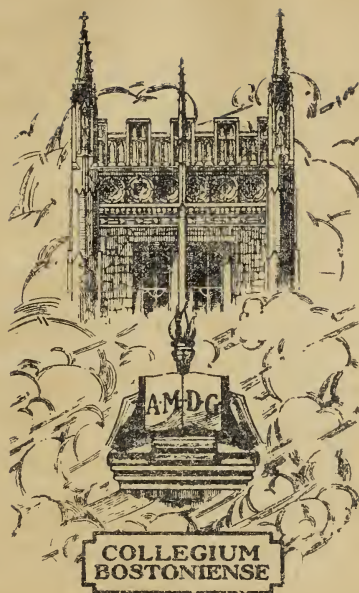



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"FERGUS GOES TO MEET CUCULLIN."

Frontispiece.



The Táin

MARY·A·HUTTON

· illustrated by ·

SEAZAN_{MAC} CAZMAOL



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PREFACE

THE following poem, on which I have spent the careful and ardent labour of the past ten years, is an attempt to tell the whole story of the Táin in a complete and artistic form.

The great tale of the Táin Bó Cúalnge has come down to us in two widely differing recensions. Both of these are in prose with poetry interspersed. One of these recensions (L.L.) is found in the Book of Leinster, a manuscript dating from the middle of the twelfth century. The other recension (L.U.) is found partly in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, a manuscript written by a scholar who died in Clonmacnoise in 1106, and who—we are told—“wrote and shaped this book from various books”; and part of the same recension is found in the Yellow Book of Lecan, a manuscript which, although later, contains some very archaic material. For a comparison of these two recensions, and for a consideration of the various and very interesting critical problems to which they give rise, I must refer my readers to the delightful *Einleitung und Vorrede* which Dr. Windisch has given us in his edition of the Book of Leinster text of the Táin: to No. 5 of Prof. Zimmer’s

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Celtische Studien ; and to Miss Faraday's short introduction to her translation of the texts of the L.U. recension. It suffices for me to say here that, while L.L. is the more literary, and L.U. the more scholarly, of the two versions, from the purely artistic point of view both of them are unsatisfactory and incomplete.

My general method of working has been this. As a rule, but not invariably, I have taken the L.L. recension as my basis. Having, as I have dared to believe, grasped the essential human facts of the story, I began by some re-arrangement of the material. Then I omitted all material that was either irrelevant to my conception or tedious in itself ; and, finally, I completed the narrative by working into its texture a rather large amount of matter from other related sources. An enumeration of the more important of these sources will be found in Appendix D. To give all my lesser sources would not be possible ; for the same principles of re-arrangement, and selection, and introduction of new material have been carried out, not only in the broad masses, but even in the smallest portions, each part being considered in relation to the whole.

In the main I have tried to work much as I imagine some scholarly Irish shanachie of a thousand years ago might have worked, if he had had the same object in view. And, in so far as the resources of the English language will allow, I have tried to preserve the Gaelic

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spirit, and to present a poem from which the modern spirit is as completely absent as would necessarily have been the case with my supposed old shanachie. In so far as I have succeeded, my readers will find themselves really transported into our old Irish epic world.

With regard to the vexed question of the anglicisation of the names, a word of explanation must be offered. The movement of the verse is sometimes intended to be very rapid. Nothing would more surely impede this movement than a doubt existing in the mind of the reader as to how the frequently recurring names are to be pronounced. It will not do for him to halt till he ascertains the pronunciation from an appendix. Therefore, in the verse, names are always spelt in such a way as to suggest their pronunciation; and in the various appendices I have given their most usual Middle-Irish spelling. For example, "Faerdeeah" is so spelt in order to show at a glance that there is a strongly accented *ee* sound in the second syllable—a bit of knowledge which is essential to the right reading of the verse. In Appendix C the reader may learn, if he wishes, that in Middle Irish this name is spelt in two words: *Fer Diad*.

In anglicising Old Gaelic names some writers will prefer to adopt the earliest, presumably unaspirated forms; others will prefer the modern aspirated forms.

PREFACE

In some cases I have adopted the one, and in some the other; and I have had practically no rule in the matter except the pleasing of my own ear in relation to the verse. Where there happens to be a thoroughly established modern form, such as "Conor," I have generally adopted it. In the case of some other names such as "Findabair," where the old unaspirated spelling gives a beautiful sequence of sounds, I have left them to be pronounced as they are spelt. In modern Irish we should call "Findabair," "Finn'-oor."

All the place-names have been anglicised as frankly as the personal names, the important point in all cases being to suggest a definite and not too difficult pronunciation. It matters little that some one else might have suggested a different pronunciation. It will be remembered that St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in writing the Life of our own St. Malachy, said in relation to a certain miracle which Malachy performed:—"This occurred at a place the name of which we do not mention, for its pronunciation is too barbarous." I could not wish that my non-Gaelic readers should have to echo these words of St. Bernard in the midst of a passage of my verse.

The word *Táin* alone I have not anglicised. It should be pronounced approximately *Tahn*.

In Appendix A brief notes will be found on all the Irish terms used. Sometimes I have used these untranslated forms simply because they are beautiful in

PREFACE

themselves, and so bring an element of beauty into the verse. Sometimes I have used them because their meaning is not certain enough to make it wise to venture on an English equivalent; and sometimes because the nearest English equivalent would suggest an entirely wrong set of mental associations.

In Appendix B I have given an alphabetical list of all the place-names introduced, with notes on all those which have been identified, or towards the identification of which I have been able to make suggestions. There are about 250 of these names. To us who are Irish and who live in the old country, it is a source of intense pleasure to be able to associate our heroes and their heroic deeds with certain definite places, and to think of them when there. I have spared no pains in the endeavour to identify these place-names; and various suggestions of my own will be found scattered amongst the notes. But many places I have failed to identify at all.

In Appendix C I give an alphabetical list of the names of persons which occur in the narrative.

These first three divisions of the Appendix, though arranged in alphabetical order, are not indices. They are meant only for reference. In every case the usual Middle-Irish spelling of the word, or else the spelling in a more modern text which I have happened to use, is given in square brackets.

A word, perhaps, must be said about the verse. It

PREFACE

has certain characteristics of its own, which have arisen naturally and almost unconsciously out of my long and close study of our early Irish literature. Those of my readers who are interested in the technique of verse will notice these characteristics for themselves. There is, perhaps, only one point in this connexion which I need mention, and that is the frequency with which I allow two very short syllables, such as "of his," "in her," to scan as one syllable. This is done with a freedom which far exceeds the practice of most writers of English blank verse. In this matter I have had no rule but the pleasing of my own ear.

To conclude, let me express my hope, and, indeed, my belief, that before long there will be amongst us many able writers who will endeavour to re-create for us the ancient and glorious literature of our country, not in English, but in the language of the Gael.

M. A. H.

Belfast, October, 1907.

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THE FINDING OF THE TÁIN

THE FINDING OF THE TÁIN.

SHEN'-CAWN, the agéd poet, asked the poets
Of Erin (for Mar-vawn', the Swineherd-Saint,
Had laid that task on him) whether a poet
Amidst them could relate the Táin Bo Cooley
Unbroken from its opening ; and no poet
Amidst them could relate the Táin Bo Cooley
Except in broken fragments. And the book,
Wherein 'twas written, had been reft away
And lost in Latin lands. And Shen'-cawn then
(Because Mar-vawn' had laid that task on him)
Said to his band of three times fifty poets,
Both to the Ollavs and the humblest learners,
" We must go forth throughout the lands of Erin,
And must not tarry two nights in one stead
Till we get knowledge of the Táin." Whereon
The poets travelled through the lands of Erin,
And searched from west to east and north to south ;
But they obtained no knowledge of the Táin
Except in broken fragments ; and they all
Were weary, gloomy, downcast, and in sorrow.

They came to Leinster, then, to Connra Cae,
The bounteous one, to whom they said, " O King,
Give us a boat to put us o'er the waves

THE TÁIN

To Alba, that we there may seek some poet
Who knows the Táin.” A ship was cleared for them
And filled ; and over the white-blossomed sea
Northward they fared, and passed the crags of Manann,
And came to Alba ; and a year they searched
From south to north and west to east through Alba,
But got no knowledge of the Táin. Then Shen'-cawn
In trouble said, “ Return we now to Erin.”
And o'er the proud-voiced ocean they returned ;
And put their prows on shore against Ath Cleea ;
And they were weary, downcast, and in sorrow.

Then they beheld Neev Caillin, who to Shen'-cawn
Was mother's son : and he bestowed on Shen'-cawn
Three kisses, and asked tidings, and they told him
They yet had got no knowledge of the Táin.
Then Caillin said : “ I will now go with you
To Connaught to Mar-vawn' ; for he alone,
Who laid this task on Shen'-cawn, can reveal
Knowledge by help of which ye may obtain
The Táin Bo Cooley whole.” And so the poets
Went to Mar-vawn' in Connaught ; and Mar-vawn',
Chief-prophet of the Heaven and the Earth,
Gave kisses to Neev Caillin and to Shen'-cawn,
And welcomed the thrice fifty weary poets,
And said, “ O Ollavs, there is not in Erin,
Amongst the living or amongst the dead,
One who can tell the Táin Bo Cooley wholly
With all its deeds and feats—save only Fergus

THE FINDING OF THE TÁIN

The son of Roy. Ye must send messengers
To the chief saints amidst the saints of Erin,
Bidding them come, and, by the grave of Fergus,
Fast to the Deity three days and nights,
That He may send them Fergus to relate
The Táin Bo Cooley wholly." Then Neev Caillin
Went forth; and he besought the saints of Erin,
And brought them; and they feasted for one night;
And on the morrow went with only Shen'-cawn
By desert ways to Aenloch on Moy Wee,
And found the flag-stone o'er the lying-place
And grave of that great Fergus; and they prayed;
And they were pleading and were fasting there
That that great Fergus might be sent to them.

These were the saints who visited that grave.

Neev Columkillé, who, for splendid radiance
Of noble birth, was as a moon in the air,
Having a hue of gold on it, and shining
Over Iona and the north-east sea.

Neev Kieran son of Faylim, who, for radiance
Of holy mercy, was as a moon in the air,
Having a hue of gold on it, and shining
O'er the wide Shannon and the heart of Erin.

Neev Brendan, who, that he might find a land,
Hidden, delightful, very far from men,
Wherein to love the Lord, had voyaged far

THE TÁIN

O'er the intolerable sea, and seen
The gate of Hell,—and who once more should voyage
For seven years, and at last find a land
Hidden, delightful, lofty, lovable,
And there abide in love of Christ the Lord.

Neev Kieran of green Sayer, who was old,
Weighted with years; for he was the first saint
E'er born in Erin, and his earliest monks
Had been a fox and brock and wolf and doe,
Who humbled themselves gently and were righteous,
And dwelt with him within vast desert woods.

Neev Findian of Clonard, the pious one
And scholar, in whose school three thousand saints
Had studied wisdom, ere they wandered forth
To build their cells and churches through vast Erin.

Neev Findian of Movilla, who was bishop
And sage in Ulster, and a shining star.

Neev Caillin, who had brought these saints together.
And they were gathered in that desert place
Round the flat flag above the grave of Fergus.

Then Shen'-cawn sang a poem to the gravestone,
As though he sang to Fergus. "Rise," he said,
"For these have supplicated Jesus Christ
That Fergus may appear to us and tell
That history, the wondrous Táin Bo Cooley,
With its beginning and its deeds and end,
Which were enacted in old far-back days,
Before the Tal-kend brought the Faith to Erin."

THE FINDING OF THE TÁIN

With that, a mighty mist and fog grew round
Those holy men and Shen'-cawn, who were there ;
So that if any man had sought to find them,
He had not found them through the mist.

And Fergus
Came from the grave where five times five score years
He had been hidden. And a beautiful
And rich appearance was upon that warrior.
Brown hair was on him ; and a hooded layna
With red inweaving of red gold. A bratt
Of bright grass-green was round him ; and he wore
A golden-hilted sword, and round-toed shoes
Wrought all of bronze. And when that warrior, Fergus,
Perceived the holy men of Erin nigh him,
It was his wish to stand, and standing, tell
The Táin he had to tell. Howbeit those saints
Would not hear aught from him till courteously
They gave him seat ; and, seated so amidst them,
The while they fasted for three days and nights,
Folded by mist, that warrior from the grave
Taught them this History, the Táin Bo Cooley,
With its beginning and its deeds and end,
E'en as it had been acted in old days,
Before Neev Patrick brought the Faith to Erin.

BOOK I

BOOK I

ONE eve it chanced to Al-yill and to Maev,
—The while the beautiful, full-blazing sun
Sank 'mid the bright cloud-rafters of the sky,—
That they were standing on their green-grassed mound
Of high Rath Croohan on Moy Wee; and thence,
They, gazing outward from themselves athwart
The pleasant, well-cleared land with plains and ridges,
Beheld that it was full of groves with fruit,
And lands with corn, and greens with flocks and herds,
And lakes with fowl, and streams with fish and otters;
And full of folk with growth and height and health
And gladness and kindly, pleasant greeting;
And full of peace and rule. And while they gazed,
The very golden, fiery-blazing sun
Went to his own deep place below the world,
And fresh, cool, dewy airs o'erswept Moy Wee.
Then that most royal pair went to their sleeping
In their own rath and their own royal house;
And while their heads were on their kingly pillow,
There rose this talk betwixt them. Al-yill said:
“'Tis a true word, O woman, it is good
To be the wife of a strong man!” Maev said:
“'Tis a true word; but wherefore dost thou cite it?”

THE TÁIN

“For this cause,” answered Al-yill. “Thou art better
To-day in wealth and riches, peace and rule,
Than on the day whereon I came and took thee.”

“Nay, I was well in power, strength, and riches,
And wealth and rule and peace before that day,”
Maev answered. “Of thy being well,” said Al-yill,
“We never heard or knew ; but heard instead
That thou wast busied with thy woman’s work,
The while the foemen of thy neighbouring regions
Were violently bearing off from thee
Great preys and plunders and vast driven spoils.”

This was the answer which Maev made to him
Before sleep came upon them there that night :

“Not so was I ! My father, Yohee Fayla
The son of Find the son of Findoman,
Held the high-sovereignty of all wide Erin ;
And he had six choice daughters, Daerbra, namely,
Ethna and Ella, Clothra, Moogawn, Maev.
But, of those six, I, Maev, was most distinguished,
Most noble. In bestowing of good gifts,
And costly things and things of price and treasure,
I was the noblest of them. In hard battle,
And fighting and hard vigorous battle-combat,
I was the strongest of them. And my father
For that good cause gave me a goodly household,
Which was much spoken of ; so that with me
There were full fifteen hundred kingly warriors
Of sons of exiles out of extern lands,

And fifteen hundreds of the sons of noble
 Dwellers amidst ourselves. And for that cause
 He also put me into sovereignty
 O'er Croohan and a Third 'midst the Three Thirds
 Of Connaught; and thereafter 'Maev of Croohan'
 Became my queenly name and designation.
 And here in Croohan then I ruled in strength
 And peace and power, till ere long I wedded
 Tinny the son of Conrig Cass, a king
 Above the men of Domnann in the west;
 And we ruled jointly here in peace and power.
 And after Tinny fell, I ruled once more
 Alone in strength and power.

Then men came
 From thy own brother who is king o'er Leinster,
 Namely, from Finn the son of Ross the Red,
 To woo me for him. And men came as well
 From Carpry Neea Faer, thy second brother,
 The son of Ross the Red and king o'er Tara,
 To woo me for him; and men came as well
 From Yohee Bec from Munster. And I went not;
 For I was she who asked a wondrous bride-price,
 Which, before me, no woman e'er had asked
 Of any man from 'midst the men of Erin.
 I asked a man devoid of avarice,
 Devoid of jealousy, devoid of fear.
 Had the man, who should gain me, avarice,
 It were not fit that we should be together;

THE TÁIN

For I myself am good for giving gifts
And costly things, and things of price and treasure ;
And on my man it would bring raillery
And scorn and very fierce, disdainful words
Were I of greater bounteousness than he ;
Though it in truth would bring no raillery
Were we of equal bounteousness. Again,
Had the man, who should gain me, any fear,
It were not fit that we should be together ;
For I myself, by myself and alone,
Break battles and engage in wars and combats ;
And on my man it would bring raillery
Were I of greater liveliness than he,
Though it indeed would bring no raillery
Were we of equal liveliness. Again,
Had the man, who should win me, jealousy,
It were not fit that we should be together,
Seeing that I was ne'er without a man
Beneath the shield and shelter of another.

Good, then, I found that man I sought for, namely,
Thyself, O Al-yill son of Ross the Red,
Of Leinster ; for thou hadst no avarice :
Thou hadst no jealousy : thou hadst no fear.
And when I saw thee first, thou wast a youth
Tender and fresh and young and free from blemish ;
And thou wast strong in war, yet not so strong
That thou wouldst e'er be able to o'ercome me
Or rule or govern me whilst we should live.

So, because thou couldst give that wondrous bride-price,

And for thy love and dearness, then, I took thee ;

And I bestowed on thee a bridal gift

(The best of such as men bestow on women)—

An outfit for twelve men in costly cloth,

A chariot costing three times seven bondmaids,

The breadth of thine own face in rich red gold,

The weight of thine own left fore-arm in pure,

White-bright findrinny. Whosoe'er he be

Who causes thee disgrace and loss of honour,

There is for thee no honour-price therein,

More than there is for me ; because, in truth,

A man upon a woman's maintenance,

Is what thou art, O Al-yill ! ”

Al-yill said :

“ Not so, indeed, am I. Though to my brothers,

Namely, to Finn and Carpry Neea Faer

(Seeing that they were older men than I),

I left the sovereignty of kingly Tara

And Leinster of delightful waters,—yet,

In riches and in generous gift-bestowing,

I was their equal. And I never heard

Of any Fifth amidst the Fifths of Erin

Being in woman-government, except

This Fifth alone. Therefore I came here then.

I took this kingship. An inheritance

I deemed it from my mother, Mawta Murrisc,

THE TÁIN

Who was the daughter of red-sworded Mahga,
Of Connaught. And where might I find a queen
Better than thee, thou being, as thou wert,
The daughter of a famed high-king of Erin? ”

They bore that night away in rest and sleep.
Next morning, ere the glorious sun rose up
Above the deep recesses of the world,
Above the eminences of that Fifth,
Maev said to Al-yill : “ There is yet a thing,
Beyond those words I said at night, last night :—
My precious things, my treasures and my wealth,
Are more than thine are.” “ That seems strange to us,”
Said Al-yill ; “ for there is not anyone
With whom there is a greater store of riches
And very precious things and wealth and treasure
Than there is with myself, and this I know.”

Then, that it might be known with which of these
There was in truth the greater store of treasure,
There were first brought to them their humble treasures,
Their wooden drinking-mugs, their two-eared vats,
Their cruses and their vessels wrought from iron,
Their washing-troughs and tubs. And secondly,
There were brought forth to them their costly treasures,
Their arm-rings, finger-rings, and golden clasps,
And all their radiant work of skilful goldsmiths,
And their apparel, purple, blue, and green,
Yellow and black and striped and tawny-grey ;
And these were viewed and counted severally ;

And they were found alike in costliness
On one side and the other.

After that

There were brought forth to them from leas and
lawns

And immense treeless lands and chequered greens
Their immense flocks of sheep ; and these were told,
Numbered, and reckoned ; and were found alike
In costliness and weight and multitude.

Over Maev's sheep there was a wondrous ram,
Distinguished, huge, costing a powerful bondmaid.
An answering ram was o'er the ewes of Al-yill.

Then, from green, grassy grazing-grounds and
pinfolds,

There were brought forth for them their flocks of
mares,

And their fine, joyous steeds ; and these were told,
Numbered and reckoned ; and were found alike
In costliness and size and multitude.

Over Maev's mares there was a special stallion,
Distinguished, huge, costing a powerful bondmaid :
O'er Al-yill's mares there was an answering stallion.

And there were brought for them from fruitful oak-
woods,

And solitudes and hollow, shelving glens,
Their immense herds of swine ; and these were told,
Numbered, and reckoned, and were found alike
In costliness and weight and multitude.

THE TÁIN

With Maev there was a boar distinguished, special,
And there was one with Al-yill.

Last of all,

There were brought forth for them from desert groves,
And lone, unpeopled lands throughout that Fifth,
Their droves and herds and flocks of wandering kine,—
Their immense herds well-nigh innumerable ;
And these were numbered, and were found alike
In costliness and multitude and greatness.
O'er Al-yill's herds there was a special bull,
Distinguished, choice for size and hue and beauty.
His four hooves and his head were very white :
Three manes were on him, which were very white,
Even like snow upon a noble mountain,—
The rest of his vast, shapely form being red,
As though he had been dyed with partar-red,
As though he had been dipped in radiant blood,
As though he had been rubbed with partar-dye.
Upon his two white horns the men of Connaught
Had set far-shining gold. Findbenna, "white-horned"—
This was his name ; and he had been calved, indeed,
By a cow 'mid Maev's own herds ; and he had
held it
Not famous or illustrious to abide
On woman's maintenance ; and he had gone,
Till he was o'er the herds owned by the King.
To Maev that hour, her being without a bull
Of equal choiceness o'er her herds of kine,

Was like her being without any tittle
Of precious things or treasures through vast Erin.

So that this was the hour wherein Mac Roth,
The royal messenger and kingly envoy,
Was called to Maev ; and Maev commanded him
To find out whether there was any place
In any Fifth of the Five Fifths of Erin,
Wherein there was a bull equal in choiceness
Unto that bull above the herds of Al-yill.

Mac Roth replied : “ I know a place already
Wherein there is a bull which is the best
In Erin. It is in the Ulster Fifth ;
And in the beautiful, high-mountained cantred
Of Cooley of blossomful, sweet-watered glens,—
In the strong house of Dawra, son of Feeacna,
In Cooley. He is called the Donn of Cooley,
And this is his description :—He is young
And very huge ; and his high horns are gold-decked :
He is brown-black, smooth-sided, dark-maned, red-eyed :
He is strong-breasted, strong-necked, strong-browed,
bull-like :

He is wide-nostrilled, wide-eyed, curled, high-headed :
He is impetuous, vehement, swift, courageous :
He is proud, envious, scornful, strong-attacking :
He has a lion's rage, a sea-beast's ardour :
He has a plunderer's blow, a wood-bear's onset.
He is the sire of immense herds and droves.
He has great victories. 'Tis of his victories

THE TÁIN

To shield one hundred warriors from the heat
And cold, with his far-spreading shade and shadow.
'Tis of his victories that, every eve,
Fifty young lads perform their childish games
And childish sports on his long level back,
Commodious and delightful—'tis no lie!
'Tis of his victories that Bananahs
And Bocanahs and dread Folk of the Glen,
Dare not approach to that same land and cantred
In which he is. 'Tis of his victories,
When he fares home to his own liss and shelter,
At falling of the shade of night, at night,
To utter forth his loud, deep, sweet cranndord
Before him, so that to the men of Cooley,"
Mac Roth said, "in the north or south or mid-part
Of Cooley, it is their sufficiency
Of music and of gladness, that cranndord
Sung by their Donn of Cooley as he fares—
With gait as of a king of lofty pride;
With gait as of a rolling ocean-billow—
To his own liss and his own green and shelter,
At falling of the shade of night at night."

So spake Mac Roth, Maev's famous messenger.

A Druid and a man of might and knowledge
Was standing near them there. "O Maev," he said,
"O daughter of great Yohee, I through knowledge
Of druids and the arts of hidden knowledge,
Can manifest the lives and history

BOOK I

Of these two bulls, whereof ye are discoursing.
They have had many shapes ; for at the first
Their names were Root and Riccny : and the two
Were two choice swine-herds who belonged to Ōkill,
King of the Shee in Connaught, and to Bove,
King of the Shee in Munster ; and, with venom
As to their power to cast thin-withering spells
Each on the other's swine, those two contended.
So the kings took their swine from them. And straight-
way,

After their being swine-herds they were birds,
Old ravens : at the Sheemound in Rath Croohan
First they were heard ; and, later, at the Sheemound
On Feven ; and the men from north and south
Heard them with noise and loudness and hoarse
clamours

Contending ; and their names were Etty and Inguen.
And after being birds they were huge beasts,
Who dwelt beneath the oceans and the waters.
Their names were Bled and Blod. They dwelt one year
Within the Suir to southward ; and one year
In the bright-streaming Shannon. In the Shannon
Men saw them like two hills or mountain-peaks
Contending with hard blows, till swords of fire
Came from their mouths e'en to the clouds of heaven.
Then, in the sight of all the hosts who watched them,
They left that river, and became two warriors
There on the shore before them ; and their names

THE TÁIN

Were Rinn and Faebur ; and they fought with weapons
A fight of no hereditary tameness
Throughout the space of three days and three nights ;
Till they became two stags who fought ; and then
Two towering, haughty phantoms, who fought long
In phantom-fight,—their exploits were not small,—
So that men died for fear and dread at watching
That phantom-fight ; and while they were two phantoms
Their names were Scaw and Skeeath. Next they rose,
Rising into the heaven ; and, 'midst the clouds,
Became two dragons who sent wondrous showers
Of heavy snow, each on the other's country :
In no man's memory had such been seen ;—
Till with career of headlong speed they fell
Out of the air, and went into the shapes
Of little water-worms, with every colour
Shining upon them ; and one went to Cooley
Of peaks and blossomful, sweet-watered glens,
And went into Glass Crond, a Cooley river ;
And one came hither to kind, gladsome Connaught,
And went to the spring-well of Oorawn Garad
Nigh to us here. Once, when at Oorawn Garad,
Thou didst, O Queen, raise up this second worm
In thy bronze vessel at the well. Thou sawest
The colours shining on it : and it told thee
Of things that should befall thee. Their two names
While they were worms were Crinniuc and Timmiuc.
Now,

Lastly, those swine-herds are these two huge bulls,
 Namely, Findbenna and the Donn of Cooley,
 Wondrous for forms and powers. O great Queen,
 It is in Destiny that these shall meet,
 And in night-lasting, man-appalling combat,
 Decide their long contention : yet I see not
 Which of the two shall in the end prevail."

The Druid ended. Maev addressed Mac Roth.
 "Go thou, Mac Roth," said Maev, "go hence to Cooley,
 Go to the house of Dawra. Beg from him
 For me, one year's loan of that special bull.
 At the year's end the loan-price of the bull
 Shall reach him, fifty heifers, and the bull
 Himself in safety back. And take with thee
 Another proposition, O Mac Roth :—
 If, to the people of that territory
 And of that land, it seem an evil thing
 To give that wonderful distinctive jewel,
 Their Donn of Cooley,—say to Dawra, then,
 He shall himself come with the bull to Connaught ;
 And I will give him from my smooth Moy Wee
 A measure equalling the land he has
 In mountainous Cooley there. And he shall have
 A chariot costing three times seven bondmaids ;
 And, beyond all, my own especial friendship."

Mac Roth went forward on his way and journey.
 This was his number : nine. Across wide Erin
 To Cooley over unobstructed ways

THE TÁIN

These travelled, that they soon might reach the house
Of Dawra in the pleasant, high-peaked land.
We leave Mac Roth upon that road and way.

This was the day and this the point of time
Wherein Maev's spies and envoys out of Ulster,
Who had been spying out the men of Ulster
In Avvin Maha and in each chief's doon
And each king's house throughout the lands of Ulster,
Came with great urgency to Croohan. Then
Maev went to her own quiet House-for-Converse,
To hear their tales and tidings out of Ulster ;
And her one daughter, namely, Findabair,
Went with her there. (And thus was Findabair :
Of age to wed, white-browed and very radiant.)
The envoys then with envoys' reverence
Accosted Maev, and told their words and tidings ;
And having told them, they withdrew. But that
Which there they told to her, we tell not now :
We tell that later. Maev with liveliness
Spake to her daughter, Findabair, and said :
" O child," said Maev, " from what these say we
know

That this is now the time and the occasion
For our unheard-of, long-prepared-for hosting
Into the lands of Ulster ; for we know
From what these say that at this time no ill
Is likely to befall us." Findabair

Said to her mother, even to Maev : “ Dear mother,
 What were the reasons for this marvellous hatred
 Between thyself and Ulster ? ” Then Maev said :
 “ Child, it is natural to hate proud Ulster.
 But I perceive that thou hast heard indeed
 That for myself there were great reasons.” Then,
 In that reposeful, quiet House-for-Converse
 In high Rath Croohan on Moy Wee, Maev spake
 These words to Findabair :

“ O child ! ” said Maev,
 “ There were great reasons for me ; and those reasons
 Thou now shalt know, being of age to know them.
 My father, Yohee Fayla, was called Fayla,
 ‘ Righteous,’ because with constant righteousness
 He acted towards all people. In the battle
 Of Letteree in Corann, he had slain
 Wise Fahtna Fahee, great High-king of Erin,
 And had himself become High-king. We then
 To the High-king’s most royal seat of Tara
 Went with great joy ; and I myself had then
 Fulfilled my sixteen years. But Yohee Fayla,
 (Because with ever-upright righteousness
 He acted towards all people), paid to Conor
 The son of Fahtna Fahee a great eric
 For the slain father. He bestowed on Conor
 The kingship of the high-proud Ulster Fifth
 In eric ; and, O child, this was not all
 That eric : he allotted unto Conor

THE TÁIN

Four of his daughters who were with himself
In Tara ; and those four, in fervent sorrow,
Moogawn and Clothra, Ethna and I,—Maev,
Were borne from Tara north to Avvin Maha
To be of Conor's women. Child, I thought
My pride would ne'er recover of that hurt.
E'en then it ne'er had seemed to me too much
That I myself should not be deedless. E'en,
I young, it had not seemed to me too much
That I should hope to be myself the chiefest
Of rulers in all Erin. And we dwelt
In Avvin ; and in this wise there was I—
Hated and without honour, hating greatly,
Dejected, in dark sadness ; and toward Conor,
I had timidity and horror. Then,
After one year my pride arose in me ;
And, through high pride of mind, I rode from Avvin,
Forsaking Conor ; and I rode towards Tara.
It was a shining and extreme clear night ;
And I was chased ; but like the wind of spring,
My chariot-steeds went south toward kingly Tara,
And crossed the boundary and came to Tara,
Where was my father the High-king of Erin.

So, child, my being thus given unto Conor
Without my will ; and my sad days in Avvin ;
And, afterwards, my severance from Conor
Without his will ; were the first powerful causes
And the first reasons for this eminent hatred

Between myself and Ulster. It was then,
When I had left stern-hearted Conor, so
Escaping from that dreadful grief, that Yohee,
My father, gave me that distinguished household,
Which was much spoken of,—so that with me
There were full fifteen hundred kingly warriors
Of sons of exiles out of extern lands ;
And fifteen hundreds of the sons of noble
Dwellers amidst ourselves. And it was then
That Yohee put me into sovereignty
O'er Croohan and a Third 'midst the Three Thirds
Of Connaught, where thenceforth in quietness
I did possess,—the power of Conor here
No more being on me ; and ere long I wedded
Tinny the son of Conrig Cass, a king
Above the men of Domnann ; and two years
Passed thus in quietness. But it was then,
Namely, at ending of these two good years,
That the great Feast of Tara was made ready
By Yohee Fayla ; and the Five Great Fifths
Of Erin were around him there in Tara,
Except myself and Tinny. Seeing this,
The men of Erin asked just Yohee, Fayla
To bring me to that Feast, and Yohee sent
Srebloo-a, his own woman-messenger,
Hither to Croohan to invite me. Then,
Upon the morrow, Tinny and myself
Arrived together at that hero-seat,

THE TÁIN

Tara, the meeting-place of kings and heroes.
Amidst the vast assemblage I perceived,
In his own Ulster place and seat of honour,
Conor the son of Fahtna, King of Ulster,
The hawk-like king ; but at that Feast his power
Was not upon me. Then, until the end
Of fourteen days added on to a month,
The racings of swift steeds and feats of riding
Pertaining to that Feast were made, and then
The men of Erin separated, each
Going back to his own land and house and doon.

“ O child,” said Maev, “ Conor remained behind
Each king and prince and chief who had been there,
That he might watch and lurk for me. One morn,
As I was riding to the Boyne for bathing,
The dreaded king, with his own men around him,
Delivered a well-calculated onfall,
With fury and with virulence, with callings
And mockery. He forced me to his will
Against my will ; and I was bound and placed
In angry bondage. That was heard in Tara ;
And when ’twas heard, the household of the King
Of Erin round about the King of Erin
Came forth from Tara. Tinny son of Conrig
Came forth from Tara. Then red battle broke
Between those people upon either side.
Harsh was the battle-thunder through the battle :
Abundant were the streams of blood that flowed ;

And I, hurt, bowed, bound, desperate, heard and saw.
 Tinny the son of Conrig Cass, my husband,
 And joint partaker with me over Croohan,
 Fell there; and ere the eve the household troops
 Of Yohee Fayla were defeated wholly,
 And driven o'er the Boyne before the men
 Of Conor son of Fahtna. Then, indeed,
 I deemed my overthrow complete. I seemed
 Helpless of all relief. But my own men
 From Connaught, my right-valiant, lusty heroes,
 Coming amidst the gory, crowded battle,
 By strength of fighting brought me from that danger
 And from that venomous bondage. They, by strength
 Of fighting, over the wide Plain of Meath,
 Over the wide expanse, taking me safely,
 We crossed the Shannon of green-flowing streams,
 To Croohan, here, my doon and rightful dwelling.

O child, this thing is truth without deceit,—
 I knew that my high pride of mind and spirit
 Would ne'er recover from this second hurt
 Until I should behold red-sworded Conor
 Pale in his death before me. And, O child,
 Untiring, throughout all my lifetime after,
 I was preparing that I might fulfil
 That which I wished for. I, in no long time,
 Ruled the Three Thirds of Connaught. Then I wedded
 Thy father, Al-yill son of Mawta Murrisc,
 Winning the friendship of the sons of Mahga

THE TÁIN

In Connaught, and the friendship and alliance
Of Leinster and the war-skilled Leinster-men.
My many sons, thy brothers, I bestowed
In fosterage with powerful Munster princes,
Winning their friendship. Five times five years so
Have been consumed since that great hurt and danger
Which I have spoken of. My people now
Are multiplied in numbers. I have gotten
Great wealth and power and great battle-strength ;
And I have triumphed and thriven in well-nigh all
My enterprises and my purposes,
Till now, indeed, I am accounted chiefest
Of rulers in all Erin, save alone
In that high-proud, strength-guarded Ulster Fifth,
Where Conor, lofty and illustrious,
Rules with huge power :—yea, even he gathers tribute
Out of the Islands of the Foreigners
Beyond the Northern Sea. But now, O daughter,
From what these envoys have averred, we know
That this is now the time and the occasion
For dealing woe to Ulster. It is well
That we have so despatched Mac Roth to Cooley
To beg this year's loan of the Donn of Cooley
For me. We know the bull will be refused.
That will be cause to us for the great hosting,
Which we have long prepared to trouble Ulster.
Thereon a strange thing shall be seen in Ulster :
We will destroy and spoil the men of Ulster :

We will strike fear into them. In the end,
 If they shall rise and come and give us battle,
 It is my hope that Conor son of Fahtna,
 Of most stern valour, on that day may know
 The grievousness of death ; and that with sureness
 His numbing death-mists may lay hold of him.
 So we, indeed, shall put the pride off Ulster ;
 And I, thereafter, shall, indeed, be chiefest
 Of rulers through the Five Great Fifths of Erin.

And for thyself, dear child, on this great hosting
 We shall perceive which are the great and true
 And lively warriors : and, when we return,
 Thou shalt be wedded to some noble warrior
 And kingly hero midst our battle-heroes."

This was the talk 'twixt Maev and Findabair
 In Maev's own quiet, private House-for-Converse
 In high Rath Croohan, on Moy Wee in Connaught,
 Before the Táin.

As for those messengers
 Which Maev had sent,—across wide, noble Erin
 To Cooley, over unobstructed ways
 They travelled till they reached the well-roofed house
 Of Dawra, son of Feeacna. Therein
 Mac Roth received a truly joyful welcome.
 (That was befitting, for Mac Roth indeed
 Was chief of all the messengers of Erin.)
 Dawra inquired what cause had brought on them

THE TÁIN

That travel, and Mac Roth related all
That friendly emulation and contention
'Twixt Maev and Al-yill. "And to ask," he said,
"For Maev one year's loan of thy Donn of Cooley
To rival that huge, beautiful Findbenna,
Is that which I have come for. Thou shalt get
Fifty fair heifers, and the bull himself
In safety back. And, yet another thing:
If, to the people of this territory
And of this land, it seems an evil thing
To give that wonderful, distinctive jewel,
Their Donn of Cooley, come thou then thyself
To Connaught, to Rath Croohan, with the bull;
And Maev will give thee from her smooth Moy Wee
A measure equalling the land thou hast
In mountainous Cooley here; and thou shalt get
A chariot costing three times seven bondmaids;
And, beyond all, Maev's own especial friendship."

That proposition gave much joy and gladness
To Dawra son of Feeacna. He shook
Till the seam-sewings of his down-filled bed
Brake underneath him. "By our faith of conscience!"
He said, "however bad, however good,
This may appear unto the men of Ulster,—
On this occasion this distinguished treasure,
Namely, the Donn of Cooley, shall be taken
To Maev and Al-yill, to the realm of Connaught!"
And to Mac Roth it gave much joy and gladness

BOOK I

To find that answer to his words and message.

Then they were served. Green rushes and green
reeds

Were strown beneath them. Pleasing food was brought.
A feast was poured for them. Anon they grew
Loud-voiced, confused ; and soon this colloquy
Happened betwixt two of those messengers.

“ ’Tis a true word,” said one, “ the man of this house
Is a great man ! ” “ He is a great man, truly,”
The second said. “ Is there,” the first man asked,
“ ’Midst all the men of Ulster any man
Greater than this man is ? ” The second said,
“ Truly there is ! Greater than this man is,
Is Conor whose he is. Yet were the men
Of Ulster all to rally to this man,
It were to them no shame or loss of honour.”
The first man said, “ He shows to us great honour,
When this thing (which to take by force from Ulster
Would be a work for the Four Fifths of Erin)
Namely, the Donn of Cooley, is thus given
Freely to us nine messengers alone.”

A third then came on them to join that talk ;
And this one was a woman. “ What,” said she,
“ Is being talked of here betwixt you two ? ”
They told their talk, and how the one had said,
That Dawra truly showed to them great honour,
Since that thing (which to take by force from Ulster
Would be a work for the Four Fifths of Erin),

THE TÁIN.

Namely, the Donn of Cooley, was thus given
To those nine messengers alone. She said :
“ Fain in this hour were I to see a burst
Of blood and clotted gore out of that mouth
Whereout that saying came ! Because,” said she,
“ Were not the bull thus yielded willingly,
He would be taken forcibly. The hosts
Of Al-yill and of Maev, with skilful guidance
From powerful Fergus son of Roy, would take him ! ”

This was the time when the Distributor
To Dawra came into that separate house
Where these were feasted : and a man laden
With drink was with him, and a man laden
With food ; and he had heard all that they said.
And anger came on him ; and he set down
His food and drink before them ; and he said not
To them that they should take it ; and he said not
That they should leave it. He went after that
Into that house where Dawra was himself,
And said with haste : “ Is it thyself who gavest
That wondrous jewel to these messengers,—
The Donn of Cooley ? ” “ It is I, indeed,”
Said Dawra. “ In the place where he was given,”
The man said, “ there was neither king nor kingship !
There was no strength or sway or government !
They say the truth ! ” “ What say they, then ? ” asked
Dawra.

“ They say,” the man said, “ that unless thou givest

BOOK I

Him willingly, thou then ere long shalt give him
Unwillingly, constrained by the great hosts
Of Al-yill and of Maev, guided and led
By Fergus son of Roy !” “ I swear,” said Dawra,
“ By all the gods whom I adore, that that
Which I bestow not on them willingly,
They shall not make me yield unwillingly.”

They slept till morn. Early upon the morrow
The messengers arose ; and they went straightway
Into that house where Dawra slept himself,
And said to him : “ O Noble One, allow us
Place-guidance that we thus may find the place
Wherein thy Donn of Cooley is.” “ Not so !
In truth or deed,” Dawra replied to them ;
“ But were it wont of mine to violate
Travellers, messengers, or journeying folk,
Who travel by these passes and these ways,
Not one of you should journey hence alive.”
“ For what cause ? ” asked Mac Roth. “ There is great
cause,”

Dawra replied. “ Ye said unless the bull
Should be delivered to you willingly,
He should be seized on forcibly by hosts
Of Maev’s and Al-yill’s, guided on their way
By Fergus son of Roy.” Mac Roth responded,
Deprecating, “ Yet, O Noble One,
Whate’er they may have said, these messengers,
Made heady by thy viands and thy ale,

THE TÁIN

It is not right so to take cognizance
Or heed of it, or so to make of it
Ground of reproach to Al-yill and to Maev."

These were the words that Dawra said to him :—
" Yet, O Mac Roth, I will not give my bull
On this occasion, if I have strength to help it."

Thus, with these words, those messengers returned.
They traversed Erin, till they reached at length
Rath Croohan on Moy Wee in Connaught. Then
Maev asked of them their tidings, and Mac Roth
Told her those tidings ;—that they had not brought
The bull from Dawra. " Through what cause ? " asked
Maev.

Mac Roth related all. Maev said to him :
" This is no cause for trouble, O Mac Roth ;
There is no need to trim these knots away.
We knew the bull would be refused. And now
He shall be taken by strength of mighty hosts,
With guidance from our Fergus son of Roy.
And we will not alone take their great bull :
There is no ill we will not do to them.
E'en though the dangerous, storm-troubled days
Of winter now come near, we yet will go.
We will lay waste, harry, and devastate
All Ulster and all Crithny. We will take
Their wives, their children, and their tender sons,
Their steeds and flocks of mares, their troops of kine,

BOOK I

Their herds of every sort of grazing kine.
And we will not alone burn to the grass
Their strongly-timbered houses, wide and fair ;
But their high, fortified green mounds, whereon
Their houses are, we will so level down
That all their glens and trenches will be filled
After our track. And at the end of all
The Donn of Cooley shall be brought to Croohan.
Whoever shall arrive or not arrive
In safety here after this powerful hosting,
The Donn of Cooley shall arrive. I swear,
By all the gods by whom my people swear,
The Bull of Cooley then shall come to Croohan.”

BOOK II

BOOK II

THESE were Maev's words. Then messengers went forth
To Maev's own seven sons, the seven Mahn-yas,
That each might come, each with his folk and cantred,
To Croohan on Moy Wee. And messengers
Went forth unto each king and under-king
And prince and chief through the Four Fifths of Erin,
That each might come with his own folk and cantred
To join that hosting.

It was on an eve,
While all were waiting for those many hosts
And bands and troops to come unto Rath Croohan,
That Maev and Al-yill, with their kingly household,
Were feasting in their royal house. And this
Was the array of that most royal house:—
It was round, vast, and built of powerful oak,
Roofed o'er with shingles; and it held within it
Seven concentric ranks of imdas, railed
With bronze, and panelled with choice, rich red yew.
And there were brought into that house that night
The newest of each kind of pleasant food
And oldest of each kind of pleasant drink;
And when each man had eaten and had drunk
His measure and his full sufficiency,

THE TÁIN

Al-yill the son of Mawta Murrisc said
Aloud:—" Let now some tale be told to us."
" What tale wouldst thou have told ? " asked Findabair.
" Let it," said Al-yill, " be some tale from Ulster ;
For (since we soon shall go upon our hosting)
To hear some tale or famous history
Of those famed tribes and that famed warlike folk
Toward whom we go, will indeed be to us
A pastime, and will while away the eve."

" Let it," said Maev, " be that most woful tale
Of the Three Sons of Usna and their deaths ;
For 'tis a tale which men hear willingly."
" And who shall tell the tale ? " asked Findabair.
" Who," answered Maev, " but agèd Lowercam,
The woman-poet, satirist, and envoy,
Who is in exile here in Croohan ? "—Now
This was the reason in Maev's mind for choosing
That tale. She deemed that Fergus son of Roy,
Who was there with them in that house that night,
Would be (when he should freshly hear this tale
Of all the wrong which he had borne from Conor)
So much the more ready and fresh and eager
To help her with his kingly hero-valour
On that great hosting to the lands of Ulster.

Throughout that household then there was great
silence ;
And Lowercam began her tale and told it.

BOOK II

The men of Ulster once (she said) were drinking
At nightfall on the floor of the house of Faylim,
Conor's own High-historian. And the wife
Of Faylim was presiding o'er those hosts,
Above them ; and she served and dealt to them ;
And she was great with child. Horns brimmed with ale,
Cause of loud mirth, passed round ; and shares of food
Passed round ; and mixed inebriate shouts were heard.

When each was faring to his sleeping-place
Within that house, the wife of Faylim too
Fared to her sleeping-place ; and, as she fared
Across the wide-floored house, the child within her
Cried, so that everywhere inside that liss
Its cry was heard. The men of Ulster rose,
Each man against the other, when they heard
The shrill, lone, terror-causing, grief-full cry.
But Shenca, straight, the truly-prudent one,
Rose up and called to them : " Stir not yourselves,
Ye men ; but let the woman come up hither,
That thus the cause and presage of that cry
May be made known to us. They took the woman
To truly-prudent Shenca, then,—that hero
Whose words of eloquence are strong to calm
The hosts of Ulster, and whose calming words
Might still the war and tumult of the world.

Whilst they were passing through the wide-floored
house,
Faylim, the woman's husband, High-historian .

THE TÁIN

And Poet unto Conor, said to her :

“What was that cry which we have heard ascending,
O woman ? By our ears the cry was heard.

Great terror has seized hold of me. My heart
Is wounded as by weapons.” Unto him

Shenca, the truly-prudent one, said then :

“Trouble the woman not ; but let her now

Be led to Cathbad, the good marvellous Druid ;

For 'tis with him that there is knowledge.” Then

The woman moved towards Cathbad, and she said,
Speaking to Cathbad, the renowned Druid :

“Let Cathbad, the good, lovable Druid, hear me ;

For not with me are the white words of knowledge

Wherewith to answer Faylim ; for the woman

Knows not herself what stirs beneath her breast.”

'Twas then that Cathbad said : “O wife of Faylim,

Beneath thy breast there cried a yellow-haired

Bright maiden, with bright blue-green eyes, and cheeks

Crimson like foxglove, and a faultless treasure

Of teeth like autumn snow, and two curved lips

Red like red rowan-fruit o'er shining snow.

Beneath thy breast there cried a yellow-haired

Bright maiden, with long shining waving hair.

High heroes strongly will contend for her.

Noble high-kings will deeply long for her.

There will be woe throughout this Fifth of Conor's.

There cried beneath thy breast a yellow-haired

Bright maiden, with red lips like fruit of rowan.

BOOK II

High-queens shall envy them. High-queens shall envy
Her excellent, unblemished, faultless form."

And Cathbad laid his hand against the woman,
So that the child was troubled beneath his hand.
"Yea, it is true," he said, "it is a maiden,
Indeed, who is troubled there. And Daerdra, 'Trouble,'
Shall be her name: and there shall be much ill
Because of her, through all this Fifth of Erin."

After that, then, the child was born; and Cathbad,
When she was brought unto him, said to her:

"O Daerdra, 'Trouble,' comely, of renown
Most wonderful, 'tis in thy time of life,
That woe and torture shall arrive for Ulster.

There will be envy, there will be hate in Ulster;
There will be wars, even after thy time of life,
Through thee, indeed, O generous daughter of
Faylim.

It is through thee, and in thy time of life,
That ears of men shall hear of a sad exile,—
The exile of the three high Sons of Usna.

It is through thee, and in thy time of life,
That a dread deed shall be performed in Avvin,
In violation of the words of Fergus.

It is through thee, and in thy time of life,
That ears of men shall hear of a great exile,—
The exile of great Fergus from our Ulster.

Thou shalt thyself perform a rough, dread deed,
In anger towards the king of high-proud Ulster.

THE TÁIN

Thy grave shall be in a lone, rock-high place.
Thy history shall be renowned, O Daerdra."

"Let the maid-child be slain," the warriors said.
But Conor, the High-king of Ulster, looking
Upon the child, straight loved it ; and he said :
"Not so, O warriors ; since it is not well
To war against things fated ; for things fated
May not by us be so avoided. Truly,
Beautiful is the smiling of this child.
Let her be brought to me at dawn to-morrow :
She shall be reared obedient to myself ;
And she shall be the wife who shall be near me."

The chiefs were silent ; for they dared not speak
Against the words and verdict of the King.
But Fergus son of Roy soon rose and spoke,
And said : "O Conor, O High-king of Ulster,
Thy judgment errs not. All things shall be done
According to thy ruling and thy judgment."

And all was done even as Conor had said.
The child was reared within a closed-up liss
Nigh the high mound of splendid Avvin Maha ;
And none (said Lowercam) was e'er admitted
Within that liss, except these four alone,—
Namely, her gentle, careful foster-mother
And foster-father, who there tended her ;
And Conor, the High-sovereign ; and myself,
Lowercam ;—they dared not close me out,

BOOK II

I being the skilled she-satirist. And Daerdra
By Conor there was reared, until she was
The maiden of most splendour which there was
Throughout the expanse of Erin. And to Conor
She was the treasure which he loved more strongly
Than any treasure. And the time drew nigh
When she should go to his high pillow.

Then,

One day upon white snow in one night fallen,
The foster-father of the maid was skinning
A cooking-calf to seethe for her; and Daerdra,—
I being with her there,—perceived a raven
Drink the calf's blood upon the snow. 'Twas then
She cried: "O Lowercam, how lovable
To me that man would be on whom should be
These three pure colours, namely, on his hair
The black of this black raven; on his cheeks
The red of this red blood, and on his body
The white of this white snow." Whereon I said:
"O maiden, dignity and bliss be thine!
In Conor's own king's household, very near
To where thou art, that man is; and his name
Is Neesha son of Usna." And she said:
"'Twill not be well with me until I see him."

At day-dawn on the morrow, while the sun
Rose through the beautiful, lustrous clouds of dawning
Neesha the son of Usna stood alone
On the high mound of splendid Avvin Maha,

THE TÁIN

Singing his rich andord. And, O ye men
(Said Lowercam), sonorous and melodious
Was the andord sung by the Sons of Usna,
By Neesha and by Annly and Ardawn,
The three high sons of Usna. Every cow
And every beast, hearing that rich andord,
Yielded a two-thirds increase of her milk ;
And to all folk who heard that melody
It was their fill and their sufficiency
Of harmony and calm and peacefulness.
Moreover, men, high was the valour too
Of those three sons. E'en had the Hosts of Ulster
Been all around them in one place to slay them,—
They three being back to back amidst those hosts,—
The hosts would not have gained the battle o'er them,
So good at warding-off and at defence
Were those three valorous, dauntless hero-ones.
And they were fleet as hounds are in the chase :
They slew the fleet, wild deer by their own fleetness :
Their leap was like the salmon's.—

And so Daerdra,
Lying at dawn in her still lying-place,
Heard that unrivalled one ; and in her mind
She knew that it was Neesha. Then she rose,
Unseen by those who reared her. She passed out,
Outside the liss, and climbed on the high mound
Of Avvin Maha, and saw Neesha there.
She passed as though she would pass unperceived.

He knew her not. He said, as she went past :
 "Fair is that heifer who goes past us there."
 "There must be heifers where there are no bulls,"
 She answered. That struck fear into him. Truly,
 He knew her then. "Maiden," he said to her,
 "The Bull of all this Fifth, namely, the King,
 Will be for thee." "I would have leave to choose
 Between you two," she said, "and I would choose
 A young bull even like thee." "Not so," said he.
 He held in memory the words of Cathbad.
 "Is it refusing me thou sayest that?"
 She asked. "It is refusing thee indeed,"
 He answered her.

With speed and vehemence
 And fervency she sprang at him and seized
 The two ears on his head. She said, "Two ears
 Of shame and of disgrace these ears will be
 Unless thou takest me!" "Arise from me,
 Remove from me, O woman," Neesha said.
 "I will be thine," she said; whereat from Neesha
 There rose his loud andord; and when the Ultonians
 Heard the andord, as thus it rose from him,
 They rose against each other,—each incited
 To mutual wounding, and to broils, and war.

The Sons of Usna came to restrain their brother.
 "What ails thee," said they, "that the men of
 Ulster

'Thus wound each other by thy fault?' He told

THE TÁIN

What had been done to him. "Evil," said they,
"Will come of it; but thou shalt never be
Beneath disgrace and taint and shame and scorn
While we two live. We will depart with her
Into some other land. There is no king
In Erin who will not make joy before us."

Those were their counsels. They went forth that
night.

They took with them thrice fifty fighting men,
Thrice fifty gillies, and thrice fifty women,
And Daerdra 'midst them, so that none might see her.

After that night wherein they fled with her,
They for a long while lived beneath protection,
All round wide Erin,—though their annihilation
Was oft attempted in the lands of Erin
By the contrivances and plans of Conor,
South-westward from white-foaming Assaroe,
And round the south, until they turned once more
North-eastward to Ben Edar. In the end
The Ultonians drove them o'er the sea to Alba.

There they abode in a desert. In a season,
When the wild creatures of the mountains failed them,
They took to falling on the kine and sheep
Of the men of Alba, till the men of Alba
Rose in one day to attack them. Then they went
And took war-service with the King of Alba.
They set their houses on his green. They slept not

BOOK II

In the King's house. It was because of Daerdra
That they did that,—so that no man might see her :
They feared they might be slain because of her.

