFEMIS

Then it was debated by the men of Erin who would be fitted to fight and contend with Cuchulain and ward him off from them on the ford at the morning hour early on the morrow. What they all agreed was that it should be Loch Mor ('the Great') son of Mofemis, the royal champion of Munster. It was then that Loch Mor son of Mofemis was summoned like the rest to the pavilion of Ailill and Medb, and he was promised the equal of Mag Murthemni of the smooth field of Mag Ai, and the accoutrement of twelve men, and a chariot of the value of seven bondmaids. "What would ye of me?" asked Loch.

"To have fight with Cuchulain" replied Medb.

"I will not go on that errand, for I esteem it no honour nor becoming to attack a tender, young, smooth-chinned, beardless boy. 'Tis not seemly to speak thus to me, and ask it not of me. And not to belittle him do I say it, but I have a doughty brother, the match of himself" said Loch "a man to confront him, Long macEmonis, to wit, and he will rejoice to accept an offer from you; and it were fitting for him to contend with Cuchulain for Long has no beard on cheek or lip any more than Cuchulain."

Thereupon Long was summoned to the tent of Ailill and Medb, and Medb promised him great gifts, even livery for twelve men of cloth of every colour, and a chariot worth four times seven bondmaids, and Finnabair to wife for him alone, and at all times entertainment in Cruachan, and that wine would be poured out for him.

They passed there that night and he engaged to do the battle and combat, and early on the morrow went Long to the ford of battle and combat to seek Cuchulain, and Cuchulain slew him and they brought him dead into the presence of his brother, namely of Loch. And Loch came forth and raised up his loud, quick voice and cried, had he known it was a bearded man that slew him, he would slay him for it. And it was in the presence of Medb that he said it. "Lead a battle-force against him" Medb cried to her host "over the ford from the west, that ye may cross, and let the law of fair fight be broken with Cuchulain." The seven Manè the warriors went first, till they saw him to the west of the edge of the ford. He wore his festive raiment on that day and the women clambered on the men that they might behold him. "It grieves me" said Medb. "I cannot see the boy because of whom they go there."

"Thy mind would not be the easier for that" quoth Lethrenn, Ailill's horseboy, "if thou shouldst see him."

Cuchulain came to the ford as he was. "What man is that yonder, O Fergus?" asked Medb. And Medb, too, climbed on the men to get a look at him. Then Medb called upon her handmaid for two woman bands, fifty or twice fifty of her women, to go speak with Cuchulain and to charge him to put a false beard on.

The woman troop went their way to Cuchulain and told him to put a false beard on if he wished to engage in battle or combat with goodly warriors or with goodly youths of the men of Erin; that sport was made of him in the camp for that he had no beard, and that no good warrior would go meet him but only madmen. It were easier to make a false beard: "For no brave warrior in the camp thinks it seemly to come fight with thee, and thou beardless" said they.

"If that please me" said Cuchulain "then I shall do it." Thereupon Cuchulain took a handful of grass and speaking a spell over it he bedaubed himself a beard in order to obtain combat with a man, namely with Loch. And he came onto the knoll overlooking the men of Erin and made that beard manifest to them all, so that every one thought it was a real beard he had.

"'Tis true" spake the women "Cuchulain has a beard. It is fitting for a warrior to fight with him." They said that to urge on Loch.

Loch son of Mofemis saw it, and what he said was "Why, that is a beard on Cuchulain!"

"It is what I perceive" Medb answered. Medb promised the same great terms to Loch to put a check to Cuchulain.

"I will not undertake the fight till the end of seven days from this day" exclaimed Loch.

"Not fitting is it for us to leave that man unattacked for all that time" Medb answered. "Let us put a warrior every night to spy upon him if, peradventure, we might get a chance at him." This then they did. A warrior went every night to spy upon him and he slew them all. These are the names of the men who fell there: the seven Conall, the seven Oengus, the seven Uargus, the seven Celtri, the eight Fiach, the ten Ailill, the ten Delbrath, the ten Tasach. These are the deeds of that week on Ath Grenca.