Then, on a time, one day, at early morn,
The steward of the king of Alba took his circuit
Around their houses ; and he saw that pair,
Neesha and Daerdra, in their sleep. He went
Forthwith and roused the king. “ We ne'er have
found

Until this day,” he said, “ a woman worthy
To be thy mate. With Neesha Son of Usna
There is a woman worthy to be mated
With the king of the Western World. Let Neesha,
therefore,

Straightway be slain ; and let this woman sleep
With thee thyself,” the steward said. “ Nay,” the king
said,

“ But rise and supplicate her secretly,
Daily to come to me.” That then was done.
What the steward said to her she told to Neesha.

When the king got from her only refusal,
The sons of Usna were commissioned forth
Into hard combats, battles, and hard dangers,
So that they might be slain ; but they were firm
In every place of wounding and of danger.

Nought was attained. The men of Alba then
Were mustered strongly to attack those sons
And slay them. She was told that. And she told

THE TÁIN

Neesha immediately. "Ye must depart,"
She said. "Unless ye will depart to-night,
Ye will be slain to-morrow." So that night
They left the king; and a long time they wandered
In desert woods and lands, and in lone glens
Set up their booths and tents. In time they came
Unto Loch Etive and subdued the lands
Around Loch Etive; and they made a stronghold;
And for a while in peace they sojourned there.

These things were told, now, to the men of
Ulster,

Who spoke together, and then said: "O Conor,
This is to all our minds a cause of grief,—
The Sons of Usna to be wandering
In hostile lands, finding their death and end,
Because of one bad woman." Conor said:
"Let one go forth to them to take that message,
And offer them protection here in Avvin."
Then I (said Lowercam) was ordered forth
To bear that message to the Sons of Usna.
I found them, and they gave me trustful kisses,
Kindly and fervently and loyally.
And I, at finding them, wept floodlike tears;
Because there were no two on the ridge of the world
Who were so dear to me as were those two,
Neesha and Daerdra. Then I spake my message.
"We will return," said Neesha, "if great Fergus
Will come to be our safeguard and our pledge;

And if a son of Conor's and a chief
 Amidst the chiefs of Ulster will await
 To take our hands on landing." I returned
 To give this word. When Conor heard this word,
 He weighed that matter for a space and season.
 Among the heroes of the Western World
 There was not any greater than was Fergus,
 In stalwartness and beauty and high race,
 In bounteousness and kindness ; and to Conor
 He, without change, was ever dear and loyal.
 He by his prowess had broken thirty battles
 O'er chiefs in distant lands, e'en to the City
 Of Moorn in the far Land of Ice and Snow.
 Conor, then, pondered for a space and season.
 Then he took Fergus to a place apart,
 And said : " O royal warrior of the world,
 If thou wert sent to fetch the Sons of Usna,
 And they, in violation of thy safeguard,
 Were slain,—a thing which never would be done,—
 What wouldst thou do?" And this (said Lowercam)
 Was what great Fergus said : he said, " O King,
 Thy own blood, thy own flesh, I would not touch ;
 But there is not another man of Ulster
 Whom I should find doing them injury,
 Who from my hands would not obtain his death."

" O royal warrior of the world," said Conor,
 " Thou shalt go forth to fetch the Sons of Usna ;
 For 'tis with thee that they will come. Depart

THE TÁIN

To-morrow ; and, when coming from the east,
Land at the doon of Borrig son of Annty,
Where Cormac, my own son, and Duffa Dael
Will take their hands on landing. And, besides,
Give me thy word that when they shall arrive,
No stop or stay shall be allowed to them ;
So that the first food which they eat in Erin
May be with me in Avvin." Fergus promised ;
And early on the morrow he arose,
And took with him no hosts or multitudes
Except his own two sons, Illann Finn, namely,
And Bwinn-ye the Rude-Red. And they set forth
Upon that mission and that embassy.

Then Conor sent for Borrig son of Annty.
He said : " Hast thou a feast for me, O Borrig ? "
" I have," said Borrig. " It was possible
To make it, but it was not possible
To bear it hither." " That being so," said Conor,
" Give it to Fergus, when he comes to thee.
And it belongs to his high hero-gassa
And to his powerful hero-prohibitions,
Both to refuse a feast when offered one,
And to forsake a feast, ere it be ended."
Borrig, instructed, fared to his own doon.

And Conor sent for Cormac, his own son,
With Duffa Dael, the chafer-tongued of Ulster.
" Go forth," he said, " unto Dunseverick
To meet the Sons of Usna when they come there ;

BOOK II

And take their hands on landing." So he spake,
Giving them wrong direction.

As for Fergus,
He, with his own two sons, Illann Finn, namely,
And Bwinn-ye the Rude-Red, in his own boat,
The Eura, sailed north-eastward, till he came
To the strong place where dwelt the Sons of Usna,
And to Loch Etive. And (said Lowercam)
'Tis thus that those three Sons of Usna were:—
They had three wide and spacious hunting-booths;
And in the booth wherein they cooked their food,
Therein they ate it not; and in the booth
Wherein they ate, therein they rested not.
And Fergus let from him a mighty shout
Within the harbour, so that it was heard
Through all that country near to him. And thus
Were Neesha and bright Daerdra,—with the Kenncaem
Of Conor placed between them, while they played
At royal feehill on the Kenncaem. Then
Neesha looked up and said: "I hear the shout
Of a man of Erin." Daerdra, too, had heard
The shout: she knew it was the shout of Fergus;
But she concealed it from them. And again
Fergus let forth from him his mighty shout
Within the harbour; so that Neesha said:
"I hear another shout. It is the shout
Of a man of Erin." "It is not," said Daerdra,
"It is, indeed, the shout of a man of Alba."

THE TÁIN

But Fergus let from him his third loud shout
Within the harbour ; and the Sons of Usna
Then knew it was, indeed, the shout of Fergus.
And Neesha bade Ardawn go to the shore
To meet great Fergus : whereon Daerdra said
That she had recognized the first loud shout
Which Fergus had let forth. "Wherefore," said Neesha,
"Didst thou conceal it?" Daerdra said to him :
"I saw a vision in the night last night,—
Namely, three birds which came to us from Avvin,
Carrying in their mouths three drops of honey :
And they with us left their three drops of honey ;
But took with them three drops of our own blood."

"How dost thou judge that vision?" Neesha said.
"Thus," answered she. "Fergus has come to us,
Out of our native land to bear us peace ;
And honey is not sweeter to a man
Than is an embassy of peace. The three
Sips of our blood which the birds took from us,—
They are yourselves who now will go with Fergus,
And be betrayed."

But it seemed ill to them
That Daerdra should speak so ; and they were grieved ;
And Neesha bade Ardawn go to the shore
To meet great Fergus. And Ardawn went down ;
And when he saw great Fergus and his sons,
He gave them each three kisses fervently
And loyally, and took them to the stronghold

BOOK II

Where Neesha was with Daerdra ; and they, too,
Gave their three kisses very fervently
To Fergus and his sons. And Neesha sought
Their tidings of all Erin ; and in special
Their tidings of the Ulster Fifth. And Fergus
Replied : “ These tidings are indeed our best,—
Namely, that Conor has sent myself to fetch you ;
And I am now your warranty and safeguard,
And I am dear to you, and true, and loyal ;
And I have taken my word, and it is on me
Now to fulfil my covenant and safeguard.
And Cormac son of Conor son of Fahtna,
And Duffa Dael of Ulster will be waiting
At Borrig’s Doon to take your hands on landing.”

“ It is not fit that ye should go,” said Daerdra ;
“ For greater is your store of wealth and riches
In Alba than it e’er will be in Erin.”

And it was then, indeed (said Lowercam),
That Fergus spake these very fervent words :—
“ Better than all things is one’s native land ;
For not delightful unto any man
Is any store of wealth, however great,
Unless he sees his own dear native land.”

(Lowercam paused ; for she perceived that Fergus,
Hearing these words which he once so had spoken,
Wept o’er his breast his flood-like showers of tears ;
And all perceived that like a sudden storm

THE TÁIN

He rose ; and, rushing like a sudden storm,
Passed from the house. But Lowercam went on.)

When Fergus so had said these thoughtful words,
“ Better than all things is one’s native land ;
For not delightful unto any man
Is any store of wealth, howsoe’er great,
Unless he sees his native land,” with fervour
Neesha replied : “ That thing is true, O Fergus;
For dearer to myself is our own Erin
Than Alba is, although by hap in Alba
I might obtain more wealth.”

“ My word and safeguard
And warranty are firm and strong for you,”
Fergus said, urging. “ They are firm and strong,”
Said Neesha. “ We indeed will go with thee
Again to Erin.”

Now (said Lowercam)
It verily was not with Daerdra’s will
That all these things were said. And she was trying
To hinder them ; but Fergus son of Roy
Gave them his word that even if all the men
Of Erin should betray them at one time,
Not shield or sword or cathbarr should protect
One such betraying from the wrath and vengeance
Which he, great Fergus, would inflict on him.

And Neesha answered very ardently :
“ O generous Fergus, Fergus of Avvin Maha,

BOOK II

Thy word is firm, and we will go with thee
Again to Erin and to Avvin Maha."

They passed that night away. Upon the morrow,
Though early was the singing of the birds
Amid the oaks, yet earlier than that,
In the pale morn, was the fresh early rising
Of Fergus and of Neesha. And they went
Down to the creek and made their curraghs ready,
And made the Eura ready; and ere yet
The sun was high, Fergus and his two sons,
And the three Sons of Usna,—Neesha, namely,
And Annly and Ardawn,—with bright-cheeked Daerdra,
And with their folk and people, bore away
Along the sea, out to the awful ocean,
To go to Erin. As for mournful Daerdra,
She from the Eura gazed along their track,
Back to the lands of Alba; and she said:
"My love to thee, thou land there in the east;
And I am wearying, indeed, at leaving
The borders of thy cherishing creeks and havens,
And thy smooth-flowering, unblemished plains,
And thy green-sided hills. And very little
Indeed does it now profit us to leave them."
Then o'er the wave-voice of the billowing sea
She sang her words of highest love of Alba.

"Belovéd land, thou land there in the east,
Alba with wonders! I would never leave thee,
Did I not leave with Neesha, my belovéd.

THE TÁIN

Belovéd are Doon Feea and Doon Finn
And the high doon above them ; and belovéd
Is Innish Draiguen o'er its strong loud beach.

Kyle Cooan ! O thick-branching wood of Cooan,
Into which Annly oft would wend. Alas !
Short seemed the time unto myself and Neesha,
While we were in yon paling land of Alba.

Glen Lawee ! in Glen Lawee I would sleep
Beneath a gentle crag. Deer-flesh and fish
And badger-flesh they brought me in Glen Lawee.

Glen Massan ! in Glen Massan grows the garlic,
Tall and pure-white. We had a rocking sleep
Above the white-haired inver of Glen Massan.

Glen Etive ! O Glen Etive ! there I built
My first house. Tender are its circling woods.
A cattle-fold for sunshine is Glen Etive.

Glen Urkeen ! O Glen Urkeen is a glen
With straight, fair ridges. At his age no man
Was prouder than was Neesha in Glen Urkeen.

And Glen Dau Roo ! My love to every man
Who dwells therein. Sweet is the cuckoo's voice
From curved bough on the peak o'er Glen Dau Roo.

And Innish Draiguen o'er its strong, loud beach !
Dear are its pure-brinked waters where they shine
Above pure sands ; and I would ne'er have left it,
Had I not left with my beloved, with Neesha."

So o'er the waves she sang her mournful words,

BOOK II

While to their own dear land and heritage
The Sons of Usna travelled. And delight
Shone on the brows of these, while with their oars
They beat the water-ways, until at length
Beneath Doon Borrig, that long-famous doon
Upon the cliff-high bounds of high-proud Ulster
They put their prows on shore. And Borrig ran
Down to that shore to take their hands on landing.
He made great joy toward Fergus and his sons ;
And gave three kisses to the Sons of Usna ;
And said to Neesha that great grief was his
That Cormac son of Conor son of Fahtna,
And Duffa Dael of Ulster had not come
North to his doon to take their hands on landing.
Then, in a little while, he said to Fergus :
“ I have a feast prepared for thee, O Fergus ;
And it belongs to thy high hero-gassa,
And to thy strong high hero-prohibitions,
Both to refuse a feast when offered one,
And to forsake a feast ere it be ended.”

When Fergus heard these words which Borrig
spake,
He flushed an angry red from crown to ground.
“Thou hast done ill, O Borrig,” Fergus said,
“ To place me under gassa, seeing that Conor
Put my strong word on me to bring the Sons
Of Usna south to Avvin on the day
When they should land in Erin.” Borrig said :

THE TÁIN

“I place thee under gassa, yea, such gassa,
That no true hero henceforth will endure thee,
Unless thou comest to consume my feast.”

Then Fergus asked of Neesha what to do
Concerning that. “Do,” answered Daerdra, fiercely,
“That which appears the best to thee! Abandon
The Sons of Usna. Drink thy feast. But truly
'Tis a high price to pay for any feast,
Thus to abandon them.” It seemed to Fergus
It was an evil thing to break his gassa
And his high hero-prohibitions. Sadly
He said to Daerdra: “I abandon not
The Sons of Usna; for my own two sons,
True Illann Finn and Bwinn-ye the Rude-Red,
Go at their sides to Avvin. And my word
And warranty go with them too,” said Fergus.

“That is enough of excellence,” said Neesha;
“For no one yet hath e'er defended us
In battle or in combat or in conflict,
Except ourselves.” And Neesha, in great anger,
Moved from the spot. And Daerdra followed him;
And Annly followed, and Ardawn, and all
Their folk and people, and the Sons of Fergus.

Yet it was not with Daerdra's will and counsel
That they made forth; and they left Fergus there
Gloomy and sorrowful. Howbeit, to Fergus
One thing seemed sure,—that if the Five Great Fifths
Of Erin should take counsel all together,

In the one spot, they still would not attain
To daring to infringe his word and safeguard.

As to the Sons of Usna, they moved forward
By each well-shortened way and fair direction,
Till Daerdra said to them : " O Sons of Usna,
How will it hurt you, though ye wait awhile ?
I now would give you a wise, fitting counsel ;
Although ye may not do it for me." Neesha
Replied : " What then, O woman, is thy counsel ?"
She said, " To go to Rathlin, there, between
Erin and Alba ; and to stay in Rathlin
Till Fergus shall have taken his feast ; and that
Will be a keeping of the word of Fergus ;
And to yourselves, O glorious Sons of Usna,
'Twill be an increase of your length of princship."

" Toward us that is a saying of great ill,"
Said the two sons of Fergus : " and to us
It is impossible to do that counsel.
E'en were there not the might of your own hands
And ours, and the word of powerful Fergus
Protecting you, ye would not be betrayed."

" Mourning and woe came with that word of Fergus,"
Said Daerdra, " when he left us for a feast."
And she was in great grief and great dejection
At having come to Erin on the word
Of Fergus. And she said : " Woe that we came
To Erin on the word of too-wild Fergus
The son of Roy ; and bitter is my heart.

THE TÁIN

My heart to-day is as one clot of sorrow
Beneath great shame. Alas! O princely Sons,
Your end of days has come." Neesha replied :
" Say not these words, O eager, vehement Daerdra,
O woman who art brighter than the sun.
The word and warranty of generous Fergus
Are strong to us." But still she grieved and said :
" Alas! I grieve for you, O Sons of Usna.
To come from Alba of the red, swift deer,—
Perpetual will be the woe from it."

After that arguing again they journeyed
By each well-shortened way and fair direction,
Until, half-way upon their way to Avvin,
Daerdra remained behind in a deep glen ;
And sleep descended on her ; and they left her
Without perceiving it. But in a while
Neesha perceived it ; and he turned to meet her ;
And she was rising from her sleep. He said :
" Why didst thou stay behind me here, O Queen ?"
" I had a sleep," said Daerdra ; " and a vision
And dream appeared to me." " What dream ?" said
Neesha.

Daerdra said : " Sad the vision which appeared !
I beheld each of you without his head ;
And Illann Finn without his head. Of help
There was not any." Neesha said to her :
" O Daerdra, heed not visions of thy sleep.
Thy mouth hath sung to us nothing save evil,

BOOK II

O shining, radiant damsel ! ” Daerdra said :
“ Better to me were ill for every man
Than for you three, O gentle Sons of Usna,
With whom I have searched sea and mighty land.”

After those words, again they journeyed forward,
Until they came unto the Height of Willows
Not far from splendid Avvin. And thence Daerdra,
While gazing outward from herself, perceived
A hateful cloud, whereat she said these words :

“ O Neesha, look upon thy cloud. I see it
Before me in the air. Above green Avvin
I see a very red, thin cloud of blood.
A sudden starting has laid hold of me
Before yon cloud. Like to a sod of blood
Is yon red, awful cloud I see before me.
And I would counsel you, dear Sons of Usna,
Not to proceed to-night to Avvin Maha,
With all this danger which there is on you ;
But let us go instead south to Doon Dalgan,
To Dectora and Sooaltim ; and later,
When Fergus shall have come to us, we then
Will go to Avvin.” Neesha angrily
Answered wise, red-cheeked Daerdra : “ Since, indeed,
There is no fear on us, we will not do
This counsel which thou givest.” And she, weeping,
Said : “ It has seldom happened before this,
O thou descendant of distinguished Rury,
That we have been without accord in counsel,

THE TÁIN

Myself and thou, O Neesha. On the day
When Manannawn bestowed on us a cup,
Thou wouldst not on that day have been against me,
I say to thee, O Neesha. On the day
When thou didst bear me with thee on our flight
Across white-foaming Assaroe of oars
Thou wouldst not then, indeed, have been against
me,
I say to thee, O Neesha.”

After that

They moved ahead by each well-shortened way,
Till they beheld high-glorious Avvin Maha
Before their eyes. O men (said Lowercam),
Owen the son of Doorha, King of Farney,
Had had long strife with Conor ; and the price
Which he now paid for peace with powerful Conor
Was this—to watch upon the Green of Avvin
With hirelings ; and to slay the Sons of Usna,
So that they might not reach to Conor himself,
And that Conor might not see them. Only Owen,
Of all the men amidst the men of Ulster,
Would have accepted that.

The Sons of Usna

Had reached the midpart of the green, when Owen,
Searching the green through the dim-thickening dusk,
Found Neesha ; and, for welcome back to Avvin,
In a fierce, evil, powerful wolf's-onset,
Gave him a thrust with his long-shafted spear,

BOOK II

So that he clove his back. Then Illann Finn
The son of Fergus threw his own two arms
Round Neesha ; and he put him under him,
And lay on him ; and he himself was slain.
And, rapidly thereafter, east and west,
Along the plain beneath the dusk-dark vault,
Ardawn and Annly, and all folk and people
Who had come thither with them out of Alba,
Were slain with wounds, till every sod became
A red death-pillow ; and each man had fallen
In his sick pool of slaughter and of dying.

After that wounding, after those murder-strokes,
After that falling, after that slaughter, loudly
The men of Ulster cried three cries of woe
And grief and mourning and loud lamentation.

After that falling, after that slaughter, Cathbad
Came on the green ; and he cursed Avvin Maha
In punishment for that great ill. He said :
“ In punishment for that great ill, no son
Of Conor’s and no man of Conor’s seed
Shall reign in Avvin, even though Conor himself,
Who, till this deed, hath been a great safe Rudder
To all this Fifth, procuring peace with riches,
May yet reign many years.” So Cathbad spake.
His saying is no hidden saying. Soon
Their graves were dug for those three noble ones ;
And their three mounds were heaped on them. And
Daerdra,

THE TÁIN

With her hands tied behind her back, was put
In Conor's house.

O men (said Lowercam),
Her mournful tragic end I tell not now.
I first must speak of Fergus. On the morrow
He swiftly came towards Avvin ; and I went
Swiftly myself (said Lowercam) to meet him.
I told him how those three heroic ones,
The Candles of the Valour of the Gael,
The three fleet-footed, harp-voiced Sons of Usna,
Had been betrayed and slain in Avvin Maha,
Though underneath his honour and protection.
Fergus, at first, could not believe that tale.
To him it seemed impossible that Conor,
The regal one, whom he and all the Ultonians
Held in great reverence and love, should so
Have outraged him,—he, Fergus, being moreover
The greatest of the warriors of all Ulster.
When he believed it, word was sent to Cormac
And Duffa Dael ; and from Dunseverick
These came to join with Fergus ; and with them
Was Feeaha the son of Conall Carna.

The anger of the men cannot be told.
In fury and huge wrath and vehemence
They moved to do their deeds. They gave red battle
To Conor's household ; and with violence
They ravaged and laid bare and scorched and wounded
From east to west and north to south round Avvin ;

And Fergus put a fringe of fire round Avvin
 To burn it ; and no man amidst the men
 Of Ulster dared attack them or oppose them.
 Then they collected all their folk and people,
 Even to the number of a cantred,—thrice
 Ten hundred warriors ; and they went from Ulster
 In rage and wrath. And yet (said Lowercam),
 Though thus they put their own dear land behind them,
 They could not put behind them their heart-love
 For Ulster ; but they loved their own land still.

This was the road they went by,—o'er Slieve
 Foo-id,

Then o'er wide Meath to westward, till they reached
 The beautiful, smooth Hill of Usna. There
 They stayed awhile ; and they deliberated
 As to which Fifth to go to,—whether to go
 To Finn the son of Ross the Red of Leinster ;
 Or to Finn's brother, Carpry Neea Faer ;
 Or to the far south-west of mirthful Munster
 To Cooroi son of Dawra, who, some said,
 Was the best chief in Erin. Then one said :
 “ The best of Fifths is Connaught ; and the best
 Of kings is Al-yill ; and the best of warriors
 Is Maev ; and Croohan is the place of counsel
 For Erin all ; since Maev in sway and power
 Is as a sovereign of all Erin. Also
 In Croohan there are found the choicest heroes
 And battle-champions, and the choicest poets

THE TÁIN

And choicest men of learning and deep science
And knowledge, in the circle of this world."

That was the counsel which all deemed the best.
A messenger was straightway sent to Croohan ;
And Maev and Al-yill made great joy before him.
He said to Maev : " O Queen, thou wilt indeed
Be sovereign o'er wide Erin, if great Fergus
Shall come to aid thee." And it was not long
Ere Fergus went himself. And when Maev saw him,
She rose to meet him ; and she welcomed him,
And kissed him. And the women and the poets
Kissed him, and welcomed him, and welcomed Cormac
And Duffa Dael and all the chiefs from Ulster.

Then Maev herself addressed great Fergus, saying :
" This gift from me to thee, O upright hero,
O Fergus : I will give perpetual keeping
To all thy cantred,—thrice ten hundred men,—
Together with their women and their poets,
And their young lads, and all their folk and gillies ;
And thou thyself shalt have a full equipment
For three score powerful men ; and thou shalt have
Red gold, in value worth thrice seven bondmaids,
And wine each night in my own house in Croohan."

Fergus accepted that. And since that day,
Now seven years past, Maev has bestowed on Fergus,
And on the cantred which he brought from Ulster,
That maintenance and keeping which she promised.
Is it not true, O Maev ? (said Lowercam)

“Yea, it is true,” said Maev. Then Lowercam,
After a little waiting, said :

O men,

I now must speak of Daerdra, and must tell you
Of her sad, mournful ending. She remained
A year near Conor ; and in all that time
She never laughed her gladly smiling laugh,
Or took her fill of food or of deep sleep ;
And she ne’er raised her head from off her knees.
And I (said Lowercam) was with her there,
Tending her in that horror and affliction.
When they would bring to her the men of music
And folk of entertainment, she would answer :

“ Though beautiful to you your valiant champions
Stepping to Avvin after expeditions,
More beautifully stepped they toward their house,
The three high-valiant, glorious Sons of Usna.

Neesha with burden of mirth-kindling mead ;
I with a bath for him and with warm fire ;
Ardawn with a slain ox or a fat hog ;
And Annly on his high back carrying faggots.

Though sweet to you the rich mirth-kindling
mead

Quaffed by the son of Fahtna of great valour,
I have oft known a chase upon a doe,
The food of which was many times more sweet.

When noble Neesha would prepare for us
A cooking-pit within the wild-floored forest,

THE TÁIN

Sweeter than honey was each kind of food,
Which there the Sons of Usna would make ready.

Though sweet in every month, indeed, to you
Your fluters and your players on the horn,
This thing is what my conscience knows to-day :—
That I have heard a music which was sweeter.

Though sweet to Conor, the renowned king,
His fluters and his players on the horn,
Sweeter to me was the cloud-rich cloth-nell
The song the Sons of Usna used to sing.

A voice as of the heavy waves had Neesha ;
It was sweet music to be ever hearing.
The Cola of Ardawn, it was good music,
And the andord of Annly towards his booth.

Much would I bear of hardness and of want,
When I was with the three delightful heroes ;
I would endure without a house or fire ;
And 'tis not I that would be sorrowful.

The three shields of the heroes and their spears
Were many a time my bed. O many a time
Have I been with them in a solitude ;
But till their death-day I was ne'er alone.

Neesha—his little grave-hill has been made.
My sight departed out of my two eyes
As I beheld the grave of Neesha. Soon
My soul will leave me. I shall find my end.

Belovéd was his spirit firm and just.
Belovéd was the warrior, high, most noble.

BOOK II

After our wandering through the woods of Fawl,
Belovéd was our hidden, lonely rest.

Belovéd was the blue eye dear to women,
And cause of terror to his enemies.
After their circuit of great woods and forests,
Belovéd their andord through the dark way.

I sleep no more. Alas ! I sleep no more,
And I stain not my finger-nails with crimson.
No joy comes now upon my mind and spirit,
Since the three noble Sons of Usna come not.

I sleep no more. Alas ! I sleep no more
Through half the night-time in my lying-place ;
My senses fly away from me in crowds,
Seeing that I now neither eat nor sleep.

I now, to-day, for joy have no occasion ;
Or for the pouring of rich mead or ale,
Or for delight or peace or gentle rest,
Or for a house, or for rich covering."

And when (said Lowercam) Conor would try
To be consoling her and pleasing her,
'Tis then that she would say to him these words :

" O Conor, what, then, art thou thinking of?
Thou hast heaped up on me sorrow and weeping.
That is what I shall have while I shall live.
Thy love for me will not endure for long.

The thing which was most beautiful to me,
Under the heaven, and which was the dearest,

THE TÁIN

Thou tookest from me,—great the wrongful deed,—
So that I shall not see it till I die.

These things to me are lasting grief and sorrow:—
The death for me of the three Sons of Usna,
A little dark-black cairn o'er the white body
Which was distinguished above countless men.

Two crimson cheeks and lips comely and red,
And eye-lashes as black as is the dael,
And rows of teeth beneath a pearly lustre,
Like to the very noble tint of snow.

Distinguished was his clean and pure array
Amidst the warriors of the men of Alba.
A comely, crimson, fit, five-folding fooan,
With its rich borderings of pure red gold.

An innar of rich royal sról, a treasure
Around him—with one hundred varied gems
Upon its bright and splendid broidery,
And fifty ounces of pure white findrinny.

A golden-hilted sword in his one hand ;
And in his second hand two blue-grey spears ;
A shield with a surrounding rim of gold ;
And on it a bright central boss of silver.

Fergus, the fair-haired, wronged us and betrayed us,
Bringing us hither o'er the mighty sea.
He sold his hero-honour for an ale-feast.
His great and wondrous deeds, indeed, have fallen.

Though they were all upon the plain before me,
The men of Ulster, and thou, Conor, with them,

BOOK II

I,—and I hide it not,—would give them all,
To see the face of Neesha, son of Usna.

Break not my heart, to-day, beneath thy woe.
Soon I shall come unto my early grave.
Sorrow is more powerful than the sea,—
If thou wouldst know it—it is true—O Conor.”

“What dost thou hate the most of all the things
Which thou dost see here?” Conor said to her.
“Thyself,” she said, “and Owen.”

“Thou shalt bide

A year with Owen,” Conor said to her.
He gave her then to Owen. On the morrow
They journeyed to the Fair of Maha. Daerdra
Was behind Owen in a chariot. “Good,
O Daerdra,” Conor, mocking, said to her ;
“It is the eye of a sheep between two rams
That thou now hast between myself and Owen.”
There was a cliff of stone against the way.
She threw her head against the cliff of stone,
So that she made bruised fragments of her head,
And she was dead.

There is no more to tell
(Said Lowercam). O men, after that woe
I myself went from Ulster, and I came
To the Black Exile here in Connaught, namely,
To Cormac and to Duffa and to Fergus ;
And here, far distant from my native land,
The mists of sad old age lay hold of me.

THE TÁIN

Lowercam ended ; and in that great house
In Croohan on Moy Wee in Connaught, each
Went to his sleeping-place, and all was still.
But Maev stepped forth out of her royal house,
And went to the great mound ; and on the mound
Found Fergus standing ; and his face was turned
Toward the north-east, toward Ulster. Then Maev laid
Her queenly arm around his royal neck,
And said : “ O Fergus, thou hast, verily,
Great love for Ulster, thine own land ; and yet
Thou, who wast once the greatest of all warriors
Throughout the Western World, wast scorned, insulted,
And driven forth out of thy native land,
To have thy dwelling in wild desert forests
With foxes and wild deer ; and 'tis with us
That thou didst find a country and a land
And an inheritance ; and wondrous kindness
We have bestowed on thee. Yea, even, O Fergus,
Because of thy great manliness and vigour,
I gave thee my own love and bare thee sons,
Kear and Corc and Conmac—(great the deed)—
Three goodly sons from whom, in aftertime,
Distinguished clans and kindreds shall descend.
It is now right that without any urging
From us, thou shouldst with care and diligence
Take thy own share of battle on this hosting
And Táin. It would not seem to me too much
Were Conor slain, that thou thyself, O Fergus,

BOOK II

Shouldst become king o'er all the kings of Ulster."

These were Maev's words. When they had thus
been spoken,

She went again into her royal house

And to her royal bed and sleeping-place.

And Fergus went to his own house and people.

BOOK III

BOOK III

THE many bands and troops which Maev had summoned

Began to come upon Moy Wee. The first
(And they arrived upon Moy Wee next day)
Were Maev's own seven sons, the seven Mahn-yas,
Whom she had borne to Al-yill. These they were :--
Mahn-ya Mathroo-il, who resembled Maev :
Mahn-ya Athroo-il, who resembled Al-yill :
Mahn-ya Mo-aepert, the much-talking Mahn-ya :
Dumb Mahn-ya Toi, the mute and silent Mahn-ya :
Good Mahn-ya More-gar, of great piety
To Al-yill son of Mawta, to his father :
Good Mahn-ya Meen-gar, of great piety
To Maev the daughter of Yohee, to his mother.
Mahn-ya Condagau Illy, who had beauty
From father and from mother, being like both.

Now, at the first, their names had not been Mahn-ya ;
But these had been their names :—Faylimy, Carpry,
Yohee, Ket, Fergus, Sheen, and Dawra. Then,
Suddenly, on a day, Maev had bestowed
On each that new name, Mahn-ya. For one day
(And it was many years before this time)
While she was on the playing-field of Croohan,

THE TÁIN

And they were playing round her, she had said
Unto her Druid: "Say to me, O Druid,
By which of all my sons Conor shall fall."

"Thou hast not borne him yet," the Druid answered,
"Unless thou wilt re-name them." "How is that?
Make this thing clear," said Maev. The Druid answered:
"By Mahn-ya Conor shall be slain." Then Maev
Re-named her sons, and gave unto each one
That new name, Mahn-ya; so that by a son
Of hers great Conor son of Fahtna Fahee
Might fall in time to come. (Howbeit, a thing
There was, which was not known to Maev that day:—
It was not Conor son of Fahtna Fahee,
But Conor son of a famed King of Alba,
Of whom the Druid prophesied, and who
Was destined to be slain in time to come
By one of Maev's own sons.) So now these Mahn-yas
Arrived upon Moy Wee; and each one brought
His cantred, thrice ten hundred men; and all
Encamped upon Moy Wee, and joyfully
Maev saw her valorous offspring.

After these,
The seven sons of Mahga came the next
Upon that plain. They were experienced warriors,
Brethren to Al-yill's mother, Mawta Murrisc;
And they were scarred and grey. These were their
names:—

Anloo-an, Baskell, Maccorb, Scandall, Aen,

BOOK III

Five sons of Mahga. Doha son of Mahga,
Who was—it happened so—a foster-brother
To Laery the Victorious of Loch Laery,
A chief in Ulster. Last, but most renowned,
Ket son of Mahga, who a wolf of evil
Was unto all in Ulster. These arrived,
Each with his cantred (thrice ten hundred men)
On smooth Moy Wee; and on Moy Wee encamped,
And gladly Maev beheld them.

After these
Seven great noble under-kings arrived
From wide and mirthful Munster. To each one
(In order, so, the more to bind him to her)
Maev, through her envoys, secretly had offered
Her daughter, Findabair, the White-beam. Now,
Each of those seven with his cantred came—
His thrice ten hundred—in the hope to wed
That maiden when the hosting should return.
The maiden of that thing knew nought. These camped
On smooth Moy Wee. Maev gladly saw them there.

A warlike cantred next from Leinster came,
Fighters replete with fames and victories.
Their wide blue lance-heads, like those Lawry Ling-sha
Had brought of old across the ocean, flashed
Now, being borne across Moy Wee.

And next
Came a contingent of the Folk of Tara;
And next, some small and varied bands; and then,

THE TÁIN

A certain small but beautiful bright band,
Mounted on soft, grey mares, which had gold bits
And little bells of gold ; the men themselves
Having upon them wan-white laynas, worked
With threads of gold, and, over these, eared bratts
Blue like the sky, and clasped with deep red gold.
Their silver shields and varied weapons, set
With carbuncle and gems of worth, flamed bright
With sparkles, as they faced the westering sun.
This was the band of Frae the son of Eedath,
Whose mother, Baefinn, sister was to Boyne
Of the Immortal Shee. From the Shee-mound
On green Moy Bray, that robing and equipment
Had been bestowed upon him. Findabair,
Far-gazing from the lofty greeanawn
Above the high main gateway of the doon,
Perceived that band arriving on the plain ;
Whereat her cheeks and countenance waxed bright
Like sunrise in the month of May. She thought,
Communing with herself, of that past day—
Yet not long past—when, in the same array,
Frae had approached to woo her. And she thought
Upon his beauty on that other day,
During the sojourn he had made at Croohan—
The day when he had swum the dark-pooled stream,
To pluck a branch of rowan red with fruit,
That fringed the further brink. For, beautiful
She had then thought it—o'er the black-dark pool

To see him—his fresh body all clear white,
 His hair of radiant brightness, and his eyes
 Of blue-green greyness; and the branch with fruit
 Between his throat and his bright face. Then e'en
 Calling, "Is it not beautiful he looks?"

She had perceived that the wild river-beast
 Had caught him in mid-stream. Whereat at once
 (Those who were round her being loth and slow)
 She, flinging off her raiment, had leapt down
 To swim the stream, carrying him a sword,
 Wherewith to slay the beast. After that day,
 And after some events and happenings,
 Al-yill and Maev had said to Frae: "Come, then,
 To join our hosting to the land of Cooley.
 Bring kine for sustenance to kings and princes.
 Bring thy three gentle and far-famed musicians
 For gladdening of the Hosts; and, at the end,
 When we again shall have returned to Croohan,
 Thou shalt have Findabair." Now, therefore, Frae
 Came to the hosting on Moy Wee. He camped
 Upon Moy Wee, ere yet the twilight fell;
 And Findabair was glad. "I see," said Maev,
 "O daughter, thou art glad to see them there."

The last of those to come upon Moy Wee
 Was the Black Exile. Fergus had sent word
 To Cormac, who was then in a far part
 Of Connaught; and he hasted not, but now,
 Almost at juncture of the day and night,

THE TÁIN

He came with three great bands, the three together
Making one cantred. From the Green of Croohan
The men of Croohan watched these bands arrive.

The first band was arrayed in bratts of green—
Green like spring-grass, with silvery dagger-pins
Fastening the bratts. Their laynas, stitched with gold,
Descended to their knees. Their shields were long.
A spear with wide grey head and slender shaft
Was in the hand of every man of them.

“Is this now Cormac?” shouted everyone.

“It is not Cormac yet,” responded Maev.

The second band wore bratts of dark black-grey.
Their laynas next their skin, which were bright white,
Descended past their thighs. Their shields were white.
A spear which had five points on one stout shaft
Was in the hand of every man of them.

“Is this now Cormac?” shouted everyone.

“It is not Cormac yet,” responded Maev.

— The third band was arrayed in purple bratts
Of hill-heath purple; and their dagger-pins
Above their breasts were all of rich chased gold.
Their silken laynas, rich and soft and smooth,
Descended to their insteps. Their curved shields
Had blade-keen edges; and a towering spear,
Like to a pillar in some kingly stead,
— Was in the hand of every man of them.
While they drew near, they all in unison
Lifted their feet, and all in unison

Lowered their feet ; so toward the doon they came.
 “Is this now Cormac ?” shouted everyone.
 “Yea, this indeed is Cormac,” answered Maev.
 And very gladly on her plain of Wee
 Maev saw the Ulster King’s great exiled son.

So the Four Fifths of Erin had assembled
 Until they were upon Moy Wee in Connaught.
 And on Moy Wee all made their camps that night,
 So that between the four famed fords of Wee,
 The Ford of Moga and the Ford of Bercna,
 The Ford of Slissen and the Ford of Coltna,
 The plain was as one cloak of smoke and fire,
 With their camp-fires enkindled there that night.
 And they remained the space of fifteen nights
 Encamped around Rath Croohan ; for their poets
 And druids would not let them travel forth
 Until the end of fifteen days and nights,
 While they were waiting for a happy sign
 Of luck and fortune to that war and hosting.
 Therefore, throughout that time they had regalement
 And pleasing drinks and pastime, so that haply
 The hardships of their coming war and hosting
 Might seem the less severe and hard to them.

When, at the end of all those fifteen nights,
 From her high mound and stronghold for outlooking
 And for surveying, Maev surveyed those troops
 And those vast multitudes and bands and throngs

THE TÁIN

In point to break up camp and journey east
Upon her war and hosting into Ulster—
Into her mind there came uneasiness,
Doubt and uncertainty and trouble. “Here,”
She said within her mind, “are multitudes
Parting to-day from loved ones and from kindred,
From territory and from heritage,
From father and from mother; and unless
Whole and unharmed they here return again,
It is on me that they will strike their groans
And sighs and curses. And moreover now—
Though I am now (outside high-powerful Ulster)
The greatest ruler through the lands of Erin—
Though I have now assembled this great hosting,
That I may so avenge my bitter groans,
And the disgrace and wrong and shame and insult
Which were inflicted on me in my youth—
Yet there is not true certainty with me
That I shall have success, or that, indeed,
I shall myself escape dark death, or even
That I shall not be captured and be taken
By Conor, and be given a far worse shame,
And a worse wrong and contumely and insult,
Than were inflicted on me in my youth.”

This was the time wherein Maev called and spake
Unto her charioteer, and bade him catch
Her steeds and yoke her chariot, so that straightway
She might repair to speak with her own Druid

And ask for prophecy and knowledge. "Wait
 One while, O Queen," the charioteer made answer,
 "That I may three times wheel the chariot round
 Sunwise, to win a sign of luck and fortune."
 He wheeled the chariot sunwise, and then Maev
 Rode to her Druid. When she reached the Druid,
 She asked for prophecy and knowledge. "Here,"
 Said Maev, "are many throngs and multitudes
 Parting to-day from loved ones and from kindred,
 From territory and from heritage,
 From father and from mother; and unless
 Whole and unharmed they here return again,
 It is on me that they will strike their groans
 And sighs and curses, for 'tis I alone
 Who have assembled all this wondrous hosting.
 And yet, let that be as it will. There goes
 Not forth to Ulster and there bides not here
 Life dearer to us than our own. Find, then,
 O Druid, whether we, at least, ourselves,
 In safety from this hosting shall return."

The Druid said, "O great and prosperous Maev,
 Daughter of Yóhee Fayla, here I have
 Knowledge to hearten and enliven thee:—
 This knowledge, namely. Conor son of Fahtna
 Lies at this hour in splendid Avvin Maha
 In torment and in weakness. On all chiefs
 And kings in Ulster, each in his own doon,
 Torment and pain and weakness have descended.

THE TÁIN

✓ This is the curse of Maha daughter of Sanrith ;
And here now is the reason of that curse.

Some six score years before the year in which
We speak, Crunniuc the son of Agnoman,
A wealthy brewy of the Ultonians, lived
In Ulster, 'mid high, wild, and lonely moors.
Many sons dwelt with him. His wife was dead.
One day, when he was in his house alone,
A thing occurred. For he perceived a woman
Stately and young move by ; and wonderful
He deemed her guise and semblance. He perceived
How, without uttering word, she kneaded, baked,
And milked, and ruled the folk, even as though
She in that stead had e'er been wont to be.
At night she slept with him. So, a long time
They dwelt together ; and, through her good rule,
There was no scarcity of each good increase
In viands, vesture, wealth. A festival
Was held in Ulster then. The folk of Ulster,
Both men and wives and growing lads and maids
Were faring to that festival ; and Crunniuc
Made to fare thither too. Excellent vesture
Was round him ; and a blooming, rich appearance
Was on him. Then the woman said to him :
“ It will become thee at that festival
To be discreet, O Crunniuc.” And he went
With every other to the Green of Meeting.
The festival was held. At close of day

BOOK III

The steeds and chariot of the Ulster king
Were brought on to the green; and those two steeds,
Drawing his chariot, gained the victory.
And the hosts cried, "There is not in this world
Aught fleetier than those steeds are!" Crunniuc
said:

"My wife is fleetier than the steeds." Whereat,
He by the king was placed in cords and bonds.
They told the woman that. "'Tis hard," said she,
"For me to go there to release him now;
Since I am great with child, and nigh my hour."
"However hard," the messenger replied,
"Unless thou goest to race with the king's steeds,
Thy man will presently be slain." She went
So to the green. Then, when she reached the green,
Her pangs of travail came on her. She cried
Aloud unto the hosts. "Help me," said she.
"Help me. Show mercy; for it was a mother
Who bore each one of you. Grant me delay
Until I be delivered." By them all
She was refused that respite and delay.
"Then," she called out, "worse ill shall come of it—
Ill that shall press on the Ultonians all
For a long space of time." "What is thy name?"
The king put query to her. "I will tell
My name," said she. "Moreover, by the name
Of that Birth I shall bear, this green for ever
Will be denominated. I am Maha

THE TÁIN

Daughter of Sanrith son of Imba." Then
She raced the chariot. Even with the speed
Of windy ripples blown athwart a mere
Or of blown foam flitting o'er some sea-strand,
She raced the chariot; and she reached the goal,
And, ere the chariot too had reached the goal,
She was delivered; and she brought forth twins,
"The Twins of Maha," "Avvin Maha." This,
Then, "Avvin¹Maha," thus became the name
Whereby that green is known. Now, she had cried
With agony of childbirth, and each man
Who heard that cry immediately was cast
Into great helplessness and grief and pain.
She said: "Ye men of Ulster, from this hour—
For nine full generations from this hour—
When most oppression from your enemies
Falls on your country, then on every man
Descended from you men who here to-day
Have done this shame to me, there shall come down
A curse of torment and of pain and weakness,
Like to the pain and weakness of a woman
Approaching to her hour. And three alone,
Namely, the women and the tender children,
And also he who will be named Cucullin,
Shall be exempted from this Curse.

This Curse,

Namely, the Kesh upon the Ulster warriors,
It is," the Druid said, "O Queen, which now—

BOOK III

Now when thy mighty hosts fare forth to Ulster—
Has fallen on each Ulster chief and king.”

So spake the Druid, yielding knowledge. Then
Maev answered: “Long ago I heard that tale,
What time I was in Avvin in my youth,
When I had been given to Conor against my will.
This is the thing which I have hoped for, ever.
And not long since, just ere Mac Roth returned
From Cooley, certain of my envoys came
From spying out proud Ulster; and I knew
By their sure words that at this time the Kesh
Was falling on the Ulster chiefs and kings.
E’en had their bull been rendered eagerly,
We should have gone to Ulster at this time.
And yet a cloud of darkness and of doubt
And apprehension weighs on me. Find then,
O Druid, whether we, at least, ourselves,
In safety shall return.” The Druid said,
“Whoever may return or not return,
Thou wilt return thyself.” The charioteer
Then turned the chariot round; and Maev came back.

Then, even as Maev came, she saw a thing
Which was to her a wonder; for she saw,
Fronting her, poised upon a chariot-pole,
A just-grown maid move towards her. In this way
That maid was. In her right hand she was holding
A weaving-sword of white findrinny, set

THE TÁIN

With hooklets of red gold ; and she was weaving
A bordering fringe. Folded around her shape,
A bratt of leafy green, chequered and pied,
Was held by a full fruit-like heavy clasp
Over her breast. Her face was rosy, bright.
Her eyes were laughing, blue ; and her two lips
Were shapely-thin and red. Within her lips
Her teeth were glistening, pearly-glimmering—
One might have deemed a white rain-shower of pearls
Had rained in there. Her light, long, yellow hair
Divided ; three gold tresses of it wound
About her head ; another long gold tress
Fell round her, making shade around her calves.
Her feet were long and slender, very white.
Her nails were trim and sharp and crimson-stained.
Whiter than snow in one night softly fallen,
The whiteness of her flesh was, where it shined
And gleamed athwart her quivering, blown apparel.

Maev looked at her. “What makest thou?” said

Maev,

“O damsel now and here?” The maiden spoke ;
And, when she spoke, as sweet as are the strings
Of peakéd harps played by the skilful hands
Of master-players, was the sweet, clear sound
Of her calm, pleasant voice and utterance.
“I am illuminating and revealing,”
She said, “O Queen, the profit and the loss
Which are before thee now, while thou dost gather,

BOOK III

And muster here the Four great Fifts of Erin,
To go unto the land of Ulster.” “Wherefore
Dost thou this thing for me?” Maev asked of her.
“I have much cause,” she said, “I am indeed
A handmaid ’mid thy people.” “Of my people
Who art thou?” Maev made question. And the maid
Replied, “Not hard to tell; for I am Fedelm,
A prophetess from ’midst thy unseen Shee.
At Sowin, now, out of thy green Shee-mound
Of Croohan, I have come, O Queen, to thee.”

And it was then that Maev began to ask
For prophecy; and Fedelm answered her.
And this is what was said between them there.
Maev said: “Speak then, O Fedelm, Prophetess,
How seest thou our great hosts?” And Fedelm answered:
“I see them red. I see them crimson-red.”

“Conor the son of Fahtna lies,” said Maev,
“In Avvin in his Kesh, the curse of Maha.
My messengers were there; and there is nothing
That we need dread, now, from the men of Ulster.
But speak the truth, O Fedelm, Prophetess—
How seest thou these our hosts?” Fedelm replied:
“I see them red. I see them crimson-red.”

“Cooscree Mend Maha, Conor’s son,” said Maev,
“Lies in his Kesh in his own Innish Cooscree.
My messengers were there; and there is nothing
That we need fear, now, from the men of Ulster.
But speak the truth, O Fedelm, Prophetess—

THE TÁIN

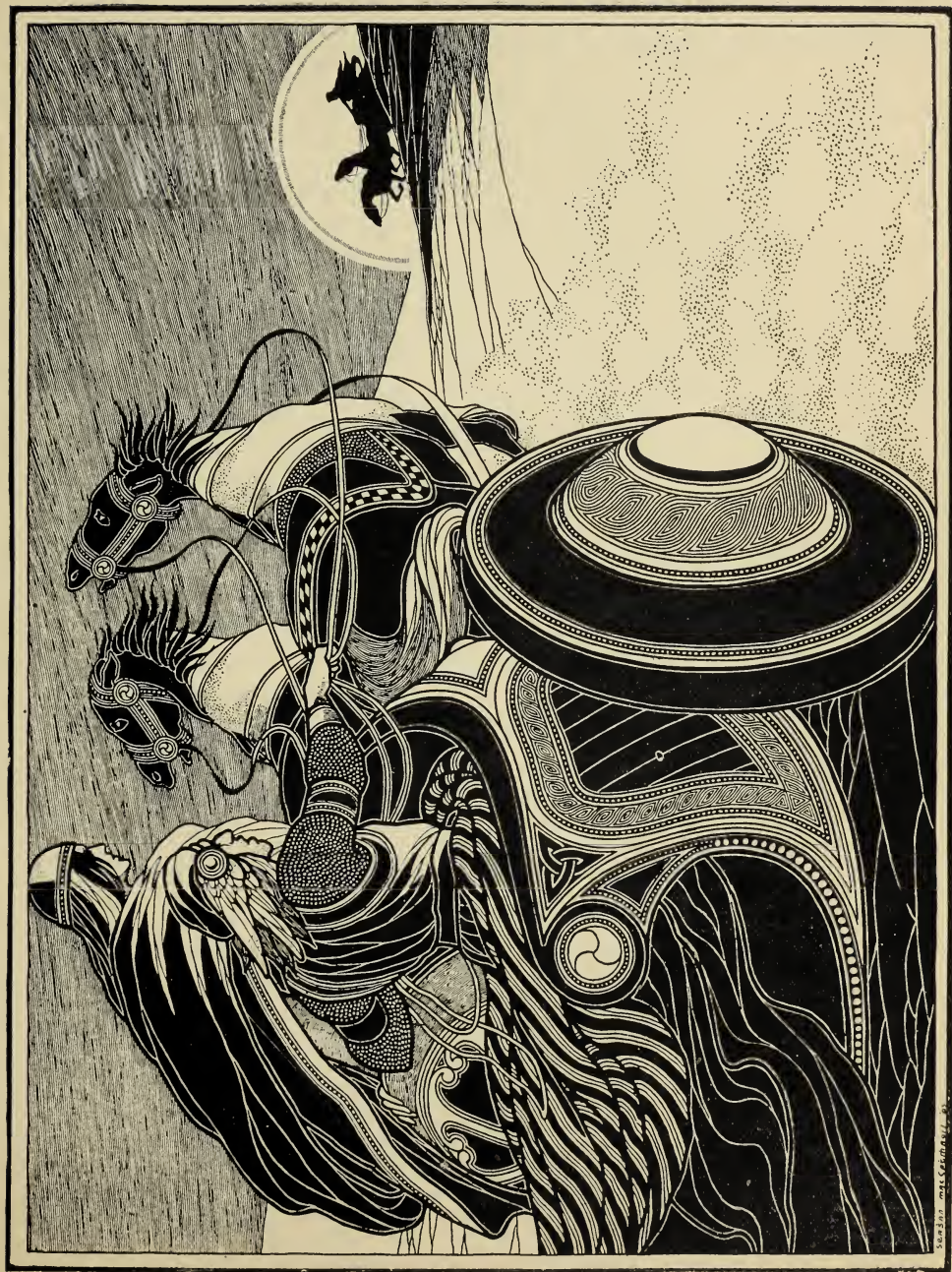
How seest thou our great hosts?" Fedelm replied:

"I see them red. I see them crimson-red."

"Owen the son of Doorha lies," said Maev,
"In his own rath, Rath Aer-heer, in his Kesh.
My messengers were there, and there is nothing
That we need fear, now, from the men of Ulster.
But speak the truth, O Fedelm, Prophetess.
How seest thou our great hosts?" Fedelm repeated:
"I see them red. I see them crimson-red."

"This is not truth, O Prophetess," said Maev.
"Keltar the son of Oo-hider," said Maev,
"With a full third of all the men of Ulster,
Lies in his Kesh in Doon Le-glass. And Fergus
The son of Roy the son of Yóhee Lenny,
Is with us here in exile, and he has
His thrice ten hundred men; and we shall surely
Bring victory and triumph out of Ulster.
Speak then the truth, O Fedelm, Prophetess,
How seest thou these great hosts?" She still repeated:
"I see them red. I see them crimson-red."

"This thing to me," said Maev, is not the same
As 'tis to thee. For when the men of Erin
Shall meet in the one place, there will be quarrels,
Occasions of dissension and disunion,
And frays and fallings-out and feuds and broils—
About their being in the van or rear,
And about fords and rivers, and about
First-slaying of swine and hares and stags and deer.



"MAEV RIDES FORTH TO SPEAK WITH HER DRUID."

BOOK III

Then look again for us, O Prophetess,
And speak the truth to us." The maiden answered :
"I see them red. I see them crimson-red.
I see a man who will perform great feats."
And she began to sing and prophesy
And to foretell things that would be thereafter.
And this was what she sang then at that time.

"I see a man youthful and very fair,
Who will perform great deeds, and win his fill
Of hurts and wounds in his smooth fine-fair skin.
Upon his brow, which is a meeting-place
For victories, the hero's light flames high.
Amidst each eye the seven dragon-gems
Of a pure hero-champion flame and burn.
Plain to perceive, his intellect is keen.
A red hooked layna folds him. His fresh face
Is beautiful and noble. He observes
Towards women courtesy and modesty.
Though a mere stripling, blooming, dainty-cheeked,
He in the battle shows a dragon's form.
His fairness and his valour now resemble
Cucullin of Mweerhevna; and though, truly,
Who this Cucullin of green Moy Mweerhevna
May be I know not, yet this thing I know—
These hosts by him will all be very red.
Four little swords for feats of special skill
He carries in each hand : he will attain
To plying these upon the hosts : the hosts

THE TÁIN

Will flee from him on every road and way.
When, in addition to his spear and sword,
He brings his dread Gae Bulg, he plants his feet
On every slope and hill. Two spears project
O'er his bright chariot-wheels : he rides to battle.
Fury distorts him, battle-fury changes
That form which hitherto I have perceived.
He is Cucullin son of Sooaltim,
Hound of the Forge : he wends unto a battle.
Your hosts, now whole, he will hack down and fell.
He will compel your slain thickly to lie.
Strong men will leave their heads with him. This I,
Fedelm the Prophetess, will not conceal.
Red blood shall drip from the white skins of heroes—
Lasting and long the memory shall be—
Bodies shall there be torn, women shall wail,
Through deeds of that renowned Hound of the Forge,
Whom now, O Queen, I see."