Medb sought counsel, what was best to be done with Cuchulain, for she was sore grieved at all of her host that had been slain by him. This is the counsel she took: To despatch keen, high spirited men at one time to attack him when he would come to an appointment she would make to speak with him. For she had a tryst the next day with Cuchulain, to conclude the pretence of a truce with him in order to get a chance at him. She sent forth messengers to seek him to advise him to come to her, and thus it was that he should come, unarmed, for she herself would not come but with her women attendants to converse with him.

The runner, namely Traigtren ('Strongfoot') son of Traiglethan ('Broadfoot') went to the place where Cuchulain was and gave him Medb's message. Cuchulain promised that he would do her will. "How liketh it thee to meet Medb tomorrow, O Cuchulain?" asked Laeg.

“Even as Medb desires it” answered Cuchulain. “Great are Medb’s deeds,” said the charioteer; “I fear a hand behind the back with her.”

“How is it to be done by us then?” asked he.

“Thy sword at thy waist” the charioteer answered “that thou be not taken off thy guard. For a warrior is not entitled to his honour price if he be taken without arms, and it is the coward’s law that falls to him in this manner.”

“Let it be so, then” said Cuchulain.

Now it was on Ard (‘the Height’) of Aigneich which is called Fochard today that the meeting took place. Then fared Medb to the tryst and she stationed fourteen men of those that were bravest of her bodyguard in ambush against him. These were they: the two Glassinè, the two sons of Buccridi, the two Ardan, the two sons of Liccè, the two Glasogma, the two sons of Crund, Drucht and Delt and Dathen, Tea and Tascur and Tualang, Taur and Glesè.

Then Cuchulain comes to meet her. The men rise against him. Fourteen spears are hurled at him at the same time. The Hound defends himself, so that neither his skin nor protection (?) is touched and he turns in upon them and kills them, the fourteen men. Hence these are the ‘Fourteen men of Fochard.’ And they are also the ‘Men of Cronech,’ for it is in Cronech at Fochard they were slain. And it is of this Cuchulain spake: —

“Good my skill[a] in champion’s deeds.  
Valorous are the strokes I deal  
On the brilliant phantom host.  
War with numerous bands I wage,  
For the fall of warlike chief —  
This, Medb’s purpose and Ailill’s —  
Direful hatred hath been raised!”

This is the reason why the name Focherd clung to that place, to wit: *Fo* ‘Good’ and *Cerd* ‘Art,’ which signifieth ‘Good the feat of arms’ that happened to Cuchulain there.

Then came Cuchulain and he overtook the hosts pitching camp, and there were slain the two Daigri, the two Anli and the four Dungai of Imlech. And there Medb began to urge on Loch: “Great is the scorn that is made of thee” said she “that the man that killed thy brother should be destroying our host here before thee and thou not attack him. For sure we are that such as he yonder, that great and fierce madman, will not be able to withstand the valour and rage of a warrior such as thou art. And, further, from one and the same instructress the art was acquired by you both.”

“I will go forth and attack him” cried Loch. Loch went to attack Cuchulain, to take vengeance on him for his brother, for it was shown him that Cuchulain had a beard; so they met on the ford where Long had fallen. “Let us move to the

upper ford" said Loch "for I will not fight on this ford" since he held it defiled, cursed and unclean, the ford whereon his brother had fallen. Now when Cuchulain came to look for the ford, the men drove the cattle across.

"The cattle will be across thy water here to-day," said Gabran the poet. Hence cometh Ath Tarteise ('the Ford over thy Water') and Tir Mor Tarteise ('the Great Land over thy Water'). Thereafter they fought on the upper ford between Methè and Cethè at the head of Tir Mor, and they were for a long space and time at their feats wounding and striking each other.