The Prophetess

Ended her prophecy : and Maev rode back
From seeking-out of prophecy and knowledge.

BOOK IV

BOOK IV

THAT day those many hosts and bands and throngs,
Ending their feasting on Moy Wee, had moved
Forth on their travel and their arduous hosting.
Their travel unto Ulster now we tell ;
And all the ways they went by ; and events
That chanced upon those ways. First, then, they went
South-eastward from Rath Croohan ; and they crossed
Moy Cronn, and passed Toom Mona, and the lake
Where three bounds march ; and at that first day's end
They camped on Cool Shillinny. There his tent
That night was pitched for Al-yill son of Mawta.
Fit furniture of cloths and coverlets
Was ranged in it ; and in that plenished tent
On Al-yill's right at pleasant feasting sat
Fergus the son of Roy, Cormac Conlinghish,
And Feeaha, young son to Conall Carna ;
While on his left sat Maev daughter of Yóhee ;
And Findabair, daughter of Maev and Al-yill.
Servants, attendants, and distributors
Were also in that tent. At eve that day
Maev's band had come the last of all those hosts ;
For Maev had lingered and delayed that day,
Searching for prophecy and knowledge. Then,

THE TÁIN

When she at length had come, she had commanded
Her charioteer to fit for her her nine
War-chariots (for 'twas in this manner ever,
On every hosting, Maev was wont to fare :—
Namely,—with two war-chariots in her front,
Two in her rear, and two upon each side,
The chariot on the which she rode herself
Being amidmost of them. For this cause
She so was wont to fare—namely, that so
The turves and ooze flung from the hooves of steeds,
Or flakes of foam flung from their bridle-bits,
Or clouds of dust caused by vast, moving hosts,
Might not attain to tarnishing or spoiling
The flashing mind of gold worn by the queen).
The charioteer had brought these chariots then ;
And Maev had taken a circuit through the camp,
Riding— that she herself might ascertain
Which of those many bands were loth and slow,
And which were active, rapid, animated
Upon that hosting. Now she had come (that done)
Into the tent, and sat by Al-yill's side.
Maev's mind within her vexed her grievously
That night ; and she was troubled and perturbed
And chafed and anxious, thinking of those things
Which she had heard in way of prophecy.

Then Al-yill asked for tidings of the camp.
“There is no need,” said Maev, “for any folk
To fare upon this hosting, save one folk—

BOOK IV

The cantred of the Leinster-men." "What good,"
Asked Al-yill, "have they wrought, so to be praised
Beyond all others?" "When the others first
Halted to camp," said Maev, "these had already
Built up their bothies and their booths and shelters.
And when the others had built up their shelters,
Those men of Leinster had served round their meat
And ale; and when the others had served their meat,
The Leinster-men had made an end of eating,
And harpers played to them. As thus their slaves
And bond-folk are distinguished 'mid the slaves
And bond-folk of all Erin: so their leaders
Will be distinguished 'mid the battle-leaders
Of Erin; and 'tis with that Leinster cantred
Each victory will be." "The better that
For us," said Al-yill; "for it is with us
They travel, and for us they will contend."
"With us they shall not travel," Maev affirmed,
"And for us not contend." "Then," answered Al-yill,
"Let them stay here." "They shall not stay," said
Maev;

"When we have gone from Connaught with our hosts,
They will rise up and take our land from us,
If they stay here." Findabair, Bright-beam,
Daughter of Maev and Al-yill, asked her then:
"What shall the Leinster-men then do, if thus
They neither bide nor go?" And Maev replied:
"Their death and violent end and slaughter—that

THE TÁIN

Is what I crave for them !” “Woe,” answered Al-yill,
“That thou shouldst say that thing,—only for this,
That with dexterity and speed and swiftness
They made their camp to-night ! We will not hide
That that is woman-counsel !” Fergus, then,
The son of Roy, said : “By our truth of conscience !
It shall not fall out so. They are a people
Bound to us Ulster-men by bonds. No man
Shall give them death but him who first gives death
To me myself.” “E’en that we could achieve,
O Fergus,” Maev responded. “We have numbers
Enough to slay thee and thy Ulster-men
And all those Leinster-men around thee. Here
We have of Connaught folk upon this hosting
The seven Mahn-yas with their seven cantreds,
The seven sons of Mahga with their cantreds,
Al-yill the son of Mawta with his cantred,
And I myself with my own household troops.
We are enough to slay you Ulster-men
And all the Leinster-men around you.” Fergus
Replied : “O Maev, it would not happen so.
Upon my side there are the seven chiefs
From wide and mirthful Munster ; and with each
Is his own cantred. I have here with me
Two cantreds of the best of fighting-men
Of Erin all, namely, our Ulster Exiles,
And this same cantred of the Leinster-men.
And to these last I have been pledge and surety,

BOOK IV

Since first they left their native territory,
And came to Connaught; and 'tis on my part
That they would fight in every place of battle.
There is a thing, however, now," said Fergus.
" These men need not be made a cause of strife
Between us. It is all one thing to me
So that they be not injured. They by me
Shall now be scattered and distributed
Amongst the men of Erin, so that henceforth
Not five of them shall be in the one place."

" It is one thing to me, indeed," said Maev,
" So that they stay not in that strong array
Wherein they are this hour." That, then, was done.
The cantred of the Leinster-men was scattered
Amidst the men of Erin, so that thenceforth,
Not five of them were found in the one place.

The hosts next day moved on from Cool Shillinny,
Continuing their progress and their course.
They passed by Doolough, and they crossed Slieve
Bawne,
And reached Mone Coltna. There, on that wide moor,
They chanced on eight score deer in one thick herd,
Which they surrounded; and in whate'er place
There was a man of those same Leinster-men,
'Twas he who got the deer, except five deer,
Which were obtained by others on that hosting.

Across the wide, reed-bordered Shannon next
The hosts passed eastward. On Moy Traega next

THE TÁIN

They camped to east of it. Now, it was hard
To wield and manage that vast host, composed
Of many various folks and tribes and kindreds,
And to make sure that everyone should be
With his own friends and his own tribe and kindred.
And then all said this was the fitting mode
For their advance, namely, that each great throng
Should be round its own king, and each division
Round its own sub-king, and each lesser band
Round its own captain ; and that every king
And everyone of kingly rank should make
A camping-mound apart. Further, they said
It must be thought of who was the fit man
To go before the hosts, and show the way
Between the two great Fifths. And then all said
That Fergus was that man ; because to him
This hosting was a hosting for revenge
And for retaliation on that king
Who had insulted him, in causing death
To those who had come to Erin 'neath his safeguard
And sworn protection. So to Fergus then
The leadership was given, and Fergus went
Before the hosts to guide them on to Ulster.

Then, e'en as he so led those warlike throngs
Toward Ulster, toward the east, on Fergus fell
His fervent love for his own land, that land
Of proud-high Ulster. Each renowned old doon
Therein was known to him. Famed men therein,

BOOK IV

Who now in resting-houses of old age
Rested from wars, had been his fosterers.
Famed battle-breakers, war-trained men therein,
Had been his comrades in the use of arms,
His dear, near foster-brothers. And young men
Therein, and eager striplings, and fresh youths
Had been his foster-children. And he thought
Of one young lad, his foster-son, who dwelt
Nigh Cooley—thinking of whom Fergus sent
Swift warnings privily to Ulster. Then,
By a long, devious route o'er bogs and streams
He led the hosts, delaying their advance
Toward Ulster, till they came at length to Granard
In Northern Teffia. There a while they camped.
Again the hosts moved onward, and again
On Fergus came his pity for his land
And kindred; and again sharp memory
Of that young foster-son who dwelt beside
The bounds of Cooley came; and then again
He led the hosts by a long devious course.
Through Northern Teffia and Southern Teffia
Southward in loops he went, till he arrived
Beside the streaming Inn-yone. Al-yill, then,
And Maev perceived that thing which Fergus did.
Maev challenged Fergus; and he answered her.
“Fergus,” said Maev, “what kind of way is this?
Wandering to north and south, in turn we stray
Through every other folk.” “O Maev,” said Fergus,

THE TÁIN

“ Wherefore be troubled ? ’Tis not for the harm
Of these your hosts that I go wandering
On every way in turn. ’Tis to avoid
A certain Slaughter-hound of Moy Mweerhevna
Who else would spring at you ; and I forewarn you
To fear that Hound.” Maev said, “ It is unrighteous
In thee to work the harm of this our hosting,
O Fergus son of Roy ! Thou, in thy exile,
Hast found much kindness at our hands, O Fergus.”
Then Fergus said, “ I will no longer go
Before these hosts. Let some one else,” said Fergus,
“ Go on before these battle-throngs to Ulster.”
So Fergus yielded up the leadership.

The hosts then took the nearest course to Ulster.
Through Meath and by the great high road of Assal
They went ; and crossed the Finnglass, Delt, and
Delind ;

And so drew near the Ultonian outer bounds.
On high Ardcullin, at the pillar-stone
Which marks the boundary of Ulster, soon
Two scouts arrived, the sons of Renc of Croohan.
Their names were Err and Inn-yel : and the names
Of those who drove their chariots, Frae and Fohnam.
The function these men had was, to precede
The hosts in every hosting and encampment,
Protecting all the clasps, blankets, and bratts,
Brought by the royal sons, from getting soilure
Through dust or mire raised by the moving hosts.

BOOK IV

These now, arriving on Ardcullin, gazed
Abroad upon the trackless, unknown land—
To them all strange and trackless and unknown—
The land of Ulster. They began to see,
Then, that around that boundary pillar-stone
Steeds had been grazing. On the northern side
The grass was cropped away e'en with its roots
From out the earth. Upon the southern side
The earth was licked away down to the stones
And flags beneath the grass. And then they saw,
Hooping the thick part of the pillar-stone,
A new-made spancel-withe, made from an oakling
New-felled and twisted: and a graven inscription
In ogam was upon the withe. At that,
They sat and rested; and their men of music
Played to them till the host should come. First Fergus
Arrived upon that height. They gave the withe
Into his hand: and Fergus read the ogam
Engraven upon the withe. When Maev arrived,
She asked, "Why wait you here?" "We wait," said
Fergus,

"Owing to yonder withe. There is an ogam
Engraven on it." Fergus gave the withe
Into the hands of Maev's own Druids. Then
He said, "Good Druids, here is a spancel-withe.
Whom names it to us? What now is its secret?
What number threw it there, few or a host?
Will it work injury to these great hosts

THE TÁIN

If they shall journey past it? Find, O Druids,
The secret of the withe." Whereon the Druids
Answered :—" This withe is a delay of chieftains,
Misfortune unto fighters, fierce in import.
By one man it was flung, who, using only
One hand, one eye, one foot, felled from the forest
The sapling tree, and firmly twisted it
Into this withe and wrote the ogam. And now
'Tis gass to all your hosts to pass yon stone
Without their spending here one night encamped,
Unless some man amongst your hosts can make
A spancel-withe like this one, using only
One hand, one eye, one foot, and shaping it
From the one stick. And thus the ogam closes :—
'And I prohibit my dear Master, Fergus,
From making it.' " " I give my word," said Fergus,
" If ye shall set that spancel-withe at nought,
Insulting him who made it, if—that is—
Ye neither camp one night upon these bounds,
Nor see that some one from among yourselves
Construct an equal withe, using one foot,
One eye, one hand, as this one was constructed,
Then, wheresoever ye may lie to-night,
In house or doon or lodgment underground,
That hero will for certain find you out ;
And some of you will pale in red death-pools
Ere comes the hour of rising in the morn."

" Not that," said Maev, " is it, which pleases us—

BOOK IV

One to take blood from us and redden us
On our first entering yon foreign Fifth,
The Ulster Fifth. Rather it pleases us
To draw first-blood ourselves." Al-yill then spake.
"We will not violate this withe," said he.
"We will not violate the kingly hero,
Who made the withe: we will not cross this height.
Into the neck of yonder wide, great forest
To southward, we will go till morning. There
Our camp and our encampment shall be made."

The hosts turned southward then. With their
strong swords

They hewed the wood before them, hewing so
A road-path for their chariots. Slahta, therefore,
"Hewn road," that place is named. In Cool Shibrilly,
Just where the Little Partry is, it is,
South-west of Cennannus of Kings. That night
A heavy snow fell round the men of Erin.
So much it was, it mounted to men's shoulders;
It reached the thick parts and the thighs of steeds,
And reached their chariot shafts. One even floor
Were the Five Fifths of Erin with that snow
That night. And no pavilions and no booths
And huts were made that night. There was no service
Of food and ale; no eating or regalement
Was there; and no one of the men of Erin
That night knew whether 'twas his friend or foe,
Who was next man to him, till the light came

THE TÁIN

At rising-hour upon the morrow. Surely
The men of Erin ne'er before had found
A night in camp wherein they had more hardness
And hardship to endure than they endured
That night in Cool Shibrilly. On the morrow,
As the sun rose and flashed along the snow,
The four Great Fifths of Erin started onward ;
And from that territory to another
They passed ; they crossed the boundary, and passed
Into the land of Ulster. Then those two,
Who e'er were wont to go before the hosts—
On every hosting and on every foray,
In every pass and gap and river-ford—
Inn-yell and Err, to wit, two of Maev's people,
Rode onward now as always. And each hoped
He might himself be first to find and slay
That warrior who had flung the withe ; and thus
Might gain much praise and fame. The hosts moved
eastward ;

They crossed the Duv, the Ohawn, and the Caha,
The Cromma and the Thromma and Fo-dromma
Which flow into the Boyne. They came to Slane ;
And passed the field of Slane, and reached Drum Leek ;
And entered on the Pass through the great forest,
Northward of Knowth of Kings. There something
chanced.

Those folks who were to vanward of the hosts
Perceived the chariots of swift Err and Inn-yel

Returning toward them, and the bloody forms
 Of Err and Inn-yel headless, and the forms
 Of their two charioteers, Fohnam and Frae,
 Headless, upon the chariots ; and the blood
 From the four headless necks flowed o'er the wicker
 And frame-parts of the chariots. At that sight
 The vanguard halted ; all the hosts were put
 To fear and dread and weapon-shuddering.
 Maev, then, with Fergus and the seven Mahn-yas
 And seven sons of Mahga, reached the front
 Which halted ; and Maev asked, " What is this here ? "
 " Not hard to tell," said all ; " these are the steeds
 Of that small band which ever went before us
 On every hosting and on every foray,
 In every pass and gap, river and ford.
 Here are the bodies of the heroes, headless."

Advice was shaped thereafter ; and it seemed
 Certain to them that this was evidence
 Of numbers ; and that some great host was there ;
 And that it was the Ultonians who had come
 Into that place ; and this was the advice
 There shaped by them :—namely, to send from them
 Cormac Conlingish son of Conor son
 Of Fahtna Fahee, that he might find out
 Who held the ford in front of them. They said,
 That e'en should the Ultonian hosts be there
 Upon that ford, they would not slay the son
 Of their own Ulster king. Cormac Conlingish

THE TÁIN

The son of Conor son of Fahtna Fahee
Then went from them to see who held the ford ;
And twenty hundred and ten hundred men
Armed, made the force who went with him. He reached
The turlough 'mid the forest, and the ford
Whereby to pass that water ; and he saw
Nothing, save, lonely 'mid the water there,
A four-pronged shaft, from every point whereof
A head of one of those four slain dropped blood
Down to the joining of the prongs and down
Thence to the water's current. And he saw
Out of the ford, eastward, beyond, the ruts
Of a chariot, and the hoof-prints of two steeds,
The track-marks of one man. The chiefs of Erin
Came to the ford ; and all began to gaze
On that pronged shaft ; and on them all was wonder
As to who could have placed the trophy there.
“ What name with you was on this ford, O Fergus,
Until this hour ? ” said Al-yill. Fergus said :
“ Ath Greena ; but henceforth, till Doom, Ath Greena
Shall be Ath Gowla. From yon bold, rough deed ;
From yon pronged shaft upon two points of which
Ye see the heads of In-yel and of Err,
And on the other two the heads of Frae
And Fohnam, this famed ford shall now be called
Ath Gowla, ‘ Ford of the forked tree. ’ ” Then Fergus
Said to Maev's Druid, “ O Druid, Pleasing One,
What is yon ogam on the shaft ? And were they

BOOK IV

Few or a host who dug this turlough-bed,
Planting it there?" The Druid answered him,
"That four-pronged tree which I see there, O Fergus,
By one man it was cut : with one swift sword-sweep
He cut it, root and branches. And he cast it
With a choice cast from off the hinder-part
Of his war-chariot, using one hand alone ;
And its two-thirds went firm into the earth ;
So that one-third of it alone is there
Outside the earth. And he dug not its road
Before it with his sword ; but through the stones
And flags and gravel of the turlough-bed
It pierced its road. And to the men of Erin
'Tis gass to reach the mid-part of yon ford
Before one man amongst themselves has drawn it
Out of its bed, using one hand alone,
Even as with one hand alone 'twas cast
Into yon ford but now." Al-yill then said :
"There is much wonder and perplexity
With me, O Fergus, owing to the speed
Wherewith those four were slain." Fergus replied :
"Fitter it were to marvel at the skill
Wherewith yon shaft was hurled ; and this I tell you—
If ye shall set that four-pronged tree at nought,
Insulting him who hurled it—if ye pass
This ford without that one among yourselves
Have drawn this shaft, using one hand alone,
Even as with one hand alone 'twas hurled

Into the ford but now—then verily
 Wherever ye may make your camp to-night,
 He whom ye so insult will visit you,
 And many will be slain, as these were slain,
 Ere comes the hour of rising in the morn.”

“Thou art thyself of these our hosts, O Fergus,”
 Said Maev. “Avert this hindrance. Pluck us up
 This pole from out the ford.” “Bring me a chariot,”
 Said Fergus, “Ye shall see whether ’tis true
 That with one curvéd sword-sweep it was cut,
 Both root and head.” A chariot then was brought
 To Fergus; and he stood on it, and gave
 A strong pull at the pole: and of the chariot
 He made small bits and pieces. “Bring me a chariot,”
 Said Fergus; and they brought a second chariot
 To Fergus; and he gave a stronger pull
 At the fixed pole, but made small bits and pieces
 And splinters of the chariot. “Bring me a chariot,”
 Cried Fergus. A third chariot then was brought;
 And Fergus put forth powerful strength and effort
 To draw the pole; but made crushed bits and pieces
 And fragments of that chariot. Seven and ten
 Chariots of Connaught, each after each, men brought;
 And of them all, each after each, great Fergus
 Made broken, bruised bits, splinters, and fragments,
 But had not yet been able to drag up
 The pole from midmost of the ford. Then Maev
 Cried to him, interposing: “Good, now, leave it,

BOOK IV

O Fergus. Be no longer breaking down
The chariots of our people. Well we know
That hadst thou not been with us on this hosting,
On this occasion, we long since had reached
The Ultonians, and had driven forth great prey
Of captives and of kine. And well we know
Why thou art acting thus. It is to stay
And to delay the advance of our great hosts,
Until the Ultonians rise from out their Kesh,
And haste to give us battle, the great battle,
The battle of the Táin." Then Fergus cried,
"Bring me my own good chariot." And men brought
To Fergus his own chariot. He put forth
The utmost measure of his strength and effort ;
And not a pole or shaft or wheel or frame-bit
Of that good chariot cried, grated, or groaned.
Though great the prowess and the hero-strength
Wherewith the pole was cast into the ford
By him who cast it, yet with equal strength
And equal prowess it was now plucked up
Out of the ford again by that renowned,
Famed battle-warrior and that hurdle-fence
Against a hundred, that strong-smiting hammer,
That foeman of vast hosts, that cutter-off
Of multitudes, that flaming link, that chief
Of huge battalions. Fergus drew it up
With his one hand, steadily, till it reached
His shoulder's level ; and he took and gave it

THE TÁIN

Into the hands of Al-yill. Al-yill gazed
Upon the pole, and scrutinized it. "True,"
Said he, "I see that with one cut, one stroke,
This has been finished, foot and head. This tells us
The nature and the training of that people
Toward whom we go. Go we to-day no further ;
But let our tents and booths be placed for us :
Let pleasant food and ale be served to us :
Let music and old lays be sung to us :
Let us have banqueting and mirth. For never
On any hosting did the men of Erin
Meet with a night of camping in a camp,
Wherein they had more dolour to endure
Than they endured last night in Cool Shibrilly
In the thick-driving snow."

A camp was made
Beside Ath Gowla then. Bondmen and serfs
From out the forest carried kindling-wood
For fires, and young trees and bending boughs
For bothies and for shelters : all began
To broil their food and to make hot their ale.
Maev made the circuit of the camp : whereon,
She, seeing that thronged camp within the bounds
Of Ulster, much exulted. "For when Conor
Hears of this thing," said she, "'twill be to him
A fire within his heart, a gnawing cancer
Beside his girdle." So Maev thought, exulting.
And Al-yill spake to Frae the son of Eedath.

BOOK IV

“ O Frae,” said Al-yill, “ bring thy three musicians—
Thy three melodious and far-famed musicians—
And let them play for us.” “ Yea, let them play,”
Frae said; and then those harpers were led forth.
And the first harper touched his strings and played
The mournful Goltree, the deep weeping-song,
Until twelve men amongst Maev’s household troops,
Hearing it, died with wailing and with grief.
The second harper touched his strings and played
The merry Gantree, the fresh laughing-song,
So that the men around forgot their woe
In laughter, and enjoyment, and delight.
Last, the third harper touched his strings and played
The Sooantree, the low, sweet sleeping-song,—
Until on all the weary men around
A sleep of soothingness descended. So,
Slept those o’er-weary hosts. Howbeit, not yet
Slept the great chieftains; but in Al-yill’s tent
Of ample wideness, round the glowing brands
Assembled, they conversed. Then Al-yill spake,
The while they sat thus in the kingly tent,—
“ There is with me,” said he, “ marvel and wonder
As to who came to-day unto these bounds,
Slaying those four who ever went before us
On every hosting. Tell us, is it likely
That it was Conor son of Fahtna Fahee,
High-king of Ulster?” “ Verily,” said Fergus,
“ It is not likely. Had it been great Conor

THE TÁIN

Who came there, there had come along with him
Those culled, choice bands and troops, which are the best
Amongst the men of Erin, and which serve him
Continually. Though the men of Erin,
Together with the men of Alba, Britain,
And Saxon-land should gather in one stead,
One meeting-place, one course, one camp, one hill,
Over against him, he would give them battle;
Before him they would be defeated, scattered,
And not o'er him would they gain victory."

"Who, then," asked Al-yill, "was it? Is it likely
That it was Cooscree Mend, the son of Conor,
From Innish Cooscree?" "Nay, it is not likely,"
Fergus replied, "for had it been the son
Of the High-king who came there, there had come
Together with him all those sons of kings
And sons of chieftains who are ever with him
In tutelage and training. Though the men
Of Erin, with the men of Alba, Britain,
And Saxon-land were gathered in one stead
Over against him, he would give them battle
With courage, and he would not flee before them."

"Who was it, then?" said Al-yill. "Is it likely
That it was Owen son of Doorha king
O'er wooded Farney?" "Nay, not so," said Fergus.
"Had it been he, he would have brought with him
His goodly forces of the men of Farney:
He would have stayed to fight a hard-fought battle."

BOOK IV

“ Who was it, then? ” said Al-yill. “ Thinkest thou
That it was Keltar son of Oohider
Who came there? ” “ Nay, in sooth, not he,” said
Fergus.

“ He is a bruising quern-stone to the foes
Of all the Fifth: he is a head of battle :
He is an oaken door against the foes
Of all his country ! Though the men of Alba,
With men of Britain and of Saxon-land,
Together with the men of Erin all,
From west to east, from south to north, should meet
In the one stead, one doon, one camp, one hill,
Over against him, he would give them battle :
Before him they would be dispersed and scattered,
And not o’er him would they gain victory.”

“ Who was it, then, that came unto these bounds? ”
Al-yill exclaimed. “ I know not,” Fergus said ;
“ Unless, indeed, there came that little lad,
My fosterling and Conor’s fosterling,
Whom we all called Cucullin of the Forge.”
“ Ah ! ” Al-yill said, “ full many a time in Croohan
I heard thee speak of that young child. Well, then,
What may his age be now? ” “ ’Tis not his age
At all that matters to you,” Fergus said,
“ He was more celebrated for his actions
When he was but a babe, than even now
At his full seventeen years.” “ How, then,” said Maev,
“ Have you among the Ultonians now some youth

THE TAIN

Of a like age with him, who is yet harder
In combats and encounters?" „No," said Fergus,
And spake with vehemence. And as they sat
At pleasant feasting in the kingly tent,
And drank the sweet, enlivening wine which Maev
Had brought with her from Croohan, he began
Passionately to praise and glorify
His foster-child Cucullin. "No," said Fergus,
"Ye will not find among the Ulster youths
Another like him. 'Midst all other youths,
He is a ram amid the flocks, a bull
'Mid timorous herds, a high and flaming torch
Of a king's house amidst the little lights
Of shepherd-booths. Yea, and I say this, too:—
Ye will not find over to northward there,
Amongst the mighty warriors of this land,—
Hard, dire sledge-hammers, barricades of battle,
Huge gates against flood-waters, though these be,—
Ye will not find among them all, I say,
One of more firm resistance in a fight,
Of greater vehemence in rapid onrush,
Of faculty more airy, swift, and fresh
In varied weapon-play, feats, and exploits
Than is Cucullin. No, ye will not find
Over against you, in this land ye enter,
Another of like power, or a youth
Who, in illustrious noble qualities,—
In trophy-taking, in the feat of nine

BOOK IV

O'er pointed weapons, in address, in valour,
In voice, in sweet and skilful utterance,
In charm, in courtesy, in all distinction,—
Attains unto the third part or the fourth
Of that which is attained by that distinguished
And noble Hound, Cucullin." "Of this all,"
Said Maev, "we will not make too much. One body
Is all he has; and it, like any other,
Receiving sore death-wounds will die. Moreover,
It is the age of a but just-grown girl
That ye attribute to him. Not for long
Will this young beardless stripling ye describe
Hold out against our armies!" "Think not so,"
Said Fergus, "for the deeds of that young lad
Were even more great and manly at the time
When he was but a babe than even now
At his full seventeen years." Then Al-yill said:
"On entering a strange and foreign land,
To hear the adventures and the histories
Of the famed, warlike tribes toward whom one goes,
Is pleasant and a pastime. Tell us, then,
The adventures of this child ye speak of."

Fergus

Began to tell the adventures and exploits
Wrought by his foster-child in those glad days
Ere the Black Exile; and with joy the tale
Of those old, happy days was taken up
In turn by Cormac and by Feeaha.

BOOK V

BOOK V

THAT little lad (said Fergus) was reared up
On Moy Mweerhevna, in the noble house
Where dwelt his father, and his mother, namely,
In bright Doon Dalgan. There men told him tales
About the boys in Avvin. For 'twas thus
Conor was wont to spend his sovereignty
Since first he took the sovereignty : at morn,
On rising, he adjusted and arranged
All business of that Fifth ; and then he dealt
The day in three. One third of it he passed
Watching the boys upon the green of Avvin
Perform their games of skill. One third he passed
Playing himself at feehill and at branduv.
And the last third he passed consuming food
And ale, till sleep unto all men drew down ;
Whereat the skilful men of music came
To gladden and to soothe them to their sleep.
Aye, though we now be exiled (Fergus said),
Though Conor dealt me a most grievous wrong,
And a most grievous insult,—I aver,
That not in noble Erin, not in Alba,
Is there another hero-king, the like
Of wise, red-sworded Conor. Well, the child

THE TÁIN

Was told the tidings and adventurous tales
Of that incorporated band of youths
In Avvin Maha. So, the little lad
Besought his mother to permit him straightway
To go and play upon the playing-green
Of Avvin Maha. "Nay, it is too soon,"
The mother answered. "Thou must wait awhile,
Until some champion of the mighty champions
Of Ulster, or some house-friend of good Conor's,
Come to convey thee safely, and to put
The firm protection of the boys upon thee."
"It seems to me too long to wait till then,
O Mother," said the child; "I may not wait.
But teach me now the quarter and direction
Where Avvin is." His mother answered him :
"'Tis far from thee,—the place where Avvin is;
For all the lone hill-region of Slieve Foo-id
Lies between thee and Avvin." But the child
Said: "I will try to find it." And he went,
Leaving the sheltering doon, and took with him
All his play-weapons; for he took with him
His small bronze hurley and his silver ball,
His feathered dart for shooting, and his spear,
With butt flame-hardened; and he straightway fell
To shortening and enlivening of his way
With these child's-weapons. With his hurley first
He struck the ball, compelling it to spring
To a far distance. Fleetly he let fly



BOOK V

The hurley in its track, with the like force ;
And then he flung the dart, and then the spear.
And lastly, with a playful rush, he flew
After them all ; and caught the hurley first ;
And then the ball, and then the feathered dart ;
Nor did the charred butt of his playing-spear
Ere reach the ground ; but by the point he caught it
While it was whirling in mid-air. So, gaily,
Athwart the lonely hills, he came at length
To glorious Avvin Maha.

And he saw
The green, cleared plain of Avvin, where the boys
Were gathered at their sports. Thrice fifty boys
He saw, commanded nobly by Folloon
The son of Conor, at their game of hurling
Upon the green of Avvin. Then the child
Made for the green ; and, all unbidden, he went
Amongst the boys to play with them. He grasped
Their ball betwixt his legs and held it there ;
Nor let it travel higher than his knees
Upwards, nor lower than his ankle-bones
Downward ; but he did so manœuvre it
That not one player of them all could reach it
With stroke or thrust or blow ; and so he brought it
Over the goal's brink ; and he won the goal
From all those others ; and they stared at him
Befooled and dazed by utter wonderment.
Thereat upspake Folloon the son of Conor :

THE TAIN

“ Good now, O youths ! fall on that youngster there.
Through me his death shall come. ’Tis gass to you
To let an outside youth come to your green,
Unless he courteously hath placed himself
Beneath your firm protection. Fall on him ;
We know he is the son of some Ultonian.
’Tis not the rule for your compatriots
To intrude into your game without first seeking
Your safeguard and protection.” Then it was
That all at once, and moving all together,
They fell upon the child. Aloft they raised
Their three times fifty hurleys, to strike blows
Upon his crown. He, standing all alone,
Lifted his one small playing-club, and parried
Their three times fifty hurleys. Then they took
Their three times fifty balls ; and all at once
They cast them at the child. He with his fists,
And with his fore-arms, and his palms, put back
The three times fifty balls. They lastly aimed
Their three times fifty playing-spears, with butts
Flame-hardened ; but he raised his little shield,
Which was designed for childish feats of skill,
And fended off the three times fifty spears.
And then it was that with swift energy
He turned on them, attacking ; and he laid
Fifty kings’ sons upon the ground beneath him.
Five more of them (said Fergus, telling the tale)
Came up between myself and wide-eyed Conor,

Where we sat playing fee-hill on the board
 Of Conor, namely, the bright Kenncaem. There
 The little lad came, rushing after them.
 And Conor, with his kingly hands, laid hold
 Of the child's fore-arms; and he said to him:
 "Halt, little lad, I see thou art ungentle
 Towards thy companions here!" "I have much cause,"
 The child replied. "I came from a far land;
 And when I came, they did not give to me
 A guest's good welcome." "Why, who art thou then?"
 The king inquired; and the child answered: "I
 Am little Setanta son of Sooaltim,
 And son of thine own sister, Dectora;
 And not from thee did I expect to find
 Reception like to this." "Why, little lad,"
 Said Conor, "Didst thou then not know the law
 Which binds the corps of boys? 'Tis gass to them
 To let a youth of our own country come
 Into their games, till he hath placed himself
 Beneath their firm protection." "Nay, in truth,"
 The child replied; "for had I known their law,
 I should have had some fear and care before them."
 "Well, youths," said Conor, "now receive the child
 Beneath your firm protection." And they said:
 "We will receive him." So the little lad
 Went underneath the safeguard of the youths;
 And the good king released him. But the child
 Turned on them once again, attacking them

THE TÁIN

With energy and violence, and laid
Fifty kings' sons upon the ground beneath him.
Their fathers thought that they were stilled in death.
It was not so ; but they were stilled by terror
Of those great forehead-blows, and middle-blows,
And blows from underneath, which with swift skill
He dealt against them. " How now ? " Conor said,
Checking the boy ; " what art thou doing now ? "
" I swear by all the gods of my own folk,"
Exclaimed the child, " unless they place themselves
Beneath my safeguard and my firm protection,
Even as I was forced to place myself
Beneath their safeguard and their firm protection,
I will not stay my hands from striking them
Till I have laid them all upon the ground ! "
" Well, little lad," said Conor, " take the youths
Beneath thy safeguard." " I accept them gladly,"
The child said. And those three times fifty lads
Passed underneath the safeguard and protection
Of the young child, Setanta.

Now (said Fergus,
Ending his tale), if as a mere young child,
At ending of the fifth year from his birth,
He overthrew those sons of kings and heroes,
Before the very gate of their own liss,
And doon, and city—namely, of Avvin Maha—
Is there a marvel or a wonder now,
E'en though he come unto a boundary,

BOOK V

And set a four-pronged pole into a stream,
And slay a man, or two, or three, or four,
Now that he hath fulfilled his seventeen years,
On this, your Táin, to take the bull of Cooley?"

Cormac Conlingish, now, the son of Conor,
Began to speak; he said: "That child we speak of,
At ending of the next succeeding year,
Performed his next great deed." "What deed was
that?"

Asked Al-yill. Cormac said:

Cullan the smith
Lived in the land of Ulster. He prepared
A feast for Conor; and he went to Avvin
To bid the king unto his feast. He said:
"O king, bring with thee but a few. Not land
Or territory have I; but alone
My hammer and my anvil and my tongs,
And my own two skilled hands." The kindly king
Said he would go to him, and bring but few.

Cullan went back unto his doon, to arrange
And to set forth his food and ale. The king
Abode in Avvin till day's closing. Then
He donned his light, free garb of travelling,
And went down to the green to say farewell
To the young band of boys. When Conor came
Out on the green, he witnessed a thing there
Which caused him wonder. Three times fifty boys

THE TÁIN

Defended one end of the green ; one boy
Stood at the other end ; and that one boy
From those thrice fifty others gained the goal.
After, they played that hole-game, which is played
By custom on the green of Avvin Maha ;
And first it was their turn to drive the balls,
And his turn to defend. Thrice fifty balls
Arrived before the hole ; but not one ball
Shot past him, reaching to the hole itself.
And next it was their turn to guard the hole,
And his to drive the balls ; and, one by one,
He safely launched the three times fifty balls
Into that hole, without mistake or error.
Thirdly, they played at reaving of their clothes
From one another ; and he quickly reft
Their three times fifty coverings. As for them—
Not so much as the pin which held his bratt
Could they deprive him of. They lastly played
At oversetting of each other. He
Laid those thrice fifty on the ground, while they
Could not so much as win firm hold of him.
And Conor wondered while he watched the child.
“ O men-at-arms,” he said, “ if but this child
Come to excel in manly deeds, as now
He doth excel in these, his deeds of childhood,
It will be well for this our land, and well
For all the lands of Ulster !” “ ’Tis not right
To doubt that he will so excel,” said Fergus.

"E'en as his limbs will grow, so will his deeds."
 "Let the young child be summoned," said the king,
 "And he shall go with us to drink this feast,
 To which we go." The child was summoned then.
 "Well, little one," said Conor, "wilt thou come
 With us to drink this feast?" "Nay," said the child.
 "Why, how is that?" the king said. He replied:
 "Those, my companions, the brave band of youths,
 Have not yet had their fill of games and sports.
 I will not leave till they have had their fill."
 "It is too long for us to wait till then,"
 The king replied; "we cannot wait for thee."
 "Wait not," the child said. "Go, and I will follow."
 "Thou dost not know that road at all, my son,"
 The King replied, demurring; but the child
 Said: "I will follow on thy chariot-trail,
 And on the track left by the host and steeds."

Thereafter Conor went unto the house
 Of Cullan the artificer. With honour
 The king was welcomed; and the guests were ranged
 In keeping with each rank and art and law,
 And noble breeding and fair habitude.
 And green-topped rushes, paling towards the roots,
 Were strown beneath them; and all straightway fell
 To quaffing and to merriment. "O king!"
 Cullan inquired of Conor, "tell me now,
 Hast thou appointed e'er a one to come
 To-night unto this doon?" "Nay," said the king,

THE TÁIN

“I have not done so”; for he had forgotten
That the young lad was going to follow him.
“Why dost thou ask?” said Conor. Cullan answered:
“’Tis that I have a ban-dog, huge and fierce,
To guard the doon throughout the long, dark night.
When he is loosened from his hound-chain, none
Dare stay in the one cantred with him, he
Making his nightly circuit round the doon.
In him there dwells the vigour of an hundred;
And he knows no one save myself alone.”
Then Conor said, “Let the good hound be loosened
That he may guard the cantred.” So that hound
Was loosened from his hound-chain; and he made
His circuit of the cantred, and then came
Unto that bench whence he was wont to guard
The doon and dwellings; and he couched thereon,
With head on paws, and he was fierce and cruel,
And wild and savage, and filled with rage and ire
Toward everyone who would approach that stead.

Now, with regard to the fair band of youths,
They ’bode at Avvin till the hour for parting;
Then each of them went home unto the house
Of his own father and mother, or the house
Of his kind foster-parents. Then the child
Followed with speed upon the chariot-trail
To reach the house of Cullan. And he fell
To shortening and enlivening of his way
By sporting with his small toy-weapons. Soon

BOOK V

He reached the green which spread around the doon
Where Conor was with Cullan; and he cast
His weapons all in front of him, reserving
His ball alone. And the great dog perceived
The child approaching; and he uttered forth
His snarling growl, so that men heard that growl
Throughout the region round. It did not seem
That he would even rend his prey; it seemed
He would engulf it whole within the breadth
Of his huge throat and his wide breast. The child
Had not one weapon of defence before him.
But, on the instant, with his playing-ball,
He made a choice, swift cast into the jaws
Of the great hound, and into his huge throat,
And through his inward part and entrails; then,
While the great hound was staggering helpless, swift
He seized him by the feet; and with the body
Dealt such a blow against the pillar-stone
Which stood upon the green, that from his hands
It fell in dead and scattered pieces. Now,
Conor had heard the belling of the hound.
“Alas! O heroes,” he cried out, “alas!
That e’er we came to drink this feast!” “Why so?”
Asked everyone; and Conor spake with haste:
“There is a little gillie whom I bade
To follow us. He is my sister’s son,
Setanta son of Sooaltim; and now
He has fallen by the hound!” All in an instant

THE TÁIN

Rose the renowned Ultonians ; though the gates
Were flung wide open, out o'er the ring-fence
Which topped the ramparts, each man stormed in haste.
And swiftly though each went, swiftilier than all
Went Fergus ; and he seized the little lad
From the ground's surface, and he hoisted him
On to his own broad shoulder ; and he bore him
Into the presence of Conor. Cullan came
Out on the green, and saw his noble hound
In its dead, scattered pieces. Then his heart
Made mighty blows against his chest ; he went
Inside into the house forthwith and said :
“ Welcome, thy coming, child, now for the sake
Of thy most noble mother and thy father.
For thine own sake thou art unwelcome ! ” “ Why,
What grudge hast thou against the lad ? ” asked Conor,
“ It was a day of evil fate, ” said Cullan,
That day when I set forth my ale to make
A feast for thee, O King. To-day my substance
Is substance wasted ; and my livelihood
Is a lost livelihood. Thou, little lad,
Of one of mine own kindly household folk
Hast robbed me now ; for thou hast slain the guardian
Of all my goods and of my flocks and herds. ”
Then the child spake : “ Be thou not wroth with me.
My master Cullan. I will speak the doom
And the just judgment now upon myself. ”
“ What judgment wilt thou speak upon thyself ? ”

BOOK V

Conor inquired; and the boy replied:

“If in all Erin there exist a whelp

Of that hound’s seed, by me he shall be reared,

Till he be able like his sire. Meanwhile,

I will be Hound of Watching at this doon,

And will defend the flocks and goods and kine.”

“Good is the judgment thou hast given, my son,”

Said Conor. “And I think Cathbad himself

Could not have given a better. Wherefore, now,

Hence, from this hour, I thee will designate

Cucullin, Hound of Cullan.” “Nay, not so,”

Besought the child. “I like my own name more,

Namely, Setanta son of Soo-altim.”

But Cathbad spake. “O little lad,” he said,

“Reject not this. It is thy hero-name.

The men of Erin and the men of Alba,

Telling their famous tales, shall speak that name.

Long as the wave-great sea shall girdle Erin

Men’s lips shall speak it; yea, the mouths of men

In Erin and in Alba shall be full

Of that renowned name.” “Then,” said the child,

“I take the name. I take it willingly.”

And so it came to pass that from that hour

Wherein he slew the hound, there clung to him

This most distinguished name, Cucullin.

So,

If as a little lad he did that deed

(Cormac Conlingish said, ending his tale),

THE TÁIN

If at the end of six years from his birth,
He slew that ban-dog, which the hosts and troops
Of all the cantred did not dare to approach,
Is there a marvel or a wonder, now,—
E'en though he come unto a boundary,
And set a four-pronged pole into a stream,
And slay a man, or two, or three, or four,—
He having now fulfilled his seventeen years,
On this, your Táin, to take the kine of Cooley ?

Next, Feeaha the son of Conall Carna
Took up the tale. "That little child," said he,
"At ending of the next succeeding year,
Performed his third and most renownéd deed."
"What deed was that?" asked Al-yill. Feeaha
Made answer, saying:

Cathbad, the good Druid,
One day, north-eastward of resplendent Avvin,
Was giving knowledge, wisdom, and instruction
To his own pupils. Eight there were around him
Of those who learnt druidic art and lore.
And one of these asked of great Cathbad then
Whether it chanced that any special charm
Or mystic virtue rested on that day
Wherein they were. And Cathbad straight replied:
"The little lad who shall take arms to-day
Will win great fame and glory, though his life
Will be but brief and transitory." Now

Our little lad, playing his childish games
 To the south-west of Avvin, heard this thing ;
 And straightway he flung down his childish arms
 And his toy-weapons ; and with speed he sought
 The sleeping-house of Conor. " Every good
 Be thine, O King of Warriors !" cried the child.
 " That is an asker's greeting," the king said ;
 " What dost thou ask, child ?" " To take arms to-day,"
 The boy cried breathlessly. " Who taught thee that ?"
 Questioned the king. " Great Cathbad," said the child
 " If it was Cathbad, I must not refuse thee,"
 Conor replied, and straight bestowed on him
 An outfit of two spears with sword and shield.
 The boy, to test their virtue, brandished these,
 Bent them, and bowed them ; and he made of them
 Small bits and broken pieces. Then the king
 Gave him two other spears with sword and shield ;
 And these he likewise brandished, bent, and bowed :
 Making them bits and pieces. So the king
 Led him unto that house wherein were stored
 The fourteen suits of arms which he reserved
 For service of the corporate band of youths.
 —To this end he reserved them : that each youth
 On first assuming arms might be invested
 By the High-king himself, and so win luck
 And happy fortune for his arms thereafter.
 Howbeit, of these fourteen suits of arms,
 The little lad, testing them one by one,

THE TÁIN

Made broken bits and pieces. Last, the king
Gave him his own two spears, and his own shield,
And his own sword ; and the boy brandished them,
And curved and bent them ; and he doubled them,—
Yea, even till head met butt and point met hilt, and yet
They brake not, but endured him. “ These are good ! ”
Exclaimed the child ; “ these are a match for me !
Long live the king, whose arms and gear these are !
Long last the land he reigns o’er ! ” It was then
That Cathbad, the good Druid, came. He asked,
Dismayed : “ Is yonder child taking on arms ? ”
“ He is,” replied the king ; and Cathbad said :
“ Not for his mother’s son would I have chosen
This day, of all the days, to be the day
Of his first taking arms ! ” “ How ? ” said the king,
“ Was it not thou thyself who taught him this ? ”
“ Not I,” said Cathbad. Then the king, in wrath,
Turned to the child, saying : “ What ailed thee, then,
Thou changeling imp, that thou shouldst lie to me
About this thing ? ” “ Nay, be not wroth with me,
My guardian, Conor,” said the child. “ In truth
It was great Cathbad who incited me.
For one of his own pupils asked him, saying :
‘ What charm or luck pertains unto this day
Wherein we are ? ’—And Cathbad answered him :
‘ The little lad who shall take arms to-day
Will win great fame and glory, but his life
Shall quickly pass ; and early he will die.’ ”

“He tells the truth of me,” said Cathbad. “So Thou, little child, shalt win great fame and glory, But early thou shalt perish !” “What reck I,” Exclaimed the lad, “though I remain in being But one day and one night ; so that my deeds Live after me, and my exploits be told ?”

“Well, little lad,” said Cathbad, “since ’tis so, Arise and mount a chariot ! ’Tis thy first.” He leapt on to a chariot ; and he shook And bent it round about him, testing it ; And brake it into fragments. Then a second He likewise brake ; and then the seventeen New chariots that by Conor were held reserved For service of the corporate band of youths, The little lad, testing them one by one, Brake likewise into bits. “These are not good, These chariots ! My kind guardian, Conor, not From these may I obtain my fitting match !” So spake the child. Then Conor called out, loudly : “Where now is Ivor son of Reeangowra ?” “Here am I,” Ivor answered. Conor said : “Harness my own two steeds there, and prepare My own war-chariot.” Then the charioteer Prepared the chariot ; and the little lad Mounted it ; and he shook and bent it round him ; And it endured him ; and it brake not. “Good !” The child cried gaily. “This is my fit match !”

“Well, little lad,” said Ivor, “let the steeds

THE TÁIN

Be now turned out to graze." "It is too soon,"
Replied the little lad. "Drive now ahead,
Three times round Avvin Maha; for to-day
Is my first day of taking arms; and I
Must now win fortune for my deeds." They drove
Three times round Avvin Maha. "Let the steeds
Be now turned out to graze," said Ivor. "Nay!
'Tis still too soon," the boy said. "Drive ahead!
That my companions, the brave band of youths,
May speak their blessing to me, on this day,
The first day of my taking arms." They drove,
And reached the plain where the boys played; and all
Shouted, "Arms hast thou really?" "Yea!" he said;
And then they gave to him their blessing, saying:
"Victory, first-wounding, every triumph,
Be thine henceforward! But to us it seems
Too soon for thee to leave us. We shall miss thee
In all our sports and games." "Nay!" said the child;
"I am not yet to part from you at all.
'Twas but to win a happy sign of fortune
That I took arms for the first time to-day."

"Now, little lad," said Ivor, "let the steeds
Be turned to graze." "It is, indeed, too soon,
O Ivor," said the child. "And tell me now,
What is the name of yonder great high-road,
Which passes there; and whither does it go?"

"Why, how can that concern thee?" Ivor said.
"Howbeit, I see thou art a talking youth,

BOOK V

A dallier and a trifler." "It seems well
To me," the child replied with dignity,
"To ask, concerning one of the chief roads
Of Ulster, where it leads to." Ivor so
Replied to him : "The road, then, leads straight on
To Ath na Foraire, the Ford of Watching,
On wild Slieve Foo-id." "Wherefore is it named
The Ford of Watching, knowest thou, perchance?"
The boy made question. "To be sure, I know!"
Said Ivor. "Daily there some man-at-arms
Of the Ultonians keeps good watch and ward,
Guarding the way, lest outside warriors come
To challenge the Ultonians. If such come,
It is his duty to do combat with them
For the whole Fifth. Howbeit, if men of verse
And science pass there, passing out of Ulster
Indignant at their treatment, 'tis his duty
To soothe them with rich gifts, and so to save
The honour of all Ulster. And, again,
If men of verse arrive there, entering
Rich Ulster, 'tis his duty to provide
Safe-conduct for them to the pillared couch
Of Conor; so that their own songs and lays
May be the first that shall be sung in Avvin
When they arrive there." "Knowest thou, perchance,
O Ivor," said the child, "what man to-day
Keeps watch upon that ford?" "I know," said Ivor,
"'Tis combat-great, courageous Conall Carna,

THE TÁIN

The son of Avver-guin, a king of heroes
Amongst the battle-heroes of all Erin.”
“Drive thou ahead, O gillie,” said the child,
“That we may reach that ford.” They drove ahead,
And reached the ford whereon great Conall was.
“Has yonder one been armed?” asked Conall. “Truly,
That is just it,” said Ivor. “Well,” said Conall,
“Victory and trophies and first-wounding
Be thine, O little lad; but to my mind
’Twas far too soon to arm thee; for indeed
Thou art not fit for deeds. However, though,
If it be merely to provide protection
To any who may come unto these bounds,
It is enough for any who may come
Unto these bounds; for the Ultonians all
Will rise on thy behalf.” “What dost thou here,
My good friend, Conall?” asked the child. “I keep,”
Conall replied, “incessant watch and ward
Over all Ulster here.” “Rise to thy house,
O Conall,” said the child, “leave me here now
To keep that watch and ward for Ulster here.”
“Not so, O little lad,” Conall replied;
“Thou art not yet of force or skill to combat
With a trained man-at-arms.” “Then,” cried the child,
“I will ride past thee straightway toward the south,
E’en to the Fertas of Loch Ahtra. There
I will seek out some chance of reddening
My hands on friends or foemen on this day.”

BOOK V

“ I will go with thee, little lad,” said Conall,
“ To guard thee, that thou mayst not go alone
Over a boundary.” “ Not so,” the child said.
“ Yea, I will go,” said Conall. “ The Ultonians
Would blame me greatly all, did I permit
Thee all alone to cross a boundary.”
For Conall then his chariot was prepared :
His steeds were caught for him ; and he rode forth
To guard the little lad. When Conall’s chariot
Came thus abreast of his, it to the child
Became a certainty that even if
He should obtain a chance for some great deed,
Great Conall would not let him do the deed.
He from the ground picked up a handstone, then,
Which filled his grasp. He made a choice, good cast
With this against the yoke of Conall’s chariot,
So that he broke the yoke of Conall’s chariot
In two ; and Conall through the broken yoke
Fell to the ground, and with the fall his shoulder
Was cut and wounded. “ What caused that, my son ? ”
Asked Conall. “ It was I,” the child replied.
“ I made the cast to try whether my cast
Was straight and true, and whether I could aim
At all, and whether there were yet in me
The makings of a warrior.” “ Venom, then,
Be on thy cast ! ” cried Conall. “ Venom be
Upon thyself as well. Leave or leave not
Thy head amongst thy foes. I now will go

THE TÁIN

No further to protect thee." "That exactly
Is what I asked of thee," the child said then ;
"Because 'tis gass to all of you in Ulster
To ride on in the company of one
Who in such way has done you injury."
Conall went north again to keep his watch
Upon the Ford of Watching in Slieve Foo-id.

As for the little lad, southwards he went,
E'en to the Fertas of Loch Ahtra ; and there
He waited till day's ending. Then spake Ivor :
"If I may dare to say so much to thee,
My little lad, 'tis time for us to turn
And journey back to Avvin. There already
The carving, and the dealing-out and sharing
Have well begun ; and now, whereas for thee
There is a place reserved, where thou wilt sit
Between the feet of Conor, there for me
Is nothing but to be among the jesters
And messengers and horsemen that belong
To the great house of Conor. It is time
That I were back to scramble with them." "Well,"
The boy replied, "harness the steeds again."
The steeds were harnessed ; and the little lad
Mounted the chariot-seat. "Why, tell me, Ivor,"
He said, "What hill is yonder hill up there ?"
"That is Slieve Mourne," said Ivor. "And what cairn
Is that white cairn I see upon its summit ?"
The child asked. "That is Finncarn of Slieve Mourne,"

Said Ivor. "It is pleasant at that cairn,"
 The child said. "It is pleasant," answered Ivor.
 "Then drive ahead, that we may reach that cairn!"
 The boy commanded. "Well, in sooth," said Ivor,
 "Thou art a dawdling and a lingering youth!
 But this is my first journey with thee. Be it
 My last until the ending of the world,
 If ever we reach Avvin once again!"

Howbeit, soon they came to the white cairn
 Upon the summit of Slieve Mourne. "Now, Ivor,"
 The child said, "teach me Ulster on all sides;
 As yet I do not know my way at all
 About this country of my guardian Conor."

The gillie from that vantage pointed out
 The hills and hillocks and green steep-down fields
 Of Ulster all around. He pointed out
 Its plains and doons and strongholds. "That will do,
 Good Ivor," said the boy. "And tell me now
 What is the name of yonder square, cleared plain,
 All dappled, and all seamed with vales, that reaches
 Beneath us towards the south?" "That is Moy Bray,"
 Said Ivor. And the boy said: "Point me out
 The doons and buildings and great fortresses
 Of yonder plain." Then Ivor pointed out
 Taltin and lordly Tara, Knowth and Cletty,
 The Broo of Angus Ōg, and the dark doon
 Where dwelt the sons of Nahta Scaena. "Tell me,"
 The child cried eagerly, "are those the sons

THE TÁIN

Of Nahta who are wont to vaunt and boast
That the whole number of Ultonians living
Doth not exceed the number they have slain?"

"They are the same," said Ivor. "Drive ahead!"

The child cried joyously. "Away with us,
That we may reach the doon of Nahta's sons!"

"Woe waits thy speech!" said Ivor. "But we know
'Tis childish folly to give such commands.
And this is sure," said Ivor, "whosoever
May now go thither, it shall not be I."

"Living or dead, thou shalt go thither now,"

The little lad said sternly. "Well, then, living
I will go southward," Ivor said, "but dead
I shall be left beside that doon we know of,
The doon of Nahta's sons." They drove ahead,
And reached the doon. The little lad leapt down
From off his chariot, lighting on the green.
And thus that green was.—In the midst of it
There stood a pillar-stone; a ring of iron
Encircled this; and round the ring of iron
Was cut an ogam script. This was the ogam:

"Whoso arrives upon this green—he holding
The rank of an armed man—'tis gass to him
To leave the green, without first challenging
To combat some one dweller in this doon."