Then it was that the Morrigan daughter of Aed Ernmas came from the fairy dwellings to destroy Cuchulain. For she had threatened on the Cattle Raid of Regomain that she would come to undo Cuchulain what time he would be in sore distress when engaged in battle and combat with a goodly warrior, with Loch, in the course of the Cattle Spoil of Cualnge. Thither then the Morrigan came in the shape of a white, hornless, red eared heifer, with fifty heifers about her and a chain of silvered bronze between each two of the heifers. She bursts upon the pools and fords at the head of the cattle. It was then that Cuchulain said "I cannot see the fords for the waters." The women came with their strange sorcery, and constrained Cuchulain by geasa and by inviolable bonds to check the heifer for them lest she should escape from him without harm. Cuchulain made an unerring cast from his sling-stick at her, so that he shattered one of the Morrigan's eyes.

Now when the men met on the ford and began to fight and to struggle, and when each of them was about to strike the other, the Morrigan came thither in the shape of a slippery, black eel down the stream. Then she came on the linn and she coiled three folds and twists around the two feet and the thighs and forks of Cuchulain, till he was lying on his back athwart the ford and his limbs in the air.

While Cuchulain was busied freeing himself and before he was able to rise, Loch wounded him crosswise through the breast, so that the spear went through him and the ford was gore red with his blood. "Ill, indeed" cried Fergus, "is this deed in the face of the foe. Let some of ye taunt him, ye men" he cried to his people "to the end that he fall not in vain!"

Bricriu Nemthenga ('Of the Venom-tongue') son of Carbad arose and began to revile Cuchulain. "Thy strength has gone from thee" said he "when a little salmon overthrows thee even now when the Ulstermen are about to come out of their 'Pains.' Hard it would be for thee to take on thee warrior's deeds in the presence of the men of Erin and to repel a stout warrior clad in his armour!"

Then at this incitation Cuchulain arose, and with his left heel he smote the eel on the head, so that its ribs broke within it and he destroyed one half of its brains after smashing half of its head. And the cattle were driven by force past the hosts to the east and they even carried away the tents on their horns at the thunder feat the two warriors made on the ford.

The Morrigan next came in the form of a rough, grey-red bitch wolf with wide open jaws and she bit Cuchulain in the arm and drove the cattle against him westwards, and Cuchulain made a cast of his little javelin at her, strongly, vehemently, so that it shattered one eye in her head. During this space of time, whether long or short, while Cuchulain was engaged in freeing himself, Loch wounded him through the loins. Thereupon Cuchulain chanted a lay.

Then did Cuchulain to the Morrigan the three things he had threatened her on the Cattle-raid of Regomain, and his anger arose within him and he wounded Loch with the Gae Bulga ('the Barbed Spear'), so that it passed through his heart in his breast. For truly it must have been that Cuchulain could not suffer the treacherous blows and the violence of Loch Mor the warrior, and he called for the Gae Bulgae from Laeg son of Rianganabair. And the charioteer sent the Gae Bulga down the stream and Cuchulain made it ready. And when Loch heard that, he gave a lunge down with his shield, so that he drove it over two thirds deep into the pebbles and sand and gravel of the ford. And then Cuchulain let go the Barbed Spear upwards, so as to strike Loch over the border of his hauberk and the rim of his shield. And it pierced his body's covering, for Loch wore a horn skin when fighting with a man, so that his farther side was pierced clear after his heart had been thrust through in his breast.

"That is enough now" spake Loch; "I am smitten by that. For thine honour's sake and on the truth of thy valour and skill in arms, grant me a boon now, O Cuchulain," said Loch.

"What boon askest thou?"

"'Tis no boon of quarter nor a prayer of cowardice that I make of thee" said Loch. "But fall back a step from me and permit me to rise, that it be on my face to the east I fall and not on my back to the west toward the warriors of Erin, to the end that no man of them shall say, if I fall on my back, it was in retreat or in flight I was before thee, for fallen I have by the Gae Bulga!"

"That will I do" answered Cuchulain "for 'tis a true warrior's prayer that thou makest."

And Cuchulain stepped back, [so that Loch fell on his face, and his soul parted from his body and Laeg despoiled him. Cuchulain cut off his head then. Hence cometh the name the ford bears ever since, namely Ath Traged ('Foot-ford') in Cenn Tire Moir ('Great Headland'). It was then they broke their terms of fair fight that day with Cuchulain, when five men went against him at one time, namely the two Cruaid, the two Calad and Derothor. All alone, Cuchulain killed them. Hence cometh Coicsius Focherda ('Fochard's Fortnight') and Coicer Oengoirt ('Five Warriors in one Field'). Or it may be, fifteen days Cuchulain passed in Fochard and it is hence cometh Coicsius Focherda on the Táin.