The child perused the ogam. Then with strength
He flung his arms around that pillar-stone,
As though it had been a faggot of small wood,

And cast it in the pool ; and the bright wave
 Laughed over it. " It seems to me," said Ivor,
 " It is no better there than where it was
 Before ; and this is clear to me : that here
 Thou wilt obtain that thing which thou art seeking,
 Namely, thy death and sudden, violent end."

" Good Ivor," said the child, " prepare for me
 The blankets of the chariot. I will sleep
 Now for a little while." " Alas !" said Ivor,
 " This is thy foeman's country, not some green
 Of gatherings." Yet obediently he spread
 The blankets of the chariot ; and the child
 There, on the foeman's green, slept his deep sleep.
 And then it was that a dread son of Nahta,
 Namely, great Foill, the first-born son of Nahta,
 Came forth upon the green. " Unharness not
 Those steeds," he shouted. Ivor quickly said :
 " I did not try to do so. See, their bridles
 Are still within my hand." " Whose are the steeds?"
 Asked Foill. " They are two piebald steeds of Conor's,
 The two Cannbracks," said Ivor. " That is true,"
 Said Foill, " I recognize them. And what man
 Has brought them thus hither across the frontier?"

" It was a tender youth," Ivor replied,
 " Who in our country first took arms to-day.
 Merely to show his beauty and his form,
 He came unto these marches." Foill cried out :
 " May it not bring him victory or triumph !

THE TÁIN

And if I knew that he were fit for deeds,
Dead he should journey back, northward, to Avvin,
And not in life." "He is not fit for deeds,"
Urged Ivor; "and whoever calls him fit
Speaks wrongly; for this year, in which we are,
Is only the seventh year since he was born."

Just then the little lad lifted his face
From off the ground, and quickly passed his hand
Across his face; and, hearing Ivor's words,
He flushed from crown to ground. "I am, in truth,
Fit for great actions and for hero-deeds,"
He cried. Great Foill replied: "I rather think
Thou art unfit." "Thou shalt know what to think
When once I meet thee at the battle-ford,"
The child made answer. "Rise now. Fetch thine arms.
I see that like a coward thou hast come,
Knowing 'tis not my wont to wound or slay
Heralds or charioteers, or folk unarmed."

Then Foill went headlong for his weapons. Ivor
Said breathlessly: "'Tis fit that thou beware
Of yonder man, my little lad." "Why so?"
The child demanded. Ivor said: "That man
Is Foill the son of Nahta Scaena. Him
Nor point nor edge may wound." "I think, good Ivor,
It is not fit that thou shouldst so address me,"
The boy said. "See now. I will set my hand
To my own dael-feat, namely, to my apple
Of tempered iron, which shall make its way

Through his shield's tract and through his forehead's
tract,

Hewing a blood-red roadway through his head
And through his nape, and making a free way
For the clear air beyond." Foill son of Nahta
Came to that combat. The child set his hand
To his own dael-feat; and he made a cast
That pierced the shield's tract, and the forehead's tract,
And made a blood-red roadway through the head
Of Foill the son of Nahta; and Foill fell;
And then the little lad severed the head
Clean from the neck, to be his sign and trophy.

The second son of Nahta now came forth,
Namely, great Toohal son of Nahta. "Well,"
Cried Toohal, "so thou wouldst exult and triumph
About this deed!" "Nay," said the child, "not yet
Have I e'er deemed the slaying of one man
A cause for triumph or for exultation."
"This time, at least, thou shalt not boast," said
Toohal.

"By me thou shalt be slain." "Go, fetch thine arms,"
The boy said. "Like a coward thou hast come,
Knowing 'tis not my wont to wound or slay
Heralds or charioteers or folk unarmed."
And Toohal went for his war-weapons. Ivor
Said anxiously: "'Tis fit that thou beware
Of yonder man, my little lad." "Why so?"
The boy demanded. Ivor said: "That man

THE TÁIN

Is Toohal son of Nahta Scaena. Him,
Unless thou slay him at thy first attempt,
By thy first blow, first cast, or first strong thrust,
Thou mayst not slay at all, so great his skill
In warding off, and parrying, and defence,
In front of pointed weapons." "My good Ivor,
It is not fit that thou shouldst so address me,"
The boy replied. "See, I will set my hand
To Conor's own great spear, the Venomed Spear,
And it shall pierce the shield above his breast,
And pierce the heart within his breast, and break
Three ribs upon his further side; 'twill be
A stern, determined cast. It will not be
A deed of tenderness. For mighty Toohal
There will be no delightful house of healing,
Or sick man's bed, until the end of time,
After that cast." Then Toohal son of Nahta
Came on the green; and the child set his hand
To Conor's own great spear, the Venomed Spear,
Which pierced the shield o'er Toohal's breast, and
 clove

The heart within his breast, and broke three ribs.
And the boy swept his head clear from his neck,
Even or ere his body touched the ground.

And now the last of the three sons of Nahta,
Namely, swift Fannla, youngest son of Nahta,
Came forth upon the green. "They were but fools,"
He cried, "these two, who have encountered thee!"

“How so?” the boy inquired. “Come!” said
Fannla,

“Down unto yonder water, where thy feet
Will not touch ground.” And Fannla darted thence,
And out upon the water. “It is fit,”

Urged Ivor, “that thou be upon thy guard
Before yon man.” “Why so?” the child demanded
Impatiently. And Ivor said: “That man

Is Fannla son of Nahta. For this cause
He bears that name: that with a weasel’s swiftness,
And with the swiftness of a swallow flying,
He travels o’er the water. In this world
There is no swimmer who can cope with him.”

“It is not right that thou shouldst warn me so,”

The boy replied; “for it is known to thee,
That river which we have at Avvin Maha,
The green-banked Callan. Once upon a time,
The band of youths, leaving their games of skill,
Plunged in the stream; and I held up a lad
On each one of my shoulders, and a lad
On each one of my wrists, nor did I wet
More than my under part.” The boy went down

To wrestle on the stream with Fannla. Quickly
He flung his fore-arms above Fannla, forcing
His body downwards, level with the wave;
And then he struck a powerful downward stroke
With Conor’s sword, severing Fannla’s head
Clear from his neck. He let the body float

THE TÁIN

Down the wide stream ; but brought the head to shore,
To be the trophy of his victory.

So were those dreadful foes of Ulster slain ;
And the child gathered up his heads and trophies,
And gave them to his charioteer ; and then,
Hearing the cries of Nahta, their fierce mother,
And tumult of men issuing from the doon,
To avenge those deaths, he said to Ivor : “ Rise,
And drive ahead, northward, across Moy Bray.
I will not part with these my heads and trophies
Till we reach Avvin Maha.” So they placed
The three heads on the chariot ; and they rode,
With speed like to the speed of flying birds,
Or to the speed of the cold, pure, spring wind,
Northward across Moy Bray ; and they outstripped
Those who pursued them, and arrived in safety
At the lone region of Slieve Foo-id.—There,
Crossing the red-haired mountains, they descried
A far-off herd of deer ; and the young lad
Said : “ Tell me, Ivor, what is that great herd
Of moving cattle ? Are they tame or wild ? ”
“ Why, wild,” said Ivor ; “ those are the wild deer
Who on these lonely spaces of Slieve Foo-id
Do keep and roam.” “ Now prick the steeds, good Ivor,
And we will try to reach them.” Ivor pricked
The steeds ; howbeit, the o’er-weary steeds
Could not come up with the swift mountain-deer.
Then the young lad leaped from his chariot-seat,

BOOK V

And darted o'er the heather and the rocks ;
And captured one swift, stalwart buck of them,
And bound him to the chariot. On they drove,
Northward, and reached the brink of the cleared land
Which lies round Avvin. There they chanced to see
A flock of beautiful wild geese, which flew
Straight past them. "What are those white birds,
O Ivor?"

The boy inquired. "Are they pets or wild?"
"Wild," replied Ivor. "They are flocks of geese
Who from the rocks and cliffs of the Great Sea
Fly inland, seeking goodly food and pasture
On the green plains of Erin." "Which were rarer
And more distinguished," asked the eager child,
"To bring them living, or to bring them dead,
Home unto Avvin Maha?" "It were rarer
To bring them living," Ivor said; "for not
By everyone is owned the art and skill
To capture them alive." Thereon the boy
Made with his sling a little, gentle cast,
Arresting eight of them. A second time
He made a cast, but with a heavier stone,
And stopped sixteen of them. "Alight, O Ivor!
Collect the birds," he said, "for if I go
To gather them myself, this untamed stag
Will spring at thee." "It is, indeed, not easy
For me to go," the charioteer said. "See,
The two steeds have grown mad; I dare not pass them.

THE TAIN

I dare not pass either of these two wheels
Of iron, for the sharpness of their rims.
I dare not pass behind, for the stag's antlers
Have filled the space 'twixt the two chariot poles."
"I see, indeed, O Ivor," said the child,
"Thou art not yet a true, accomplished hero.
Step from the antlers of the stag. I swear
Now by the gods by whom the Ultonians swear,
The bending wherewith I will bend my head
Upon him, and the eye that I will make
While eyeing him, will hold him; so that truly
He will not dare to turn his head at thee,
And will not dare to move." This, then, was done.
The charioteer gathered the birds. The child
Tethered them then with ropes, braces, and thongs
Belonging to the chariot. Then, "Good Ivor,"
He shouted gleefully, "convey the birds
Along with me to Avvin." And 'twas thus
He rode toward Avvin: the three severed heads
Of foes upon his chariot, white-bright birds
Fluttering above it, a wild mountain-stag
Running behind it. And in a short time
They came to Avvin Maha.

Lowercam

Daughter of Oy and I-ark saw them coming.
She said to Conor: "Yon a chariot-rider
Approaches terribly. Red, bleeding heads
Of foes are on his chariot; bright, white birds

BOOK V

Are round about him ; a wild, untamed stag
Is bound and tethered at the chariot's rear.
We must make ready to receive that rider."'
Then Conor said : " Indeed, I know that rider !
It is the little lad, my sister's son,
Who went to-day unto a boundary
To seek first-reddening of his hands. Make ready
Now to receive him fitly ! " Then three vats
Of pure, cold water were prepared ; and raiment
Was laid out fairly. And the warriors met
The child ; and quick, obedient servitors
Took him, and plunged him, first in the one vat,
Then in the second vat, and last of all
In the third vat ; and so his battle-rage
Was cooled ; and all his skin was cleansed, and shone,
And flushed a crimson-pink from crown to ground.
And then they combed his tresses of fair hair,
Which gleamed pale-golden, like the wax of bees,
Or like a clasp of fair, pale gold, when shining
Towards the bright sun. This done, they took a layna,
That was inwoven with bright threads of gold,
And put it round him ; and they took a bratt
Of bright grass-green, and pinned it with a pin
Of white, wrought silver o'er his breast. And then
They led the child to sit between the feet
Of Conor, the great king, who, with his hand,
Stroked the child's brow.

So, now (said Feeaha),

THE TÁIN

If, as a little lad, he did that deed—
If, at the end of his first seven years
He slew those champions and those battle-fighters
By whom two-thirds of all the men of Ulster
Had fallen, and had fallen unavenged—
There is indeed no wonder and no marvel,
E'en though he come unto a boundary,
And plant a four-pronged pole into a mere,
And slay a man, or two, or three, or four,
Now that he hath fulfilled his seventeen years,
On this, your Táin, to waste the land of Cooley.

BOOK VI

BOOK VI

Now, there was in the tent with them that night,
Amidst the warriors and the noble chiefs,
A warrior of the men of Domnann, namely,
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
A young, choice warrior of the men of Domnann,
From Irrus Domnann in the far-off west ;
And while all quaffed still in that kingly tent
Beside Ath Gowla, and discoursed and wondered,
Wondering at those boy-deeds, Faerdeeah said :
“ O King and Queen,” he said, “ I, if ye will,
Will tell you all the tale and history
How that Cucullin was trained up to arms
And wondrous deeds and feats of warlike skill
By Scawtha in the East ; for I can tell it,
Having been there with him myself ; and that
Which I saw not myself my dear companion,
Cucullin, hath narrated to me. Truly,
If ye shall hear this tale, when ye have heard it,
Ye will no longer wonder at yon deed,
Namely, his coming to this boundary,
And setting yon pronged pole into the mere,
And slaying those who ever went before you
In every war and hosting.” Al-yill said :

THE TÁIN

“ Good, O Faerdeeah, tell us, then, that tale.”

Whereon Faerdeeah told his tale in order,
And in progression, and with oratory
And choice and learned words.

O men (said he)

Ye have heard tell of the restraint and rule
And excellent lordship found in Avvin Maha
Under the admirable, able king,
Conor the son of Fahtna, in whose time
Concord and quietness and peaceful pleasure,
With plenteous yield from forest, field, and ocean,
Have stayed with the Ultonians. Ye have heard
Of the great dignity and rank and plenty
In the king's house in Avvin. That king's house,
The long Creev Roe of Conor, was designed
After the likeness of the Meadhall House
In Tara. Nine score feet and fifteen feet
Its length from door to door ; and it is built
Of fitted planks of rich, red yew, and roofed
With planks of yew thatched o'er with lapping shingles.
Inside the house from fire-hearth unto wall
There are nine imdas ; and of these each pillar
Of bronze has thrice ten feet in height, and each
Partition is of rich, red boards of yew.
Within the chief place in that house is placed
The imda of Conor ; and round about it stand
Pillars of bronze with silvern capitals ;
And on each capital a bird of gold

BOOK VI

Perches ; and flashing gems of carbuncle
They are which serve for the birds' eyes ; and so
These flash that in that house the day and night
Seem of like brightness. A tall, narrow band
Of silver reaches from above the king
Up toward the roof-tree of the kingly house
And what time Conor with his royal wand
Strikes the resounding silver, all the men
Of Ulster become silent, so that even
A needle falling on the vast house-floor
Is heard, because of the great hush and silence
Wherein men are through reverence for him.

Ranged

About this imda are the twelve tall imdas
Of the twelve chariot-chiefs of Ulster. Yea,
And all the valiant warriors of the land
Of Ulster find a place in the Creev Roe
At feasting. Many noble gatherings
And many wonderful and varied pastimes
Are there ; and nightly, when the twilight falls,
The I-arn Gool, that wondrous cask, is filled
With heart-enlivening wine. One hundred brewings :
That is the measure that is poured at eve
Into the Gool : that is the goodly measure
Which satisfies the Ulster men assembled
At the one time. And when the night descends,
And the tall, kingly candle of the house
Is lighted, then from door to door are stretched

THE TÁIN

Long ropes on which the chariot-chiefs of Ulster
Perform with skill. Three other feats of skill
Those chiefs perform as well :—the apple-feat,
The sword-edge feat, the dart-feat. Well ye know
The names of those renowned chariot-chiefs,
As Conall Carna son of Avver-guin,
And Laery the Victorious son of Connud,
And mighty Keltar son of Oo-hider ;
But, in the happiest time, the Sons of Usna,
Since slain, were there ; and Fergus son of Roy
Was there, the noblest chief of all ; and there
Were Duffa Dael and Cormac son of Conor.
They three are absent now ; but Avvin yet
Is wonderful and splendid. So at night
The chariot-chiefs perform their feats of skill
In the great house ; and, as the night goes on,
The folk of music and of art and verse
Arise and sound their stringed melodious harps
And their bright timpan ; and they chant aloud
The boughs of genealogy and boughs
Of Ulster kinship ; and they sing their songs
Of skilful harmony, until sweet sleep
Falls on the hosts, and all the house is still.

Now, when Cucullin had fulfilled from birth
His fifteen years, in feats and in swift skill
He went beyond all others of his time ;
And greatly did the Ulster women love him
For his swift skill and for his nimble leap,

BOOK VI

For his sweet utterance, and for the beauty
Of his fresh face, and for his ardent looks,
And for his wisdom. Many were his gifts;
For—saving when his battle-rage flamed high—
He had the gift of wisdom and of reason:
He had a wondrous gift for feats of skill:
He had a gift for booanbac and feehill:
He had the gift of estimating numbers:
He had the druid's gift of prophecy:
He had the gift of shape in face and form.
Three faults alone he had. He was too young;
And older warriors hailing from strange lands
Would taunt him for his ungrown beard. Besides,
He was too daring and too beautiful.
The men of Ulster then deliberated
About Cucullin; for they held in mind
Great Cathbad's prophecy; and they were troubled,
Being in great fear that their beloved Cucullin
Would perish from them early; and they wished
To give a wife to him, that he might leave
A son. They knew that only from himself
Could such another as himself gain life.

Thereafter Conor sent nine messengers
Into each Fifth of the Five Fifths of Erin,
To see whether in any royal doon
Or chieftain's doon in Erin they could find
The daughter of a king or of a chieftain
Or of a wealthy brewy, whom Cucullin

THE TÁIN

Might choose to woo. The messengers returned,
But had not found a maiden whom Cucullin
Could choose to woo. Beyond the white-bright
Boyne,

Beyond the bounds of Ulster, in the plain
Of rich Loolohta Loha, nigh the sea,
Cucullin knew a maiden whom he loved
And chose to woo. And this, indeed, was Emer,
A daughter of the wily Forgall Mona,
The lordly, wealthy brewy, who is nephew
To Tethra, king of the Fomorians. Her
Alone, of all the maidens of wide Erin,
Cucullin chose to visit and to woo.

For she had the six gifts :—the gift of beauty,
The gift of a sweet voice, the gift of utterance,
The gift of needlework, the gift of wisdom,
The gift of chastity. Cucullin said
He would woo none but one who should be equal
Unto himself in lineage and in age,
In beauty and in skill, and who should be
The best hand-worker of the maids of Erin.
And only Emer, daughter of Forgall Mona,
Had this description. Therefore her alone
Cucullin chose to woo.

In bright array
Cucullin travelled south to visit Emer
And show to her his beauty. For at first
He called unto his own good charioteer,

BOOK VI

Laeg son of Reeangowra, who was brother
To the good charioteer of Conor, namely,
To Ivor son of Reeangowra. "Now,
My good friend Laeg," Cucullin said, "bring up
My own two steeds. Bring up the Leea Maha,
Who rose from out the lake in wild Slieve Foo-id,
So that I cast my arms about his neck
And wrestled with him, making him my own.
Bring up the black Doo Sanglenn, whom I found
In that dark lake I named him after. Bring
My chariot which no steeds of all the steeds
Of Ulster may o'ertake, it being drawn
By those two steeds I speak of." Laeg brought up
The steeds, and he prepared the chariot. Then
In festive raiment and in bright array
Cucullin travelled south to visit Emer
And show to her his beauty.

On a day

In rich Loolohta Loha, Emer came
Out on her playing-field, outside the doon ;
And round her were her foster-sisters, daughters
Of lords of land who lived around the doon
Of Forgall. On the bench of gatherings
Beside the doon these sat ; and they were learning
Rich needlework and fair, choice handiwork
From Emer. As they sat upon the bench,
The maidens heard somewhat approaching them.
They heard the rapid thuds of hooves of steeds,

THE TÁIN

The creaking of a chariot, the quick cracks
Of leathern straps, the grinding of swift wheels,
The clang of weapons. Emer spake to them.
“Let one of you rise up,” said she, “and see
Who is’t that through the land rides towards us so.”

Then Feeal daughter of Forgall rose and said :
“I see two steeds equal in size and beauty
And bounding speed ; and they are broad of brow
And slender-mouthed, with crispéd manes and tails,
And heads uplifted haughtily. The steed
Against the chariot’s right pole is dark grey,
And he looks fierce and wild. The rock-strewn turf
Flames underneath his four hard hooves. A flock
Of swift birds follows. While he takes his course
Along the track there darts from him a flash
Of fiery breath, and bright-red sparkling fire
Streams from his curbed jaws. The second steed
Is black as is the dael ; and beautiful
He looks, as easily he bounds along,
Following the levels of the green mid-glen
And the cleared river-mead. Behind I see
A chariot of fine wood and woven osiers,
Whereto are white bronze wheels, and a long pole
Of white bright silver set with white findrinny.
Its yoke is high, arched, and o’erlaid with gold.
The plaited reins are yellow. The hind poles
Are straight as are two daggers. On the seat
Sits a fresh, ardent youth, most beautiful

BOOK VI

Of all the youths of Erin. Round him falls
A crimson and five-folded fooan, held
By a gold, graven brooch, against the which
His white breast heaves, beating full strokes. The
layna

He wears is white, and has a pure, white hood
All interwoven red with flaming gold.
Two blue-white, blood-red cheeks breathe fire and flame.
Darker than is a winter night is each
Of his two eyebrows. Underneath them flash
Seven red dragon-gems within the midst
Of each of his two eyes. I think, indeed,
A ray of love burns in his look. A sword,
Long and gold-hilted, rests on his two thighs.
His spear is bound fast to the chariot-frame.
Upon his shoulders hangs his crimson shield,
All silver-rimmed and decked with beasts of gold.
And now he leaps the hero's salmon-leap;
And many other wondrous feats he shows,
That chariot-chief of the distinguished chariot.
In front of him there is a charioteer,
A man tall, stooping, slender, freckled greatly,
With very curly, gold-red hair confined
About his brow by a findrinny circlet,
And at his neck by cups of shining gold.
He wears a small, short cloak with openings
At his two elbows. In his hand he bears
A red-gold rod for ruling of the steeds."

THE TÁIN

Thus Feeal daughter of Forgall spake. Ere long
Cucullin came upon the playing-field
Wherein the maidens were. He greeted them ;
And Emer lifted up her sweet, fair face,
And recognized Cucullin. Then she said :
“ May Dess make smooth thy travelling-way before
thee.”

He answered : “ May all here be safe from harm ! ”
“ Whence hast thou come ? ” she asked. And he
replied,

Speaking in learned language : “ I have come
From the resounding, smooth-bright City of Twins.”
“ Where did you sleep ? ” she asked. “ We slept,” he
said,

“ Within the house of him who tends the kine
Of the green plain of Tethra.” “ In that house
What was your food ? ” she asked. He answered her :
“ The Ruining of a Chariot there was cooked
To be our food.” “ And what way did ye come ? ”
She asked. “ Betwixt two Hard ones of the Forest,”
He said. “ By which way did ye travel then ? ”
She further asked. He said. “ Not hard to tell ;
Athwart the thick-green Covering-Veil of Sea,
O’er the Great Secret of the men of Deea,
Across the Foam of the Two Steeds of Avvin,
Across the Garden of the Red More-reega,
Over the back of the Great Sow, and down
The Glen of Dam, and down the trodden road

BOOK VI

Between the God and his great Druid-Seer ;
Then o'er the Marrow of the Woman Fedelm,
Between the Boar and his own Dam ; and then
Over the Washing of the Steeds of Deea,
Between the King of Ahna and his Servant,
O'er the four-cornered Manncool, o'er Great Crime ;
And, lastly, o'er the Remnants of the Banquet,
Unto these fields of Loo the son of Ethlenn,
Namely, Loolotha Loha. Here I greet
The daughters of the nephew of great Tethra,
The king of the Fomorians.—And for thee,
O maiden, what is the account of thee ?”
Cucullin asked. “It is not hard to tell,”
The maiden said, “for I am called indeed
The high and well-walled Tara among women ;
The unattainable, fair, glittering star
Of chastity ; the secret jewelled worm,
Deep in a well ; the flame of fire ; the road
Which none may enter.—For around me here
Are champions and strong men that follow me,
Guarding me always that I be not taken
Without their knowledge, or great Forgall's will.”
“Who are the champions who thus follow thee,
O maiden ?” said Cucullin. Emer said :
“Two Looees, and three Looaths, and Lath Gobla
The son of Tethra ; Tuath and Trescath too ;
Brian and Balor ; Bas the son of Omna ;
Eight Connlas ; and my brother Conn the son

THE TÁIN

Of Forgall. Every separate man of them
Has in himself the vigour of one hundred,
Besides the feats of nine. Forgall alone
Is such that it were hard indeed to tell
His many powers. He is stronger far
Than any bondman ; and more learned far
Than any druid ; of more sharp perception
Than any poet. More than all the feats
Of skill that thou mayst own would not suffice
For fighting against Forgall. Great the deeds
Of valour that have been narrated of him."

"Why dost thou not account me as the match
Of these strong men, O maiden ?" said Cucullin.

"Why should I not account thee so," said Emer,

"If deeds like theirs have been recounted of thee ?"

"Maiden, I swear," Cucullin said, "my deeds
Shall be recounted amidst glorious deeds
Of battle-heroes." "What then, is thy strength ?"

The maiden asked. "It is not hard to tell,"

He said ; "when I am weak in fight, I fend
For twenty ; and the third part of my strength
Suffices thirty. I alone give combat
To forty ; and the mention of my name
Protects one hundred. Fords and battle-fields
Are shunned for dread of me ; and multitudes
And hosts of arméd men flee far away
Through terror of my look and face alone."

"Those are good fights for a young, tender lad,"

BOOK VI

The maiden said ; “ but thou hast not as yet
Attained the strength of chariot-chiefs.” “ O maiden,”
Cucullin said, “ if I have so attained,
It is not strange ; for not as a churl rears
His child between the flagstone and the hearth
Have I been reared by my kind guardian, Conor.
I have been reared among the learned men,
Among the druids and among the poets,
Among the chieftains and the battle-champions,
Among the jesters, harpers, and musicians,
Among the brewies and rich lords of land,
Of our dear realm of Ulster ; and by them
I have been given their manners and their gifts.”

“ Who, then, have brought thee up to all these
deeds

Whereof thou vauntest ?” Emer said. He answered :

“ It is not hard to tell. Sweet-worded Shenca
Has taught me, so that I am wise in judgment
And not forgetful. Blai, the lord of lands
Of Tara in the Ards of Ulster, took me
Because of the close kinship of his race :
So that I got my due of wealth with him,
And learnt the way to entertain the men
Of Ulster, for the week of entertainment,
Together with their king, red-sworded Conor ;
And for that week to settle all their gifts
And spoils, and aid them in each fine and eric,
And in their honour. While I yet was small,

THE TÁIN

And ere through woful cause he left our land,
The noble Fergus fostered me. From him
I learnt to slay great warriors through the strength
Of valour: yea, by valour and by prowess
I guard our border against foreign foes—
Being a bush of shelter to the poor,
And a protecting rampart to the wealthy.
I comfort each poor wight, and slay the strong,
All through the kindly fosterage of Fergus.
Then to the knee of Avver-guin I came,
The skilful poet and father of Conall Carna,
So that I learnt the way to praise a king
For any excellency that he has;
And the sweet Finncaem, mother of Conall Carna,
Cared for me kindly, that victorious Conall
Might thus become my foster-brother. Cathbad,
The good, renowned druid, taught me then,
For the dear sake of Dectora, my mother—
Making me skilful in druidic arts,
And learned in the excellence of knowledge.
Yea, all the men of Ulster equally
Have brought me up, both kings and kingly poets,
Both chariot-chiefs and their good charioteers;
So that I am the loved one of the host
And multitude; and for them all I fight,
And for the honour of them all. Moreover,
O maiden, one amongst the bright Immortals,
Namely, great Loo, long-handed son of Ethlenn,

BOOK VI

Hath noticed me ; and there will come a day
When he will help me. So, for thee, O maiden,"
Cucullin asked, " say how hast thou been reared
Here in Loolohta Loha ?" Emer said :
" It is not hard to tell. I have been reared
In antique virtues and in fine behaviour,
In noble manners, in a queenly carriage,
In truth, in courtesy, in chastity ;
So that to me there is attributed
Each noble quality which men may find
Amongst the hosts of women." He replied :
" Good are these virtues verily. Why, then,
O maiden, should it not be right and fit
For us two to be one ? I never yet
Have found a maiden able to converse
In this wise at a meeting." Emer said :
" A question first. Hast thou a wife ?" " Not so,"
Cucullin answered. Emer spake again,
And said : " This thing would not become me well,
I thus to go unto a man, ere goes
My elder sister Feeal daughter of Forgall,
Whom thou seest near me here. She is distinguished
For wondrous handiwork." " Nay," said Cucullin,
" It is not she whom I have loved." Just then
Cucullin saw the two breasts of the maiden
Athwart her layna's opening. Then he said :
" Fair is this plain, the Plain of the Noble Yoke."
And Emer, understanding, answered him :

THE TÁIN

“None comes unto this plain but him who slays
As many as one hundred at each ford
Between the Ford of Skenn-menn at Ollbinny
And Banquin Airked where the swift Brae breaks
The brow of Fedelm, fleeing wife of Nahtan.”

“Fair is this plain, the Plain of the Noble Yoke,”
Cucullin said ; and Emer answered him :

“None comes unto this plain but him who slays
Thrice nine men at one blow, and with such skill
As to save one man 'midst each nine of them.”

“Fair is this plain, the Plain of the Noble Yoke,”
Cucullin said ; and Emer answered him :

“None comes unto this plain but him who slays
Benn Sooan son of Rossmelc, from the end
Of summer till the opening of the spring,
And from the opening spring until May-day,
And from May-day until full winter falls.”

Cucullin said : “'Tis said. It shall be done.”

“It is accepted,” Emer said. And so
Those two were plighted. When those noble words
Had thus been said, Cucullin moved from her,
Holding no longer converse.

O'er Moy Bray

He rode to northward. Silently he rode
Awhile, but in a while his charioteer,
Namely, good Laeg, aweary of the silence,
Said to him: “Good, now, Cucuc, those strange words
And unknown names the which I heard thee use—

BOOK VI

Thee and the maiden as ye talked together—
 What did ye mean to say by them ?” Cucullin
 Replied : “ Dost thou not know, good Master Laeg,
 How that I woo that maiden ? We concealed
 The sense of our discourse, enfolding it
 In learned terms of scholars and of poets,
 That her companions who were round her there
 Might not have understanding of it. Forgall,
 Were he aware I wooed her, would prevent
 Our meeting thus for converse.” Then Cucullin
 Began at the beginning of that talk
 Which he had held with Emer. He explained
 Its terms to Laeg, who listened. So with tales
 And antique lore he shortened and made joyful
 The tedious way ; and ever north they travelled.
 “ Well, first of all,” said he, “ I said I came
 From the resounding, smooth-bright City of Twins.
 That is great Avvin Maha. Well thou knowest
 The story of Maha, wave-swift wife of Crunniuc,
 Who raced the steeds of the High-king of Ulster,
 And at the goal bore twins, from whom men named
 The city raised there. Next, I said we slept
 Within the house of him who tends the kine
 Of the Green Plain of Tethra. That is Roncu,
 King Conor’s fisherman. He with his line
 Catches his fish ; and poets call the fishes
 The kine of the green sea. “ The Plain of Tethra,”
 That is the sea ; for Tethra is a king

THE TÁIN

Above the fierce Fomorians who range
The seas in search of plunder. Guileful Forgall
Is sister's son to him. We ate, I said,
The Ruining of a Chariot. Now, thereby,
I meant that little foal which in that house
Was killed and cooked for us. Thou dost remember
How for three nomads there we were detained,
Having partaken of it. For 'tis gass
On every chariot that a man should mount it
For three whole nomads, when he hath partaken
Of flesh of steeds ; because the steed it is
Which doth bear up the chariot. After that,
I said, betwixt two Hard Ones of the Forest
We came : I meant Slieve Gullion and Slieve Foo-id.
We came through Orkill, the dark wood which fills
The space between them. Then, I said, we rode
Athwart the thick-green Covering-Veil of Sea ;
That is green Moy Mweerhevna, where we passed
My own dear doon, Doon Dalgan. In old days
A dark enchanted sea covered that plain—
A sea so dense that warriors dressed in arms
Might rest upon its billows—till the Dagda,
Distinguished God o'er the fruit-bearing earth,
Arriving with his Club of Storm and Tempest,
Conjured it ; and it dried and left the plain
For the sweet grass to grow on. Then, I said,
We passed the Secret of the Men of Deea ;
And that is Grellah Dollud. On that moor

BOOK VI

In old, old days—ere came the Sons of Mil—
The Thoo-aha Dae Danann, Men of Deea,
Assembled secretly ; and there they planned
That battle of Moy Twirra, where at last
They freed themselves from the hard rent and tribute,
That the Fomorians, the strong Ocean-rangers,
Exacted from them year by year. Good, then,
Over the Foam of the two Steeds of Avvin,
I said : I meant the river Oo-anub,
The Foaming One. Within the hollow Mound
Of Ercmon, by the Thoo-aha Dae Danann,
Two steeds were reared—reared for a famous king
Then ruling in great Avvin. When the steeds
Were freed from out the mound, a glorious stream
Broke after them ; and it was white with foam ;
And foam o’erspread the country. Thence is named
White Oo-anub, that water which we forded.
Across the Garden of the Red More-reega,
We came, I said ; and that is Oughter Netmon.
The Dagda gave that height to the More-reega,
To the great horror-breathing Queen, the quaffer
Of men’s red blood, inciter by her cries
To furious, blood-red battle. In that place
She made her herb-field, and there dwelt. Well, then,
Over the Back of the Great Sow we climbed,
I said : I meant Drum Bray ; for when from Spain
Our ancestors, the noble sons of Mil,
Arrived against these shores, on every hill

THE TÁIN

And every ridge the Thoo-aha Dae Danann,
By powerful spells, impressed the loathly shape
Of a long-sided sow. So by their spells,
Breeding dislike and dread, they hoped to drive
The sons of Mil from off their shores. And then,
Down through the Glen of Dam—that is Glen Bray—
I said we came; and down the trodden road
Between the God and his great Druid-seer.
The God I meant is Angus Ōg, bright son
Of the great Dagda; and his habitation
Is, as thou knowest, in his lordly Broo,
Beside the white-bright Boyne. West of the Broo
One sees the Shee of Brassil, who is Druid
And Seer to Angus; and the great South Road
Passes between the two. And now we crossed,
I said, the Marrow of the Woman Fedelm:
That is the reach of the bright river Boyne
Betwixt the river Thromma and the Inver,
Where the Boyne mingles with the sea. And then—
But now (Faerdeeah said), to tell the tale
Of all those names upon the river Boyne,
Which then Cucullin told; and all the tales
He told besides of famous forts and doons
South of the Boyne; and the long tale he told
Of beautiful, sweet women who abide
On a large plain beneath the sea and give
Gold urns to those who visit them,—to tell
These at this time would surely weary you.

BOOK VI

Laeg asked Cucullin : “ Those strange, darksome words
The maiden spake at parting, what were they ? ”
Cucullin answered : “ When I said to her,
‘ Fair is this plain, the Plain of the Noble Yoke,’
’Twas not Moy Bray, good Laeg, that thus I praised.
It was the maiden’s shape. I saw the yoke
Of her two breasts athwart the opening
Of her fair layna ; and of them I spoke
Those words ; and when she answered me, she meant
She is so strictly guarded that no man
May come unto that plain, but him who slays
As many as one hundred at each ford
Between Ollbinni and the Boyne. No man
May come unto that Plain but him who leaps
The hero’s salmon-leap o’er the three ramparts
That fortify the doon ; and who—that done—
Meets her three brothers, Ibbur, Skibbur, and Catt,
And slays the eight each brother has with him ;
But in such wise that not a blow may reach
Or hurt those brothers. Finally, she said,
In way of prophecy, that I shall fight
Incessantly and all alone against
Great odds, from Sowin unto Balt-thana,
Ere I shall find my time to pass the Boyne
And journey south to win her. So good Laeg,
Thou seest now all that I must needs perform
Ere I can wed the maid.” Cucullin so
Went driving on his way. In Avvin Maha,
His cheerful travelling done, he slept that night.

BOOK VII

BOOK VII

Now (said Faerdeeah, as he told his tale)
Their daughters told those brewies and those lords
Of land, who dwelt around the doon of Forgall,
About that youthful warrior, who had come
In his resplendent chariot, and had talked
Upon the green with Emer. What the two
Had said, these said they knew not ; but they knew
That he had turned to northward o'er Moy Bray
On taking leave of them. The brewies told
That thing to Forgall. " It is true," said Forgall.
" It was the Ree-astartha who came there
From Avvin Maha ; and the maid has yielded
Her heart-affection to him. Therefore talked they.
Yet it shall not avail them. I by craft
Will balk them ; so that that which they desire
Shall not be gained by them."

Then Forgall Mona
Called to himself two of his own sure folk,
And told them all his plan ; whereon, they three
Featly arrayed themselves in foreign raiment,
And crossed Moy Bray and grass-green Moy
Mweerhevna,
And wild Slieve Foo-id ; and they fared to Avvin

THE TÁIN

As though they were a Gaulish embassy,
Bringing sweet wine of Gaul and costly gifts
To Conor from the Gaulish King. Great joy
And welcome greeted them. On the third day,
At banqueting, it chanced that Conall Carna,
Cucullin, and the champions all of Ulster,
Were praised in Forgall's presence. Then he said :
" That praise is just. The method of their feats
Is wonderful ; yet if your bright and gifted
And much-beloved Cucullin were to go
To Domnall, the great warrior on the Alps,
There to be trained by him, his feats would be
E'en the more wonderful ; and if thereafter
He were to reach to Scawtha, who is daughter
To Airdgama, a king in Scythia, there
By that fierce warrior-woman, that renowned
Preceptress of the heroes of the east,
To be well taught, he—gifted as he is—
Would soon excel the warriors of all Europe."
Cucullin said that he would go. He vowed
He never would return to Avvin Maha
Till he had learnt from Domnall and from Scawtha
All which they had to teach. And Conall Carna
And Laery the Victorious said they too
Would go to get that training, and began
To make them ready for that long, hard travel.
Forgall took courteous leave of Conor, and went
To his own house. Now for this cause and reason

BOOK VII

Forgall had spoken so : he thought Cucullin,
Being in training with that warrior-woman,
Namely, with Scawtha, through her well-known
hardness

And her severity and battle-wildness,
Would get his death ; and so would ne'er return
Again to Avvin Maha.

Ere he went,
Cucullin rode across Moy Bray to visit
The maiden once again. Beyond the Boyne,
Beyond the bounds of Ulster, on the plain
Of rich Loolohta Loha, nigh the sea,
He spoke with her at night-fall ; and she told him
That it was Forgall who in smooth-bright Avvin
Had urged his travel thus ; and that he had urged it
So that she—Emer, namely—and himself
Never might come together. Then she told him
To have much heed ; for Forgall would send snares
To be destroying him and breaking him
On every road and land where he might go.
Each vowed unto the other then the keeping
Of chastity until that day should come
When they should come together. And Cucullin
Vowed that if once he should return with safety
He straight would tell the maiden of his safety.
The Enga, Conall Carna's long-famed ship,
Was waiting nigh that strand. Cucullin, then,
And Emer daughter of Forgall, spake their partings ;

THE TÁIN

And o'er the bitter-green, salt, great-waved sea,
O'er the green-sided and white-ridgéd billows,
O'er the wild, treacherous currents and swift streams
Of Ocean, the three friends fared on their way
For distant warrior-training.

Of their deeds

Until they came to Domnall on the Alps,
And of the feats which there they learned from Domnall
(Faerdeeah said) I treat not. Dorndoll daughter
Of Domnall afterward desired Cucullin.
That damsel's shape was vile. Her knees were big,
Her heels in front, her feet behind, her eyes
Inside her head black-grey and big. As black
As is the side of a burnt, lonely ruin,
After its burning by night-reaving foemen,
Her face appeared; and round about her bulking
Strong brow her earth-red hair wound in thick wisps.
When he denied her, she vowed utter vengeance
On him for that. She said unto Cucullin,
He would not win his finished warrior-training,
Till he should reach to Scawtha far in Scythia
To eastward of those Alps. Thereon they three,
Laery and Conall Carna and Cucullin,
Fared eastward o'er the Alps; and it was then,
E'en as they passed those places lofty, dreadful,
Unfruitful, barren, hungry, perilous,
That there appeared to them before their eyes
Their smooth-bright Avvin Maha, plentiful

BOOK VII

In bright, melodious feastings and ale-banquets
'Mid lands of health and joy. Nor Conall Carna
Nor Laery the Victorious then could pass
That vision and appearance. Dorndoll daughter
Of Domnall—it was she who had given that vision,
So that Cucullin at it might turn back
And win reproach and shame through his thus breaking
That vow which he had made, to reach to Scawtha
Or find his death ; or—should he not turn back—
So that he, being parted from his friends,
Might the more surely find his death. Cucullin
Of his own mind and will fared on alone
Over the unknown ways ; though, as he fared,
He was sad, sorrowful, and very heavy
For loss of his companions. And he knew not
Whither to wend to reach the doon of Scawtha,
And yet had sworn to reach the doon of Scawtha
Or find his death. He lingered then some while ;
For he perceived his straying and his darkness.

While he thus lingered for a while in darkness
Of counsel, he espied, coming straight towards him,
An awe-inspiring beast, dreadful and huge
And lion-like. It came to him and watched him,
And hurt him no-wise. On whichever way
He tried to go, it came to him and met him,
And turned its side to him. With confidence
He sprang aloft then on to the beast's neck,
Letting it travel on each way it would ;

THE TÁIN

And so for four full days they in that mode
Travelled, until at last they reached a land
Where dwellers were, and saw there some young lads
Rowing athwart a lake ; and the lads laughed,
Owing to the great wonder which was on them
At that so harmful beast's being in service
So to a man. Cucullin leapt from it ;
And the beast parted from him ; and he blessed it.

He went then on the road he saw before him,
And chanced on a great house in a great glen.
A damsel very fair and shapely came
Out from that house then ; and she greeted him,
And spoke his welcome. " Welcome is thy coming,
Cucullin," she exclaimed to him. He asked her
How she thus knew him ; and she said to him :
" We two were friendly fellow-fosterlings
With Ulbecawn the Saxon, at that time
When we were learning from him melody
And eloquence and poetry." She gave him
For maintenance of strength, then, drink and viands ;
And he went from her, wending towards his way.

He chanced ere long upon an admirable
Young warrior, who then also spake a welcome.
They made exchange of tidings and of knowledge.
Cucullin asked for knowledge of the way
To the great doon of Scawtha. Then the youth
Gave him the knowledge of the way. " It lies,"
He said, " across the Plain of Evil there,

BOOK VII

Which widely spreads, upon whose hither half
The feet of men will freeze, and will be frozen
To the ground's face ; but on whose further half
The grass will rise, and will impale men's feet,
Even as on a battle-field of spears."

That youth then gave a wheel unto Cucullin,
And bade him follow it o'er the hither half
Of the Plain of Evil. Then he gave an apple,
And bade him follow it o'er the further half.
And then he told him that beyond that plain
He would discover a great valley-gorge,
And through it one thin path ; and all the gorge
He would find full of horrors and of shapes,
Of spectres and of loathly apparitions,
Which had been sent, some by shrewd Forgall Mona,
And some by incenséd Dorndoll, to destroy
His courage and to be his end and ruin.
Mounting the gorge, the path would lead him on
Through high and strong and terrible regions : it,
And it alone, would lead him unto Scawtha.
Then the youth taught Cucullin how to win
Respect and honour in great Scawtha's house.
They blessed each other. And Cucullin passed
In safety o'er the perilous Plain of Evil,
And through the spectred gorge, and through the high
And strong and terrible regions. And he came
To a wide green nigh to the doon of Scawtha,
And saw bright bands of fresh and glittering youths,

THE TÁIN

Pupils of Scawtha, playing at hurling there
In mingled groups. He, after his long travel,
Was tired and drooping, weak and hunger-worn.

Now (said Faerdeeah, as he told his tale)
Amidst great Scawtha's pupils at that time
Were certain youths from Erin. Six we were,—
Faerbay the son of Baetan ; and Faerbay
Son of Faerbend ; and Bress the son of Ferb ;
And Lewy son of Solmoy ; and Faerdaet,
A son of Daman ; and myself, Faerdeeah,
A son of Daman. And we six from Erin,
Perceiving thus a youth from Erin come,
Ran to him ; and we each one, fervently,
Gave him three kisses. And we asked of him
Tidings of Erin for ourselves ; and he,
All weary as he was, asked for himself
What arts of valour and what feats of skill
We six had learnt. “ We six have learnt,” I said,
“ To cross the Bridge of the Cliff, whereby men go
To the seven-doored house of Scawtha. Then he
asked :
“ How long have ye been learning it ? ” We said :
“ We have been learning it three nights and days
And one month and one season and one year.”
“ Youths, quick,” Cucullin said, “ show me this bridge.”
“ It will not profit thee to see the bridge,”
We said, “ till Scawtha shall begin to teach thee

BOOK VII

Safely to pass it, as she taught us all."

"I would but see it," he replied. Thereat
We led him to the bridge. And thus it was :
At one time when a youth should leap on it,
It would put on the thinness of a hair,
And the sleek smoothness of a long lake-eel :
Another time it would rise up and grow
E'en to the height of a ship's mast. Cucullin
Leapt on the bridge and fell ; and leapt again
And fell ; and a third time he leapt ; that time
He reached the mid-part of the bridge, and there
He wavered, and he hovered in mid-air
Over the black lake-waters which it bridged.

That now was seen by Ooaha, the daughter
Of Scawtha from their seven-doored house, their high
And rooféd stronghold ; and she paled and whitened,
And cried to her dread mother, Scawtha, crying :
"My grief ! a beautiful unrivalled youth
Stands poised amidmost of yon bridge. He shakes
And wavers toward a fall. I fear, indeed,
That he will never more behold the land
Of his dear father and his mother." Scawtha,
Her mother, warlike fighter and renowned
Preceptress of the heroes of the east,
Replied : " It was foretold to me long since
That a fresh, child-like youth should come to us
From Erin in the west. It was foretold
That in one hour alone he would achieve

THE TÁIN

The victory of the Bridge, which every other
Only achieves after three days and nights
And one month and one season and one year.
And 'twas foretold that his great deeds of valour
Would be related by the mouths of men
Until the ending of the world. I think
Thou seest that youth whose coming was foretold.”
Cucullin wavered still upon the crest
Of the Bridge of the Cliff. Then, nigh in act to fall,
He leapt aloft his hero's salmon-leap :
He lighted on the island of the doon
Of Scawtha, at the door of the huge doon
Of Scawtha ; and we six of Erin, pupils
Of Scawtha, raised aloud our shouts of joy
And wonder, at that passing of the bridge.

Howbeit, notwithstanding this achievement,
Great Scawtha placed Cucullin for a time
Beneath her daughter Ooaha, to learn
Amidst the youthful pupils. Ooaha
Then spake unto Cucullin, and she said :
“ If thou wilt learn true valour, thou must go
To Scawtha in the vast and antique yew
Wherein she holds communion with her gods,
Wherein she doth instruct her own two sons,
Coo-ar and Ket. And thou must set thy sword
Betwixt her breasts, until she promise thee
Three wishes. Then demand of her to train thee
Without neglect : to send thee with Faerdeeah

The son of Daman to be taught by Weefa,
 The hardest woman-warrior of this world,
 Who in Great Greece abides : last, to foretell
 What shall befall when thou again shalt go
 To far-off, noble Erin." Then Cucullin
 Obeyed her ; and he leapt his salmon-leap
 Into the yew-tree ; and he set his sword
 Betwixt the breasts of Scawtha ; and he cried :
 " Death is above thee !" Then she said to him :
 " I give thee thy three wishes. Utter them
 In the one breath." Thereat he uttered them.
 " Train me," he said, " in arms and feats of skill
 Without neglect : then send me with Faerdeeah
 The son of Daman to be taught by Weefa,
 The hardest woman-warrior of this world,
 Who in Great Greece abides : lastly, foretell
 What shall befall when I again shall go
 To far-off, noble Erin." After that
 Scawtha herself trained him to skill in arms ;
 And—for that I was more in years than he—
 (Faerdeeah said, telling his warrior-tale)
 She placed him under me, to dress my spears,
 And to prepare my bed, and to perform
 A gillie's service. We together practised
 All feats which Scawtha taught :—the apple-feat,
 The blade-feat, the small-javelin feat, the faen-feat,
 The body-feat, the rope-cord feat, the cat-feat,
 The chariot-hero's rapid salmon-feat,

THE TÁIN

The wielding of the chariot-driver's staff,
The leap across a fence, the "baw-ee brashee,"
The red whirl of a finished valiant champion,
The wheel-feat, the mouth-fury feat, the breath-feat,
The warrior's whoop, the furious counter-blow,
The sod-blow, the swift running up a lance
And poising of the body above its point,
The feat of the scythed chariot. And we went
Together amidst crags and through dark forests,
And many wild and lone and desert places,
Learning from Scawtha. And she taught us well.
And 'twixt Cucullin and myself their grew
Heart-friendship. Of one kindred and one tribe
We seemed to be, so strong was our affection.

Ere long great wars occurred. The foes of Scawtha
Pressed on her densely. We went out with her
Into hard battles; and we fought her foes.
Howbeit, of these fights I tell not now.
We fought the king of the great Snowy Land
Which lay to northward. Then upon the south
Fresh trouble came; and one day Scawtha spake
Her words of rousing import. "Get ye ready,"
She said, "to go unto the able battle,
That will be fought against us on the south
By cruel, battle-skilled, grey-haired Germanus."
Thereat Cucullin, who was ever daring,
Spake unto me and to the son of Baetan,
"Let us arise," he said, "and gather men,

BOOK VII

And seize the fort of battle-skilled Germanus
Ere he can give us battle." So we went.
We took with us four hundred fighting men
Out of the Islands of the Athishec.
We reached the doon which towers above the loch
Of sparkle-bright Lind Format. On the beach
I slew great Blawth son of red-sworded Calba.
The son of Baetan slew a grim, fierce man,
Mugarny of the Tyrrhene Sea. We reached
The gate-way of the doon ; and there Cucullin
Slew Rind who guarded it ; and I slew Rood.
We forced our way within : Cucullin slew
Four fifties of strong fighters ; and I slew
Two terrible companies. We pillaged all
The wealthy doon ; and battle-wise Germanus—
For all his plans and skilful strategy—
We brought with us alive out of his doon
That towers above the waters. To great Scawtha,
With swift exhilaration and with triumph,
We carried him a captive.

And so Scawtha
(Faerdeeah said, telling his valour-tale)
Had trained us up in arms and feats of skill
Without neglect. Cucullin and myself,
She now, fulfilling so her second promise,
Sent from her, therefore, to be taught by Weefa,
The hardest warrior-woman of the world,
Who in Great Greece abides. After long travel,

THE TÁIN

We reached the doon of Weefa ; and loyally
And kindly Weefa welcomed us. She put us
Soon to a sword-fight with her ; and Cucullin
Fought first ; and straightway, with her weapon-play,
She broke his sword, till what remained of it
Was hardly longer than his hand. Thereafter
She taught us all that wondrous weapon-play.
She took us into battles and to combats.
She led us on a dangerous expedition,
Even to the Mountain of Armenia. Great
The war-experience and the battle-knowledge
We gained while thus we served her.

Now, awhile,

I leave to speak of these our deeds of arms
(Faerdeeah said), and, instead, speak awhile
Of things that chanced—I tell a truthful tale—
In Erin here. While we two were with Weefa,
An admirable man who was in Munster,
And who is with you now upon your hosting,
A king renowned, Lewy the son of Nōs
The son of Alamac—a foster-brother
Unto Cucullin—fared from the south-west,
From Munster, taking with him twelve good chiefs
Of Munster, to this end, that these might woo
Twelve maids in Tara, twelve fair daughters, namely,
Of Neea Faer the son of Ross the Red.
Those maids, howbeit, had been all affianced
Ere Lewy reached to Tara. Forgall Mona,

BOOK VII

Hearing of that, journeyed to Tara straightway.
 He said to Lewy that there was with him
 In rich Loolohta Loha nigh the sea,
 The maid who was the best of maids of Erin—
 The best for beauty and sweet voice and language,
 The best for chastity and for handiwork,
 The best for wisdom. Lewy said to him
 That that to him seemed well; and Forgall Mona
 Plighted his daughter, therefore, to that king;
 And the twelve daughters of the lords of land,
 Who dwelt around his doon—folk of Moy Bray—
 He plighted to the twelve good chiefs of Munster,
 Who had arrived with Lewy. So then Lewy
 The son of Nōs the son of Alamac,
 Went in one band and troop with Forgall Mona
 To Forgall's doon in rich Loolohta Loha
 To have his marriage and bride-festival.
 The time, howbeit, when Emer was brought forth
 To Lewy, to the place in which he was,
 To sit at his one hand, she with her hands
 Took his two cheeks. "Upon thy truth of honour
 And truth of soul to me," she said; and then
 She made confession that it was Cucullin
 Who loved her and who had her love. She said
 It, therefore, would be hot, face-reddening insult,
 And honour-violation toward Cucullin,
 To take her—whosoe'er should take her from him.
 At that, that king dared not then sleep with Emer:

THE TÁIN

He feared Cucullin. Straightway he returned
To his own doon and fort in the south-west.

I now again (Faerdeeah said) set forth
Cucullin's own adventures. When—our time
With Weefa in Great Greece being fulfilled—
We journeyed to the Island of the doon
Of Scawtha, again, and reached the seven-doored house
Of Scawtha, we found there those five of Erin,
Our comrades, and our friends, and our co-pupils:
Faerbay the son of Baetan ; and Faerbay
Son of Faerbend ; and Bress the son of Ferb ;
And Lewy son of Solmoy ; and Faerdaet,
My brother, son of Daman. And those five,
Having fulfilled their training with great Scawtha,
Were now in point to leave her : they were saying
Their blessings and their partings. Then Cucullin
Said he desired to fare back to Erin
In company with those companions. Scawtha
Spoke to him words of solemn warrior-import.
“Thou shalt not go with them,” she said, “till I
Have tied a hard, encircling fold and friendship
About you all ; so that the men of the world
May never put you one against the other
Unto a combat. For there is no danger
That any other man in all this world
Will cause you danger, unless danger rise
From one of you against his fellow. Therefore,
These are the gassa which I leave to you :

BOOK VII

If it shall be the better man of you,
Who shall seek combat with the less good man,
Then it shall be the better man of you
Who shall be conquered ; and, in the same way,
If it shall be the less good man of you
Who shall seek combat with the better man,
Then it shall be the less good man of you
Who shall be conquered. Let not one of you
Transgress these gassa and this testament.”
Thereat we gave our hands unto each other,
So covenanting fulfilment of that league,
Each toward the other, till the Breast of Doom.
And then it was that upon me great Scawtha
Bestowed a conganess, a horn-skin armour ;
And then it was that to renowned Cucullin
She gave her dread Gae Bulg. No other man
Of Erin has its like ; and to him only
She taught the wielding of it. After that
Scawtha fulfilled her third great vow to him,
Namely, to tell him what things should befall,
When he, with all of us, should go again
To far-off, noble Erin. And she sang,
Through power of the Imbas Forosnai,
These words to him, foreshowing deeds to come :

“ My strong affection to thee, welcoming,
O Shield of Fury, Shield of Victory !
I see, O Shield, thy hound-strong combating.

Alone against rough, reaving multitudes,

THE TÁIN

By Maev brought east with great hostility,
I view thee, unsubdued, yet combating.

On fords from Sowin unto Balt-thana,
I see high heroes, huge, illustrious,
Fall in death-pools, with thee, Shield, combating.

I see thy three-day sleep—sleep wonderful :
I see three fifties slain—deed sorrowful :
I see thy Bressla More, red, terrible.

I see thee lying, wounded, languishing :
Erin contends in battle pitiless :
The bive screams o'er that field, wild, ravenous.

Thy fill of years is brief, ephemeral ;
But thy war-deeds men hold in memory,
While Erin yet by waves is combated.

My strong affection to thee, welcoming,
O Shield of Fury, Shield of Victory !
I see, O Shield, thy fame uncombated."

Well, after that (Faerdeeah said) we said
Our partings and farewells. On that same night
We started on our long and arduous travel.
To our own land, to Erin. I relate
One event only of that arduous travel.

Toward summer's end we reached the doon of
Rooad,
King of the Isles ; and there were Conall Carna,
And Laery the Victorious, gathering tribute
And rent ; for on those islands of the Gall

BOOK VII

There is strong tribute to the men of Ulster.
Cucullin heard a sorrowing in the doon
Ere yet he reached it. "Wherefore is that cry?"
Cucullin asked. "The daughter of our king,"
They said, "is being handed o'er as tribute
To the Fomorians, to the Sea-plunderers,
And therefore this hard sorrowing in our doon."
"Where is the maid?" he said. "Down on yon
shore,"

They answered him. Cucullin went from them,
And came into the presence of the maid
On the shore-sands. He asked of her her tidings;
And the maid told that grief fully, completely.
"Whence will the men arrive?" Cucullin asked.
"From yonder somewhat distant isle," she said;
"And bide not here to face their violence."
Cucullin, notwithstanding, bode with her
To face them; and he slew the three Fomorians
With one-man valour. The last man of them
Had wounded him, however, in his hand;
And the maid wound a piece from her own raiment
About his wounded hand. Cucullin then
Went up to the king's doon like every other:
He had not told his name unto the maiden.
The maiden came then to the doon and told
Her father all that tale. Cucullin came
Like every other guest; and Conall Carna
And Laery the Victorious had great joy

THE TÁIN

At seeing him ; and much they welcomed him.
Many a man within that doon then boasted
Himself the slayer of those ocean-thieves ;
But the maid credited no whit his boasting.
And then it was that the king caused a bath
To be prepared ; and every man in turn
Was brought to it ; and when Cucullin came,
As each one came, the maiden knew him straightway.
“ I give my daughter to thee,” Rooad said ;
“ And her bride-outfit I myself will pay.”
“ Not so,” Cucullin said. “ After a year,
Let her come after me, if so she will,
To Erin ; and I, ’midst my comrades there
Will find for her a very noble consort.”

After that hour (Faerdeeah said) we stayed
Three nights beneath kind tendance in that doon,
With banqueting. At ending of that time
We put our hands unto our ships to sail
Again to Erin. We put prow on shore
On a North Ulster strand. We blessed each other,
We comrades ; and each one of us fared then
To his own people, his own tribe and land.
I (said Faerdeeah) fared to my own folk
In Irrus Domnann in the west. Cucullin
Fared to smooth, beautiful, bright Avvin Maha,
Where was great Conor son of Fahtna Fahee,
High-king of Ulster. There he told his tidings,
And put his weariness away. And then—

BOOK VII

This (said Faerdeeah) I have heard from one
Who tells true tidings—to his own bright doon,
Doon Dalgan, next he journeyed, where he had,
O King and Queen, some warning of these hosts
And this your hosting. He with Sooaltim,
His father—husband unto Dectora,
His noble mother—rode then to the marches,
And reached Ardcullin. While their steeds grazed there
He made that spancel-withe, made from an oakling
New-felled and twisted; and he cut the inscription
In ogam; and he flung the spancel-withe
Around the pillar-stone, so to delay
Your hosts for one full night while he should go
South o'er the Boyne to rich Loolhta Loha,
There to tell Emer daughter of Forgall Mona
How he again had come to noble Erin
In safety from his travel. Sooaltim
He sent with words of warning north to Avvin.

And now (Faerdeeah said) I have related
The tale I said I would relate. A thing
There is, howbeit :—One of our battle-comrades,
Faerbay the son of Baetan, said to me
That Scawtha, one hour prophesying, said
It was in Destiny, or that Cucullin
Should fall by me, or else that I, Faerdeeah,
Should fall by him. Therein the son of Baetan
Reported erringly. It were a thing
Not possible; for this I say to you:

THE TAIN

A dearer, truer friend I never found
Than was Cucullin son of Dectora.
Oh! he was half my heart, and I to him
Was half his heart; and this I say to you :
By my hard shield, by my ringed battle-shield,
Were sword of mine to slay that valiant Hound,
I would then thrust my dripping slender sword
Through my own side, through my own breast and heart.
Yea, by my sword, by my red battle-sword,
Were I to slay that Hound of Moy Mweerhevna,
I would be buried in his raised earth-mound,
And the one stone should lie o'er him and me.
By my war-spear, by my far-flaming spear,
If any folk should come betwixt us two,
And should incite me, so that I should slay him,
I would then turn against that folk in fury,
And they with all their armies should be slain.
By my strong hand, by my trained hero's hand,
Rather than that in unjust battle-fight
I should destroy that glorious, valiant Hound,
I would myself be slain and thrown as meat
To every wolf and every screaming bive.

Faerdeeah ended so his warrior-tale
Of all Cucullin's training-up to arms
By Ooaha, by Scawtha, and by Weefa
Far in the East. Beside Ath Gowla still
The Four Great Fifths of Erin stayed that night.

BOOK VIII

BOOK VIII

THE Four Great Fifths beside Ath Gowla so
Remained that night ; and so with histories,
Recounting notable things, Al-yill and Maev
With all the kings and chieftains whiled away
The fore-part of that night. And if thereafter
Upon the men of Ulster there was joy
And gladness and delight of mind and spirit,—
Upon the chiefs of Erin there was grief,
Because they knew the youth who had performed
Those things recounted would perform yet greater
Before them in the land whereto they journeyed,
The land of Cooley. When the glorious sun
Next morn filled up with light each hollow glen
Throughout the lands of Erin, Al-yill said :
“ Let us move forward.” Then they crossed Ath
Gowla,
And moved along through the long forest-pass.
Cucullin went before them where they went.
He felled an oak athwart the forest-passage
Ahead of them ; and on its side he wrote
In ogam that ’twas gass on any man
To go beyond it till some chariot-rider
Should leap it with his chariot. The hosts pitched

THE TÁIN

Their tents in front of it ; and chariot-riders
Went in their chariots to o'erleap it. Thirty
Good steeds fell there ; and thirty chariots there
Were broken wretchedly. The Pass of Awyny,—
That is the name upon that pass for ever.

They stayed there till the morrow's dawning-time.
Then Maev procured that Frae, the glistering,
Strong son of Eedath, should be brought to her.
" Help us, O Frae," said Maev, " remove from us
This strait and hindrance. Rise from us. Go forth,
That thou perchance mayst fight and slay Cucullin."
Frae at that early dawning-hour went forth :
He took with him eight others : he arrived
Beside Ath Foo-id and descried the youth
At bathing in the pure, cold river there.
" Bide for me here," Frae said then to his people,
" While I myself go to yon man ye see.
The water is not good," said he. He flung
His raiment from him then ; and he stepped forth
Into the ice-cold stream to meet Cucullin.
" Come not against me, Frae, bright son of Eedath,"
Cucullin cried to him, " for thou wilt die
Thereby, and it were grief with me to slay thee."
" Against thee I will go," Frae said to him ;
" Here in this snow-cold stream we two will combat ;
And let thy fight with me be fair and noble."
" Whatever mode of fight seems best to thee,"
Cucullin said, " that choose thou." Frae replied :

"The arm of each, then, round his fellow's body
 Is what I choose." They wrestled a long time,
 With powerful grips each round his fellow's body,
 There in that water. Frae was then submerged.
 Cucullin raised him to the air and said
 With courtesy : "I raise thee up again,
 O Frae, bright son of Eedath. Own thou now
 That I have won ; accept thou from me now
 This sparing of thy life." Frae answered him :
 "I own it not ; and I accept it not."
 Cucullin put him under once again,
 Until Frae died of that. His form was brought
 Out from the water to the river's brink,
 Drowned, without life ; and his own people bore him
 Away, till they had reached the camp and hosting.
 Ath Frae, "the Ford of Frae," then, is the name
 Which has been given for ever to that ford
 Wherein Frae died. The camp and hosting all
 Cried out with grief for Frae the son of Eedath.
 Findabair daughter of Maev and Al-yill
 Wept in still grief, seeing him drowned and pale,
 And thinking of that beauty which he had
 That day when in his sparkling bright array
 He had approached to woo, and of the beauty
 Which was upon him on that other day
 When she herself had swum the dark-pooled stream
 To succour and to aid him. Soon the hosts
 Perceived a band of women, robed in innars

THE TÁIN

Of pure grass-green, come to that drowned, pale form
Of Frae the son of Eedath; and these drew him
With them away into the green Shee-mound,
Where, with her sister Boyne, his mother Baefinn
Dwelt 'midst the deathless Shee. Then, with his chariot,
Fergus the son of Roy leapt the felled oak.

The hosts moved on until they reached Ard Ahad.
Cucullin there slew six, six Dungalls, namely,
From Irrus Domnann in the far-off west.
And the hosts moved until they reached Drum Saulinn.
There was with Maev upon that hosting then
A little much-loved whelp : its name was Bashny.
Cucullin, going before them where they went,
Launched from his sling, from his cranntowl, a stone,
Which, striking to the mid-part of their camp
Upon Drum Saulinn, struck from Maev's whelp its head.
That Maev took very grievously. She said :
"Great is the mockery and shame to you,
O men, that ye do not pursue and hunt
That wild deer of misfortune, who each day
Is slaying some of you !" Then many warriors
Fell to pursuing him and hunting him,
Until at hunting him they broke the poles
And hind-shafts of their chariots. And the hosts
In the meantime moved on and reached Drum Keen.
Cucullin, near by, there, in the red morn,
At milking-time, heard from a holly-forest
The sounds of breaking boughs. "Alas ! O Laeg,"

Cucullin said to his good charioteer :

“It is too bold a mode in the Ultonians,
If it be they who thus hew down their forests
In front of the Four Fifths of Erin. Therefore,
Wait here awhile, good Laeg, while I go hence
To see who cuts the forests.” Then Cucullin
Went to that place whence he had heard the sounds
Of breaking boughs, and found a gillie there.

“Who art thou, gillie, and what dost thou here?”

Cucullin said to him. The gillie answered :

“I am the charioteer to Orlam son
Of Al-yill and of Maev ; and I am cutting
New holly chariot-shafts, because our shafts
Were shattered yesterday while we were hunting
That famed wild deer, Cucullin ; and, brave youth,
By all the honour of thy bravery,
Help me to finish, lest that famed Cucullin
Should come upon me here.” “Thy choice, O gillie,”
Cucullin said, “shall I cut down the poles
For thee, or trim them?” “I myself will cut them,”
The gillie said, “for it is easier.”

Cucullin then began to trim the poles.

He took one by its upper end and dragged it
Betwixt his toes and then betwixt his fingers,
Against its branches and excrescences,
Till he had trimmed, and shaped, and smoothened it,
And polished it, so that not even a fly
Could stay on it ; and then he laid it from him.

THE TÁIN

And each rough pole he in that fashion trimmed.
The gillie looked at him, and said : “ I think
This work which I have given thee to do
Is not thy daily work. Who, in all Erin,
Art thou, O youth ? ” Cucullin said to him :
“ I am that famed wild deer, even Cucullin,
Of whom thou spak'st at morn, at milking-time.”
“ Woe on me then ! ” exclaimed the charioteer.
“ I die by that until the Breast of Doom.”
“ Fear not, O gillie,” said Cucullin. “ Never
Slay I good charioteers or messengers,
Or folk unarmed. But tell me in what place
Thy lord is, namely, Orlam.” “ At yon grave-hill,”
The gillie said. “ Go to him,” said Cucullin.
“ Carry him warning. Tell him to have fear.
If I shall reach him, he by me shall fall.”
The charioteer thereat went towards his lord.
He took the nearest way through the dense forest ;
But howe'er rapidly he went, Cucullin,
Taking a longer way through the same forest,
Arrived more rapidly. He cut the head
From Orlam son of Al-yill and of Maev ;
And, from the grave-hill since called Tamlaht Orlam,
He toward the hosts of Erin brandished it.
The hosts moved on until they reached Ard
Keenaht.

And then it was that the three sons of Aurac
Came to the river-ford by high Ard Keenaht

Against Cucullin. These, then, were those sons :
 Mess-Linny and Mess-Leea and Mess-Lahan.
 And Loo-an and Oo-al and Milhy were the names
 Of their three chariot-drivers. For this cause
 They went against Cucullin : it to them
 Seemed overmuch of action and performance,—
 That which Cucullin had performed against them
 On those preceding days ; namely, his slaying
 Those sons of Renc, two foster-sons of Al-yill's,
 Beside Ath Gowla ; and his overwhelming
 Of Frae the son of Eedath ; and his slaying
 Of Orlam son of Al-yill and of Maev
 At Tamlaht Orlam ; and his brandishing
 That head in full view of the hosts of Erin.
 They meant to slay Cucullin in return,
 And of themselves to lift that sore oppression
 From the great hosts of Erin. To the woods
 They went, and cut there three white hazel-rods,
 And gave these to their charioteers ; and then
 They went, the six of them, against Cucullin,
 Six against one, breaking the faith of men.
 Cucullin at the ford by high Ard Keenaht
 Slew four of them ; but Lahan broke in flight
 To northward. With his chariot-driver, Milhy,
 He reached the Nith in Connallia Mweerhevna ;
 And there his chariot broke. Ath Carpat, therefore,
 “Ford of the Chariot,” has since been the name
 Upon that ford. And Lahan straightway turned

THE TÁIN

To face Cucullin who had swiftly chased him.
He met him on the second ford hard by.
He fell there by Cucullin ; and Ath Lahan,
“ The Ford of Lahan,” since has been the name
Upon that ford on the green river Nith.
Now, on the shoulder of hill between those fords—
Ath Carpat and Ath Lahan in the Nith—
Laeg son of Reeangowra, charioteer
Of famed Cucullin, fought the charioteer
Of Lahan, namely Milhy ; and Laeg slew him :
Whence, Goola Milhy, “ Shoulder of Milhy,” since
Has been the name on that low eminence
In Connallia Mweerhevna ’twixt those fords,
Ath Carpat and Ath Lahan in the Nith.
And that was “ Laeg’s One Combat on the Táin.”

The hosts moved on and came to Edon More.
This was the time when from the far north-west,
From fair white-foaming Assaroe, the harpers
Of Keenbili arrived, with will to gladden
The hosts with harping and with magic music.
Because of friendship unto Maev and Al-yill
These came ; but it appeared to Maev and Al-yill
That they were spies from the Ultonians. Wherefore,
The hosts gave chase to them, till at Leek More
“ The Great Flat Flag,” those harpers went from them
In shapes of swift, wild stags ; for they were men
Of druidism and great art and knowledge.

This was the time wherein Cucullin promised

That in whatever place he should see Maev,
 He from his sling, from his cranntowl, would sling
 A stone at her, which would not be far off
 From one side of her head. That thing was done.
 He, seeing Maev, cast from his sling a stone,
 Which killed her little bird on her one shoulder
 West of the ford. Maev crossed the ford ; and then,
 He, from his sling casting a second stone,
 Killed her pet squirrel, which was on her shoulder
 East of the ford. And “ Maeda of the Bird,”
 And “ Maeda of the Squirrel,” are the names
 Upon those places, even unto this hour.

This was the time wherein the men of Erin
 Deliberated and took counsel, planning
 At dawn upon the morrow to begin
 Their ravaging and laying waste and spoiling
 Of Meath and wide Moy Bray and Moy Mweerhevna
 Up to Cucullin’s country. In the presence
 Of Fergus son of Roy they planned ; and then
 To Fergus came his fervent memory
 And sharp affection for his fosterling ;
 And he began to warn the men of Erin
 To have much fear ; and he began to praise
 His fosterling, Cucullin, and to praise
 His gifts and deeds, as he before had praised them
 Beside Ath Gowla. Notwithstanding that,
 The hosts upon the morrow morn began
 Their ravaging and laying waste and spoiling

THE TÁIN

Of all those lands. A cloud of red-brown fire,
Heavy, wide-spread, they carried o'er those lands ;
And Maev made sword-land of Mweerhevna. Then,
With all their captives and their herds of kine,
Which they had taken, and their preys and spoils,
They drew together, and moved on towards Cooley.

Cucullin, in the margin-land of Cooley,
Upon a day, at midday, in a forest,
Rested a little on his spear. His head
Was on his fists : his fists were round his spear :
His spear was on his knees. He rested so,
And slept his sleep, until he heard a cry
Coming right towards him from the north ; and awful
And fear-inspiring it sounded to him.
Then he saw Laeg. " Whence was that cry, O Laeg ? "
Cucullin said to him. " From the north-west, "
Laeg answered him, " upon the great highway
Unto Kell Coo-an. " " We will after it, "
Cucullin said. They went until they reached
The Ford of the Two Magic Deeds ; and there
They heard the chariot-sound of chariot-wheels
Sound from the side of Grellah Culgary.
Ere long they saw one chariot before them ;
And one red steed beneath it ; and one leg
Beneath the steed ; and the long chariot-pole
Through the steed's body, so that a thole-pin passed
Through the pole's end across his powerful forehead.

BOOK VIII

A blood-red woman with two blood-red eyebrows
Sat on that chariot; and her bratt and raiment
Were all blood-red. Betwixt the two hind-shafts
Her long, red bratt trailed o'er the earth behind her.
Nigh to the chariot walked one big, large man
Arrayed in red. He, with his hazel-fork,
Was driving on one cow in front of them.

“The cow rejoices not to be so driven,”
Cucullin said. The woman answered him:
“The cow pertains not to thee. She belongs
To no near kinsman and no friend of thine.”
“The cows of Ulster all pertain to me,”
Cucullin said; “and why is it the woman
Who answers me? Why is it not the man?”
“He is no man,” the woman said to him.
“He is Cold Wind, Reeds, Rushes.” “And thyself?”
Cucullin said, “what is thy name?” She answered:
“Keen-cutting Edge, Hair, Little Mouth, Hate, Horror.”
“Ye mock at me,” Cucullin cried. With that
He leapt on to the chariot. His two feet
He placed on her two shoulders; and his dart
He held above her crown. “Play not on me
With thy edged weapons!” she cried out. “Then name
Thy genuine name,” he said. “Depart from me,”
She said, “I am a woman-satirist;
And it was Dawra son of Feeacna
In Cooley, who, in payment for a song,
Bestowed on me this cow.” “Let us, then, hear

THE TÁIN.

Thy song," Cucullin said. "Depart from me,"
She said; "no more be trembling o'er me here."
Cucullin then went down; and she to him
Sang a cheek-reddening, chafing, chiding song
Composed in learned words. He understood;
For he was trained and skilled in learned words;
And, filled with ire, he made to leap again
On to that chariot. Then he saw no chariot,
No steed, no man, no cow, no blood-red woman
With dragging, blood-red bratt; but saw, instead,
That she, the woman with the blood-red bratt,
Had now become one lonely carrion-bird,
Red-mouthed and black, on a tree-branch near by.
He comprehended then that he had seen
That dread More-reega, daughter of Ernmas, queen
Of heavy slaughters, who drinks up men's blood,
Who shrieks on high for pale-lipped carcasses,
Dispensing her confusion, famine, battle,
Betwixt the seas of Erin; and he said:
"Had I but known that it was thou, O Queen,
We had not parted so." She answered him,
Speaking in semblance of that carrion-bird:
"E'en the small ill which thou hast done to me,
Will cause thee ill, Cucullin. I had brought
That cow, thou sawest, from a far Shee-mound
To visit the Donn of Cooley: I was wending
To that Shee-mound again. Because, Cucullin,
Thou didst attempt to stay me on my way

BOOK VIII

Thou shalt find ill. Thou shalt have cause to rue
Thy deed to me ; and thou shalt rue Maev's Táin."

"How shall I rue this Táin?" Cucullin said.

"For I thereby shall gain much fame and glory.

I shall break mighty battles. I shall slay

Their mighty men. I shall survive this Táin."

"How wilt thou gain thy glory on this Táin?"

She said. "And how wilt thou survive this Táin?

For when thou first shalt meet upon a ford

A man commensurate with thyself in skill,

I, in the shape of a lithe water-eel,

Will wind around thy feet and cause thee there,

Within that ford, unequal, death-sure combat."

"By all the gods by whom my people swear,

I swear," Cucullin said, "that I will bruise thee

Against the grey rock-flags within that ford ;

And ne'er shalt thou obtain from me thy healing

Till Doom, unless thou then shalt rise from me."

"I, in the shape of a starved, grey bitch-wolf,

Will come," she said, "and chase the startled kine

Down towards that ford to overwhelm thee there."

"By all the gods by whom my people swear,

I swear," Cucullin said, "that I will aim

A stone and break thy right eye, or thy left eye ;

And thou shalt ne'er obtain from me thy healing

Till Doom, unless thou then shalt rise and flee."

"I, in the shape of a red, hornless heifer,

Will come," she said, "and guide one hundred heifers,

THE TÁIN

Hornless and red, to trample through that ford
Where thou wilt be ; and thou shalt get thereby
Unequal, death-sure fight. Thy head, Cucullin,
Will be removed from thy curved throat that day.”
“ By all the gods by whom our Ulster swears,
I swear,” Cucullin said, “ that I will hurl
A stone, and break on thee one hindward leg ;
And thou shalt ne’er obtain from me thy healing
Till Doom, unless thou then shalt rise and flee.”

After those words, the bitter-threatening bive
Went from that place. Cucullin turned again
Toward the same forest-watch whence he had come.

’Twas this same day that the great Donn of Cooley,
Having around him fifty of his heifers,
Came to the margin-land of Cooley. There
He pawed and dug the earth in front of him.
Then the More-reega, daughter of Ernmas, still
In semblance of the flesh-consuming bive,
The bitter-throated bird, flew till she lighted
Upon the lofty boundary-marking stone
In Tara of the land of Cooley. There
She cried her words of warning and of pity
Unto the Donn of Cooley ; and she said,
Addressing him : “ O miserable one !
O wretched Donn of Cooley ! Hear my words.
Have fear ! The men of Erin come to hunt thee.
Maev the daughter of Yohee Fayla comes

BOOK VIII

To hunt thee, and to capture thee, and bind thee.
Great her desire and her longing for thee !
Have fear ! Hear warning ! Flee, O bull of Cooley !”

The Donn of Cooley, then, with fifty heifers,
To the black, hidden Corrie of Glen Gatt
In Cooley, went into retreat and hiding.

Cucullin, in the salt and marshy flats
Of Connallia Mweerhevna in those days
Slew no one. On the low foot-hills of Cooley,
In his own natural country, he awaited
Those hosts of Erin. Then Maev told her people
To make a shed of shelter. With their shields
Over their heads they made a shed of shelter ;
So that Cucullin from the little knolls,
And smooth and plain-topped hills, and rising hills,
Might not achieve their shooting. And Cucullin
Achieved no shooting of the men of Erin
Along those fore-shores or around the knolis
And hillocks of the margin-land of Cooley
Upon that day. In Raeda Loha, then,
In Cooley, the Four Fifths of Erin set
Their rest: ’twas there they made their camp that night
That night Cucullin with his charioteer
Moved on beyond Glass Crond, a rapid stream
Of Cooley, his own natural country. There
He called to the quick mountain-streams of Cooley.
He said : “ I supplicate the river-streams,

THE TÁIN

That they for me may fight. I supplicate
The torrents and the waters of my country.
I call to my Glass Crond." The men of Erin
Moved on next day until they reached Glass Crond.
They sought to pass it. Then that river rose
And fought against them. And it swelled, and grew
Into the tree-tops ; and it spread, and swept
One hundred of their battle-chariots down
Its rapid-waved, wild inver ; and it whelmed them
In the deep-drowning sea. And none could cross
That river on that day. Next day Maev said
To her own people that some man should go
To prove the river. At those words a man
Of huge, tall bigness, one of Maev's own people,
Rose to achieve that. Oola was his name.
Upon his back he put a flag of stone
For firmness ; then he went to prove the stream.
Then the stream hurled him down and made him dead,
Deprived of life, the stone being on his back.
Maev told her folk to lift him forth again
And dig his grave-mound and erect his flag.
His grave-mound and his flag beside the way
Nigh to Glass Crond are to be seen this hour.

After that death the Four Great Fifths of Erin,
Because they could not pass Glass Crond, went up,
Coasting the stream, until they reached the place
Where the stream issued from the mountain. Closely
Cucullin on that journey followed them ;

BOOK VIII

And, from the other side of the same stream,
With his cranntowl shooting at them, he slew
One hundred fighting-men of them ; and slew
Amidst those fighting-men, both Raen and Roy,
The two historians of the Táin. Arrived
Beside the well whence the stream issued forth,
The people wished to pass between the well
And mountain, and descend the vale again.
But Maev allowed that not ; for it to her
Seemed well to leave her track upon that mountain
Till Doom, to be a shame and a reproach
To the Ultonians. Therefore they camped there
Three days and nights, and dug the ground before
them,

Digging a pass across that mountain-ridge
To be a lasting shame and strong disgrace
To the Ultonians. “ Barna Tána Bo,”
That is the name upon that mountain-pass
Since then ; because it was across the mountain
That the hosts passed. They passed, and so came
down

To Findabair of Cooley. There the hosts
Divided, and they set the land in fire
And flame, and gathered what there were of women
And boys and maids and kine in mountainous Cooley,
Till they were gathered all at Findabair.
Then Maev surveyed each prey and prize and spoil.
“ It is not well that ye have gone,” said Maev.

THE TÁIN

“The Donn of Cooley is not with you here
‘Midst your great spoil.” “He is not in the spoil,”
All said. And then Maev’s cowherd, namely, Lohar,
Was called to Maev. “Where is the bull?” said she,
“Know’st thou, perchance?” “I fear to tell,” he
answered.

“E’en as we came nigh to this land of Cooley,
He, with three twenties of his heifers round him,
To the black hidden Corrie of Glen Gatt
In Cooley went into retreat and hiding.”

“Rise ye,” said Maev. “Between each two of you
Carry a withe. They did that (and from that
That glen is called “Glen of the Withes,” Glen Gatt).
They found the bull, and drove him forth with triumph
Until he was in Findabair of Cooley.

In which place, seeing Maev’s own cowherd there—
Lohar, to wit—the bull repaired to him.

He brought the entrails and the inward parts
Of Lohar out on his high, lofty horns.

With all his heifers he attacked that camp

In Findabair till fifty fighting-men

Had fallen and died. He went from them, then,
straight

Out of the camp and doon in Findabair;

And not a man of all the men of Erin

Knew whither he had gone. These things to them
Seemed shame and taint, dishonour and disgrace.

To the wild desert woods around Slieve Gullion

It was that the great Donn of Cooley now
Had gone from them to new retreat and hiding.

The hosts moved on, driving their prey and spoil,
Which they had taken. At Glen Taul that night
They made their camp and fort. That glen is called
Glen Taul, because of the abundant milk
Yielded that night to all the hosts of Erin
By the great flocks and herds which they had taken.

The hosts next day moved on until they reached
Glass Colpa, a swift mountain-stream of Cooley.
Glass Colpa rose against them; and it swept
One hundred of their battle-chariots down
Its rapid-waved, wild torrent, till it lost them
In the deep-drowning sea. They skirted Colpa
Up to its spring, even to Bally Al-yone,
And slept that night at Leessa Leek,—so called
Because of the enclosures for their calves
Which they constructed in that place that night.

Next day the hosts moved on. As they moved on
A thing occurred touching the sword of Fergus,
Occurring as hereafter follows. Al-yill
Early that day said to his charioteer,
Namely, Faer-lōga: “Go from me, Faer-lōga!
Discover Maev and Fergus. It with me
Seems well to have some new memorial
And index of their union and their friendship.
That charioteer rose forth. He found the queen,
The daughter of Yohee Fayla, and great Fergus,

THE TÁIN

Where that pair stayed behind in a fair brake
The while the hosts moved on. The two heard not
That spy beside them. Now, the sword of Fergus,
His Calad-colg, his musical sword, which Leddy
Had brought one time out from the magic Shee,
And had bequeathed to Fergus—that curved sword,
Which was a flaming candle, and whose voice
Was sweeter than the sound of pipes of gold
When played at evening in a royal house—
Lay nigh him in that place wherein he lay
Companioned by great Maev. Faer-lōga drew
That sword from out its sheath, and left the sheath
Empty and void not far from Fergus there.
He went to Al-yill. “Is it so, indeed?”
Said Al-yill. “It is so,” Faer-lōga said.
“Here is the token.” “That is a good token,”
Said Al-yill; and they smiled each at the other.
“For her ’twas right,” said Al-yill. “’Tis for help
On this her Táin that she hath done it. See
Now that the wondrous sword be kept by thee
Bright and well polished. Put it ’neath the seat
Of my own chariot with a cloth of linen
Folded about it there.” Fergus rose up
Ere long, and made to don his sword again.
“Alas!” said he. “What is thy grief?” asked
Maev.
“’Tis an ill deed that I have done to Al-yill,”
He said; “and bide thou here while I go up

Into yon wood ; and wonder not at all,
 Though it be long till I come back." Maev knew not
 That he had lost his sword. Fergus went up
 Amidst the trees, and took with him the sword
 Of his own charioteer. He made a sword
 Of wood amidst those trees, and thrust that sword
 Into his empty sheath. " We will go on
 Now to the hosts," he said. And they went on
 To the great hosts of the Four Fifths of Erin.

The hosts that day passed over swift Glass Gatlig.
 Glass Gatlig it was called because with gads
 And withes and ropes and cords they dragged their kine
 And brought their calves across it. After that,
 On steep Drumenna in the border-land
 'Twixt Connallia and Cooley they that night
 Encamped. They made a very strong encampment.

Fergus was called that night to play at feehill
 With Al-yill in his tent. He went ; and Al-yill
 Laughed at him railingly. Fergus was wroth ;
 But Al-yill said : " Be not wroth, then, O Fergus ;
 For welcome is thy coming. Sit thou down.
 We will play feehill here and boo-an-bac."
 Fergus sat down, then, in the royal tent ;
 And the two played at feehill on a board
 Of bronze : of gold and silver were the men.

The hour the cloudy shades of night came down,
 Cucullin, from Slieve Fauhan very near

THE TÁIN

The hosts of Erin, with his strong cranntowl
Began to hurl his sling-stones at that camp
On cragged Drumenna ; and all night he hurled ;
So that before the light of rising-time
Upon the morrow, he had slain one hundred
Firm fighting-men from 'midst the men of Erin.
And all the hosts at light of rising-time
Were dulled and deadened by their apprehension
And fear and dread and terror of Cucullin.
Maev at that early dawning-hour then spake
To Feeaha the son of Conall Carna
Of Ulster, who was kinsman to Cucullin.
She bade him go to seek Cucullin out,
And offer terms. "What terms?" said Feeaha.
"Not hard to tell," said Maev ; "indemnity
For aught of his that we have spoiled or taken :
A feast in Croohan for him never-ending :
Wine and sweet mead there to be poured for him :
And he to come into the warlike service
Of Al-yill and myself ; for I myself
Am, in real power, the sovereign of all Erin ;
And so, to serve me would advantage him
More than his serving of that minor lord
Whose he now is." (Now this, by the Ultonians,
Has been accounted ever as the saying
Most mirth-producing, droll, and laughable,
That e'er was spoken on the Táin,—Maev's making
"A minor lord" of that renowned great ruler

Over a Fifth, who was the best in Erin,
 Namely, of Conor son of Fahtna son
 Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More.)
 Feeaha went upon that embassy.
 Cucullin welcomed him ; and Feeaha
 Related all Maev's terms. Cucullin said :
 " I will not change the brother of my mother
 For e'er another sovereign. But let Maev
 And Fergus come to-morrow to Glen Fauhan,
 And meet me there in the red light of morning,
 And I will speak with Maev." Then Feeaha
 Went with these words back to the men of Erin.

So the next day in the red light of morning
 Fergus and Maev went down into Glen Fauhan
 To meet Cucullin. And across the glen
 Maev looked upon Cucullin ; and her mind
 Tortured her greatly on that day, because
 No more than a fair, adolescent youth
 He seemed to her to be. " Is yonder one,"
 She said, " that wonderful, renowned Cucullin
 Of whom ye speak, O Fergus ?" But on Fergus
 A silence had fallen. In his breast there grew
 His pain of sharp affection while he viewed,
 For the first time, the little tender lad,
 His fosterling, whom he had left in Avvin
 Many long years before, and who had come
 Now to his seventeen years. " Well, let Cucullin
 Be spoken to by thee," Maev said. " Not so,"

THE TÁIN

Fergus replied. "Let him be spoken to
By thee thyself; for there is little distance
Betwixt you here across the glen." Maev then
Spake to the lad herself. She said to him:

"Thou young Cucullin son of Dectora,
Featful swift hound of Cooley and Mweerhevna,
I offer thee complete indemnity
For aught of thine that we have spoiled or taken:
A feast in Croohan for thee, never-ending,
With wine and mead there to be poured for thee,
If thou wilt come into the warlike service
Of Al-yill and myself, and leave the service
Of him whom now thou servest." Thus said Maev.
Over the glen Cucullin answered her:
"O most proud Maev daughter of Yöhee Fayla,
I will not change the brother of my mother
For e'er another sovereign in all Erin.
I will not stay from you my strong cranntowl,
Unless ye will restore to me all women
Whom ye have taken in this realm of Ulster.
I will not stay my terrible cranntowl,
Unless ye will restore to me, not only
The kine of my own lands, but all the kine
Which ye have taken in this realm of Ulster.
For all the folk and all the kine of Ulster
Pertain to me on this your great Invasion;
And for them all I here keep watch and ward."

Maev at these words had anger. "This," she said,

BOOK VIII

“ Were far too much to give for warding-off
The attacks of a young, tender lad.” In anger,
Then, on each side, they parted from each other,
Leaving Glen Fauhan. Maev and Fergus went
Back to their camp and to the hosts of Erin.

BOOK IX

BOOK IX

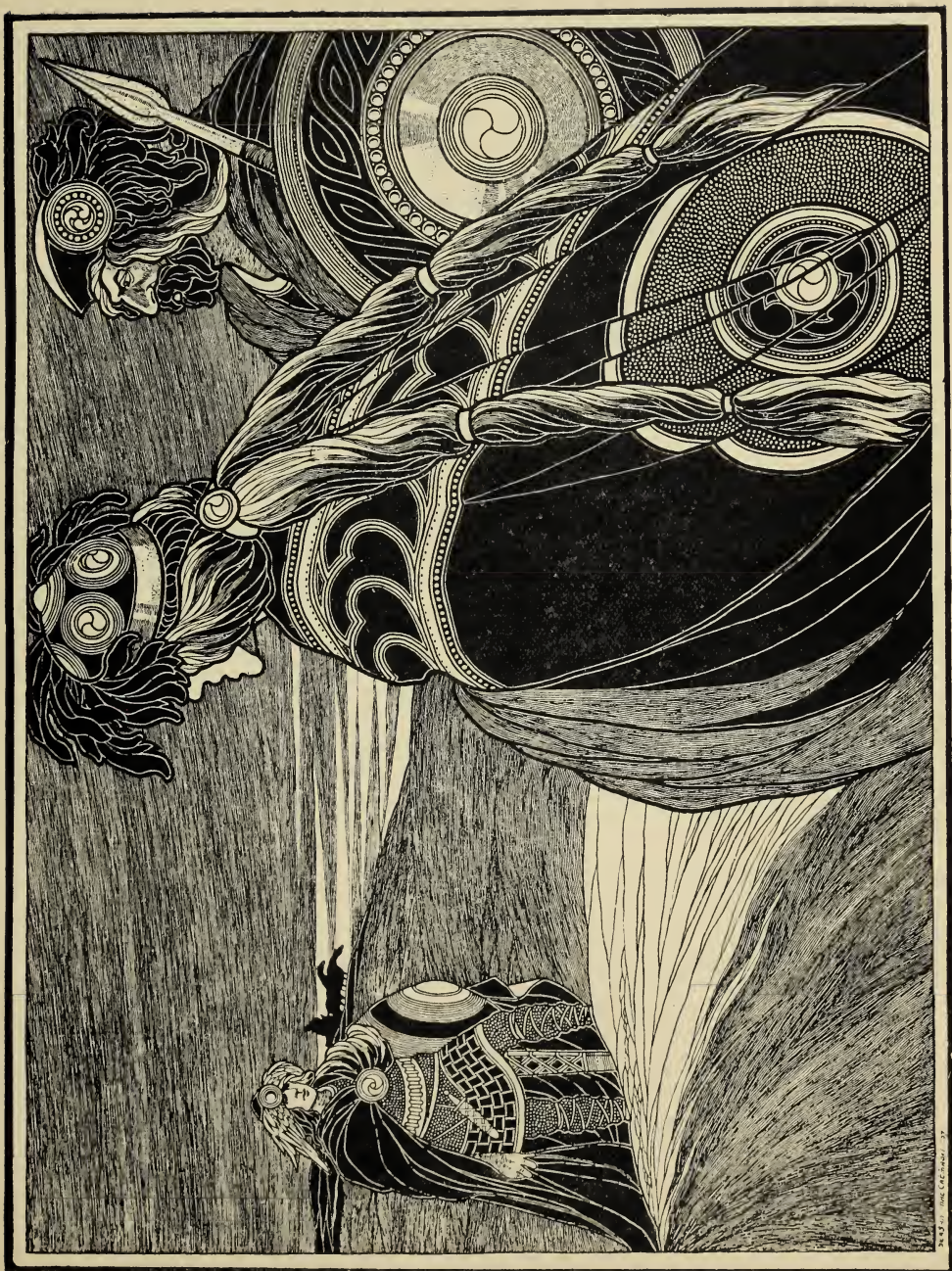
THE Four Great Fifths of Erin kept their camp
On cragged Drumenna yet three days and nights.
But there no tents or booths were placed for them :
No pleasant food or ale was served to them :
No music and old lays were sung to them :
They had no banqueting or mirth. For nightly,
The hour the cloudy shades of night came down,
Cucullin, from Slieve Fauhan, very near
Those hosts of Erin, with his strong cranntowl
Hurling his sling-stones 'mid their people, slew
One hundred valiant fighting-men of them
Ere came the light of rising in the morn.

Then Maev said: "These our hosts will not endure,
And will not stay, Cucullin slaying so
One hundred from us every night. And wherefore
Should terms not now be carried to him? Wherefore
Should he not be addressed from us?" "What terms
Are these?" said Al-yill. "He shall have," said Maev,
"The milch-kine and the bond-folk, and shall stay
His dread cranntowl from the Four Fifths of Erin,
Leaving our hosts to sleep." "Who shall go forth
To carry him the terms?" asked Al-yill. "Who,"

THE TÁIN

Maev asked him, "but Mac Roth, chief-messenger
Of messengers of Erin?" "Nay," Mac Roth said,
"I have not the place-knowledge; and I know not
Where I shall find him." "Ask thou then of Fergus,"
Maev answered him; "'tis likely that that knowledge
Is with great Fergus." Fergus said to her:
"Not so, O Maev; I know not where he is;
But there is one thing I think likely, namely,
His being now 'twixt Fauhan and the sea,
Letting the winds and sun be o'er his body,
After his sleeplessness of night last night,
While he was slaying and was striking down
Your hosts, he all alone." That thing was true
In Fergus. In that night a heavy snow
Had fallen, so that all the Fifths of Erin
Were with that snow as one white, level floor.
Then down between Glen Fauhan and the sea
Cucullin came for sunlight and for wind,
After his sleeplessness of night that night;
And there he cast from him his seven and twenty
Waxed, board-smooth laynas, which with cords and
ropes

Next his white skin were wont to be tied fast,
So that his prudence might not go from him
When his war-fury should rise up. The snow
Melted for thirty feet on each side round him,
With the abundance of the heat of body
And war-glow of Cucullin; and the gillie



"MAEV AND FERGUS MEET CUCULLIN IN GLEN FAUHAN."

BOOK IX

Could not stay very near to him because
Of the abundance of the battle-anger
And war-glow of that champion, and the ardour
Then in Cucullin, and the heat of body.
“ A warrior now comes near us, O Cucullin,”
Laeg cried to him. “ What warrior ? ” asked Cucullin.
“ He is a brown-haired gillie,” Laeg replied,
“ Wide-faced and beautiful. The bratt around him
Is brown, distinctive. A short copper spear
Secures that bratt; a profitable layna
Is next his skin ; and he has two barnbrogues
Betwixt his two feet and the ground. He carries
In one hand a white hazel club, in one
A one-edged and tooth-hilted sword. “ O gillie,”
Cucullin said, “ those are the signs, marks, badges
Of messengers. One of the messengers
Of Erin, that is there, who has come forth
To address me with a message.” In short while
Mac Roth attained that place wherein Laeg watched.
“ Under what service dost thou serve, O gillie ? ”
Mac Roth inquired. “ I serve the warrior-youth
Yonder, above,” said Laeg. Mac Roth came up
Into that place wherein Cucullin was.
“ Under what service dost thou serve, O warrior ? ”
Mac Roth inquired. “ I serve,” Cucullin said,
“ Conor the son of Fahtna Fahee son
Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More.”
“ Hast thou no nearer, more immediate service ? ”

THE TÁIN

Mac Roth made question. "That," replied Cucullin,
"Suffices now, this hour." "Couldst thou inform me,"
Mac Roth went on, "in what place I might find
That famed Cucullin, about whom the hosts
Of Erin let from them an outcry, now
Upon this hosting?" "What is to be said
To him," Cucullin answered, "may be said
To me." "I come," Mac Roth said, "to address him
From Al-yill and from Maev. I carry to him
Their terms and war-conditions." "What conditions
Carriest thou?" Cucullin asked of him.
"He shall be given," Mac Roth replied to him,
"The milch-kine and the bond-folk, and shall stay
His dread cranntowl from the Four Fifths of Erin,
Leaving the hosts to sleep. Not mild or gentle
That thunder-shower feat is, which he pours
Upon them each long night." Cucullin said :
"E'en were Cucullin here to hear these terms,
He would not take them. For the men of Ulster,
Being incited and attacked with satire,
And hot, cheek-reddening insult and invective,
Would slay their milch-kine to redeem their honour,
If they possessed no dry kine ; and, moreover,
They would take up to them their bondwomen
On to their beds, and would beget a folk
Who would be bond-folk through their mothers."

Straight

Mac Roth returned. "Didst thou not find that youth?"

BOOK IX

Maev asked of him. "I found," Mac Roth replied,
"An awe-inspiring, angry, glowing youth
Between Glen Fauhan and the sea. I know not
Whether he was Cucullin." "Took he from thee
The terms we sent?" "Nay, truly," said Mac Roth;
And he related to them then the reasons
Why the terms were not taken. Fergus said:

"'Tis he, indeed, with whom thou wast conferring."

"Let other terms be borne to him," said Maev.

"What terms?" asked Al-yill. "He shall have," said
Maev,

"The dry kine and the free folk, and shall stay
His dread cranntowl from the Four Fifths of Erin,
Leaving our hosts to sleep. Not mild or gentle
That thunder-shower feat is which he works
Upon them each dark night." "Who shall go forth
To carry him the terms?" asked Al-yill. "Who,"
Maev asked him, "but Mac Roth?" "Yea, I will go,"
Mac Roth said; "this time I have the place-knowledge."

Mac Roth went forth then to address Cucullin.

"'Tis to address thyself that I have come

This time," he said, "because this time I know
Thou art thyself that greatly-famed Cucullin."

"What hast thou brought?" Cucullin asked of him.

"Thou shalt be given," Mac Roth replied to him,

"The dry kine and the free folk, and shalt stay
Thy dread cranntowl from the Four Fifths of Erin,
Leaving the hosts to sleep. Not mild or gentle

THE TÁIN

That thunder-shower feat is, which thou pourest
Upon them each dark night." Cucullin said :
" I will not take the terms. The men of Ulster
Will slay their dry kine to redeem their honour,
For they are generous ; and they will be
Without dry kine or milch-kine. And, moreover,
They to the querns and kneading-troughs will put
Their free women, unto slave services
And into bond-work. 'Tis not good with me
To leave that plight in Ulster after me—
Bond-maids and serf-women being so made
Of daughters of the kings and chiefs of Ulster."
" Exist there, then, terms that thou wilt accept
On this occasion ? " " There exist such terms."
" Tell me thy terms," Mac Roth said. " By my word,"
Cucullin said, "'tis not I who will tell them."
" What then ? " Mac Roth said. " If," Cucullin answered,
" There be amidst your doon one who can tell
The terms I have, let him recount them to you ;
And if there be not, let there be no sending
To address me any more with messages
Of terms and war-conditions. For whoe'er
He be who comes, his life shall here have ending."
Mac Roth went back. " Didst thou not find him then ? "
Maev asked of him. " I found him," said Mac Roth.
" Took he the terms ? " said Maev. " He took them
not,"
Mac Roth replied. " Exist there terms," said Maev,

BOOK IX

“Which he will take?” “He has terms,” said Mac Roth.

“Related he the terms?” said Maev. “This, truly,” Mac Roth said, “was his word : not he himself Will tell the terms to you.” “What then?” said Maev. “If,” said Mac Roth, “amidst ourselves there be One who can tell his terms, let him relate them. And if there be not, let there be no sending To address him any more with messages Of terms and war-conditions. And one thing I here aver,” Mac Roth said, “though it be To carry him the sovereignty of Erin, It is not I who will go forth to him To find from him my death and final ending.”

Then it was, truly, that Maev looked on Fergus. “What are these terms which that one asks of us, O Fergus?” Maev said. “I perceive no good, Even the least good, for you from his terms,” Fergus replied. “What are these terms?” said Maev. “A man,” said Fergus, “of the men of Erin Each day to meet him on a ford in combat ; And, for such time as he shall be at slaying That man, to let the hosts move freely forth ; But, when the man is slain, an obligation To be upon the hosts, with their great prey, To bide within their doon and strong encampment Till hour of rising next day in the morn.” “This is our conscience,” Al-yill said, “these terms

THE TÁIN

Are slight and easy.” “What he asks is good,”
Maev said to them. “He asks these terms,” said
Fergus,

“That so he may detain you here and hold you,
With all your captives and great prey of kine,
Until the Ultonians rise from their long Kesh,
And muster all their hosts, and journey south,
And grind you to the sand and earth and gravel.
And it is wonderful to me,” said Fergus,
“Their being so long at rising from that Kesh.”
“We take the terms,” said Maev. “We deem it
lighter

Daily to lose from us one man than nightly
To lose from us one hundred. And, moreover,
There will be one amongst our battle-champions
And battle-chiefs, who, meeting in a combat
That slight, unbearded youth, will by his strength
O’erthrow him, and so clear us of this strait.”
“Who,” Al-yill said, “shall go to bear these terms,
And to relate them to Cucullin?” “Who,”
Maev asked of him, “but Fergus?” “Nay,” said
Fergus,

“Not so. I will not go till there is given
A contract, with securities and sureties
And warranties enough to bind you fast
To keep the terms, and to bind him fast, too,
To keep the terms.” “We accept that,” said Maev.
And with strong pledges Fergus bound them down.

BOOK IX

His steeds were caught for Fergus, and his chariot
Made ready; whereupon for Edarcool,
A tender youth of Maev's and Al-yill's folk,
A son of Feda and of Leth'-riny,
His own two steeds were caught. "Whither," said
Fergus,
"Wilt thou fare forth?" "I will fare forth with thee,"
Said Edarcool, "to look upon the shape
And figure of Cucullin." Fergus said:
"There is no wish with me that thou shouldst go,
Albeit I hate thee not; but I am loth
That thou and he should meet. Thou art a lad,
Brisk, lively, gay, insolent, arrogant,
Pert, overweening; and that other lad
Is angerful, hot, ardent. And I think
Some cause of anger will arise between you
Before ye part." "Canst thou, then, not protect me?"
Asked Edarcool. "I can, indeed," said Fergus,
"Provided only that thou showest him
No scorning and no disesteem." They rode
In their war-chariots then upon their way
To reach that place wherein Cucullin was.

Between Glen Fauhan and the sea Cucullin
With his own charioteer, even with Laeg,
Was playing at boo-an-bac. And not a thing
Could pass there unperceived by Laeg, so true
His watching was; and still each second game
He won from his young lord, Cucullin. "Cucuc,"

THE TÁIN

Said Laeg, "here comes a chariot-rider towards us."
"Describe him, then, good Laeg," Cucullin said ;
And Laeg described him thus :

"Larger," said he,
"Than is some heathy knoll, rising alone
From out a grassy level, seems to me
His noble chariot. Larger than the tree,
Reverenced and old, that stands upon the green
Of some king's doon, appears to me the hair
That curls and waves in golden bright abundance
About that warrior's head. A crimson fooan,
Fringed and embroidered, folds him round : a spike
Of graven gold secures it. In his hand
He holds a wide, red-flaming spear. A shield,
Carven, and compassed by a ridge of gold,
He has ; and a long sword-sheath, which for size
Is like the rudder of some kingly vessel,
Reposes on the huge and seated thighs
Of that great, haughty warrior, planted there
'Midst of his chariot."

Then Cucullin cried :
"Oh, welcome, ever welcome is the coming
Of that belovéd guest ! I know that guest.
It is my guardian and my fosterer,
My gentle, noble Fergus, who comes there.
But, my good Laeg, as for the long, great sword,
Great like the rudder of some kingly vessel,
I have been told that 'tis a sword of wood,

Which now fills up that sword-sheath of our Fergus.”

“ I see,” said Laeg, “ a second chariot-rider

Approaching us. To him it seems to be

Sufficiency of joy and entertainment

Merely to watch the prancing of his steeds,

And the swift course they make across the land.”

“ That rider,” said Cucullin, “ is some youth

Amongst the men of Erin who comes hither

To spy upon my shape, and scrutinize

Each form and feature. For—thou knowest it well—

I am much spoken of and talked about

Amongst those lads beyond there, in their doon.”

Fergus arrived, and leapt from out his chariot.

“ Speak,” said he, “ art thou true and trusty towards me? ”

“ Trusty and true I am,” Cucullin said,

“ O dear and welcome, ever-welcome guest !

If a bird-flock shall come unto this plain,

A wild-goose thou shalt have, with half another ;

If fish shall come into these river-invers,

A salmon thou shalt have, with half another ;

And thou shalt have a drink from the sand-pools,

And have thy fistful of green river-cress,

Thy fistful of sweet sea-weed and sea-herbs ;

And if necessity be laid on thee

To fight a combat, I myself will go

To meet thy foeman at the danger-ford ;

And Laeg shall stay to watch and guard thee here,

While thou dost take thy deep repose and sleep.”

THE TÁIN

“ Well do I know, belovéd fosterling,”
Said Fergus, “ how it stands with thee, and how
These means are all the best thou canst command
For entertainment of a welcome guest
Now on this Táin. But I have come this time
To bring a message from the men of Erin.
They offer single combat. I have come
To bind thee thereunto. Accept it, thou.”

“ I bind myself to that, my master Fergus,”
Cucullin answered. And no longer time
Their talk continued, lest the men of Erin
Should say that Fergus had deceived, betrayed,
And left them, for his fosterling and pupil.

For Fergus then his chariot was prepared,
And he rode back ; but Edarcool remained
Nigh to that much-famed lad, who there alone
Defended Ulster ; and he stared upon
Each form and feature of that other lad,
For a long while and a great space of time.

Cucullin said : “ What little animal
Art thou observing with great care, O gillie ? ”
“ Thyself,” said Edarcool. Cucullin said :
“ The eye could swiftly make a circuit o’er it.”
“ That is what I observe,” said Edarcool ;
“ Thou art not large. I know not anything
For which thou needst be feared. I see in thee
No overwhelming of a host, or cause
For hate and horror and great dread. A shapely,

BOOK IX

Fair youth, thou art, I own it. Thou hast feats
Sightly and various ; but for counting thee
Where fighters, warriors, and great battle-champions
Might be—it is most true we should not count thee.”

“I will not slay thee,” said Cucullin, “knowing
The safeguard under which thou camest hither,
Namely, the safeguard of my master, Fergus.
I swear by all the gods of my own folk,
Howbeit, that if ’twere not for that safeguard,
It would now be thy cloven, scattered quarters
Which would return from me to yon great camp
Behind thy chariot-wheels.” “Provoke me not,”
Said Edarcool, “and—for this wondrous contract,
Which has been bound by Fergus on the hosts
And on thyself, namely, a one-man combat—
It will be I who, of the men of Erin,
Will be the first to come to thee to-morrow.”