And deep distress possessed Cuchulain that day more than any other day for his being all alone on the Táin, confronting four of the five grand provinces of Erin, and he sank into swoons and faints. Thereupon Cuchulain enjoined upon

Laeg his charioteer to go to the men of Ulster, that they should come to defend their drove. And, on rising, this is what he said: "Good, O Laeg, get thee to Emain to the Ulstermen, and bid them come henceforward to look after their drove for I can defend their fords no longer. For surely it is not fair fight nor equal contest for any man for the Morrigan to oppose and overpower him and Loch to wound and pierce him." And weariness of heart and weakness overcame him, and he gave utterance to a lay: —

"Rise, O Laeg, arouse the hosts,  
Say for me in Emain strong:  
I am worn each day in fight,  
Full of wounds, and bathed in gore!

"My right side and eke my left:  
Hard to say which suffers worse;  
Fingin's hand hath touched them not,  
Stanching blood with strips of wood!

"Bring this word to Conchobar dear,  
I am weak, with wounded sides.  
Greatly has he changed in mien,  
Dechtire's fond, rich-trooped son!

"I alone these cattle guard,  
Leave them not, yet hold them not.  
Ill my plight, no hope for me,  
Thus alone on many fords!

"Showers of blood rain on my arms,  
Full of hateful wounds am I.  
No friend comes to help me here,  
Save my charioteer alone!

"Few make music here for me,  
Joy I've none in single horn.  
When the mingled trumpets sound,  
This is sweetest from the drone!

"This old saying, ages old: —  
'Single log gives forth no flame;'  
Let there be a two or three,  
Up the firebrands all will blaze!

"One sole log burns not so well  
As when one burns by its side.  
Guile can be employed on one;  
Single millstone doth not grind!

"Hast not heard at every time,

'One is duped'? — 'tis true of me.  
That is why I cannot last  
These long battles of the hosts!

"However small a host may be,  
It receives some thought and pains;  
Take but this: its daily meat  
On one fork is never cooked!

"Thus alone I've faced the host,  
By the ford in broad Cantire;  
Many came, both Loch and Badb,  
As foretold in 'Regomain!'

"Loch has mangled my two thighs;  
Me the grey-red wolf hath bit;  
Loch my sides has wounded sore,  
And the eel has dragged me down!

"With my spear I kept her off;  
I put out the she-wolf's eye;  
And I broke her lower leg,  
At the outset of the strife!

"Then when Laeg sent Aifè's spear,  
Down the stream — like swarm of bees —  
That sharp deadly spear I hurled,  
Loch, Mobebuis' son, fell there!

"Will not Ulster battle give  
To Ailill and Eocho's lass,  
While I linger here in pain,  
Full of wounds and bathed in blood?

"Tell the splendid Ulster chiefs  
They shall come to guard their drove.  
Maga's sons have seized their kine  
And have portioned them all out!

"Fight on fight — though much I vowed,  
I have kept my word in all.  
For pure honour's sake I fight;  
'Tis too much to fight alone!

"Vultures joyful at the breach  
In Ailill's and in Medb's camp.  
Mournful cries of woe are heard;  
On Murthemne's plain is grief!

“Conchobar comes not out with help;  
In the fight, no troops of his.  
Should one leave *him* thus alone,  
Hard ’twould be his rage to tell!

“Men have almost worn me out  
In these single-handed fights;  
Warrior’s deeds I cannot do,  
Now that I must fight alone!”

Although Cuchulain spoke thus, he had no strength for Laeg to leave him.

This then is the Combat of Loch Mor (‘the Great’) son of Mofemis against Cuchulain on the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge.

XVI THE VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT

Then were five men sent against Cuchulain on the morrow to contend with him and he killed them, so that they fell by his hand, and 'the Five of Cenn Cursighi' was their name. Then it was that Medb despatched six men at one and the same time to attack Cuchulain, to wit: Traig ('Foot') and Dorn ('Fist') and Dernu ('Palm'), Col ('Sin') and Accuis ('Curse') and Eraisè ('Heresy'), three druid men and three druid women, their three wives. Cuchulain attacked them, the six of them, and struck off their six heads, so that they fell at his hands on this side of Ath Tíre Moire ('Big Land's Ford') at Methè and Cethè.

Then it was that Fergus demanded of his sureties that fair dealing should not be broken with Cuchulain. And it was there that Cuchulain was at that time, that is, at Delga Murthemni. Then Cuchulain killed Fota in his field, Bomailcè on his ford, Salach in his homestead, Muinè in his fort, Luar in Lethbera, Fertoithle in Toithle. These are the names of these lands forever, every place in which each man of them fell.

Forasmuch as covenant and terms of single combat had been broken with Cuchulain, Cuchulain took his sling in hand that day and began to shoot at the host from Delga ('the Little Dart') in the south, in Murthemne. Though numerous were the men of Erin on that day, not one of them durst turn his face southwards towards Cuchulain, towards the side where he was between Delga and the sea, whether dog, or horse, or man. So that he slew a hundred warriors till came the bright hour of sunrise on the morrow.

## XVIA THE HEALING OF THE MORRIGAN

Great weariness came over Cuchulain after that night, and a great thirst, after his exhaustion. Then it was that the Morrigan, daughter of Emmas, came from the fairy dwellings, in the guise of an old hag, with wasted knees, long-legged, blind and lame, engaged in milking a tawny, three teated milch cow before the eyes of Cuchulain. And for this reason she came in this fashion, that she might have redress from Cuchulain. For none whom Cuchulain ever wounded recovered therefrom without himself aided in the healing. Cuchulain, maddened with thirst, begged her for a milking. She gave him a milking of one of the teats and straightway Cuchulain drank it. "May this be a cure in time for me, old crone" quoth Cuchulain "and the blessing of gods and of non-gods upon thee!" said he; and one of the queen's eyes became whole thereby. He begged the milking of another teat. She milked the cow's second teat and gave it to him and he drank it and said "May she straightway be sound that gave it." Then her head was healed so that it was whole. He begged a third drink of the hag. She milked the cow's third teat and gave him the milking of the teat and he drank it. "A blessing on thee of gods and of non-gods, O woman! Good is the help and succour thou gavest me." And her leg was made whole thereby. Now these were their gods, the mighty folk: and these were their non-gods, the folk of husbandry. And the queen was healed forthwith.

"Well, Cuchulain, thou saidst to me" spake the Morrigan "I should not get healing nor succour from thee forever."

"Had I known it was thou" Cuchulain made answer "I would never have healed thee." Or, it may be Drong Conculainn ('Cuchulain's Throng') on Tarthesc is the name of this tale in the Reaving of the Kine of Cualnge.

Then it was she alighted in the form of a royston crow on the bramble that grows over Grelach Dolair ('the Stamping Ground of Dolar') in Mag Murthemni. "Ominous is the appearance of a bird in this place above all" quoth Cuchulain. Hence cometh Sgè nah Einchi ('Crow's Bramble') as a name of Murthemne.

Then Medb ordered out the hundred armed warriors of her bodyguard at one and the same time to assail Cuchulain. Cuchulain attacked them all, so that they fell by his hand at Ath Ceit Cuilè ('Ford of the First Crime'). "It is a dishonour for us that our people are slaughtered in this wise" quoth Medb. "It is not the first destruction that has befallen us from that same man" replied Ailill. Hence Cuilenn Cind Duni ('The Destruction of the Head of the Dûn') is henceforth the name of the place where they were, the mound whereon Medb and Ailill tarried that night. Hence Ath Cro ('Gory Ford') is the name of the ford where they were, and Glass Cro ('River of Gore') the name of the stream. And fittingly, too, because of the abundance of gore and blood that went with the flow of the river.