Edarcool straight turned back. He took to talking
Then to his charioteer. “Gillie,” said he,
“An obligation is upon me truly
To meet Cucullin at the ford to-morrow.”
“Truly thou didst so vow,” the gillie said.
“Howbeit, I know not that the thing so vowed
Will be accomplished.” “Which thing were the
better,”

Said Edarcool, “to do the deed to-morrow,
Or now, to-night, to do it?” “’Tis our conscience,
Better to miss a victory to-morrow,”

THE TÁIN

The gillie said, "than to win death to-night."
"Nay, turn the chariot round again, O gillie,"
The lad said. "By the gods of my own folk,
I swear that never till the Breast of Doom
Will I again return unto the camp,
Until I take the head from yonder lad,
And show Cucullin's head." The charioteer
Then turned the chariot once again, and turned
Its left side towards the ford. Laeg saw that thing.
"Cucuc," said Leag, "there is the chariot-rider
Who was here last." "What of that, O my gillie?"
Cucullin said. "His left board," said the gillie,
Is now turned towards us, as he nears the ford."
"O gillie, that is Edarcool, who seeks
A combat from me now," Cucullin said;
"And 'tis not well with me to slay him, knowing
The safeguard under which he travelled hither,
Namely, the safeguard of my master, Fergus;
But there is on me, verily, no bond
Or obligation to reject fair combat.
Carry my weapons to the ford. Unworthy
I should esteem myself, were he to be
Down at yon ford before me." And Cucullin
Went to the stream, and straightway bared his sword
Above his curved bright shoulder; and was ready,
So, on the ford for the other lad to come.
Then Edarcool arrived. "What dost thou ask,
O gillie?" said Cucullin. He replied:

BOOK IX

“Combat with thee is what I ask and wish for ;
And thou art bound to grant it manfully.”
Cucullin made a sod-stroke at the sod
Which was beneath the feet of the other lad,
Slicing the sod ; and the lad fell supine,
The sod being on his upturned breast. “Go now,”
Cucullin said, “for I have given thee warning.”
“I will not go from thee,” said Edarcool,
“Till I have reached thee.” Whereupon, Cucullin
Made with his sword an edge-blow, shaving swiftly
The hair of that other lad from nape to brow,
From ear to ear,—as though with a light razor
It was he shaved,—drawing no drop of blood.
“Go now,” he said, “Thou hast a two-fold warning.
And I have made of thee a cause of laughter.”
“I will not go from thee,” said Edarcool,
“Till I have reached thee.” At which words Cucullin
Struck at the armpits of the other lad,
With his sword lightly ; and the raiment fell
From Edarcool ; and his skin was not reddened.
“Go now,” Cucullin said, “for I have given
A proof of power.” The other lad replied :
“I will not go, till I have taken thy head
And trophies ; or till thou hast taken my head
And trophies.” “’Tis this last,” Cucullin said,
“To wit, that I shall take thy head and trophies,
Which shall be brought to pass.” Whereat Cucullin
Made with his sword a crown-stroke from the crown

THE TÁIN

Of Edarcool e'en to his navel ; and made,
Swift upon that, a cross-stroke through his navel,
So that the three disjointed parts of him
Fell to the earth in the one point of time.

That was the downfall, then of Edarcool,
A son of Feda and of Leth'-rīny,
A tender youth of Maev's and Al-yill's folk.

Now of that combat naught was known to Fergus.
And that was natural for him ; since Fergus
Never for aught looked rearwards o'er his back,
At sitting, or at rising, or on travels,
Or at departing, or in fights and strivings
And battles—that thus no one e'er could say,
That he in fear gazed rearwards o'er his back.

The charioteer of Edarcool ere long
Came up with him. "Where is thy lord, thou gillie?"
Cried Fergus. "He has fallen," said the servant,
"Slain by Cucullin in the ford." Full wrath,
Swift, fire-fleet, sudden, leaped in Fergus then.
"It was not fitting, truly," he cried out,
"In that unearthly sprite so to insult
And wound me with regard to one who came
Beneath my safeguard and protection. Turn
The chariot for us, gillie," Fergus said.
"I will turn back now to address Cucullin."

The gillie turned the chariot ; and they fared
Back toward the ford, and saw Cucullin there.

BOOK IX

“What caused thee, thou uncouth, unearthly sprite,”
Fergus cried out to him, “so to insult
And wound me with regard to one who came
Beneath my safeguard and protection?” Then,
Cucullin fell down kneeling before Fergus ;
And Fergus, in his anger and hot wrath,
Rode three times in his chariot past him. Kneeling
And bowed, Cucullin cried : “My master, Fergus,
By the good fosterage which thou didst give me,
Say which would seem to thee the better, namely,
I to take his life and his spoils, or he
To take my life and my spoils ? Furthermore,
Ask his own gillie which one of us two
Was sinful in what happened.” Fergus said,
Looking upon the lad, his fosterling :
“That which has happened seems the best to me.”

Then Fergus tied a withy round the feet
Of Edarcool, and round his cloven neck ;
And dragged him o’er the ground behind the steeds
And chariot-wheels ; and where the ground was rough,
The cloven fragments parted round the juts
And points of rock ; and where the ground was smooth,
They met again. And Fergus trailed them thus
Across the sloping camp, up to the tent
Of Al-yill and of Maev, and called aloud :
“Here is your tender youth for you, and here
The message that ye sent him out to bring !”

And Maev came forth, and stood without the door

THE TÁIN

Of her own tent ; and there she lifted up
Her voice of lamentation ; and she said :
“ It seemed to us that this young hound was full
Of life and ardour when he left the camp ;
And now, it seems to us, he did not leave it
Beneath a true man’s safeguard when he left it
Guarded by Fergus.”

From great Fergus then
Broke forth his chuckle of laughter. “ How,” said he,
“ Should this mere whelp, this woman’s lap-dog, dare
To approach that slaughter-hound, whom now the Four
Great Fifths of Erin will not dare to pass,
Or move beyond, to reach their native homes ?
Yea, I myself might deem it fortunate
To escape thus safe and whole from out his hands.”

For Edarcool his grave-mound then was made :
His stone was set : his name was writ in ogam :
His funeral-cry was wailed above him there.

That night Cucullin stayed his famed cranntowl ;
And o’er the weary hosts came welcome sleep.

BOOK X

BOOK X

A MAN of powerful bigness, excellent
In shape and race, arose to attack Cucullin
At milking-time next morn. This was Nathcrantil,
A prowess-full man of Maev's and Al-yill's folk.
He deemed it not worth while to bear his weapons
Down to the pool; but thrice nine little spits
Of holly, sharpened, singed, and burned, he took
Down to the pool, wherewith to kill Cucullin.
Finding the youth before him in the ford,
He hurled a spit on him, whereat Cucullin
Leapt in the air, and lighted very lightly
Upon the upper end of the little spit,
E'en as it struck into the ground. Nathcrantil
Then hurled on him his second spit. Cucullin,
Like any bird, flew from the first spit, lighting
Upon the upper end of the second spit,
E'en as it struck into the ground. Nathcrantil
Then hurled on him his third spit; and Cucullin
Flew to the third; and so from spit to spit
He passed, until the last of those thrice nine
Had been discharged at him: there were no more.

It was just then that a long bird-flock came
O'er the cleared plain hard by them; and Cucullin,

THE TÁIN

Like any bird, went after them, that so
They might not go from him, and that he so
Might get his share of food for night that night ;
For fish and birds and deer-flesh on this Táin
Were all he had to serve and nourish him.
But this is what seemed plain now to Nathcrantil—
Namely, that it was in a road of rout,
Of flight and of defeat that thus Cucullin
Had gone from him. He went upon his way
To the tent-door of Al-yill and of Maev ;
And there he lifted his loud voice on high
Like to the wave-roar of the sea. “ That youth,”
He said to them, “ whom ye denominate
‘ The most renowned Cucullin ’ went from me
In road of rout, of flight, and of defeat,
At milking-time this morn.” Maev answered him :
“ We knew it would be true that when a hero
And a good warrior should advance to him,
That young, unbearded wildling would not stand
For long before him. We see now ’tis true ;
For when a deedful warrior goes, the youth
Fights not, but flees in rout and flight before him.”
That thing was heard by Fergus ; and to him
’Twas as his death-wound that a man should boast
Of having made Cucullin flee. He said
To Feeaha the son of Conall Carna :
“ Go, Feeaha, address Cucullin. Say
From me that he was noble, generous,

BOOK X

While he was bravely out before the hosts ;
And it were nobler now to hide himself
Than to flee thus before one man of them.
It is no greater shame to him to hide
Than 'tis to others who are hiding now."
Feeaha, therefore, went to address Cucullin.
Cucullin welcomed him. " Faithful to me
I deem that welcome," Feeaha replied ;
" But this time I have come to thee from Fergus.
He says that thou wast noble, generous,
While thou wast bravely out before the hosts ;
And it were nobler now to hide thyself
Than thus to flee before one man of them ;
For 'tis no greater shame to thee to hide
Than 'tis to others who are hiding now."

" Which man among you boasts ?" Cucullin asked.
" Nathcrantil, verily," said Feeaha.
" The feat which I performed upon his spits,"
Cucullin said, " should have debarred that boasting.
But do not Fergus and all chiefs in Ulster
Know that I ne'er do harm to charioteers
Or messengers or folk unarmed ? Not arms
Were with this man, but little spits of wood.
I will not wound him till he brings his arms.
Let him come down 'twixt Fauhan and the sea
To-morrow, armed ; and then, however early
He comes there, he will find me ready there ;
And, verily, I will not flee before him."

THE TÁIN

Feeaha straight returned unto the camp.
He told these words. It to Nathcrantil then
Seemed long until the light of day should come
Next day when he should go to attack Cucullin.

At earliest light of dawning-time next day
Cucullin rose after the watch of the night.
His anger came on him. In rapid anger
He flung his bratt around him, and observed not
The stone of rock which was beside him there;
So that he flung his bratt around the stone,
Plucking it from the earth; and it remained
Between his body and his bratt. He knew not
That he had plucked it, owing to that anger
Which was upon him then. Nathcrantil came.
His arms that day were carried on a wain,
So many were they. Then he saw Cucullin,
Who was transformed with ire and battle-rage.
He knew him not. "Art thou indeed Cucullin?"
He said. "And if I am?" Cucullin asked.
"Then," said Nathcrantil, "thou art more a warrior
Than thou wast yesterday. Nevertheless,
It would not be the head of a small lamb
That I would carry to the camp to be
My trophy; and I will not take the head
Of any beardless boy." "I am not he,"
Cucullin said; "go to him round the hill."
Cucullin came to Laeg. "O Laeg," he said,
"Pluck up thy fistfuls of this winter grass,

BOOK X

Which is brown-yellow, withered. Bind the grass
Around my chin that I may have my beard ;
He will not slay me while I lack it." Laeg
Plucked up the grass, and made the beard, and then
Cucullin met Nathcrantil round the hill.

" I think that is more fitting," said Nathcrantil,
Mocking, disdainful ; " but I now will fight thee.
Take the right way of fighting with me now."

" Instruct me in the way," Cucullin said.

" When I shall throw a cast," Nathcrantil answered,

" Elude it not ; but keep thy ground." Cucullin
Replied : " I vow that I will not elude it,
Except by ascending." Then Nathcrantil threw

A powerful cast. Cucullin leapt a leap
Into the air, ascending ; and the spear
Passed underneath him as he leapt. Nathcrantil
Cried angrily : " Thou workest ill, thou wildling,
Thus to elude my cast." Cucullin said :

" Elude my cast by ascending." Then he threw
A powerful cast on high, so that the spear
Struck on Nathcrantil from on high, and struck
The crown of his head, and pierced the bone of his
crown.

" Alas !" Nathcrantil said, " thou art indeed
The best war-champion which there is in Erin.
I in the camp have four and twenty sons.
I will go tell them now what hidden riches
I have ; and I will come to thee again,

THE TÁIN

That thou mayst take from me my head. I die
If once thy spear be taken from my head.”
“Good,” said Cucullin, “thou wilt come again.”
Nathcrantil went to the camp of the men of Erin.
Each one then came to meet him. “Where,” said each,
Is the head of the Ree-astartha? Hast thou slain him?”
“Wait, heroes,” said Nathcrantil, “I must speak
To my own sons, and then go back again
To fight Cucullin at the ford.” He came
Soon to the stream again. He cast his sword
Against Cucullin; and the sword broke in two
Against the stone of rock which was between
Cucullin’s body and his bratt; and then
Cucullin with his sword sprang at Nathcrantil,
And took from him his head to be a trophy
And war-memorial of this first combat
Which he had fought with a great battle-hero
Amidst the heroes of the men of Erin.

The men of Erin then deliberated
As to who should be sent from them the next
To attack Cucullin; and all said that Coor
Son of Daw-loath’ was he. For Coor was thus:
A rough and bitter hero, very surly;
And it was difficult to be with him
In eating or in sleeping. All averred
That should it be this Coor who should be slain,
That would remove from them a sore oppression;

BOOK X

Yet should it be Cucullin who should fall,
That would be better. Then Maev sent for Coor.
“Ye think my powers sure and wonderful!”
Said Coor. “A youth like that one is too tender
For such as I am. Had I known this thing,
I had not come; but I had found a gillie
Of equal age with him from ’midst my people,
To go against him at the ford.” “O Coor,”
Cormac Conlingish, then (the son of Conor),
Said to him, “it will be a marvel to us
If thine own strength avails to slay Cucullin.”
“Good, then,” said Coor, “since on myself ’tis laid,
Make ready to fare forth to-morrow morn
Early upon your road. ’Twill not delay me
For long to kill that little, young wild deer.
I will prepare a clear, free road before you.”

When the bright-lofty, fiery-blazing sun
Arose next morn above the mountain, Coor
Son of Daw-loath’ arose. He took with him
A loaded wain of war-gear and of weapons,
Wherewith to kill Cucullin. That same morn
Cucullin very early fell to playing
His various feats of skill which he had learnt
From Oo-aha, from Scawtha, and from Weefa
Far in the east. At rising-hour each morn
It was his wont to play each feat of them,
That so not one might ever go from him
Into oblivion and forgetfulness.

THE TÁIN

Coor for a third-part of the day remained
Behind the rampart of his shield, expecting
To kill Cucullin ; and Cucullin ceased not
The madness of his feats ; and he observed not
Coor who lurked there. 'Twas then Laeg said :

“ O Cucuc,
'Twere well to serve that man who is expecting
To kill thee here.” Cucullin then was playing
His apple-feat ; and the eight apples rose
And fell from hand to hand through the clear air,
Like flying bees on a bright summer's day.
He, with the apple in his hand, then made
A warrior-cast, which pierced Coor's shield, and pierced
His brow, and bore a portion of Coor's brains
Out through the rearward hollow of his nape.
So at that ford Coor found his end of life-time.

Fergus went up to speak with Maev and Al-yill.
“ Arrest your course ! ” he cried. “ Make your camp here
Till light of rising-time to-morrow morn.
Then ye must find some other champion. Coor
Son of Daw-loath' hath found his end of life-time.”

The Four Great Fifths of Erin rested then
A little to the westward of Drumenna,
And made their camp and their encampment there.

After that day, for very many days,
Even weeks of days, in combat with Cucullin
Each day a warrior fell. Of the distinguished

BOOK X

Men who fell so were Lath son of Daw-bro',
Srub Dawra son of Fedig, Bove and Cruthen,
Nathcorpa, Marc, Maellia and Boguina.

Howbeit, to tell the manner of the fall
Of every separate man of these were tedious.

After those weeks of days of daily combat,
On that lone lad who there defended Ulster—
On that Cucullin—there grew weariness,
And wearing-out of strength, and hard exhaustion,
By reason of the hardness of those combats
And their great number ; and he feared indeed
That he himself, through that great weariness,
Would fall in fight with some unwearied champion,
Some fresh, unwasted man from 'midst those hosts.

This was the time and hour wherein Cucullin
Said to his charioteer, even to Laeg :

“ Go from me, Laeg ; go unto yonder camp
Of the men of Erin ; bear interrogation
To those who have a bond with me, my brethren
In arms, my fellow-learners and co-pupils :
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
Faerbay the son of Baetan, and Faerbay
Son of Faerbend, and Bress the son of Ferb,
And Lewy son of Solmoy, and Faerdaet
A son of Daman. And bear, furthermore,
His own interrogation separately
To my own genuine foster-brother, Lewy

THE TÁIN

The son of Nōs the son of Alamac,
Who, when I was far distant, with regard
To Emer daughter of Forgall, held in honour
My honour. Bear to him my special blessing.
Ask him, that he may tell to thee what man
Will come to attack me at the ford to-morrow."

Laeg, at those words, went forth into the camp
Of the men of Erin ; and he took with him
Interrogation to the fellow-pupils
And comrades of Cucullin ; and he went
After that straight into the tent of Lewy
The son of Nōs ; and Lewy welcomed him.

" Truly, I think that thou art faithful," Laeg said.
" Faithful toward thee I am indeed," said Lewy.
" I come," said Laeg, " to address thee from Cucullin.
To thee especially and separately
He sent interrogation and his special
Blessing, that thou mayst tell to me what man
Will go to attack him at the ford to-morrow."

Lewy replied : " May the anathema
Of all his friendship and his comradeship
Be on the man who will go ! It is Cucullin's
Own fellow-learner, brother-in-arms, and comrade,
Faerbay son of Faerbend. A while ago
He was convoyed to the wide, royal tent
Of Maev and Al-yill. The maid Findabair
Was placed at his one hand. 'Tis she who brimmed
His drinking-horn. 'Tis she who gave a kiss

BOOK X

With every draught she poured. 'Tis she who set
Her own hands to his portion. Not for all
Does Maev intend that wine which was poured out
There for Faerbay ; for only fifty wains
Thereof were brought from Croohan." Laeg went back,
Grieved, heavy-headed, very sad, unjoyful,
Sighing. Cucullin saw him, and he said :
" 'Tis heavy-headed, very sad, unjoyful,
Sighing, that Laeg is as he comes. 'Tis truly
One of my comrades and my fellow-pupils
Who will come forth to fight with me to-morrow.
Good, my good Laeg," Cucullin said, " who comes
To attack me here to-morrow?" Laeg replied :
" May the sure malediction of his bond
And of his friendship and his comradeship
Be on the man who will come ! It is thy very
Own fellow-learner, brother-in-arms, and comrade,
Faerbay son of Faerbend. A while ago
He was convoyed to the wide, royal tent
Of Maev and Al-yill. The maid Findabair
Was placed at his one hand. 'Tis she who brimmed
His drinking-horn. 'Tis she who gave a kiss
With every draught she poured. 'Tis she who set
Her own hands to his portion. Not for all
Does Maev intend that wine which was poured out
There for Faerbay ; for only fifty wains
Thereof were brought from Croohan." " O good
Laeg,"

THE TAIN

Cucullin cried, "return again to Lewy.
Bid him come hither to this hill of Crannig,
Here to have speech with me." Lewy came there.
"Is it indeed Faerbay son of Faerbend,"
Cucullin said, "who will come forth to-morrow?"
"'Tis he indeed," said Lewy. "Alas! for that!"
Cucullin said, "I shall not be in life
After that combat and that meeting. Two
Of equal age we are, of equal deftness,
Two equal when we meet. And he is fresh,
Not having fought, while I am worn and wearied
By reason of the number of these combats,
And watching here alone before yon hosts.
O Lewy, greet Faerbay from me. Say this:
'Tis not true soldiership to come against me.
Bid him come down beneath this hill to-night
And speak with me himself." Lewy went back.
He gave Cucullin's words; yet, notwithstanding
Those words, Faerbay would not refuse the combat.
When, then, he thus would not refuse the combat,
Faerbay delayed not till the morn, but went
At meeting-time of day with night that night,
To address Cucullin, and to put away
His league and hissword-friendship with Cucullin.
And Feeaha the son of Conall Carna
Went with him to the glen. Cucullin there,
Meeting Faerbay, firmly appealed to him
By the great foster-mother and preceptress

BOOK X

Who had taught both of them, namely, by Scawtha,
Preceptress of the warriors of the east ;
And still Faerbay would not refuse that combat.
When, then, Faerbay would not refuse the combat,
Hot ire, fire-fleet, vehement, very sudden,
Laid hold upon Cucullin. " Then, Faerbay,"
He cried, " recant thy league and thy sword-friendship."
And he moved off from him in rage and anger.

As he was going, then, up the rough, dark hill,
Sharply he trod on a sharp holly-shoot,
Which pierced the sole of his foot, and bathed itself
Amidst his skin and blood and bones. He dragged it
Out from his sole, and dragged it from its roots,
And shouted to Faerbay : " Go not, Faerbay,
Till thou hast seen this find which I have found."
" Throw it," Faerbay said ; and Cucullin threw
Over his shoulder backward the sharp spike
Which had been bathed in the blood and flesh of his foot.
It was one thing to him whether it reached
Faerbay or reached him not ; and he looked not
Behind him once to know whether it reached.
That missile struck Faerbay in his hollow nape,
And issued 'twixt his lips to the ground. Whereat,
Feeaha son of Conall Carna shouted—
" Mah thra an faughard " (Good is the cast indeed).
He thought it wonderful that one should slay
A champion with a little holly-spine.
Faerbay son of Faerbend died there that eve

THE TÁIN

Within that glen beside the height of Crannig.

Something was heard. Fergus it was, who sang
With hatred and great scorn and joyfulness :

“Truly, Faerbay, foolish thy journey was,
Unto this glen where now thy grave shall be.
Death and last end have reached thee in this place,
Where thou didst put from thee thy friendship-vow.
And Faughard now (The Cast) shall be the name
On Crannig, yonder high, rough-sided hill,
Whence that good cast of the holly-shaft was made.
And Glen Faerbay shall be the undying name
On thy death-glen, where now thou liest, Faerbay.”

At morn Cucullin sent his charioteer,
Laeg son of Ree-angowra, unto Lewy,
That he might ask whether Faerbay still lived,
And whether he was coming to that combat,
Which he had vowed to fight. Then Lewy said :
“A blessing on the hand which served that service !
Faerbay fell dying down in yon glen last night.”

When Laeg had fared to his own lord again,
Lewy went up to the tent of Maev and Al-yill.
“A man of you to go against that other !”
He cried ; then went to his own tent again.

Then Maev devised a plan. “Listen, O Al-yill,”
She said; “upon this Táin with yonder Lewy
The son of Nōs the son of Alamac
There is a brother. He is a young youth,

BOOK X

Unwise, weak, childish, vain, puffed, insolent.
We will caress him, till, enticed by us,
He shall go down to the ford to fight Cucullin.
He will be slain; whereon that hero, Lewy
The son of Nōs the son of Alamac,
Despite his foster-friendship for Cucullin,
Will be compelled by honour to go down
And slay Cucullin to avenge that brother.
Lewy, we think, indeed, can overcome him."

"The plan is good," said Al-yill. That same night
That youth they spoke of, namely, Laeriny
The son of Nōs the son of Alamac
Was summoned to their tent. His satisfaction
And glorying in that honour which Maev showed him
Were very great. The maiden Findabair
Was placed at his one side. 'Twas she who brimmed
His drinking-horn. 'Twas she who gave a kiss
With every draught she poured. 'Twas she who set
Her own hands to his food. Maev said to him:
"We give thee this, thou hero Laeriny:
It is the last of the wine we brought from Croohan."
"What art thou saying there, O Maev?" said Al-yill,
Speaking as though he knew not Laeriny.
"I am addressing that man there," said Maev.
"Who is the man?" said Al-yill. Maev replied
To Al-yill, speaking so that Laeriny
Should hear the words she said: "Often, O Al-yill,
Thou hast bestowed thy care on things unfit.

THE TÁIN

'Tis fit that thou shouldst now bestow thy care
On yonder couple who have greater beauty
And worthiness and pride than any couple
On any road in Erin,—Findabair,
I mean, and Laeriny.” “Yea,” Al-yill said,
“I see them so. That union would be fitting.
I will not hinder it, if he but bring
Here to the camp the head of the Ree-astarth.”

It was then, in his joy, that Laeriny
Gave to himself a bending and a shaking,
So that he broke the seams of the quilted cushion
Which was beneath him ; and the grassy green
Was sprinkled with its feathers. It to him
Seemed that it would be easy to o’ercome
The Ree-astarth, and to take his head,
And bring that head to Al-yill. It to him
Seemed long until the light of day should come,
When he should go to combat with Cucullin.

Lewy went down that night to address Cucullin.
They met in Glen Faerbay. Each one of them
Welcomed the other. “I have come,” said Lewy,
“To tell thee of my brother, Laeriny,
Who comes to meet thee at the ford to-morrow.
He is a youth, young and unwise and weak
And insolent and vain. And for this reason
It is that Maev has put him to this combat :—
That when thou shalt have slain him, I may go
To avenge my brother. I will never go

BOOK X

Until the Breast of Doom, because he goes
In violation of my truth and honour.
Nevertheless, because of the great friendship
Between thyself and me, my friend Cucullin,
Slay not my brother." In the early morn,
At the red-glorious light of rising-time,
Laeriny fared unto the battle-ford,
To meet Cucullin. To the battle-heroes
And warriors of that camp it seemed unworthy
To go to watch that combat : only women
And lads and maidens went. Cucullin came
Then to the ford : to him it seemed unworthy
To bring his weapons. He met Laeriny.
He took from Laeriny his battle-weapons
Out of his hands, as one would take play-weapons
Out of the hands of a young child. He rubbed
And bruised him 'twixt his own hands, then, and shook
him,

And hurled him from the mid-part of the ford
To the green bank ; and he was borne away
Fainting and bruised up to the door of the tent
Of his brother Lewy. He was the only man
Who had retained his life after a combat
Fought with Cucullin on that Táin ; and never
From that day till his death was Laeriny
Without the grief of illness, or without
Trouble of chest, or without being borne
On horseback in his sickness and his pain.

THE TÁIN

When Maeu was told of that escape, annoyance
Grew in her, for that her keen plan had failed ;
And her mind tortured her because not yet
Had she found one to overthrow Cucullin.

That night she sent for all the kings and princes
Who were upon that hosting ; and she said :
“ Whom shall we now send forth to assail this youth ?
There is none other of his friends and comrades
Who will consent to violate his bond.”
Whereat all said : “ Except his friends and comrades,
Throughout the expanse of Erin of wide compass
We know of none able for that hard combat,
Except two men alone ; and, of these, one
Is Cooroi son of Dawra, who hath reddened
His sword in distant lands ; and one is Lōk
The son of Emonis, who years ago
Was taught in Scawtha’s land, and who, even like
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
Owns a tough conganess, a horn-skin armour,
The gift of Scawtha ere he left her land ;
And neither sword nor spear will pierce that armour.”

Now there was present in the tent a man
Of Cooroi’s folk from the far-off south-west,
Who said : “ Great Cooroi will not come. To him,
Truly, it seems enough to have sent this number
Of his own household folk to help the hosting.”

After that conference, then, and that prime-council,
Maeu sent for Lōk the son of Emonis—

For Lök the Great—who like Cucullin himself
 Had been trained up to arms far in the east.
 Lök came; and Maev besought him, promising
 Land on Moy Wee equal to Moy Mweerhevna,
 An outfit for twelve men of each right hue,
 A chariot costing seven powerful bondmaids,
 And Findabair to be his own one wife.

And he esteemed it mean and unbecoming
 To combat with a gillie. “O Maev!” he said,
 “I will not go for combat with that youth,
 Who is tender, young, and without any beard.
 But I have one to meet him, that is, Long
 The son of Emonis, my brother. Give
 The same rewards to Long. He shall go forth
 To meet Cucullin at the ford.” Maev sent,
 Therefore, for Long the son of Emonis,
 And offered the same gifts and same rewards.
 He went next day down to the ford of combat.
 Cucullin slew him there; and his folk carried
 His body back to his great brother, Lök.

Then Maev incited Lök to avenge his brother.
 Lök hesitated still, and was reluctant;
 For he esteemed it mean and unbecoming
 To combat with a gillie. “O Maev,” he said,
 “I may not make that combat till the end
 Of seven days from this day.” “’Tis not fitting,”
 Maev said, “that we should be without attacking
 The hound for all that space. Therefore, each night,

THE TÁIN

While we are waiting for thy conquering combat,
We will send forth a party of night-hunters
To hunt Cucullin and endanger him ;
And so we may, perhaps, arrest this peril."

That, then, was done. A party of night-hunters
Went forth from Maev each night to hunt Cucullin ;
But every night Cucullin slew those hunters.
These were their names : seven Oo-arguses,
Ten Delbaes, seven Conalls, seven Keltars,
Eight Feeacs, seven Anguses, ten Al-yills.
Each of the seven nights a troop was slain.

At the end of the seven nights Maev urgently,
With strong persuasions and hard settings-on,
Again incited Lök to avenge his brother.
She said : " O Lök, great son of Emonis,
Truly thou art a targe for mockery
Unto that man who slew thy brother, and still,
By thee unchecked and unopposed, inflicts
Great harm upon our hosts ! We deem it certain
That a young, little wildling such as he
Could not withstand the ardour and the power
Of a proved hero like thyself. And yet,
Because by the same warlike nurse ye both
Were taught and trained, it is no shame to thee
To meet him and thereby to avenge thy brother."

Then Lök the Great the son of Emonis,
Incited so, consented. He went down
To meet Cucullin and to avenge his brother.

BOOK X

“Come to the upper ford,” said Lōk, “Not here
In this polluted ford where Long has fallen
Will we decide our combat and contention.”
They met in the upper ford; and then began
Between Cucullin son of Sooaltim,
And Lōk the Great the son of Emonis,
Their powerful combat and their strong contention;
And all who watched that combat and contention
Were filled with dread and horror and much fear.

This was the hour and this the point of time
When the More-reega daughter of Ernmas came,
Even as she had sworn that she would come
What time Cucullin should engage a foe
Commensurate with himself in warlike skill.
Forth from the green-grassed Shee-mound, where she
dwelt,

She came; and first in form of a lithe eel
Swam down the stream, and round Cucullin’s feet
Wound a close, triple coil. Straightway he fell;
And though with speed, like to the swallow’s speed
Above a pool on a hot summer’s day,
He rose and struck the eel and brake her ribs
Within her, so that she released her hold—
Yet in that point of time wherein he had lain
Prone in the stream, great Lōk had dealt a blow,
Gashing Cucullin’s side; and all the stream
Was reddened with his blood. Again she came,
In semblance of a starved bitch-wolf she came,

THE TÁIN

Chasing the startled cattle towards the ford,
To overwhelm him there. Cucullin aimed
A stone and struck her eye, and turned the cattle
Hillward ; nor had his adversary time
To wound him newly. But again once more
The bitter-vengeful, dread More-reega came,
And, shaped like a red hornless heifer, led
One hundred red and hornless heifers down
To overwhelm Cucullin. Swift he aimed
A stone, and struck one of her hindward legs ;
And it brake under her ; and then the Bive
Vanished. But while Cucullin had turned round
To cast the stone, great Lōk had dealt a blow
And gashed Cucullin's second side ; and all
The stream was reddened with his flowing blood.

This was the hour and this the moment of time
Wherein Cucullin called to his charioteer,
Namely, to Laeg the son of Ree-angowra,
To send him the Gae Bulg. 'Twas the first time
He e'er had called for it ; and 'twas because
Of that tough conganess, the hornskin armour,
Which great Lōk wore when fighting with a man,
That he now called for that dread spear of Scawtha.
And thus, indeed, was that dread spear of Scawtha :
It would be floated down the stream, and caught
And cast by the toes of the foot : a one-spear wound
It made on entering a man ; but thirty
Sharp-wounding heads it had, which would spread out

BOOK X

Within the man. The spear was floated down
Swiftly by Laeg the son of Ree-angowra.
Cucullin caught it with the toes of his foot,
And cast it; and it pierced the conganess,
And pierced Lōk's heart within his breast. Lōk cried :
“ I ask one warrior-boon from thee, Cucullin.”
“ What boon ? ” Cucullin said. “ 'Tis no request
For mercy or for safety,” Lōk said : “ merely
Retreat from me one backward pace, that now
It may be forward, eastward, that I fall,
Not backward, westward, toward the men of Erin ;
And so no man of them will say of me
That it was in retreat and flight and rout
That I fell by thee here ; for I now fall
By the Gae Bulg.” “ I will indeed retreat,”
Cucullin said, “ for warrior-like the boon is
Which thou dost ask.” And he retreated then
One backward pace, and Lōk the Great fell forward
Upon his face there in that upper ford ;
And the dark mists of death encompassed him.

Since that same hour wherein Lōk fell, Ath Tray,
“ Ford of the Foot,” that is, “ the Foot's Retreat,”
Has been the name upon that ford of combat,
In which Lōk fell, in low Cann Teera More.

That day a dark dejection visited
Cucullin, for that he was all alone
Defending Ulster ; and extreme fatigue,

THE TÁIN

And the sharp anguish of those bleeding wounds
Oppressed his spirit ; and he said to Laeg :

“ Arise from me, strong Laeg of the hosts : complain
For me in very-red Avvin. Say for me
That I am wearied each day in the battle,
And now am wounded and bathed o’er with blood.
A wound is in my right side ; and a wound
Is in my left side. Say to kindly Conor
That the dear son of Dectora has changed
His form indeed, being wearied, wounded, now.
Though he should come to me, ’twere not too soon.
I am alone before the flocks and herds.
I am in evil : I am not in good.
I am alone on many fords, and now
Very rough wounding has befallen me.
No friend arrives to fight for me or help me,
Except the charioteer of my one chariot.
Were but a few to arrive, we still might fight.
There is not music in one horn alone ;
But from a number of horns of differing sound
You get sweet music. This is an old word :
You get no flaming from one single stick ;
But two or three will cause the torch to flame.
The portion for a host cannot be seethed
On one fork only. I am here alone
Fronting Maev’s hosts down at Cann Teera More.
Lōk son of Emonis has torn my loins.
The bitter-vengeful Bive came in three shapes.

BOOK X

Lōk son of Emonis wounded my liver.
Laeg sent the spear of Scawtha down the stream.
Its course was quick. I hurled the dreadful spear,
Whereby fell Lōk the son of Emonis.
What ails the Ultonians that they give not battle
To Al-yill and the daughter of Yōhee Fayla ?
Seeing that I am now in pain, disabled,
Wounded, and bathed with blood, say unto them,
That they must now come after their own Táin.
The sons of Mahga have borne off their kine,
And made division of the kine amongst them.
Joyful the Bive before the hosts of Al-yill !
Mournful the cries of woe on Moy Mweerhevna !
Let Conor now come forth with his rangéd hosts.
Rise, now, O Laeg : go unto very-red Avvin."

Then Laeg arose ; but first he had gathered moss
And healing herbs, and made soft pads and wisps,
And dressed Cucullin's wounds, staunching the blood.
Rising, he left his lord ; and with all speed
He fared to sword-red Avvin. But his words
Were as a warning to the dead. Not yet
Might the Ultonians rise from their long Kesh ;
And Laeg turned back to his own lord again.

Before good Laeg returned, and while Cucullin
Lay all alone in the deep-hiding woods,
The great More-reega daughter of Ernmas came,

THE TÁIN

Appearing like some agéd wrinkled crone
Milking her cow. And this was why she came :—
That she might win her healing from Cucullin.
For so it was, he having wounded her,
Only through him might she again be whole.

And the cow had three teats. Cucullin thirsted,
And begged one draught of milk to assuage his thirst.
She gave him all the milking of one teat.
He drank it, and cried out in thankfulness :
“ Health to the giver !” And the Great Queen’s eye
Thereby was healed. Again he begged a draught :
Again she gave the milking of one teat ;
And he cried : “ Joy and health unto the giver !”
And a third time he begged of her a draught,
She gave the yield of the third teat ; and then
Cucullin cried : “ The blessings of all beings,
Of gods and no-gods—be upon thy head,
O woman who hast succoured me !” Thereby
Was the More-reega healed of all her wounds.
The crone and cow had vanished ; and Cucullin,
Gazing bewildered, saw one carrion-bird,
Red-mouthed, upon the bough beside him there,
Who spake and said : “ Remember thy great boast,
That thou wouldst never heal me of my wounds !”
And then Cucullin knew her ; and in wrath
He answered : “ Had I known that it was thou,
Thou most abhorréd and detested Queen,
Thou drinker of men’s blood, grinder of bones,

Wild shrieker-out for pale-lipped carcasses,
 Dispenser of confusion, famine, woe,
 I ne'er had healed thee,—nay though I had died
 Of thirst and want, I had not healed thy wounds.”

Then the More-reega vanished and went back
 To the far, hollow Shee-mound where she dwelt.

On Maev the daughter of Yōhee Fayla now
 Was joyfulness and triumph, seeing that now
 Cucullin, wounded, was laid low. She now,
 Taking a third part of her hosts, fared north
 To waste the lands of Crithny and of Ulster,
 E'en as she swore to waste them. She fared north
 Along the road of Meedlougher. She put
 A cloud of red-brown fire, heavy, widespread,
 Above the lands of Ulster and of Crithny ;
 And, for the folk of Ulster and of Crithny,
 There was no ill she did not do to them
 With liveliness. She took their sons and wives,
 Their steeds and flocks of mares, their troops of kine,
 Their herds of every sort of grazing kine,
 Their raiment, and bright silver and bright gold.
 And she not only burned unto the grass
 Their strongly timbered houses, wide and high ;
 But their high, fortified green mounds, whereon
 Those houses were, she swiftly levelled down,
 So that their glens and trenches were filled up
 After her track. “ When Conor son of Fahtna

THE TÁIN

Hears of our deeds," Maev said, "they unto him
Will cause heart-sickness, waste of flesh, cheek-
whitening,

So that no meat will please him, and no quiet,
Sweet sleep will go to him ; but he will be
Tortured in mind, dark-spirited."

Howbeit,

Maev on that expedition dared not go
To Avvin Maha, or to any doon
Where Ulster warriors lay, pained by their Kesh,
The curse of Maha ; for if one should wound
A warrior in that Kesh, that Kesh would leap
Straight to that wounder. Therefore, she fared north
Through Dalriada to the Northern Sea,
To ever-bright Dunseverick, where dwelt
Findmore the Great, the warrior-wife of Keltar
The son of Oo-hider. Before the door
Of ever-bright Dunseverick she gave
Fierce battle to Findmore, and slew Findmore
The wife of Keltar ; and she pillaged all
That famous doon ; and she took fifty women
Out of that doon as captives. Then she turned
Southward toward Cooley once again. Each ford
Which Maev upon that expedition passed
Was thenceforth called Ath Vaeva. Each night-stead
Whereon her tent was pitched at night was thenceforth
Called Poopal Vaeva. Each place where she set
Her horse-switch, when she took her rest, was thenceforth

Called Billi Vaeva. So she came again
Southward to Al-yill ; and they met at Faughard.

While Maev upon that vigorous expedition
Was spoiling so all Ulster and all Crithny
Unhindered, Laeg the son of Ree-angowra
Had come again from sword-red Avvin Maha
Unto his lord, telling him that his message
Had been but as a message to the dead.

Cucullin then from his low sick-man's bed
Had risen, though feeble ; and his wounds were dressed
Freshly with wisps and moss ; and he went forth
Again to fend his land, the land of Cooley.
Then he saw something : he saw sixty men
Of Maev's and Al-yill's household ; and a bratt
Folded round each ; and the dark Donn of Cooley—
With his two eyes burning like crooan-red,
And gold on his high horns, and with fifty heifers
Of his own heifers—running and being driven
Before the men, after his being taken
In Glen Samaska in Slieve Gullion. Then
Cucullin went to them. “What is thy name ?”
He said to their chief man, who answered him :
“One who nor fears nor loves thee, namely Boi
The son of Bawn, of the especial folk
Of Al-yill and of Maev.” “This spear at Boi !”
Cucullin said ; and hurled at him the spear,
Which pierced the shield above his breast, and pierced
The heart within his breast, so that Boi fell.

THE TÁIN

Howbeit, in the little space of time
Wherein Cucullin and Boi son of Bawn
Exchanged their words and spears, the Donn of Cooley
With skill and swiftness was brought off from them,
And driven to the camp and the encampment
Of Maev and Al-yill and the men of Erin ;
So that, indeed, that driving of the bull,
The Donn of Cooley, was the worst dishonour
And baffling and befooling, that was ever
Put on Cucullin on that Táin and hosting.

Then Maev and Al-yill and the hosts of Erin,
Having the bull, fared south ; and at the place,
Since called the Bressla More on Moy Mweerhevna,
They made their camp at night, having first sent
Their mighty prey in captives and in kine,
And the great bull, the wondrous Donn of Cooley,
Yet further south, even to Cleer Bo Ulla,
For shelter and for safety. And Cucullin
Against the high, green grave-hill in the Larguey,
Exceeding near to the great hosts of Erin,
Took up his post ; and his own charioteer,
Laeg son of Ree-angowra, kindled there
His fire at eve that night. Cucullin, gazing
Out from himself, perceived the fiery shining
Of their clean-golden lance-heads and war-weapons
Above the heads of the Four Fifths of Erin
At falling of the eve that night. He, seeing

BOOK X

Thus the great number of his enemies
And the huge number of his foemen—knowing
Too that his wounds were yet unhealed and yet
He was but weak and feeble—was o'erborne
By rage of anger. He took up his sword,
And his two spears and shield ; and shook his shield,
And brandished his two spears, and whirled his sword.
And from his throat he gave his hero-cry,
So that the Bannanahs and Boccanahs,
And the Glen-folk and Spirits of the Air,
Answered him for the horror of that cry,
Which thus he raised above him. And the Nowin,
That is to say, the Bive, went through the hosts,
So that the Four Great Fifths of Erin fell
To weapon-trembling ; and one hundred warriors
Of the good warriors of the men of Erin
Died of heart-horror 'midst of their camp that night.

BOOK XI

BOOK XI

Now of the Bressla More, red, terrible,
Cucullin's Bressla More on Moy Mweerhevna,
We next must tell. While Laeg was on that grave-hill
He perceived somewhat : he perceived a man,
Out of the north-east quarter, slanting-wise
Crossing the wide camp of the men of Erin
In a direct line towards him. "Cucucawn,"
Said Laeg, "there is a man approaching us."
"What kind of man?" Cucullin asked. Laeg
answered :

"He is a man noble and fair and tall,
Whose face shines glorious as the glorious sun
Shines 'mid high clouds on a dry summer's day.
His wide-spread, crispéd, curling hair is yellow
Like bright bog-flags in flower. He wears a bratt
Of bright grass-green, caught by a clasp of silver
Above his breast ; and next his bird-white skin
He has a layna made from kingly sról,
Richly inwoven with red threads of gold,
And falling in rich folds down to his knees.
A black shield with a rim of hard findrinny
He bears. He bears a tall five-headed spear ;
And a forked javelin is beside it. Wonderful,

THE TÁIN

Truly, the deeds are, and the feats of art,
Which he displays as he comes through that camp;
Yet in the camp no one salutes or greets him,
And he himself greets no one. 'Tis as though
Throughout that camp of the Four Fifths of Erin
No man could see him." "That is true, O Laeg,"
Cucullin answered; "no man there can see him;
For that is one of my own helping friends
From a Shee-mound of Erin, who comes there
To pity me and comfort me. They know
The hardships and oppression I am in,
Over against the Four Great Fifths of Erin
Now on this Táin."

That warrior reached the grave-hill
Where then Cucullin was; and he began
To comfort and to pity him. He said:
"Thou hast been very manly, O Cucullin."
"It was not much," Cucullin said. The warrior
Said: "I will help thee now, thou little son."
"Who in all Erin art thou?" asked Cucullin.
Whereat that warrior from the Shee replied:
"I am long-handed Loo the son of Ethlenn,
Who in old days—hundreds of years of days
Before this day wherein I speak to thee—
Led the bright, greatly skilled Dae Danann hosts
To that dread battle of the North Moy Twirra,
Wherein the Fomorian hosts were whelmed and slain.
Yea, I am he who slew the one-eyed Bahlor,

And afterwards reigned many years in Tara
 Above the Dae Danann host. And, little son,
 'Tis I who was thy father from the Shee,
 Sooaltim not being thy father."

"Warrior,"

Cucullin said, "'twere well to heal these wounds."
 "Sleep, sleep a little now, thou brave Cucullin,"
 The warrior said; "let thy deep swoon of sleep
 Be o'er thee on this grave-hill in the Larguey,
 Till the far end of three days and three nights;
 And I myself will watch against yon hosts."

The warrior then above Cucullin sang
 His deep, low, rich faer-dord, whereat deep sleep
 Came on Cucullin and he slept. And then
 That warrior from the Shee threw healing herbs
 And roots from out the Shee, and leaves of curing,
 And powerful incantations of quick curing,
 On the sore wounds and hurts which hurt that youth,—
 So that he in his sleep grew whole again
 Without perceiving it or knowing it.
 In his deep, gentle swoon of sleep Cucullin
 Slept so upon the grave-hill in the Larguey
 Till the far end of three days and three nights.

That was the time when the young lads of Ulster,
 Who played upon the playing-green of Avvin,
 Sons of the kings and chiefs of noble Ulster,
 Took counsel with each other. "It is grievous,

THE TÁIN

Indeed," they said, " that thus our friend, Cucullin,
Should be alone and without any help."

Whereon Folloon the son of Conor questioned
And said: " A question : Shall I have a band
To travel south and help your friend, Cucullin ?"

And the young lads of Ulster answered him :
" We do not wish to live without going south
To aid Cucullin." Then thrice fifty lads,
Being a third of all the lads of Ulster,
Made of themselves a band around Folloon
The son of Conor ; and they travelled south
O'er the hill-region of Slieve Foo-id, and came
Down on the level plain, on Moy Mweerhevna.

Al-yill perceived that brightly varied band
Far out upon the plain. " That band," said he,
" Is a fresh troop of the young Ulster children,
Who have come south from sword-red Avvin Maha,
To help Cucullin. Let a troop go out
Without Cucullin's knowledge, and destroy them ;
For if they meet him, ye will not resist them."

A troop went out ; but the young lads avoided
That troop which went ; and they drew nigh the hosts.
With their thrice fifty childish playing-clubs
They thrice attacked the hosts ; and by their hands
Thrice their own number fell, ere, in the end,
The little lads were overpowered and slain.
Folloon the son of Conor had declared
That he would ne'er return again to Avvin

Till he should take with him the head of Al-yill,
 Together with the glorious mind of gold
 Which Al-yill wore in battle. Difficult
 That was for him ; for the two sons of Boi
 The son of Bawn, who were defending Al-yill,
 Attacked him ; and by them he swiftly fell.

Cucullin on the grave-hill in the Larguey
 Slept his deep swoon of slumber and of sleep
 Till the far end of three days and three nights.
 That warrior from the Shee looked at his wounds
 Then, and perceived that they were clean ; and then
 He sang his aely of awakening o'er him.
 "Awake," he sang, "O little battle-hound ;
 Awake, and do thy feats of war and battle.
 Thy friend from out the Shee hath healed thy wounds.
 Awake, and mount once more thy battle-chariot.
 Rise, little son ! Rise, slaughtering Hound of Ulster !"

Cucullin rose then out of that deep sleep,
 And passed his hand across his face, and flushed
 Rosy from crown to ground ; and there was strength
 And freshness in his spirit, even as though
 He were about to travel to a feast,
 Or to a festival of Ulster women,
 Or to an ale-stead, or to a festival
 Amidst the great prime-festivals of Erin.

"How long have I remained in this deep sleep,
 O warrior ?" said Cucullin ; and the warrior

THE TÁIN

Replied: "Three days and nights." "Alas for that!"
Cucullin said. "Why so?" that warrior asked.

"Because," Cucullin said, "those hosts have been
For all that space without attack or harm."

"It is not so, indeed," that warrior said.

"Who came to harm them, then?" Cucullin asked him.
Whereat that warrior from the Shee replied:

"The little lads came from the north, from Avvin—
Thrice fifty lads, sons of the kings of Ulster—
Commanded by Folloon the son of Conor.

With their thrice fifty childish playing-clubs
They thrice attacked the hosts, whilst thou wast here
In thy deep swoon of slumber and of sleep;
And by their hands thrice their own number fell,
Ere they themselves were overpowered and slain.
Folloon the son of Conor had declared
That he would ne'er return again to Avvin
Till he should take with him the head of Al-yill,
Together with the glorious mind of gold
Which Al-yill wears in battle. Difficult
That was indeed for him; and he was slain."

Cucullin heard those words; and, when he heard
them

So from that warrior, there broke from him
A sharp, sad, woeful, heavy, passionate cry.
"Alas," he said, "that then my battle-strength
Was not upon me! Had my battle-strength
Been then upon me, the young lads from Avvin

BOOK XI

Had not thus fallen as now they have fallen : Folloon
The son of Conor had not fallen as now
He has fallen.” “Be thou comforted, O son,”
The warrior said to him ; “it is no stain
And no reproach upon thy hero-valour :
It is no stain upon thy honour.” “Warrior,”
Cucullin said, “abide with us to-night,
That we together may avenge our lads
On yon great hosts.” The warrior, smiling, answered:
“I will not so ; because, however great
The feats of valour and the deeds of arms
A man might do beside thee, not on him
Would be the fame and the renown for them,
But only on thee. Therefore, I will not tarry
Beside thee here. Howbeit, on this occasion,
Fear not, but fare alone, thou little son ;
And alone do thy deeds on yonder hosts.
There shall be power upon thee from the Shee
To-night. To-night thy foes and enemies
Shall have no power above thy life. Take now
This Covering of Concealment which was sent thee
By the dark king o’er the far Land of Sorca,
By Manannawn the son of Lear.” The warrior
Bestowed that Covering on Cucullin, and then
He went from him, and was not seen.

Cucullin

Called to his charioteer, even to Laeg :
“And the scythed chariot now, O Soul, O Laeg !

THE TÁIN

If thou hast now its gear, equip it swiftly,
That we may ride to-night to avenge our lads,
Our sons of kings from Avvin." Laeg replied :
" I have the chariot, and I have its gear.
I can equip it swiftly."

It was then,
Therefore, that that war-hero and that fighter,
And that constructor of a Bive's Ring-fence,
Put on his battle-dress of war and battle.

Of that good battle-dress of war and battle
Which he put on, then, were his seven and twenty
Waxed, board-smooth laynas, which with cords and
ropes

Next his white skin were wont to be tied fast,
So that his prudence might not go from him
When his war-fury should rise up. He put
These round him then ; and over these he put
His tough war-hero's belt of hard, tanned skin,
Made from the shoulders of the seven skins
Of seven young bulls. It from the slenderness
Of his mid-sides extended to the thickness
Beneath his arm-pits. It was wont to be
Around him so, to cast back spears and points
And spikes and darts and spits ; they would be cast
Back from that belt as if they had struck on horn
Or rock or stone. Next, he put round himself,
About his soft and tender middle-parts,
His membranous filmy foo-a-vrög of sröl

Bordered with gold. And over that he put
 His brown and well-smoothed foo-a-vrōg of leather,
 Made from the shoulders of the four hard skins
 Of four young bulls to place on the outside
 Of that soft filmy foo-a-vrōg of srōl.

And then it was, indeed, that that war-hero,
 That battle-champion of the valorous Gael,
 Took up his battle-arms of war and battle,
 Of conflict and of combat. Of those arms
 Were his eight little swords, with his great sword,
 Which was bright-faced, bone-hilted. Of those arms
 Were his eight little spears, with his great spear,
 Which was five-headed, deedful. Of those arms
 Were his eight little darts, with his great dart,
 His great Dael Clish, fierce, dreadful. Of those arms
 Were his eight shields for feats, with his curved shield
 Black-red, wherein a boar meant for display
 Could lie, so great it was ; and whose sharp edge,
 All round, would cut a hair against a stream,
 So sharply was it sharpened. Of those arms
 Was his high, noble, glorious, crested cathbarr
 Of battle and of combat and of conflict,
 Out of each angle of the which a cry
 Would be cried forth, like to the battle-cry
 Of one hundred warriors ; for the Bannanahs
 And Boccanahs and Demons of the Air
 And the Glen-folk were wont to cry before it,
 Above it, and around it, every time

THE TÁIN

That the blown blood of warriors and of heroes
Would shower swift past it on the airs and wind.

Lastly, that fighter and that valour-champion
Put on the wondrous Covering of Concealment,
Druidic, strange, which had been sent to him
By far-off Manannawn the son of Lear.

That was the hour and that the moment of time,
When, while he thought of the dead lads from Avvin,
There came upon Cucullin his contortion
And his war-writhing, till there was made from him
A man misshapen, many-shaped, strange, awful,
Dreadful, unheard-of. In that battle-writhing
All his flesh trembled and was troubled round him,
Till every limb and every joint of him
Quivered, e'en like a tree against a stream,
Or like a reed against a stream. Hard writhing
Engaged his limbs: his calves and hindward parts
Twisted to frontward: his two knees and feet
Writhed backward. Hideous writhing and contortion
Spread o'er his visage. He engulfed one eye
Within his head: its fellow-eye broke out
Bare, horrible, upon his cheek. His lips
Twisted themselves strangely and terribly.
Something was heard: it was the half-loud beating
Of his stirred heart against the ribs of his side,
Like the thick growling of a slaughter-hound
Above his food, or like a Scythian lion
Ranging 'mid bears. Then there were seen above him

BOOK XI

Thick showers of fiery sparks in clouds and airs
Over his head, arising from the seething
Of truly rough, fierce rage which raged within him.
His hair rose up and twisted o'er his head,
Stiff, like red branches of a stiff-branched thorn,
Which close some gap in some high earthen rampart :
E'en had a kingly apple-tree beneath
Its kingly fruit been shaken around his head,
Scarcely an apple of them would have fallen
To groundward past those hairs ; but on each hair
An apple would have lodged, so strong the writhing
And anger-stiffening of each hair of them.
Last there arose from out the crown of his head
A shaft of blood, dark, upright, straight, as tall
And high and thick and steady as the mast
Of some prime, kingly vessel ; till above him
A dark druidic mist was made of it,
Like the smoke-pall above a royal hostel,
What time a king is coming for his guesting
At eve in winter.

When that hard contortion
Wherewith Cucullin so had been contorted
Had past, that Head-of-Valour of the Gael,
The Battle-champion of all Ulster, leapt
On his scythed battle-chariot. For Laeg
Meanwhile had dressed himself and dressed the chariot
He had put on his own light hunting-dress,
Whereof was his soft innar made from deer-skin,

THE TÁIN

Airy and light, so that it hindered not
The movements of his hands : whereof was also
His noble, glorious, crested, four-ridged cathbarr,
Which was adorned with many hues and forms,
And reached to his mid-shoulder, much enhancing
The glory of his look : whereof was also
His gleaming guipny of red-yellow gold—
His curved thin band of anvil-beaten gold—
Which with his hand he placed around his brow
To be a token of his charioteering,
Whereby all men might know him from his lord.

When Laeg had dressed himself, he on the steeds,
Namely, the Leeha Maha and Doo Sanglenn,
Had thrown their covering-armour, which was studded
From end to end with little points and lances
And spikes and darts. And, lastly, he had thrown
Upon those steeds a Spell and Incantation
Of Covering, which that warrior from the Shee
Had taught to him that day, so that that night
Within that camp of the Four Fifths of Erin
No man might clearly see them on their course.

And so it was indeed that that war-champion,
That high, proud Head-of-Valour of the Gael,
The Battle-champion of all Ulster, leapt
On his scythed battle-chariot—with its ends
And boundaries of iron, with its edges
Cutting and thin, with its hard spikes and spikelets,
With its hard, lacerating hooks and hooklets,

BOOK XI

With its sharp nails and spits and spikes and prongs,
Which were upon its frame-parts and its thongs,
And on each pole and hind-shaft. And he threw
Out from him then before his enemies
His noise-feats of one hundred and two hundred,
Three hundred and four hundred ; and he stood
At the five hundred ; and he went so far,
Because it did not seem too much to him
That all that number should be slain by him
In his first onset and first battle-leaping
Against the men of the Four Fifths of Erin,
In vengeance for the lads. In this array,
Then, he rode forth against his enemies ;
And with his chariot next he made a circuit
Around the men of the Four Fifths of Erin,
Without, outside. He put a ponderous course
On to his chariot ; and the iron wheels
Ploughed through the ground, so that it was enough
To form a doon—the way the iron wheels
Ploughed through the ground ; for there arose alike
The sods and pillar-stones and rocks and flags
And the fine sand and gravel of the earth,
Till they were height for height with the iron wheels
Above, beside them. It was for this reason
That he thus put that ponderous Bive's-circuit
Around the men of the Four Fifths of Erin
Without, outside :—so that they might not scatter
And might not flee from him, until by slaughter

THE TÁIN

He should avenge the lads on them. He came
So, 'midst the battle; and he felled great fences
Of bodies of his foemen in a circuit
And a wide circle round about the hosts
Without, outside. He made a foeman's onset
Upon his foemen, so that sole to sole
And neck to neck they fell. Three times he so
Rode round the hosts, so that he left around them
A sixfold slaughter-fence, in a great circuit
All round that doon of the Four Fifths of Erin;
For they fell, soles of three to necks of three,
All round that doon of the Four Fifths of Erin.
And hence the Shessra of the Bressla More
(The Sixfold Slaughter of the Great Destruction)
Was the name given to that dreadful slaughter
Wrought by Cucullin then. And it is one
Of three uncounted slaughters on the Táin,
Which were, this Shessra of the Bressla More,
The Imlee of Glendomna, and the battle
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
The battle of the Táin. For in this slaughter
The slaughter was uncounted: no man knew
How many had fallen. Of the common, poor
People of little reckoning who fell
There was no counting possible. Only
The chiefs were counted. Of the chiefs who fell
There were two each of Croo-ees, Kahlas, Keers,
Keears, and Eckells; there were three each of Crommas,

BOOK XI

Cauriths, and Combeergas ; four each of Fohairs,
Furacars, Casses, Fotas ; and five each
Of Kermans, Caur, and Coffys ; and six each
Of Saxons, Dooahs, and Dawras ; and seven each
Of Rohas, Ronawns, and Ruras ; and eight each
Of Rohties, Rindahs, Mullahs ; and nine each
Of Daigiths, Dawras, Dahmahs ; and ten each
Of Fee-ac, Fee-ahas, and Faylimies.

Those were the chiefs who were mown down that night.

Cucullin went from them after inflicting
That slaughter on the chiefs and folk of Erin.
There was not any reddening on himself
Or on his gillie, or on a steed of his steeds.

This was the Shessra of the Bressla More
(The Sixfold Slaughter of the Great Destruction).
This was the Bressla More on Moy Mweerhevna,
Cucullin's Bressla More, red, terrible,
Cucullin's Bressla More on Moy Mweerhevna,
Which Scawtha had foretold far in the East.

Upon the morrow morn Cucullin went
To gaze abroad above the hosts of Erin,
And to display his lovable, fair form
To all their women and their wives and maidens,
And to the poets and wise men of knowledge,
Which were amongst those mighty hosts of Erin ;
Because that arrogant, druidic form,
Wherein he had appeared to them at night

THE TÁIN

That night, was not by him deemed fair or worthy.

Beautiful, truly, was that youthful son,
Namely, Cucullin son of Sooaltim,
Who there displayed his beauty and his form
Unto the hosts of the Four Fifths of Erin.
Three hues of hair were on him—a brown hue
Next to the skin of his head, a blood-red hue
Adjoining that, and a fair golden hue
Adjoining that ; and each thin, separate hair
Had these three hues on it. A fair arrangement
Was on those hairs : they made three well-formed
wheels

About the nape of his neck ; and like a thread
Of fine-drawn gold was each free, scattered, glorious,
Long, separate hair of them which streamed and fell
Backwards beyond his shoulders. And one hundred
Crimsoned, fair links of rich, red, flaming gold
Went round his throat and neck ; and full one hundred
Rich ornaments of mingled carbuncle
Made a choice covering for his head. Four dimples
Smiled in each cheek. Seven gems of light flamed
bright

In each of his two kingly eyes. That day
He put his feast-array of feast-days round him.
Of that array was his fit, crimson, fair,
Five-folding fooan, in which, o'er his white breast,
Was a white silvern spike inworked with gold,
And shining like some lamp filled up with light,

So that the eyes of men could not endure it,
 Because of its great cleanness and its glory.
 Of that array was his rich silken innar,
 With hems and belts and fringes of rich gold
 And silver and findrinny, which reached down
 To the upper edge of his brown foo-avrög,
 Which was red-brown and soldier-like, and made
 From kingly sröl, filmy and beautiful.
 Of that array was his brown-crimson shield,
 Which was upon him, with its pure white rim
 Of silver round it. And of that array
 Were his gold-hilted sword at his left side,
 And his long, grey-edged spear which was beside him
 Inside his chariot. In his hand that day
 Was Oak-fruit of the Red More-reega, namely,
 Dead heads of men. Nine heads were in his right
 hand,
 And ten were in his left hand ; and he shook them
 And brandished them towards those great hosts of
 Erin.

This was the time when the young maids and
 daughters
 Amongst the men of Erin in that camp,
 Besought the men to raise them on their shields,
 And raise the shields aloft on to the shoulders
 Of sturdy warriors, that they thence might gaze
 Upon Cucullin's form ; for wonderful
 That lovable, fair form, which they perceived

THE TÁIN

Upon him there that day, appeared to them,
When they remembered the druidic form,
Arrogant, dark, which they had seen on him
At night that night.

But upon Maev that morn,
After the red, dread slaughter of the night,
For the first time there was dismay and fear
And trembling and sick dread and shuddering
Before Cucullin. She concealed her face
Beneath her impending shield: she dared not
gaze
Then on that Hound.

Howbeit in Maev that morn
There was resolve and hard heart-resolution
To find some warrior and some battle-champion
Who would be fit to overcome that Hound;
And, having found such, then, by gifts or blame,
To induce him to go forth to slay Cucullin.
She, scrutinizing in her mind, was sure
That there were four men living still in Erin
Who would be fit to meet him. One was Fergus
The son of Roy; and one was Calateen
Of dangerous arts, a dangerous, fierce opponent,
With poison on his spears; and one indeed was
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
The mighty warrior of the men of Domnann,
Cucullin's brother-in-arms; and one was Cooroi
The son of Dawra, in the far south-west.

BOOK XI

At eve that day Maev dispatched generous Lewy
The son of Nōs the son of Alamac,
To address Cucullin, and to ask renewal
Of his war-terms—the terms of single combat.
Then Lewy to that grave-hill in the Larguey
Went forth to address Cucullin. “I have come,”
He said, “to ask renewal of the terms.”
“I will renew them,” said Cucullin, “seeing
That now my wounds are healed, and I am whole,
And able for hard strife and battle-combat.”
Lewy went back again, and gave that answer
To Al-yill and to Maev. Then Maev besought
The men of Erin that some man of them
Should go for battle-combat with Cucullin
Upon the ensuing morn. But each one said
(Even as she had known that each would say,
After the red, dread slaughter of that night) :
“It is not I who will go forth, or leave
This place wherein I am. My race and kindred
Are not beneath a bond to give a man
To certain death and to foredoomed destruction.

This, therefore, was the evening when Maev spake
To Fergus son of Roy, of great renown ;
And she implored him very earnestly,
And she besought him and entreated him
To go to combat at the ford of battle,
And to bring back the head of the Ree-astartha.

THE TÁIN

Fergus refused. "O Fergus," Maev said then,
"Once thou wast greatest of all Ulster warriors,
And naught was lacking to thee save to be
The king in Ulster. Then, because thou wast
Too great to be in the one Fifth with him,
Conor the son of Fahtna Fahee drove thee
Forth from thy place, landless and with dishonour.
He slew the three Bright Candles of the Gael
While they were underneath thy guard and honour.
He drove thee from thy country and thy land
And thine inheritance ; and immense kindness
Thou hast received from us. I gave, O Fergus,
Support for thy three times ten hundred men,
Together with their women and their poets
And their young lads and their unnumbered gillies.
I gave unto thyself perpetual feasting
In royal Croohan. I myself maintained
Thy honour, by myself paying thy debts
Of honour, and fulfilling all thy vows.
For seven long years has Connaught borne these
 burdens ;
And now it is a shameful thing in thee
That thou dost shirk thy share of battle-danger,
And that thou dar'st not meet the Ree-astartha
Who is destroying us." These words Maev said,
Speaking to Fergus ; and many more she said ;
And she reproached him very heavily.

Fergus was silent. He returned no words

BOOK XI

Unto those heavy words ; but Maev was sure
That he would go unto the battle-ford
At earliest dawn of rising on the morrow.

Fergus went back to his own tent and people.
He slept no sleep that night. His debt and bond
To Maev were heavy on him and oppressed him ;
For it was difficult indeed to shun them ;
And it seemed bitter to him so to be
Dependent on that queen. There in his tent,
While thinking of the little lad of Ulster,
Upon his breast he wept his showers of tears,
So that his beard and breast were wet with them ;
And his own servants dared not speak to him
Their words of consolation or of counsel.

At earliest dawn of rising on the morrow
Fergus went down unto the battle-ford
Of conflict and of combat ; and Cucullin
Saw his great guardian, Fergus, there before him.
There was no joy made upon either side.
There was great silence. In a little while,
Cucullin said : “ O my great guardian, Fergus,
I see there is no sword in yon long scabbard,
Which thou hast with thee there.” Fergus replied :
“ It is indifferent to me, O my pupil ;
For even if my sword were here with me,
It should not reach thee ; and 'tis not on thee
That it should now be plied. If I would ply it
On thee, my pupil, he who has that sword

THE TÁIN

Would yield it to me gladly. O my pupil !
O my knee-fosterchild ! will a wild doe
Make war on her own fawn ? Or will a brother
Make war on his young brother ? Or shall I
Make war on my own pupil ? But, my pupil,
By all the nurture and by all the rearing
Which I once gave thee, and which all the men
Of Ulster since have given, and which Conor
Himself hath given, I now beseech and pray thee
To flee before me in this place to-day
In presence of the watching hosts of Erin.”
Silence was on that youth, and then he said :
“ O my great guardian Fergus, it behoves me
To be reluctant to take flight or flee
Before one man from 'midst the men of Erin,
Now when I am alone before yon hosts,
Guarding the folk and flocks and lands of Ulster.”
Fergus made answer to him : “ O my pupil,
Now it behoves thee to be not reluctant ;
For in the last great battle of this Táin,
If thou shalt still be living, and shalt come
To meet me, thou being wounded, filled with wounds,
And thou shalt bid me flee before thee, truly
I then will flee before thee in that battle ;
And if I flee, the men of Erin all
Will flee before thee likewise in that battle.”
After those earnest words and that strong promise,
Which Fergus so had made, Cucullin went

BOOK XI

In road of rout, of flight and of defeat
In presence of the watching hosts of Erin.
Fergus turned back once more, he having so
Done treachery to Maev. "He flees, he flees,
He flees before thee, Fergus!" each one cried:
"He flees in road of rout and flight before thee."

"Follow him, Fergus!" Maev said; "let him not
Thus go from out thine hands." There broke from
Fergus

His savage laughter-voice. "Nay, verily,"
Said he, "beyond this spot wherein I am
I will not follow him. However little
Ye deem that share of flight, that I have caused him,
There is no man amongst the men of Erin,
Who hath known how to put him to such flight
Upon this Táin; and it is for that reason
That, till each man of Erin in his turn
Hath gone to fight with him in single combat,
I will not go to threaten him again."

Now of Cucullin's combat on the Táin
With Calateen of deadly, dangerous darts,
Together with his twenty-seven sons
And with his grandson, Glass the son of Delga,
We must tell briefly.

In Maev's tent that night
The chiefs and kings considered who was fittest
To send for battle-combat with Cucullin

THE TÁIN

At earliest hour of rising in the morn.
Then all agreed with Maev that it was best
To send for Calateen of deadly arts,
Together with his twenty-seven sons,
And with his grandson, Glass the son of Delga.
For thus those men of dangerous, deadly arts
Were:—there was poison on each man of them,
And poison on each weapon of their weapons ;
And he whom they but reddened, if he died not
Forthwith, died surely ere nine days were past ;
And not a man of them e'er aimed an aim
Unfit or false, or cast an erring cast.
The men were sent for then ; and huge rewards
Were promised them for doing that famed combat ;
And for rewards they took in hand to do it.

And it was needful that in presence of Fergus
This thing should be confirmed ; and he, when called,
Was powerless to cross or traverse it ;
For this is what men said :—that Calateen
Together with his twenty-seven sons
And with his grandson, Glass the son of Delga,
Was as one man ; for this is what they said :—
His sons were merely limbs of his own limbs,
And parts of his own parts, and it was right
That Calateen should have the host and fullness
Of his own body ; and their contract therefore
Was not a breaking of the faith of men.

Fergus went back to his own tent and folk.

BOOK XI

He breathed on high his groan of weariness.
“ ’Tis grievous unto us the battle-deed
That will be done to-morrow,” Fergus said ;
And he told all that tale. “ And now,” said Fergus,
“ There is no man to whom I will not give
My blessing and my battle-dress of battle,
If he will go from me to watch that combat,
And bring me word when in that unjust combat
Cucullin shall have fallen.” Feeaha
The son of Conall Carna said to him :
“ I will myself go forth to watch that combat.”
And they stayed there that night.

Upon the morrow

Cucullin went unto the battle-ford
Early ; and Calateen of dangerous arts
Went jointly with his twenty-seven sons
And with his grandson, Glass the son of Delga.
Upon Cucullin who was there alone,
They launched at once their twenty-nine sharp darts
Whereon was poison ; and no dart of them
Went on an erring or a swerving course.
Cucullin wrought his edge-feat with his shield,
So that the twenty-nine unswerving darts
Plunged to their mid-parts in his battle-shield ;
And not one dart of them had reddened him.

This was the time when he drew forth his sword
From its Bive’s-scabbard, so that he might hew
And lop the darts, and thus unload his shield.

THE TÁIN

While he was so unloading it, the men
Drew nigh him swiftly, warily. They placed
Upon his head their twenty-nine right hands,
That they might bend him and might bow him down
Until his face and brow should be forced down
Into the sand and gravel of the ford.
While they were so bending and bowing him,
Cucullin raised on high his warrior-moan
And hero-sigh of hard, unequal combat,
So that there was no man of Ulster living,
And not in sleep, who did not hear him sigh.
And the men bent and pressed and bowed him down,
Until his face and brow and countenance
Were 'midst the sand and gravel of the ford.
It was just then and at that point of time
That Feeaha the son of Conall Carna
Arrived and saw that thing. There came on him
His thong and tie of Ulster love and kinship.
He drew his sword out of his strong Bive's-scabbard,
And gave one sweeping blow, till with that blow
He had struck their twenty-nine right hands from them ;
And the men, owing to the urgency
Of the deed and act wherein they had been, fell back
Suddenly into the sand and ooze of the ford.

Cucullin raised his head and drew his breath ;
And he exhaled his sigh of weariness ;
And he perceived the man who thus had helped him.
“ Well nigh too late thy help arrived for me,

BOOK XI

O fellow-pupil!" said Cucullin. "Truly,"
Said Feeaha, "however late and little
The help appears to thee, it is not little
To us there in that camp. We in that camp
Are the best cantred of the Clan of Rury;
And 'tis beneath the mouth of spear and sword
That we should all be placed, if this one blow
That I have struck for thee, were known of us."
"I give my word," Cucullin said, "that now,
Since I have raised my head and drawn my breath,
Unless thou tell that tale about thyself,
Not one of these shall henceforth live to tell it."
Then turned Cucullin rapidly against them,
And fell to hewing them and slaying them,
Until he put them from him in their parted
Quarters, and in their finely parted joints,
Eastwards and westwards, lengthways of the ford.
One man alone escaped him—namely, Glass
The son of Delga; then Cucullin saw him,
And, in his rushing of swift running, rushed
Like the swift, rushing wind; and even as Glass
The son of Delga came unto the tent
Of Al-yill and of Maev, Cucullin reached him;
And while he panted, "Feea—, Feea—," meaning
To tell the deed of Feeaha, Cucullin
Struck a swift blow, and struck his head from him;
And then again, like the swift, rushing wind,
He went from them; and no one caught him there.

THE TÁIN

“ That was a sudden thing with that man there,”
Said Maev ; “ what debt was that whereof he spoke ? ”
(For “ Feea ” means “ a debt. ”) “ Truly,” said Fergus,
“ I know not ; but perchance within the camp
There is some man who owed a debt to him ;
And it was in his mind whilst he ran hither.
Howbeit one thing I aver,” said Fergus—
And he spake loudly, roughly, joyously—
“ Now, in one time, his debts have all been paid.”

This was Cucullin’s combat on the Táin
With Calateen of many dangerous arts,
Together with his twenty-seven sons
And with his grandson, Glass the son of Delga.

And upon Maev that day there was great grief,
And great perplexity, because not yet
Had she found one amongst the men of Erin
Able to conquer and o’erthrow Cucullin.

BOOK XII

BOOK XII

THAT evening Maev unto her private tent
Summoned the chiefs and warriors and brave men ;
And they stood round her, leaning on their spears,
Holding a council. And Maev said to them :

“ Unless we find a man to overcome
This dread Cucullin, now my heart will break.”
Then they all said that there was but one man
Fitted to meet Cucullin at the ford—
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
The mighty warrior of the men of Domnann
From Irrus Domnann in the storm-beat west ;
For like and equal were their modes of fight :
They by one teacher had been taught and trained,
Namely, by Scawtha ; so that neither owned
Advantage o’er the other, save that only
Cucullin owned the art of the Gae Bulg.
But then, as was well known, Faerdeeah owned
A conganess, a tough protecting armour,
The gift of Scawtha ere he left her land ;
And no edged weapons easily could pierce it.

Then there were sent envoys and messengers
To bring Faerdeeah straightway ; but Faerdeeah
Denied, declined, refused those messengers,

THE TÁIN

And came not with them ; for full well he knew
The thing that brought them there,—to make him fight
In fierce encounter with his own dear friend,
His loved companion and brother-in-arms, Cucullin.

And Maev dispatched her skilful slanderers,
And men of irony and calumny,
And bade them speak their dangerous lampoons
And hot, cheek-reddening satire and invective,
To raise three shameful blisters on his face—
Reproach, Disgrace, and Contumely—that so,
If he died not immediately, at least
He might be dead ere nine days should be past,
Unless he came with them.

Faerdeeah then
Came to confer with Maev ; for he desired
To fall in battle-glory, not by shafts
Of coward ridicule. And he resolved
To offer every other battle-service,
But not to combat with his own dear friend.

The hour that Maev and Al-yill saw him come
They laughed a full loud laugh of triumph. Then
With honour and attendance they received him,
And brought him to the feast. And Findabair,
Obedient to her mother, brimmed his cup
With wine from Gaul, and gave him with each cup
Three kisses, tenderly and fervently ;
And carried to him, folded in her layna,
Red, well-stored apples ; and she laid them down,

And bade him eat, and said that he indeed
 Of all the men in Erin was the one
 Whom she could choose to love. And this was true ;
 For now, since Frae had fallen, she had not seen
 So goodly a man to love as was Faerdeeah.
 So he grew gently merry. Presently,
 When he a while had quaffed the wine from Gaul,
 Maev spake and said: " Good, now, my friend,
 Faerdeeah,
 Knowest thou why I have sent for thee this night ?"
 And he made answer: " Here are goodly chiefs,
 And men of valour and of warlike deeds ;
 And where such men are gathered, 'tis but fit
 I should be found amongst them !" Maev replied:
 " Not only so ; but I have sent for thee
 To offer thee great wealth and great rewards :—
 A chariot costing four times seven bond-maids,
 And raiment for twelve men, of each right hue,
 With drinking-horns and bridles and fleet steeds,
 And kingly sról and rings of rich red gold,
 And the full measure of thy barren land
 Apportioned to thee from my smooth Moy Wee,
 With a fair share of plain and forest land,
 To be thine own, free of all tax and tribute,
 Free from demands for hostings, free to thee
 And to thy sons and to thy seed for ever,
 Until the brink of Judgment and of Doom.
 These shall be thine, and more ; for Findabair

THE TÁIN

Shall go to thee to be thine own one wife ;
And I will give to thee as highest honour
The golden brooch from out my queenly robe.
These shall be thine, if thou to-morrow morn
Wilt meet Cucullin at the danger-ford,
And if by thee he shall be slain and die."

"Great the rewards and gifts !" exclaimed the chiefs.

Faerdeeah said : " Though very great the gifts,
Maev, as for me, may take them back again.
I will not slay my brother-in-arms, Cucullin."

They brimmed his horn again, and when again
He for a while had quaffed the Gaulish wine,
Maev spake and said : " Hearken, my friend, Faerdeeah.
It is an ancient word that to each man
His native land is dear. Cucullin fights
For his own native land, the land of Ulster ;
And thou shouldst fight for thine, the land of
Connaught."

Faerdeeah hearkened for a while, then said :
" I cannot fight my brother-in-arms, Cucullin."

They brimmed his horn again ; and when again
He for a while had quaffed the Gaulish wine,
Maev spake and said : " Know'st thou, my friend,
Faerdeeah,

Throughout the camp to-night by every fire,
There is no theme for jest and mockery
Save this alone, namely, that thou, Faerdeeah,

Who hast been trained to arms far in the east
 By Ooaha, by Scawtha, and by Weefa,
 Lackest the valour for hard battle-combat.”
 Faerdeeah heard ; and he grew red and pale.
 For thus Faerdeeah was :—there was to him
 No ill so hard to endure as mockery
 And raillery and scorn and mocking words.
 He paused a while in silence, but then said :
 “ I may not fight my brother-in-arms, Cucullin.”

They brimmed his horn again ; and when again
 He for a while had quaffed the Gaulish wine,
 Maev spake aloof, apart, in a low voice,
 According to the ways for great deceivings,
 And said : “ O warriors, it was a true word
 Cucullin spoke.” Faerdeeah heard her words,
 Even as she had meant that he should hear them.
 He said to her : “ What word was that, O Maev ? ”
 “ Cucullin said,” said Maev, “ that unto him
 It would not have appeared too much that thou,
 Faerdeeah, shouldst have been the first to fall
 In battle-fight with him upon this hosting.
 And this is what Cucullin says : he says
 That he, indeed, would think it little honour
 To slay thee now, after the true war-heroes
 Whom he has slain in combat on this Táin.”
 Faerdeeah heard those well-devised words
 Which Maev devised ; and he grew red and pale
 With wrath ; yet had it not been for the wine

THE TÁIN

Which he had quaffed, he would not have believed
Those words, as now with anger he believed them.
“It was not right,” he said, “that even Cucullin
Should speak of me in that wise. Never yet
Hath he known cowardice or weariness
In me by day or night. But now I swear
I will be he who shall be found the first
In readiness upon the ford to-morrow.”

“May victory and blessing be on thee,”
Said Maev, “and all success and battle-triumph.”

“But thou, great Queen,” Faerdeeah said, “must
give me

Sureties and pledges that thou wilt fulfil
The promises that thou hast made.” Then Maev
Bound herself by the firm security
Of six great chiefs and princes. Yet Faerdeeah
Paused, and he said: “Nay, thou must give me, too,
The sun and moon and wind.” And Maev complied.
She gave to him in surety sun and moon
And stars and colours and the falling dew
And the four winds—that those great powers all,
If she should break her word, might punish her.
And after that she bound Faerdeeah fast
By the same pledges and securities
To fight Cucullin on the following morn.
So they were bound on either side; and Maev
Took from her crimson bratt her heavy brooch
Of beaten gold; and kindly, royally,

Yielded it to Faerdeeah as a sign
 Of mutual faith and truth and honour pledged.
 Faerdeeah then, the feast being ended, went
 Back to his tent and to his folk and people.

Fergus had witnessed all that speech and contract.
 He went to see Cucullin ; and he came
 Unto that place wherein Cucullin was.
 "He who will come against thee in the morn,"
 He said, "is thine own friend and bosom-comrade,
 Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
 Who with thyself was trained far in the east."

Cucullin said : "It is not he, indeed,
 Whom I had wished to come against me—yet
 Not on account of any fear of him,
 But on account of my great love for him."

Fergus replied : "Yet it is right to fear him ;
 For not like others who have come is this
 Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
 Who will confront thee at the ford to-morrow."

Cucullin said : "Here I have been alone
 Against the hosts of the Four Fifths of Erin,
 Since Sowin Eve till now when spring begins.
 I have not yielded one foot in retreat
 In all this time before one man of them,
 Save before thee, O Fergus ; and I hope
 I shall not yield before Faerdeeah now."
 Fergus went back to his own tent and people.

As for Faerdeeah, he had now returned

THE TÁIN

Unto his tent and folk, to whom he told
How he was bound by Maev to single combat
With dread Cucullin on the ensuing morn.

The people of Faerdeeah's tent that night
Were not content and merry and full of joy ;
But they were sorrowful, dispirited ;
Because they knew in whatsoever place
Those two great heroes, those two battle-breakers,
Might meet in combat, either both would fall,
Or one would fall ; and if but one should fall,
They thought that it would be their own dear lord ;
For now it seemed a thing impossible
To overthrow Cucullin on this Táin.

During the earlier hours of that sad night
Faerdeeah slept a deep and heavy sleep.
Then his sleep went from him ; and he awoke.
All the inebriation of Maev's wine
Had gone ; and now in the cold, misty morn
The question and the trouble and the sorrow
Of that vowed combat scourged and weighed on him.
Then he arose, and bade his charioteer
Harness his steeds and yoke his chariot quickly.
The servant sought to hinder him, and said :
" Better by far remain and take thy rest
Until the sun arise. Go not yet forth
Unto this grievous meeting and encounter."
" Be silent now, my man," Faerdeeah said.
" Thou speakest like a servant. We will go

With strength and valour to the ford of wounding,
O'er which the Bive shall scream."

The horses then

Were harnessed, and the chariot yoked, and forth
They rode, and reached the battle-ford; and not
E'en yet had the full light of daylight come.

Through the dim, misty light of early morn
Maev from her tent had seen Faerdeeah pass.
She said: "Does Al-yill sleep?" "Not so," said
Al-yill.

Maev said: "Provided that Cucullin falls
By yonder warrior, 'twill be well for us
If he himself falls too; for this we know:—
That if he slays his friend, 'tis we ourselves
Whom in his woe he next will seek to slay."

Faerdeeah and his servant then had reached
The battle-stream. "O gillie," said Faerdeeah,
"Look, is Cucullin yet upon the ford?"
"He is not," said the servant. "Look with heed,"
Faerdeeah said. "Cucullin," said the servant,
"Is not some little switch or goad concealed
Amid long grass." "'Tis true," Faerdeeah said,
"He is not there. He has not till this hour
Heard of the coming of a true war-hero
Against him on this Táin. Now, having heard,
He has abandoned the dread ford." "Alas!"

THE TÁIN

The gillie said, "it is unkind, disloyal,
So in his absence to insult Cucullin.
And dost thou not remember how, yon time
When ye attacked rough, battle-skilled Germanus
O'er the edge-borders of the Tyrrhene Sea,
Thou with the host hadst left thy battle-sword ;
And 'twas Cucullin who regained it for thee,
Slaying one hundred men to reach to it ?
And dost thou not remember where we were
On that same night ?" "I do not," said Faerdeeah.
"We all were at the house of Scawtha's steward,"
The gillie said ; "that night, with glowing pride,
Thou wentst into that house before us all ;
Whereat the steward, the giant-hideous churl,
With his long, three-pronged flesh-fork struck at thee
Against the mid-part of thy back, and flung thee
Out o'er the threshold of the door. Cucullin
It was who slew that churl ; and it was I
Who served as steward so long as ye remained
Within that stead. And that one day alone
Makes it not right that thou shouldst boast thyself
A better battle-hero than Cucullin."

"Be silent, O my man," Faerdeeah said.
"What thou now dost is wrong, thus, when too late,
Putting those days into my memory ;
But hadst thou spoken of these things last night,
Then, notwithstanding Maev's strong wine from
Croohan,

BOOK XII

Yea, notwithstanding that o'erweening boasting
Cucullin made, I had not come to-day
Unto this fight and combat. And now, gillie,"
Faerdeeah said, "desist from this, and spread
The blankets and the skins of the firm chariot
Beneath me here, that I may take my sleep,
My deep repose and rest. In the last hours
Of the dark night I slept not; for the thought
And trouble of this combat weighed on me."

The charioteer loosened the steeds, and then
Spread for his lord the blankets and the skins;
And soon the heavy deadness of deep sleep
Fell on Faerdeeah, and he rested there.

And now about Cucullin. He arose not
Until the day with its full light had come,
That so the men of Erin might not say
That fear and terror drove away his sleep.
But when the day with all its light had come,
He rose and said unto his charioteer:
"Good now, my servant Laeg, harness the steeds
And yoke the chariot. We will now ride forth.
He is an early-rising man, this friend,
Faerdeeah son of Daman son of Dawra,
Who comes against us at the ford to-day."

"The steeds are caught: the chariot is prepared,"
Said Laeg, "so mount it: it will not disgrace
Thy valour or thy prowess and feats of arms."

Then sprang into his chariot the adroit

THE TÁIN

And battle-victorious, red-sworded hero,
Cucullin son of Sooaltim ; and round him
Shouted the Boccanahs and Bannanahs
And the Glen-folk and Spirits of the Air ;
And Thooaha Dae Danann raised around him
Shoutings and cries, that so they might enhance
The terror and fear and hate his foes should feel.

In no long time Faerdeeah's charioteer
Heard the dim roll of wheels, the tramp of hooves,
The musical clang of swords and spears and shields
Beating against each other, and the cries
Made by the airy spirits. Then he went
And laid his hand upon his master, saying:
" Arise, Faerdeeah ! for he cometh now—
The Hound of Valour. Over wide Bray Ross
Fleetly he cometh. Like a noble hawk
He swoopeth southward, and is like the wind
For swiftness. Not with waned dexterity
Will he attack thee at the ford to-day."

Faerdeeah, waking, spake with vehemence,
And said : " Hast thou been bribed to praise this man ?
I think thou hast taken wages to extol
The vaunting youth from Cooley. Know thou, then,
That he shall find his downfall here to-day."

And soon the charioteer, watching there, saw
Cucullin's comely, four-peaked chariot : green
Its pleasant awning, thin and firm its frame.
Beneath the one yoke was a fleet, gray horse,

With long smooth hair : beneath the second yoke
 A black horse, tufty-maned and fierce like fire,
 And like a hawk down-swooping from a cloud,
 Like a cold gust of spring wind o'er a plain,
 Or like a deer when started by the hounds
 On his first chase, were those two noble steeds.
 As though they trod on fiery flags they came ;
 And the earth shook and trembled. So Cucullin
 Came to the ford. Faerdeeah on the south
 Awaited him. He on the northern side
 Drew up his chariot ; and they faced each other.

“ Welcome, Cucullin, is thy coming,” then
 Faerdeeah said. Cucullin answered him :
 “ Trusty and dear to me until this hour
 Those words had been. Now I accept them not.
 And, O Faerdeeah, it were fitter far
 For me to speak the welcome in this land.
 It is my land, not thine ; and I am here
 Defending my own people and their wives
 And youths and little ones and flocks and herds,
 All that are left uncaptured and unslain ;
 And thou hast come to combat with me here.”
 Faerdeeah said : “ Thereby I honour thee.
 What claim or right hast thou to fight with me ?
 For, when we were with Scawtha far away,
 Thou wast my servant and subordinate,
 To fit my spears and to prepare my bed.”

“ Yea, for I was the younger,” said Cucullin ;

“ But, well thou knowest, it is not as thy man,
 Or as thy servant and subordinate,
 That men hereafter will remember me.
 Therefore withdraw in time, or thou shalt find
 That thou hast fallen in a gap of danger ;
 And edgéd weapons here will hew thee down,
 And thou shalt never be a battle-chief
 From this time forth ; but here thy life shall end.”

“ Away with all thy boasting and thy warning !”
 Replied Faerdeeah ; “ like a tame house-bird
 Thou art to me. Ere sun-down, ere the night,
 Crimson shall flow thy blood athwart thy bridle.
 Thy head shall be upon a pointed spit,
 Thou upstart vaunter ! I am here at length ;
 And thou shalt fight and die.” So spake Faerdeeah.
 Indignant rage having laid hold of him.

Then, quick, Cucullin said : “ O my Faerdeeah,
 Why didst thou listen to the fair-haired queen ?
 She hath beguiled thee with deceiving words.
 We, when we were with Scawtha in the east,
 Went out together into every battle.
 In lands and forests many and far away
 We went with Scawtha, learning, practising.
 And we were heart-companions : side by side,
 After long toil, we slept our good, deep sleep.
 A dearer, trustier friend I have not known.
 We thought that never, indeed, between us two
 Could there be angry words or enmity.

BOOK XII

Come not against me now, O noble hero,
Faerdeeah son of Daman. Break not so
Our bond of friendship. Hold in memory
The vow we made. There is not in the world
One at whose hest I would do ill to thee."

Faerdeeah paused in silence. Then he said :
"It is too late. Too long have we been thus,
Contending with words only. And what weapons
Shall we select to-day?" Cucullin said :
"Thine is the choice of arms until the night ;
For thou art he who first did reach the ford."
"Dost thou remember, then," Faerdeeah asked,
"The game with missive weapons that we played
With Ooaha, with Scawtha, and with Weefa ?
If thou rememberest, let us try them now."

Then they put on their two bright-bordered shields,
Adapted for quick play of skill ; and took
Eight little lances made for feats of skill,
With eight well-shapen feather-wingéd darts,
Eight ivory-hilted poniards thin and straight,
And eight dimunitive bone-hafted spears.
And these flew forth from them and back again
Like flying bees on a bright summer's day.
No cast was badly aimed. From early morn
To full mid-day they cast and shot and hurled,
Until their various missiles were all spoiled
And blunted on the well-directed shields.
Though excellent the hurling, yet so true

THE TÁIN

Was the defence that neither, in all that time,
Wounded or injured or made red the other.

“Let us abandon these,” Faerdeeah said;
“For not through these our fight will be resolved.”
“Yea, let us leave them, if the time be come,”
Replied Cucullin. And they ceased, and flung
Into the hands of their good charioteers
Their darts and lances and bright-bordered shields.
“What arms or weapons shall we fight with now?”
Faerdeeah questioned; but Cucullin said:
“Thine is the choice of arms until the night;
For thou art he who first did reach the ford.”

“Then,” said Faerdeeah, “let us now take up
Our straight and shapely, smooth, well-hardened spears,
Wherein well-tightened is the flaxen cord.”

“So let us, if thou wilt,” Cucullin said.
Then they put on two strong, protecting shields;
And took their shapely, smooth, well-hardened spears,
Wherein well-tightened was the flaxen cord;
And with these arms they shot, each at the other,
From middle day until the evening fell.
Though excellent the quick defence they made,
So skilful was their hurling, and so true,
That each was hurt and wounded in that time.

“Let us leave off now for the present while,”
Faerdeeah said. “Let us, if it be time,”
Replied Cucullin. And they ceased, and threw
Into the hands of their good charioteers

BOOK XII

Their shields and fighting-weapons ; and forthwith
Each one drew nigh the other ; and each laid
His arms around the other's neck, and gave him
Three kisses ardently and fervently.
Their horses all that night remained together
In the one paddock ; and their charioteers
Stayed by one fire. Howbeit, ere darkness fell
Each servant made for his own lord a bed
Of newly-gathered rushes ; and both made
Pillows for wounded men ; and then there came
The folk of cure and healing, and applied
Succulent herbs of healing and of cure
To all their hurts and gashes and sore wounds.
Of every herb and every healing salve
That they provided for Cucullin's wounds
He sent one half south-westward o'er the ford
Unto Faerdeeah. And of all nourishment,
And all inspiriting, well-flavoured ale
Brought by the men of Erin to Faerdeeah,
He sent one half north-eastward o'er the ford
To freshen and delight and help Cucullin.
They, in this manner, rested there that night.

And early in the morning they arose ;
And they came forward to the ford of battle.
“ What arms of valour shall we take to-day ? ”
Cucullin asked ; but briefly, courteously,
Faerdeeah answered : “ Thine the choice of arms

THE TÁIN

Until the night ; for in the day now past
The choice was mine." " Let us," Cucullin said,
" Take up our huge, wide-headed thrusting spears ;
And let our steeds be caught and chariots yoked,
" That from our chariots and from o'er our steeds
We may deliver battle here to-day."

Then they put on two durable, strong shields,
Wide and protecting ; and they took the spears
That were wide-headed, huge ; and these they
thrust

And drove against each other, from the gleam
Of early morning till the evening fell.
Their steeds were weary, and their charioteers
Dispirited ; and they themselves—the heroes,
The men of valour—they were weary too.
" Now let us cease, Faerdeeah," said Cucullin ;
" Our steeds are weary ; and our charioteers
Discouraged and fatigued. Why should not we
Be weary likewise ?" And they ceased, and threw
Their spears and shields unto their charioteers ;
And each drew nigh the other ; and each laid
His arms around the other's neck, and gave him
Three kisses ; and Cucullin said : " Faerdeeah,
My loving heart is as one clot of blood ;
Almost my spirit has departed from me.
What need hadst thou to come to combat here
At bidding of the evil-minded queen ?
Let us withdraw from this, and strive no more.

BOOK XII

I have not heart or strength for feats of valour,
Fighting with thee, Faerdeeah, my dear friend."

Faerdeeah mused in silence. He recalled
The strong securities and powerful bonds
Wherein he was fast bound by Maev; then said :
" O Hound of Valour, Hound of Battle-triumph,
It is too late. We may not now draw back ;
But one of us must fall, or both must fall,
In contest at this ford. And well we know
What must be, must be. Man may not avoid
His hour of birth, nor yet his hour of death ;
But he is driven and constrained to come
Unto that sod where his last grave shall be."

They rested there that night. Their charioteers
Lay at one fire ; and their horses stayed
In one enclosure. And the men of healing
Came to watch o'er the wounded heroes there,
Putting unto each grievous hurt and wound
Their powerful phrases, able words and charms
And spells and incantations. Only so
Might they alleviate the sore pain, and staunch
The flowing blood—so bitter and so deep
Their hurts and injuries and gory wounds.
Of every spell and every powerful charm
Brought by the men of healing for Cucullin,
He sent one half south-westward o'er the ford
Unto Faerdeeah. And of all pleasant food,
And all exhilarating, mirthful ale,

THE TÁIN

Brought by the men of Erin to Faerdeeah,
He sent one half north-eastward o'er the ford
To help Cucullin.

In the early morn
They rose and came unto the ford of battle.
Cucullin saw a darkly-lowering cloud
Upon Faerdeeah's face that morn, and said :
"Thou art not well to-day, my friend, Faerdeeah.
Dulled is thy hair, and drowsy is thine eye :
Thy freshness and thy form have gone from thee."

"'Tis not through fear of thee that I am so," .
Replied Faerdeeah; "there is not in Erin
A champion I could not subdue this day.
What arms or weapons shall we fight with now?"

Cucullin answered: "Thine the choice of arms
Until the night; for in the day just past
The choice was mine." "Let us," Faerdeeah said,
"Take up our heavy and hard-smiting swords.
Thereby we shall be nearer to our end
Than by the thrusting we were yesterday."

Then they put on two long and ample shields,
And took their heavy and hard-smiting swords;
And they began to hit and hew and strike
And smite each other; and continued so
From early morning till the evening fell.

"Let us forsake this now," Faerdeeah said.
"Let us, if it be time," Cucullin answered.
It was a parting of two mournful men,

BOOK XII

Two sorrowful, disheartened ones, that night.
Their steeds were not in the one fold that night,
Nor lay their charioteers by the one fire.
In woe and grief they rested that night there.

And early on the morrow morn arose
Faerdeeah, and went forward all alone
Unto the ford of battle ; for he knew
That was the day which finally should end
Their striving and their combat ; and he knew
That one of them would fall, or both would fall,
Upon that day. And then it was indeed
That he put on his battle-suit of battle
Before the coming of Cucullin towards him.
He put against his whitely-gleaming skin
His filmy foo-a-vrōg of kingly srōl
Hemmed up with spangled gold ; and over that
His foo-a-vrōg of leather, brown, well-smoothed.
And over that he placed a disc of stone,
Huge like a mill-stone ; and placed o'er these all
His iron foo-a-vrōg, steadfast and deep,
Of tempered iron ; and all this he did
Through fear and dread of the Gae Bulg that day.
Then he put round his head his crested cathbarr,
Whereon, in the divisions, forty gems
Of carbuncle were set, which flamed and glowed ;
And it was outlined well with crooan-stones
And crystal and jewels of light that men had brought

THE TÁIN.

From the far eastern world. In his right hand
He took his stalwart, death-producing spear.
He placed on his left hip his curvéd sword
With golden hilt and hand-guard of red gold.
He hung upon the broad slope of his back
His shield with hornéd rivets, that was formed
Of fifty strong concentric rings encircling
A central boss of glorious, flaming gold.

That morn Faerdeeah practised many a feat,
And many an art adroit and wonderful,
And many a movement that he ne'er had learned
From Ooaha, from Scawtha or from Weefa,
But had contrived himself, to be attempted
That day against Cucullin.

And Cucullin
Came to the ford, and saw each noble feat
And all the arts adroit and wonderful
Faerdeeah practised there ; and then he said :
“ My good friend Laeg, thou seest the noble feats
Faerdeeah practises ; and well we know
That all these arts in turn will here to-day
Be tried against me. Therefore thou, good Laeg,
If they prevail against me in the least,
If I begin to yield or waver here,
Thou shalt incite me and find fault with me,
And rail at me with sour, disdainful words,
That so thou mayst arouse my rage and ire.
But if it be that I prevail, then praise me,

BOOK XII

Commend me, and speak kind, applauding words,
That so my hope and spirit may grow the more."

And Laeg replied: "Thus, surely, will I do."
Cucullin then put on his noble garb
Of battle and of combat; and he too
Performed adroit and accurate turns of skill,
And feats and arts that he had never learned
With Ooaha, with Scawtha, or with Weefa.
Faerdeeah witnessed all those feats, and knew
Each would be tried against him in its turn.

"What arms of valour shall we take to-day?"
Inquired Cucullin; and Faerdeeah said:
"Thine is the choice of arms until the night."

"Let us, then, try the ford-feat," said Cucullin.
"Let us," replied Faerdeeah, "if so thou wilt."
Howbeit, though thus Faerdeeah gave consent,
The choice was unto him a cause of grief;
For, until then, Cucullin had o'erthrown
All champions and all heroes whomsoever
Who in the ford-feat had encountered him.

Illustrious and awful was the fight
That they fought out upon the ford that day—
Those two exalted warriors, those two heroes,
Those high-born ones with gift-bestowing hands,
Those well-belovéd pillars of all valour,
Those keys of valour of the valiant Gael,
Those two dear friends, brought to such dreadful fight

THE TÁIN

Through the skilled instigation and inciting
And the skilled wiles and slanderous words of Maev.

From early morning till the midday hour
They cast and hurled ; but when the midday came,
Their battle-anger rose and boiled with fury.
And from that hour their rage and battle-fury
Seethed in their hearts, so that each knew no more
That he was fighting with his friend and comrade ;
But each thought only of the strife and combat.
And each drew nigh the other. Then it was
That from the very brink of the wide ford
Cucullin leapt, and lighted on the boss,
The golden central boss, of the great shield
Faerdeeah son of Daman held before him.
For thus he hoped to strike Faerdeeah's head
Over the border of the mighty shield.
But, straight, Faerdeeah with his left elbow dealt
The shield a blow, and cast Cucullin back,
Light as a bird, on the ford's brink again.
Again Cucullin leapt, and deftly lighted
On the great boss, to reach Faerdeeah's head.
Faerdeeah dealt the shield a mighty blow
With his left knee, and cast Cucullin back,
Light as a child, on the ford's brink again.

And Laeg perceived that thing. "Alas !" said
Laeg,
" The man who is against thee casts thee now

As a lewd woman casts away her child :
 He flings thee as the river flings the foam :
 He grinds thee as the mill grinds the fresh malt :
 He cuts thee as the wood-axe cuts the oak :
 He binds thee as the woodbine binds the tree :
 He pounces on thee as the hawk doth pounce
 On tiny birds : and thou hast now no kin
 And no relationship to men of valour
 From this time forth, thou small distorted sprite."

Then, with the swiftness of the cold spring wind,
 With the adroitness of a swallow flying,
 Cucullin once again sprang through the air,
 And lighted once again upon the boss
 Of the great shield, to strike Faerdeeah's head.
 Faerdeeah gave the shield a sudden shake,
 And cast Cucullin back on the ford's brink,
 As though he had ne'er leapt from it at all.

Then, for the first time in their awful combat,
 Cucullin was distorted with his rage
 And filled with swelling, as a bladder is filled
 With a man's breath ; and he appeared to be—
 To those who watched—some giant, terrible,
 Strange, and discoloured. Like a Man of the Sea,
 Or huge Fomorian from the north, he stood
 In perfect height against Faerdeeah there.

So close the combat was, which there they made,
 That now their heads encountered o'er their shields,

THE TÁIN

And now their feet below them ; and their hands
Met in the middle part, beyond the plates
And borders of the shields. So close their fight,
Their shields were burst and rifted from the rim
Unto the central part. So close their fight,
Their spears were bent and doubled from the point
Unto the haft. So close the fight they made,
The unseen Bannanahs and Boccanahs
And the Glen-folk and Spirits of the Air
Screamed from the edges of their shields, and cried
From each sword-hilt and spear-shaft ; and the herds
Of horses of the men of Erin brake
In fright and fury from their rings and tethers,
And fled in madness. And the little folk
And women and youths and cowardly folk and fools
Broke from the camp south-westwards in their fright
And wild alarm and terror in that hour.

They now were at the edge-feat with their swords.
Faerdeeah found a chance upon Cucullin
For one brief instant ; and he dealt a blow
With his bone-hafted dagger, till its blade
Was hidden in Cucullin's chest. The blood
Fell on Cucullin's girdle ; and the ford
Was reddened with his blood. Cucullin then
Held out no longer ; for Faerdeeah still
Was striking his annihilating blows,
And his long blows, and his great middle blows,

Upon him there ; and he called out to Laeg
 To send him the Gae Bulg. Faerdeeah heard
 Cucullin calling for that spear of Scawtha.
 He made a downward stroke with his great shield
 To shield his under-part. Cucullin hurled
 Out of his palm a short, straight dart athwart
 The upper margin of Faerdeeah's shield,
 And through the throat-vent of his horn-skin armour,
 So that the point thereof was visible,
 After its piercing of Faerdeeah's heart,
 Within his breast and side. Faerdeeah then
 Made a swift, upward stroke with his great shield
 To shield his over-part ; though this was help
 Arriving when too late. And Laeg meanwhile
 Directed the Gae Bulg along the stream.
 Cucullin with the toes of his feet received it.
 He gave a choice cast of the Scythian weapon
 Upward against Faerdeeah ; and it pierced
 The iron foo-a-vrōg of tempered iron,
 And clove the disc of stone into three parts,
 And pierced through all the coverings of his frame,
 So that each inward part of him was filled
 With spear-heads of the opening Gae Bulg.

" That is henceforth enough," Faerdeeah said :
 " O Hound of beautiful and wondrous feats,
 I fall by that." The heavy mist of death
 Came o'er Faerdeeah. And Cucullin ran
 And closed his hands around him ; and he bore him

THE TÁIN

With all his arms and his accoutrements
North-eastward o'er the ford, and up the bank,
That so the trophies of the victory
Might be with him north-eastward of the ford,
Not with the men of Erin on the south.

Then on the ground he laid Faerdeeah down.
His battle-fury now had gone from him ;
And a thick cloud of faintness and of pain
Descended densely on him while he bent
O'er the dead body of Faerdeeah there.
This was peceived by Laeg. "Master," said Laeg,
"Hasten away. The men of Erin come ;
And 'tis not single combat they will give us,
Faerdeeah son of Daman being slain."

"Why should I haste, my servant?" moaned
Cucullin ;
"And what have I to do with rising now ?
The utmost folly and rage of grief is mine,
After my swording of this noble one.
Would rather he had lopped from me each limb
Ere this thing had befallen !"

"Nay," said Laeg,
"Triumph, elation, spirit, and delight
Befit thee now. At thee he dealt his blows
Unfriendly, envious, lamentable. Now
Faerdeeah of the Hosts has fallen. Now
Maev has received her deadliest grief of all.

Hasten away, O Slaughter-hound of Avvin,
And heal thy wounds ; and when they are whole again,
Great joy and exultation shall be thine."

Cucullin heeded not ; but he began
To moan and to complain and to lament
Above Faerdeeah there, and spake these words :

" Alas, Faerdeeah ! great the treachery
The men of Erin did thee ! Wherefore now
Didst thou lend ear to the deceiving words
Of the fair western women ? Didst thou think
That Findabair would be for thee ? As well
Tie with a thong the shifting river-sand
As think to win her ! Unto many more
Had she been promised, ere Maev promised thee.
But never shall they find another hero
Like thee to fight for Croohan—nevermore
One of like deeds in battle, summoning
The red-mouthed Bive to scream above the slain.
And never shall they see the like of thee,
Cloud-coloured son of Daman, whose bright face
Was like the clouds of dawn. Oh, dear to me
Thy ruddy freshness, dear thy shapely form,
Thy pure blue eye and yellow-streaming hair,
Thy gifts of wisdom and of eloquence !
Oh, woe that thou shouldst die while I remain !
I have not known one like thee, my Faerdeeah !"

So spake Cucullin and was silent. Yet
He moved not ; but he gazed upon Faerdeeah.

THE TÁIN

And then he spake, and said: "My good friend Laeg,
Remove Faerdeeah's armour. Let me see
The golden brooch that pledged him to this fight."

And Laeg removed the armour; and they saw
The golden brooch. Cucullin wept and said:

"It was not right, Faerdeeah, so to come
To fight with me. When we were far away
With Scawtha in the east, we thought unkindness
Could never be between us. Now, good Laeg,
Open the body, and take out the spear.

I cannot be without the Gae Bulg." Laeg
Opened the body and took out the spear.

Cucullin saw his weapon, red with blood,

Lying beside Faerdeeah; and he said:

"O my Faerdeeah, sorrowful the fate!

I, with my merciless weapon still unwashed:

Thou, pale in death upon a couch of gore.

Sad—what has come of our meeting here—

I, wounded, sinking, covered with rough gore:

Thou, altogether dead! Oh, dear to me

The friend to whom I have served a draught of blood!"

"Good, now, Cucullin, let us leave the ford,"

Said Laeg; "too long have we been here." "Aye,
Laeg,"

Cucullin answered, "we will leave." But still

He gazed back at Faerdeeah; and he said:

"Now every other combat I have fought



"THE DEATH OF FAERDEEAAH."

BOOK XII

Seems but a game of play. Alas ! I loved
This pillar of gold whom now I have overthrown.
Huge, like a mountain, he seemed yesterday :
To-day his shadow only doth remain.
There hath not come unto a gory battle,
Nor hath old Banba nursed upon her breast,
Nor hath there e'er been known on sea or land,
Of sons of warriors, one of better fame."

Laeg on the chariot placed his suffering lord,
And drove a goad into the waiting steeds ;
And so Cucullin, while the evening fell,
Into the blue-black forest rode away,
Wounded well-nigh to death. The men of Erin
Interred Faerdeeah in a noble grave,
With his rich dress and war-accoutrements,
And shield and spear and all his various arms.
There the green-surfaced hill was closed above him,
Beside the ford to which they gave his name.

BOOK XIII

BOOK XIII

FROM out of Ulster some few men arrived
To help Cucullin, and console and aid
And ease him. These were Shennel Ooaha
And the two sons of Gaega—Muridah
And Cotreb. These men carried him away
To bathe his wounds and make clear water strike
Against his gashes, plunged in brooks and streams
Of Connallia Mweerhevna. For his friends,
The unseen Thooaha Dae Danann, then
Were strowing plants and herbs of health and healing
On each pure stream of Connallia Mweerhevna,
To help Cucullin ; so that each bright stream
Was greenly checkered with them. Now, the names
Of those bestrown, bright streams which helped
Cucullin

Are these :—the Sawss, the Booan, the Billawn,
The Finnglass, the light Glore, the Glenawin,
The Baeg, the Tahg, the Telamet, the Rind,
The Bir, the Brenid, the Deehaem, the Mooah,
The Meelic, the cramped Cumung, and the Cullin,
The Ganawin, the Drong, the Delt, the Dooglass.
And so the soilure and the dangerous venom
Were laved from out his wounds. And, after that,

THE TÁIN

Dry wisps and pads of grass and moss were placed
Against those wounds. And supple willow-wands
Were arched above him to sustain his bratt;
Because his wounds and gashes were so great
That he might not endure it if his raiment
Should reach his skin. And thus that day his life
Was kept within Cucullin; yet it wanted
Only a little, and he would have died
Despite that help, so bitter were his hurts
After that awful combat with Faerdeeah.

And while Cucullin thus was bathed and tended
The Four Great Fifths of Erin went south-west
From Ath Faerdeeah; and they drew nigh Taltin—
The burial-field of Ulster kings and queens
And kingly princes; and they drove with them
Their captives and their droves of Ulster kine,
Thinking to drive them through the wide west ford,
And into Connaught, ere the men of Ulster
Should rise from out their Kesh; and Maev sent forth
Mac Roth her messenger, e'en to the hills
And crags and green-grassed summits of Slieve Foo-id,
To watch the north, that thus in Avvin Maha
The men of Ulster might not rise in arms
Without her having swift advice and warning.

This is the time wherein the charioteers
Of Ulster—three times fifty charioteers—
Accoutering themselves with warlike arms,

Came south against the hosts. There fell by them
 Thrice their own number, ere those charioteers
 From Ulster in the field themselves fell slain.

This is the time when aged Illiah
 The son of Cass the son of Bac the son
 Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More,
 Resting in old-age maintenance—maintained
 In green Rath Immil, by his son's famed son,
 By Laery the Victorious—was informed
 How, throughout all the cold, dark winter months,
 Even from Sowin till the opening spring,
 The Four Great Fifths of Erin had been spoiling,
 And laying waste and ravaging and burning,
 All Ulster and all Crithny. Illiah
 Took counsel with his folk. "What counsel now,"
 Said he, "would seem to you more wise than this,
 Namely, that I should travel south forthwith
 To attack the men of Erin, and to take
 Spoils from their armies, and avenge a little
 The honour of all Ulster? If thereafter
 I fall myself and die, that is all one."
 His folk approved of that. They caught for him
 His two old, yellow, withered, wasted steeds,
 Which were upon the shore beside the doon.
 They brought his old-time, antique chariot out,
 That was without cushion or coverlet,
 And yoked it on the steeds. His rough, grey shield

THE TÁIN

Of iron, with its hard encircling rim
Of hardened silver, he took up. He took
His rough, grey-hilted sword on his left side.
He took his two blunt spears with shaking heads
Into his chariot; and his folk arranged
Round stones and pillar-stones and great, flat flags
About him in his chariot. Furnished so
He travelled south against the men of Erin.
Ere long the hosts perceived him. Then the men,
Seeing that agéd, naked warrior come,
His spittle of old age down through the gaps
In the old osier-woven chariot-floor
Slow-dripping, laughed aloud their mocking laugh.
“Good would it seem to us,” they said, “if such
Were the description of each man from Ulster
Who e’er should come against us!” In that hour
Dōha the son of Mahga passed that way.
Full quickly he restrained the rabble-crowd.
He went to Illiah, and welcomed him.
“Welcome thy coming, noble Illiah!”
Said Dōha. “What man is it who thus greets me?”
Old Illiah queried. “’Tis the friend and comrade
Of Laery the Victorious,” Dōha said.
“’Tis Dōha son of Mahga.” “Dear to me
Thy welcome is, then,” Illiah replied;
“Therefore draw near me after some short while,
When all my valour shall have withered up,
And all my weapons shall have been expended,

That thou thyself and not some other man
 Among the men of Erin mayst be he
 Who strikes my head from me. And let my sword
 Be kept by thee for Laery." The old man
 Then with his weapons wrought upon the hosts
 Until his weapons had been all expended ;
 And when his weapons had been all expended,
 He wrought upon them with his rocky weights—
 Round stones and pillar-stones and great, flat flags,
 Which he had there—till these had been expended.
 And when his flags and stones had been expended,
 He wrought upon them with his arms. He seized
 Whichever man among the men of Erin
 Came near ; and 'twixt his forearms and his fists
 Compressed and chafed him till he made of him
 A marrow-mass, wherein formless were mingled
 Sinews and skin and bones and hair and flesh.
 One of the three chief wonders of the Táin
 Is the great number whom he wrought on so,
 Ere all his old-age valour was expended ;
 And when his strength and valour were expended,
 Descrying Dōha, he called out to him :
 " Come to me now, O Dōha son of Mahga !
 Now strike my head from me ; but let my sword
 Be kept by thee for Laery." Dōha came.
 With one swift sword-blow he struck off the head
 From the old warrior ; and in this way ended
 " The stone-attack of agéd Illiah."

THE TÁIN

Now—though the king and chiefs in Avvin Maha
Arose not yet out of their blinding Kesh,
Which had been paining them and blinding them—
Yet, by degrees, in other parts of Ulster,
Some few great Ulster chiefs arose with life,
And came to attack the hosts.

The first of these

Was the famed warrior-poet, Avver-guin
The son of Cass the son of Bac the son
Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More.
He was the father of great Conall Carna,
Who at this time was gathering rent and tribute
For Ulster, in the isles beyond the sea.
Avver-guin reached the hosts as they were passing
With all their throngs to westward over Taltin,
The ancient burial-field of Ulster kings
And princes ; and he drove them back once more
Before him over Taltin, toward the north.
He put his firm left elbow under him
In Taltin, and his folk provided him
With stones and pillar-stones, and great flat flags ;
And with these missiles he assailed the hosts
Throughout the space of three days and three nights.

This was the time when, in the far south-west,
In Caher Conroi, Cooroi son of Dawra,
Having returned from warfare in far Scythia,
Was told how through those long, dark, winter months,
Even from Sowin till the opening spring,

The Four Great Fifths of Erin had been stayed
 And held in check and hindered and delayed
 By one man all alone. Now, as for Cooroi,
 Since first he had taken arms, he had not reddened
 His sword in Erin ; for there was not room
 In Erin for his pride and haughtiness
 And warrior-fulness ; and he e'er had reddened
 His sword in distant lands. But when he heard
 How the Four Fifths of Erin had been hindered
 By one man all alone, he said : " That man,
 Indeed, gives worthy matter for a combat."
 And Cooroi son of Dawra went forthwith
 To seek hard battle-combat with Cucullin.
 Then, when he came to the lone forest-hiding
 Wherein Cucullin was, and saw Cucullin
 Crying with bitter pain, and full of wounds,
 And pierced and hurt, it did not seem to him
 Noble or hero-like or full of honour
 To seek a combat with him. " For," he said,
 " It would not be the wounds given by me,
 Which would now cause his death ; 'twould be the
 wounds
 Which he obtained in combat with Faerdeeah."

Cooroi the son of Dawra therefore left
 Cucullin ; and he went to join the hosts,
 And to have speech with his own household people
 Who were upon that hosting. When he came
 And joined the hosts, he perceived Avver-guin,

Westward of Taltin, hurling at the hosts,
 With his left elbow under him. Then Cooroi
 Passed round the men of Erin toward the north
 Of Taltin; and his folk provided him
 With stones and pillar-stones and great, flat flags;
 And face to face he assailed Avver-guin,
 So that the rocks and pillar-stones and flags
 Answered each other in the air, and clashed
 Amidst the clouds and in the air above
 The heads of all those hosts. A hundred stones
 Were made of every separate stone of them
 Amidst the clouds and winds above their heads.
 "Upon the truth of valour which thou hast,
 O Cooroi," Maev said, "cease from this thy hurling:
 'Tis not good help that comes to us therefrom,
 But evil help." "I give my word," said Cooroi,
 "I will not cease until the Breast of Doom,
 Or until Avver-guin shall cease." Thereon
 Avver-guin said: "I will cease verily;
 And bind thyself to come again no more
 To help these hosts of Erin." Cooroi then
 Accepted that; and went upon his road
 To his own folk and his own high-walled doon—
 To Caher Conroi in the far south-west.

During this time the hosts of Erin passed
 O'er Taltin toward the west. "It was not this,"
 Said Avver-guin, "which Cooroi bound on me
 Namely, that I should ne'er begin again

To hurl against yon hosts." Therefore, again
 He went to westward of them, and he drove them
 Before him over Taltin toward the north ;
 And he began to hurl, and hurled at them
 For a long while and a great space of time.
 And then it was that all the men of Erin
 Said it would not dishonour Avver-guin,
 If they should leave their camp in Taltin empty,
 And if their hosts should go for one day's journey
 Back toward the north, so that they might be stayed
 And be delayed upon their road to Connaught ;
 And if, on his part, Avver-guin should stay
 His deeds of valour from the hosts of Erin,
 Until the day when, in a powerful battle,
 The Five Great Fifths of Erin should be met
 Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
 As now their druids and their seers and prophets
 Were prophesying they should meet. He said
 He would accept that. Then the hosts went back
 One full day's journey toward the north ; and he,
 Keeping in Taltin, stayed his deeds of valour
 Against the men of the Four Fifths of Erin.

The next of the great Ulster chiefs to come
 To do his deeds against the hosts of Erin
 Was Rôhee son of Faha-win, who came
 From Reedonn in the north. He brought with him
 Thrice fifty warriors ; and he seized a hill

THE TÁIN

Facing the hosts of the Four Fifths of Erin.
Findabair daughter of Maev and Al-yill
Saw Rōhee on that hill not far from them ;
And he was thus :—a hero than whom none
Could be more comely or more beautiful ;
For on his head there was a bushy grove
Of hair red-yellow ; and his pure-skinned face
Was broad above and narrowed toward the chin ;
His eyes were very blue, keen with high pride,
Like laughing candles in his head ; his lips
Were rosy, thin ; his teeth gleamed like clear pearls ;
His figure was erect and tall and even,
Broad at the shoulder, narrow-hipped, white-skinned.
He wore a layna made of royal srōl
With margin-hems of gold. His bratt of crimson
Was fastened with a princely yō of gold.
He wore a white-bright shield, whereon were beasts
Of twisted gold. His dazzling warrior-sword
Was golden-hilted ; and his spear was long,
Grey-edged, and done with rivets of findrinny.
In all wide Erin there had ne'er been seen
A hero-chief more beautiful ; and maidens
Throughout wide Erin loved him for the tales
Which were related of his shape and beauty.
Findabair daughter of Maev and Al-yill,
When she perceived that warrior Rōhee there,
Grew rosy and then pale ; and ere the eve
She to her mother, even to Maev, spake all

BOOK XIII

Her whisper and her secret. "O dear mother,"
She said, "'tis yonder hero whom I love ;
And who (since I have seen him) e'er will be
The man to whom my thoughts will cleave—the man
Whom I would choose to be my love and wooer."
And Maev replied : "Dear child, if thou dost love him,
He shall be thine. Sleep with him, then, this night ;
But, first of all, ask of him that he stay
His deeds of valour from these hosts of Erin,
Until the day when, in a powerful battle,
The Five Great Fifths of Erin shall be met
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
As now our druids and our seers and prophets
Are prophesying they shall meet." And Rōhee
The son of Faha-win accepted that ;
And Findabair daughter of Maev and Al-yill
Went to the tent of Rōhee that same night.

Now one among the seven under-kings
Of Munster who had come upon that hosting
Was told of this. He spake unto his people :
"That maid was promised to myself," he said,
"Long before this. That was indeed the reason
Why I came forth upon this war and hosting."
Each of the seven under-kings of Munster
Said the same words ; and that that was the reason
Why he himself had come upon the hosting.
"And wherefore should we not now go," they said,
"To avenge our honour on those seven men,

THE TÁIN

Those seven Mahn-yas, sons of Maev and Al-yill,
Who now keep guard to rearward of these hosts,
In the low-lying Im-lee of Glendomna ?”

This was the counsel which they deemed the best.
Then they arose—each with his warrior-cantred.
And, on the other part, Al-yill and Maev
And all the seven sons of Mahga rose
With their own people and their warrior-cantreds.
And it was then that Fergus son of Roy
Rose with his cantred to make intercession
And peace between them. But to make that peace
Was putting hand to a great work ; for ere
That peace was made, and all sat down in quiet
Beside their comrades and beside their arms,
Hundreds of very valiant men had fallen
On both those sides. And this, indeed, was one
Of three uncounted slaughters on the Táin,
Which were : the Shessra of the Bressla More,
This “ Imlee of Glendomna,” and the battle
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
The battle of the Táin.

And Findabair

Daughter of Maev and Al-yill heard these tidings,
Namely, that those unnumbered men had fallen
Through her occasion. And she had not known
Of all the promises which had been made
Before the Táin. Then, when she heard these tidings,
Her heart within her breast broke and was cloven

With shame and generous feeling towards those men.
 And she found death ; and she was buried straightway.
 And that red, heath-grown, very lonely hill,
 Wherein that day with grief they buried her,
 After that time was called Slieve Findabair.
 And on that heath-grown hill they wailed above her
 Her death-wail, and her loud, long burial-cry—
 E'en as in old, old, very far-back days,
 Brigit the daughter of the mighty Dagda
 Had ordered and ordained ; for it was Brigit,
 That woman-poet and that woman-druid,
 The goddess whom all poets love and worship,
 Who had ordained that in all time to come
 There should be wailing o'er the dead in Erin.

The hosts of Erin said : “ White was this fight
 For Rōhee son of Faha-win—unnumbered
 Full-valiant men to fall through his occasion,
 And he without a redness or a wound.”

The hosts of Erin travelled toward the west,
 And made their camps that night in Slane of Meath.

Of “ Sooaltim's Repeated Warning ” now
 We next must tell. Sooaltim had been told
 How his young son, the son of Dectora,
 Namely, Cucullin, was in hard oppression
 Of very wrongful and unequal combat
 With Calateen of many dangerous arts

THE TÁIN

Together with his seven and twenty sons,
And his young grandson, Glass the son of Delga.

Then, after some delaying, Sooaltim
Went forth to find Cucullin ; and he found him
In wounds and pain, wounded well-nigh to death
After his awful combat with Faerdeeah.
And Sooaltim began to wail above him,
And to cry out with pity and with woe.
Then to Cucullin it seemed loss of honour
That Sooaltim should wail above him—seeing
That, though he was in wounds and grief and pain,
This Sooaltim could not avenge him. Thus
Was Sooaltim :—no mighty, wondrous warrior,
And yet no bad, mean warrior ; but a good,
Plain, homely, ordinary man-at-arms.

Cucullin then spake unto Sooaltim :
“ Good, now, my father Sooaltim,” he said,
“ Cease from thy wailing ; and away with thee
To Avvin Maha to the men of Ulster.
Say to them that they now must come themselves
After their wives and babes and driven kine.
I am unfit to guard them any longer
Amidst the gaps and passes of the land
Of Connallia Mweerhevna. All alone
I have been facing the Four Fifths of Erin
Since Sowin, until now, when Spring begins.
And I have slain one warrior at a ford
Each day, or else each night one hundred men.

The Faith of Men has not been kept with me
 In single combat at the battle-ford ;
 For they sent many men to fight with one.
 They are bent willow-wands which hold my bratt
 Above me, that it may not touch my skin.
 They are dry wisps of moss which dress my wounds.
 E'en from my crown unto my soles there is
 No place whereon a needle-point might rest,
 Which is without some gash or hurt or wound.
 There is not on me e'en one single hair
 Without its dew-like drop of deep red blood
 Held on its point—save on my left hand only,
 Wherewith I held my shield ; and my left hand
 Has thrice ten wounds. Unless they come to avenge
 These things forthwith, they never will avenge them
 Until the Breast of Judgment and of Doom.”

Then Laeg led up the wondrous Leea Maha,
 Cucullin's steed, who once from the Grey Lake
 On lone Slieve Foo-id had come forth to him,
 So that he cast his arms about his neck
 And wrestled with him, making him his own.
 (And now that steed would love him till his death.)
 And Sooaltim upon the Leea Maha,
 Cucullin's steed, rode north to Avvin Maha,
 With warnings unto Ulster. When he reached
 The side of Avvin, he cried out the words :
 “ In Ulster men are slain, O men of Ulster !
 Women are carried captive ! Kine are driven ! ”

THE TÁIN

Howbeit, he found not from the men of Ulster
The answer which he would have deemed sufficient.
And, since he found it not, he went yet further,
E'en to the top of the high, girdling rampart
Of Avvin; and he called the same words there :
“ In Ulster men are slain, O men of Ulster !
Women are carried captive ! Kine are driven ! ”
And still he found not from the men of Ulster
The answer which he would have deemed sufficient.
For thus the men of Ulster were:—’twas gass
To all of them to speak before their king
Should speak ; and to the king himself ’twas gass
To speak before the druids who were with him
Should speak. And Sooaltim went further yet,
E'en to the Flagstone of the Hostages
’Midst Avvin ; and he called the same words there ;
“ In Ulster men are slain, O men of Ulster !
Women are carried captive ! Kine are driven ! ”

Then Cathbad, the great Druid, spake—yet spake
As one who still was dreaming:—“ Who has slain ? ”
He said, “ and who has captured ? Who has driven ? ”
“ Al-yill and Maev have come despoiling you,”
Cried Sooaltim, “ and they have seized your women,
Your youths, your tender lads and little ones,
Your horses and your troops of mares, your kine,
Both milch and dry, your bulls, your numerous herds.
Cucullin all alone has stayed and hindered
And held in check the Four Great Fifths of Erin,

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Amid the gaps and passes and defiles
Of Conallia Mweerhevna. In his combats
They broke the Faith of Men with him. No man
From Ulster goes to aid him or to help him.
The lad was wounded. He is crushed and broken.
They are bent willow-wands which hold his bratt
Above him that it may not touch his skin.
There is not on him any single hair
Without its dew-like drop of deep red blood
Held on its point—save on his left hand only,
Wherewith he held his shield; and his left hand
Has thrice ten wounds. Unless ye go to avenge
These things forthwith, ye never will avenge them
Until the Breast of Judgment and of Doom.”

“The man who thus incites his own high-king
Is fit for death,” said Cathbad the great Druid.
“That which is said by Sooaltim is true,”
Said Conor. “It is true,” said all the men
In Avvin all together; but they spake
As men who still were dreaming. Sooaltim,
Because he found not from the men of Ulster
The answer which he would have deemed sufficient,
Went from them, then, in anger and great rage
And very venomous ire and fierce wrath,
And spake no further warning. It was then
That the dear steed, Cucullin’s Leea Maha,
Who loved Cucullin and who grieved for him,
Reared beneath Sooaltim; but Sooaltim

THE TÁIN

Rode on o'er the high rampart-mound of Avvin
Unheeding of that sign. Then his own shield
Turned against Sooaltim ; and the sharp rim
Of his own shield struck at his neck, and struck
The head from Sooaltim, whereat the steed,
Cucullin's steed, the loving Leea Maha,
Himself went back to Avvin ; and the shield
Was on the steed, and in the hollow shield
Was the swayed head of Sooaltim. The head
Of Sooaltim cried out the self-same words :
“ In Ulster men are slain, O men of Ulster !
Women are carried captive ! Kine are driven ! ”

Then Conor heard the cry of the dead head
Of Sooaltim. He rose and spake, yet spake
As one who still was dreaming : he was dulled
By his confusion in his Kesh and sleep.

“ That cry of lamentation is a little
Too mournful and too great,” he said, “ because
The heaven is above us and the earth
Is underneath us, and the blue-rimmed sea
Is round us in a circuit. And unless
The firmament with all its showers of stars
Shall fall upon the firm face of the earth—
Unless the many-furrowed, blue-rimmed sea
Shall veil the thick-haired forehead of the world—
Unless the earth shall break and yawn beneath us—
I will bring back each of those captured women
To her own place and her own Ulster dwelling,

BOOK XIII

I will bring back each of those driven kine
To her own stead and her own field for grazing,
By victory of battle and of conflict,
Of combat and of contest and of war."

And it was then that Conor saw his son,
Finn-ha Faerbend. (And he was called "Faerbend,"
"The Man of Horns," because he used to wear
Horns of bright silver on his head.) And Conor
Bade him go forth to muster and to gather
The men of Ulster; and he named to him
The men whom he should summon; and he named
In equal way the living and the dead:
He yet was one part dream-blind, and was dulled
By his confusion in his Kesh and sleep.
He said: "O Finn-ha, go from me. Go forth
To Conall Carna son of Avver-guin
At Meedlougher; to Mend son of Sal-colgan
Beside the white-bright Boyne; to the three sons
Of Feeacna who own the Donn of Cooley,
Namely, to Dawra, Ross, and Im-ha, south
In Cooley; to great Connud son of Morna,
Beside the Callan; to wise Avver-guin
The poet, by the Bush in the far north.
To Laery the Victorious son of Connud,
By his own loch at Immil; to wise Finguin
The leech of Finngower; to Cooscree Mend,
The son of Conor, in green Innish Cooscree;
To Foorbee Faerbenn son of Conor, at Seel

THE TÁIN

On green Moy Innish ; to renowned Cucullin
The son of Soaaltim, on Moy Mweerhevna ;
To Owen son of Door-ha King of Farney ;
To Blai the brewy, in the Ards of Ulster ;
To Avver-guin of white-foamed Assaroe ;
To huge, thick-necked Munnrower son of Guerkind,
From out of Mourne ; to Kehern son of Finntan,
At Carrloig ; to great-spirited Folloon,
Conor's young son, who heads the lads in Avvin ;
To Illann son of Fergus son of Roy,
In Gower ; to strong Broo-aher, in Slawnga ;
To Shenca, the sweet-worded one of Ulster,
In his own house ; to Muridah and Cotreb
And Shennel Ooaha ; to the great queen,
Namely, Findmore the warrior-wife of Keltar,
In strong Dunseverick by the northern sea ;
To Rôhee, in bright Reedonn ; to great Keltar
The son of Oo-hider, in Doon Le-Glass ;
To Aerrga Ecbael, in his own Bree Aerrga."

These are a few of those great kings and princes
And hero-chiefs whom Conor named that day.
But many more he named. Not difficult
Indeed to Finn-ha was that mustering,
That congregating and that war-assembling,
Which Conor gave to him to make. For those
Who then were west or north or east of Avvin
Came, without pause, unto the Green of Avvin,
Under obedience to their ruling kings,

BOOK XIII

And at the words of their own chiefs and princes,
To serve this rising and this war of Conor.
But those who then were south of smooth-bright
Avvin,

Went without pause along the track and road
Of the great hosts of the Four Fifths of Erin.

The first day's travel which the men of Ulster
Made around Conor brought them ere night fell
To high Ardcullin. "Wherefore halt we here,
O men?" said Conor. "We halt here," said they,
"Awaiting thy two sons, Feeaha, namely,
And Feeacna, who went from us to Tara,
To fetch therefrom thy little grandson Erc,
The son of Fedilmid, the Blooming One,
Thy daughter. For, although he be the son
Of Carpry Neea Faer, of Al-yill's brother,
Who sides with Maev upon this war and hosting,
They ask him now to come, with the full strength
Which he can muster forth on this occasion,
To help his mother's father." Conor said:
"I will no longer halt upon Ardcullin ;
Because the men of Erin have not heard
That I have risen from that darkening pain
And Kesh wherein we were ; they have not heard
That I am yet alive after that pain."
And it was then that Conor son of Fahtna
And Keltar son of Oo-hider went forward
With three times fifty well-armed chariot-heroes,

THE TÁIN

Till they reached Ath Neermeeda. Nigh that ford
They saw eight twenties of huge, powerful men
Of the especial folk of Maev and Al-yill;
And with them were eight twenties of the women
Of Ulster in hard bondage and oppression.
This was their share of the rich spoil of Ulster:—
A woman in the hand of every man.
Conor and Keltar took from those huge men
Their eight times twenty heads; and they delivered
Those women from their bondage and oppression.
After that time, that ford was called Ath Fayna,
“Ford of the Warriors,” because thus the warriors
Of east and west encountered there that day.
Conor and Keltar turned again and stayed
On high Ardcullin nigh their hosts that night.

That night on high Ardcullin 'midst his sleep
Keltar the son of Oo-hider was troubled
And stirred by visions, and he sang these words :
“Gather yourselves, ye warriors and ye heroes !
A mighty battle will be fought by you.
The heavy-sodded earth will shake with you.
Thick showers of spears will be hurled forth by you.
Deep, vengeful wounds shall be thick-dealt by you.
Ye shall inflict horror and fear and dread.
Ye shall inflict pale death and lasting shame.
Gather yourselves, ye warriors and ye heroes !
A very mighty battle will be fought

BOOK XIII

Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig
At morn upon a day which now is near us.”

That night on Slane of Meath amidst his sleep
Cormac Conlingish son of Conor son
Of Fahtna Fahee was perturbed and troubled
And stirred by visions ; and he sang the words :

“ Wondrous the morn ! Wondrous the time of
meeting !

Hosts will be mixed. Hosts will be turned in flight.
Throats will be broken, sand and earth be reddened.
The kings of Ulster will arise round Conor.
They will contend for their own Ulster women.
They will contend for their own driven herds,
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
At morn upon a day which now is near us.”

That night on Slane of Meath amidst his sleep
Rough Duffa Dael from Ulster lands was troubled
And stirred by visions ; and he sang the words :

“ Great are the hosts—the hosts on high Ardcullin.
Great is the morn—the morn on wide, fair Meath.
Great are the hosts of steeds—the hosts of steeds
Which shall be seen on the long road of Assal.
Great is the fight—the fight not far from Clahra.
Great is the battle-storm—the battle-storm
Of men of Ulster round their king, round Conor.
They will contend for their own Ulster women.

THE TÁIN

They will contend for their own driven herds,
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
At morn upon a day which now is near us."

And this indeed is truth, and not a lie :
To men of Ulster and to men of Erin .
This night was not the calmest and the gentlest
Which they had ever known upon a hosting,
Or e'er would know in any time to come—
Because of all the songs and prophecies
Which they thus uttered in their time of sleeping,
And all the spectres and the loathly shapes,
And all the apparitions and the visions
Which in the darkness and the doleful gloom
Appeared to them amidst their sleep that night.

BOOK XIV

BOOK XIV

AT time of the delightfulness and beauty
Of the red light of morning, Al-yill rose
From out his royal tent on Slane of Meath,
And said : “ From Sowin until spring-tide now
We have been devastating, wasting, burning
All Ulster and all Crithny. We have taken
From the rich folk of Ulster and of Crithny
Their wives and sons and tender little ones,
Their steeds and flocks of mares, their herds of kine,
Their herds of every sort of grazing kine ;
And we have levelled down their turfy knolls,
Till all their glens and trenches are filled up
After our track. Therefore, this being so,
I will no longer tarry on this plain ;
But let them give me battle on Moy Wee
If so they will. And still, whate’er we say,
Let some one go from us to view yon plain,
The great wide plain of Meath, that we may know
Whether as yet the men of Ulster come
Upon that plain ; and if indeed they come,
We will not flee unto our rath, it being
Unkingly so to flee before a foe.”
“ Who shall go forth to view the plain ? ” asked each.

THE TÁIN

“Who but Mac Roth, who is chief-messenger
Of Erin all,” said Al-yill; “he stands here.”

Mac Roth went forth to view and to survey
The clear, wide plain of Meath. Anon he heard,
Floating from far away, a muffled roar,
A crackling, thunderous murmur, and deep din
Of many mingled sounds. It seemed to him
To mean no trifling thing—rather it seemed
That the secure and solid firmament
Descended on the firm face of the earth,
Or that the boundless and blue-breasted sea
O’erflowed the thick-haired forehead of the world,
Or that the earth itself trembled and moved
In some tremendous earthquake; or, at least,
That the primeval and huge forest trees
Fell, each upon the other, caught and grasped
Each by the other’s forked and branching boughs.
One thing was certain: the wild forest-beasts
Were from the distant forest fleeing forth,
So that the heath and grass of the wide plain
Might not be seen beneath them. And Mac Roth
Went to relate his tidings at the place
Where Maev and Al-yill were, and Fergus was
With all the chiefs. And there he told his tale.

“What may that mean, O Fergus?” questioned
Maev.

“Not difficult,” said Fergus. “The dim roar,
And crackling, thunderous murmur which he heard

BOOK XIV

Mean that the northern warriors have awaked
From their long Kesh, and now with sword and axe
Attack the ancient forest, hewing there
A road before their chariots ; and all beasts
Who in the forest dwell flee forth in fright,
So that the heath and grass of the wide plain
May not be seen beneath them."

Once again
Mac Roth went forth to view the plain. He saw,
Hovering far away 'twixt earth and sky,
A long, grey mist. It seemed to him he saw,
Rising from out the hollows and the dells
Of the dim mist, clear eminences, firm,
And like dark isles in silver-hollow lakes.
He thought that he discerned in the forefront
Of the same mist, deep, groaning caves and dens ;
And, at their openings, fair, white linen cloths
Blown by the wind ; or a white fairy snow
Soft drifting by. And then he seemed to see,
Fluttering through the mist, a scattered flock
Of various birds, all strange and wonderful ;
And seemed again to see that the same mist
Was spangled all along, as with bright sparks
Of newly-kindled fire, or as with stars,
Clear-shining on a bright, still night of frost.
And while he gazed he heard a growing roar
Of mingled booming, crying, thundering,
With shrill, sharp snaps and thuds, ringings and cheers,

THE TÁIN

All floating towards him on the eastern wind.
And he returned and came unto the place
Where Maev and Al-yill were, and Fergus was,
With all the chiefs: and there he told his tale.

“What may that mean, O Fergus?” Al-yill asked.
“Not difficult,” said Fergus; “that grey mist,
Which rose between the heaven and the earth,
Was the white, cloudy breath of steeds and men,
Fiercely expelled, and mingled with the sand
And whirling dust and soilure of the plain.
Those little darkling heights and crests he saw,
Peeping from out the hollows of the mist—
They were the heads of kings and mighty men,
High-towering o’er their chariots. And the dens
And deep engulfing caverns he discerned—
They were the mouths and nostrils of the steeds
And mighty men, opened, distended wide,
Strongly respiring the free air and wind.
And what unto Mac Roth seemed fairy snow
Or linen-web was the white foam and froth
Flung from the bridle-bits of fiery steeds,
Urging their course with strength and vehemence.
Again, what to Mac Roth seemed flocks of birds,
All varied, numerous, strange, and wonderful,
Were the quick turves and sods shot from the hooves
Of the same fiery steeds as on they come.
And all the mingled uproar that he heard
Was the loud shield-cry of the mighty shields,

The hissing of the spears, ringing of swords,
 Clangour of helmets, friction manifold
 Of high-suspended weapons, and, besides,
 Creaking of cords and ropes, grinding of wheels,
 Tramping of steeds, and, through and over all,
 The ceaseless tread of battle-warriors there,
 Swift marching towards us o'er the plain of Meath.
 Lastly, the brilliant spanglings which he saw,
 Like stars of night, or sparks from ruddy fire—
 Those were the terrible and flaming eyes
 Of heroes and of warriors gleaming bright
 Beneath their shapely helmets. Angrily
 They shine and glow. And this I say to you,
 There ne'er have been, and ne'er will be again,
 Men like to those Ultonian men for fury
 And battle-anger and the rage of war."

"We care but little for all this," said Maev;
 "With us there are good youths and fighting-men
 Who will know how to greet them."

"Think not so,"
 Said Fergus; "this is truth and not a lie—
 That not in Erin, not in all the world,
 From Greece and Scythia to the Isles of Orc
 And Isles of Gat, and south to Bregan's Tower,
 May ye find hosts to quell Ultonian hosts,
 Whose rage and anger have been once aroused."

That day the men of Erin left their camp

THE TÁIN

In Slane of Meath ; and, moving towards the west,
Encamped at night in Clahra. When the sun
Rose the next morn and shined with glowing face
Above the fair-banked edges of the world—
“ Good now, O men of Erin ! ” Al-yill said ;
“ Let some one go from us to view the plain—
The great wide plain of Meath ; and let him see
Whether the men of Ulster yet have come
To Slane of Meath where we were yesterday ;
And let him bring to us a true account
Of all their arms and war-accoutrements,
Their kings and heroes and their well-known chiefs,
Their breakers of great rifts in battle-ranks,
With all their troops from all their different lands.
To hear these all described will be to us
A pastime and will while away the morn.”
“ Who then shall go ? ” they asked. “ Who but
Mac Roth ? ”

Said Al-yill. So Mac Roth went forth once more ;
And he took up his post in Slane of Meath,
Over against the men of Ulster there.
From early morning till the evening fell,
The Ulster hosts arrived in Slane of Meath.
So great their numbers that in all that time
The land was ne’er left naked, but was clothed
By moving throngs. All orderly they came ;
For every throng surrounded its own king,
And every band its lord. Each chief and lord,

With the full muster of his hosting, camped
 In a clear place apart. When evening fell,
 All had arrived and camped in Slane of Meath.
 Mac Roth delayed not till the night had come,
 But, when the first three powerful bands arrived,
 Returned to tell his tale. "Good now, Mac Roth,"
 Said Al-yill; "in what order do they come,
 And who came first?" "I know not," said Mac Roth,
 "But first there came an ardent, stalwart band
 Of very noble aspect. I esteemed
 Their numbers to be thrice three thousand. All,
 Quick flinging off their raiment, dug the earth,
 And lifted sods, and raised a mighty mound
 High on the rounded summit of a hill,
 To be a seat and station for their lord.
 And he, their lord, was tall and thinly-built,
 Courteous and proud, of princeliest way and style,
 Accustomed to command and to restrain,
 And awful was his kingly gleaming eye.
 His yellow bush of crispéd drooping hair;
 His trimly forking beard; his crimson fooan,
 Folding five times about him; the gold pin
 Above his breast; the layna next his skin,
 Of purest white, adorned with threads of gold,
 Were all of princely mode. He wore, besides,
 A white-bright shield, adorned with monstrous beasts
 In deep red gold. In the one hand he bore
 A golden-hilted sword, and in the other

THE TÁIN

A wide, grey spear. This warrior took his seat
High on the mound, and calmly waited there
Till all the rest should come ; and his own troop
Sat down there round about him. Next there came
Two bands of thirty hundred, both alike
In discipline and number and array.
The man who led the first of these had hair
And beard like crispéd gold. His warrior's layna,
Of good brown-red with gold embroidery,
Descended to his knees ; and over it
He wore a greenish bratt, with silver clasp.
Besides his shield and ivory-hilted sword
With golden thread-work, in his hand he bore
A shining spear secured with silver bands
And clasps of gold ; and marvellous the games
Played by that spear held in the warrior's hand ;
For first the silver bands whirled and revolved
Over the clasps of gold from butt to socket,
And after that the clasps of gold revolved
Above the bands of silver back again.
This warrior sat upon the left-hand side
Of the great chief who earliest reached the hill ;
And his own band sat round him. ' Sat,' I said,
Nay, but with knee to ground and shield to chin,
They waited to spring towards us. One thing more,
The leader of that band—he with the spear—
Wore on his head a mind of glorious gold."

The second of those two companion-bands

Was ruled o'er by a man sedate, grey-haired,
 With wide, white brow, and shrewd and kindly
 eyes.

About his chin there hung a long, grey beard,
 Forking and slender. And his fair apparel
 Was all of silvery white and darkest grey.
 For dark grey was his bratt with leafy brooch
 Of white findrinny ; and of purest white
 The layna next his skin. His shield was white,
 Adorned with silver. At his shoulder's height
 I saw a bough of bronze. This warrior sat
 High on the mound in presence of the chief
 Who first arrived there ; and I say to you,
 Sweeter than murmuring of crested harps
 In hands of skilful players was the sound
 Of that man's voice discoursing with the chief
 Who came first to the hill, and giving him
 Wise admonition and discreet advice.

“ Who may these be, O Fergus,” Al-yill said.
 “ Assuredly, I know,” said Fergus ; “ he,
 For whom was raised a mighty mound of sods
 Where he might sit till all the rest should come,
 Was Conor son of Fahtna Fahee son
 Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More—
 Conor, high-king of Ulster, and the son
 Of a high-king of Erin. He who came
 And sat on Conor's left, and wore a mind
 Of glorious gold, was Cooscree Mend of Maha,

From Innish Cooscree. He is Conor's son,
 And leads into the war the youthful sons
 Of lesser Ulster kings, besides the sons
 Of kings of Erin in his fosterage.
 The wondrous spear he has, with silver bands
 And clasps of gold, is known as Cooscree's Candle.
 And this, now, is the manner of that spear—
 The bands of silver never do revolve
 Around the clasps of gold but at a time
 When some great prey is nigh. I therefore think
 They now revolve in sight of some huge prey
 And near-approaching slaughter. And for him,
 The wide-browed, gentle hero who did sit
 In Conor's presence, and did speak with him,
 Who could that be but Shenca? he who owns
 The sweetest oratory and eloquence
 Of all the men of Erin; he whose words
 Of eloquence and oratory calm
 The hosts of Ulster; he who with three words
 Might calm the war and tumult of the world.
 Howbeit, I give my word that at this time
 They are no timorous counsels which he gives
 Unto his lord, but counsels to fight well,
 And do great deeds of battle and of courage.
 Yea, and I give my word," Fergus exclaimed,
 "They are deed-doing men who woke from sleep,
 Round about Conor at earliest dawn to-day!"

"I make no great account of them," said Maev;

“With us there are good youths and fighting-men,
Who will know how to greet them.”

“Nay, not so,”

Said Fergus ; “this is truth and not a lie,—
That not in Erin, not in all the world,
From Greece and Scythia to the Isles of Orc
And Isles of Gat, and south to Bregan’s Tower,
May ye find hosts to quell Ultonian hosts,
Whose rage and anger have been once aroused.”

Once more Mac Roth went out from them to view
The wide great plain of Meath. He watched each band
Arrive in Slane of Meath. When all had come,
Almost at meeting-point of night with day,
He came again with tidings to the place
Where Maev and Al-yill were, and Fergus was,
With all the chiefs, there to relate his tale.

“There came another band unto that hill
In Slane of Meath,” Mac Roth continued then.
“It is no lie ; with raging impetus
They gained that hill ; and heavy was the dread,
And huge the terror they conveyed. Their cloaks
Streamed in the air behind them. In their front
I saw a valorous leader, whose huge head
Was streaked with sparse, grey hairs ; and in that head
Blazed yellow, full, large eyes. A yellow bratt
Fell round about him ; and a pin of gold
Was in that o’er his breast. A yellow layna

THE TÁIN

Lay next his skin. A wide, long-shafted spear
Was in that warrior's hand. A drop of blood
Gleamed on its edge." "What man was that, O
Fergus?"

Al-yill demanded. "Well I know," said Fergus.
"Nor single challenger nor mighty host
Escapes that hero who approaches there;
For that is Laery the Victorious, son
Of Connud Boy, the son of that same Illiah,
Who of late came from Immil in the north,
And in his old age died assailing you."

"There came another band to that same hill,"
Mac Roth went on. "A great thick-sided man
Commanded it. In truth, it little wanted
But that each brawny leg and limb of him
Was thicker than a mean man's trunk! No lie!
He is indeed a man! Brown, bushy hair
He had upon him; and beneath the hair
A scarred, blue-crimson face, and in the face
High-up, bright-speckled eyes. He was, moreover,
Noble and energetic. All his men
Were dark-skinned, dark-eyed; and their red-bronze
spears
Flamed bright. They seemed not subject unto Conor."
"Who is that, Fergus?" Al-yill asked. "I know,
In truth I know," said Fergus. "He, who there
Approaches, is as one embodied thirst

For battle. He is a great lord of arms
 Above the men of Erin in the north ;
 For he is my own foster-brother, Fergus
 The son of Leddy, from his wealthy rath
 In fertile green Moy Linny of the north."

"There came another band unto that hill,"
 Mac Roth went on. "A four-square, bull-like man
 Commanded it; and he had bulging eyes,
 Grey, and set low down in his head. His hair
 Was curled and yellow; and a scarlet shield,
 Rimmed with hard silver, made a huge, bright disk
 Behind his head and shoulders. In his hand
 He held a smooth, long spear. A grayish bratt
 Fell round him, and a copper yō secured it
 Above his mighty chest. His hooded layna,
 Being up-girded, reached but to his thighs.
 Upon his left leg was a short, straight dagger.

"Who was that, Fergus?" Al-yill asked. "I know,"
 Said Fergus. "He is a stockade of battle
 Against the face of all of you who go there;
 For he is Connud the great son of Morna,
 From green-banked, gentle Callan in the north."

"There came another band unto that hill,"
 Mac Roth went on, "and they were firm of tread,
 And wondrously and diversely attired.
 A beautiful, unresting hero led

THE TÁIN

That band ; and he was robed in fine blue cloth,
Which was adorned with stooags of findrinny,
And at the openings of the garment bore
Rich red gold buttons of distinctive stamp
And character. Outside he wore a bratt
Freaked out with every privileged tint and hue.
He had five wheels of gold, namely, his shield.
He had a dagger-straight, hard sword. His spear,
Ridgéd and straight, flamed redly in his hand.

“ Who might that be, O Fergus ? ” Al-yill asked.
“ In truth, I recognize him,” Fergus said.
“ He is the choicest of all kingly poets ;
He is a road of learning and of wisdom ;
For he is Avverguin the great, good poet,
And son of Ecket, the old smith and brazier—
Avverguin from the Bush in the far north.”

“ There came another band unto that hill,”
Mac Roth continued. “ Two soft, tender youths
Went in the forefront of that band. Two bratts
Of greenish hue were round them ; two cassawns
Of whitest silver clasped these o’er their breasts ;
Two laynas of smooth, yellow silk were next
Their bird-white skin ; and two white-hilted swords
Hung at their girdles. Two five-barbéd spears
With silver rings were in their hands. There seemed
But little difference in age between them.

“ Who were those two, O Fergus ? ” Al-yill asked.

BOOK XIV

“ I know indeed,” said Fergus. “ Two of one counsel,
Two of one teaching, two alike in valour,
Two fires, two flames, two torches equal burning,
Two Ulster champions always next their king.
Those there are Feeaha and Feeacna,
Two sons of Conor son of Fahtna son
Of Ross the Red-haired son to Rury More.

“ Another band arrived upon that plain,”
Mac Roth continued ; “ and it was commanded
By a white-chested, very comely hero,
Much like to Al-yill there in form and style,
In strength and whiteness, in array and arms,
In bounty and in valour. On his head
He wore a mīnd of gold. His shield was rimmed
With gold. His sword-hilt was adorned with gold.
His towering, five-barbed spear had gold upon it.”

“ Who was that hero, Fergus ? ” Al-yill asked.
“ I know that hero,” Fergus said. “ His heart
Is hard as is a flagstone, yet it has
The rage of fire. He drives his enemies,
E’en as a charioteer drives two swift steeds ;
For he is Foorbee Faerbenn son of Conor,
From Conor’s own Moy Innish in the north.”

“ There came another band unto that plain,”
Mac Roth went on. “ An all-white, powerful hero
Commanded it. His eyes and hair and beard,

THE TÁIN

His raiment and accoutrements, were all
Of the one whiteness. Only his great shield
Was rimmed with yellow gold, and his long sword
Was golden-hilted. His tall five-barbed spear,
Held in his hand, showed high o'er all the hosts."

"Who may that be, O Fergus?" Al-yill asked,
"Know'st thou perchance?" "Indeed, I know," said
Fergus.

"Belovéd in our country of the north
Is that white hero who draws near you there ;
Belovéd is that bear of blows and combats ;
Belovéd is that mountain-bear of actions ;
That is white Faeradah, the just and famous,
From Nemud in Slieve Fooid in the north."

"Another band arrived upon that hill,"
Mac Roth went on. "A big and stalwart man
Walked in its front. Red, fiery-tinted hair
Was on him ; and huge, fiery-tinted eyes
Blazed in his head. He wore a mottled bratt.
His shield was green ; his spear rose thin and blue ;
His troop around him was all gory-red ;
And he himself amidst them was all red,
Bloody, and scarred with numerous hurts and wounds."

"Who was that man, O Fergus?" Al-yill asked.
"I know him well," said Fergus. "He, indeed,
Is an illustrious, kinglike beast of combat.
He is a raging bull, blocking a pass ;

He is the challenger of Inver Colpa,
 And is the fortress-gate to all north Erin ;
 For he is Mend son of Salcolgan, and hails
 From the north sand-spits of the white-bright Boyne.
 'Tis to avenge the prey which you have taken
 That he now comes against you," Fergus said.

" There came another band unto that plain,"
 Mac Roth went on. " In its forefront I saw
 A corpulent, thick-throated hero,—black
 His hair, and bushy, and his face all scarred
 And crimson. Brightly sparkled his green eyes
 Within his head. His spear had guarded eyelets.
 His black shield had a rim of hard findrinny.
 His bratt was of chill grey, clasped with pale gold.
 A layna of striped silk lay next his skin.
 His sword, which was adorned with carven bone
 And twisted work of golden threads, he wore
 Upon the outside of his raiment." " Who
 Was that, O Fergus ?" Al-yill asked. " I know,"
 Said Fergus. " He is as a spring-tide wave
 Drowning small gentle streams upon the shore.
 He is thick-necked Munn-rower son of Guerkind,
 From the Mourne Territory in the north."

" There came another band unto that plain,"
 Mac Roth said. " Verily they seemed to be
 In multitude, a huge and drowning flood ;

THE TÁIN

In ardour, a red flame ; in strength, a cliff ;
In violence, a thunderstorm ; in force,
A winter-torrent. In their front I saw
A raging, hideous warrior ; and he
Had great ears, a great nose, and apple-eyes,
And rough, grey hair. He wore a striped grey bratt
Pinned o'er his breast by a huge iron spike,
Which reached from shoulder unto shoulder. Next
His skin he had a rough and streaky layna.
There was on him a big brown hill—his shield.
At one side of his back he bore a sword
Of seven pieces of well-tempered iron.
He carried in his hand a great, grey spear,
With thirty sewings through its eye-holes. Truly,
Whoe'er he was, some folk amongst the hosts
Already at that hill fell down with fear,
At seeing that terrific warrior come
With his own band about him."

"Who was that,
O Fergus?" Al-yill asked. "I know, indeed,"
Said Fergus. "He is as an ocean-flood
Whelming the solid land—that man who comes
There, with his band about him. He is Keltar,
The mighty Keltar son of Oo-hider,
From his own doon, Le-Glass in the east-north."

"There came another band unto that hill
In Slane of Meath," Mac Roth said. "It was bold

BOOK XIV

And powerful, and it was rude and dreadful ;
And at its head I saw a big-mouthed man,
The measure of his mouth being like the measure
Of mouths of stallions. He was big of belly,
Blind of one eye, and with a low, flat head,
And had long arms. His hair was frizzed and brown.
His bratt was black, with surface napped and teased,
And was secured by a round wheel of bronze.
He wore a layna with distinctive markings,
And a long sword, and a thick-studded shield.”

“ Who was that man, O Fergus ? ” Al-yill asked.
“ I know,” said Fergus. “ He who there approaches
Is a red-handed and a raging lion.
He is one cruel thirst for blood and combat ;
For he is Aerrga Ecbael—Aerrga Horse-mouth,—
From his own stead, Bree Aerrga, in the north.”

“ Another band arrived upon that hill,”
Mac Roth continued. “ And there could not be
A man-at-arms more beautiful than he
Who led that band. His figure was erect
And tall and evenly proportioned, broad
Of shoulder, narrow-hipped, white-skinned. His face
Was broad above and narrowed towards the chin ;
And in the face his clear, blue, brilliant eyes
Burned like two candles. His two lips were red
And thin. His teeth gleamed like clear pearls. His
hair

THE TÁIN

Of a rich yellow-red fell thick and free.
This warrior was arrayed in a full bratt
Of crimson, fastened by a yō of gold.
His layna was of kingly srōl, embroidered
With bright, red gold. He bore a pure, white shield,
Whereon were tortuous beasts of gold. His sword
Was golden-hilted ; and his spear was long,
Grey-edged, and done with rivets of findrinny."

"Who is that warrior, Fergus?" Al-yill asked.
"I know," said Fergus, "and ye know well, too.
That man is a half-battle to each one
Who goes there. He himself is a battalion.
He is your kin by marriage. He it is
Who slept with your own daughter, Findabair ;
So that the Munster princes rose in wrath,
And many men were slain, and she thereafter
Died for pure shame and generous feeling towards
them.

For that is Ro-hee son of Faha-win,
From his own doon, from Reedonn in the north."

"There came another band unto that hill,"
Mac Roth continued. "In their style and mode
They differed from all other bands which came.
For some men wore red bratts and some wore blue.
Some bratts were of pure white and some were green,
And some were blay or yellow ; all alike
Were beautiful and streamed upon the wind.

BOOK XIV

'Midst of that troop I saw a little lad
 With ruddy, freckled face, and crimson bratt
 Fixed by a yō of gold. Of kingly srōl
 His little layna was, and it was done
 With broidery of gold. His small, white shield
 Bore figured beasts of gold, and had its rim
 And central boss of gold. A golden hilt
 His sword had ; and a little, light, sharp spear
 Held in his hand, rose high above his head."

"Who may those be?" asked Al-yill. Fergus said :
 "I cannot recognize their style or mode,
 Nor know I such a royal child in Ulster ;
 But there is one thing that I think. I think
 Those are the men of kingly Tara, coming
 Round about Erc, the son of Fedilmid
 The Freshly-blooming One, great Conor's daughter.
 Erc is the son of Carpry Neea Faer,
 High-king of Tara, brother and ally
 To Al-yill there ; yet think not that that child
 Comes, as a kinsman comes, to aid or help you.
 Without his father's leave I think he comes
 To aid his mother's father. And," said Fergus,
 "If I am right in my surmise, a herd
 Trampling green crops that band will be to you.
 Loudly and wrathfully those mighty bulls
 Will roar, the while they guard the tender calf
 Of their own queenly heifer, in the fight
 Of Gawrig in the morning of to-morrow."

THE TÁIN

“ There came another band unto that hill,”
Mac Roth went on. “ Controlling it, I saw
Three purple-faced and anger-kindled men
Of honourable rank. Each had thick hair
Of pale blay-yellow; and their ample bratts
Were all alike, and were secured by pins
Of brightest gold. Bright gold embroidery
Adorned their three neat laynas. Their three shields
Were all alike. A golden-hilted sword
Each wore upon his thigh; in his right hand
Each grasped a grey, wide spear.”

“ Who were those, Fergus?”
Asked Al-yill. “ Three good chieftains of Moy Cova,
Three heroes of the Road of Meed-lougher,
Three lords of Cooley, three revered old men
Of the east quarter of Slieve Foo-id,” said Fergus.
“ They are the three famed sons of Feeacna,
The three good guardians of the bull, whose names
Are Dawra and Ross and Im-ha,” Fergus said.

“ There came another band unto that hill
In Slane of Meath,” Mac Roth said. “ It was last
Of all the bands; and it contained not fewer
Than thirty hundred. They were bright, clean
warriors,
And ruddy-cheeked, with long, light-yellowish hair.
Their countenances seemed to glow. Their eyes
Were bright and kingly. Garments glossed and bright

Were held by golden pins. Their blue-white spears
 Shined like pure glass, flashing in the clear air.
 Their shields were yellow, threatening dangerous blows.
 Their swords were golden-hilted. As these came,
 Clamour of grief broke from each man of them ;
 Sad, moanful mourning had invaded them ;
 Sorrowful there seemed each mean combatant ;
 And each high, kingly chief was sorrowful.
 Their heads were bowed with sorrow and with pain.
 Bereaved seemed that bright host illustrious,
 Orphaned of him who should have governed them.”
 “ Who are those, then ? ” said Al-yill unto Fergus.
 “ Truly we know, then,” Fergus answered him.
 Those are fierce lions, lions of a battle ;
 Those are the cantred out of Moy Mweerhevna.
 And this it is which makes them bowed of head,
 And sorrowful and void of joy—their being
 Without their own young, native king amongst them,
 Without Cucullin, red of sword, commanding,
 Battle-victorious and battle-triumphing.”

“ There is enough of cause for them,” said Maev,
 “ However scant of joy and sorrowful,
 And grieved at heart and downcast they may be.
 There is no ill we have not done to them.
 We were despoiling, burning, reaving them
 From Sowin unto Spring-tide. We have taken
 Their wives and tender sons and little ones,
 Their steeds and flocks of mares, their troops of kine,

THE TÁIN

Their herds of every sort of grazing kine.
And we have not alone burned to the grass
Their strongly-timbered houses, wide and fair ;
But their high, fortified green mounds, whereon
Those houses were, we have so levelled down,
That all their glens and trenches are filled up
After our track. And their unrivalled bull,
Their wondrous Donn of Cooley, we have taken
Away from them, to bring with us to Croohan."

"O Maev, thou hast therein no ground," said
Fergus,

"For triumphing or boasting o'er those men.
There is no ill that thou hast done to them,
The which the leader of that able band
Hath not avenged upon thee. For each grave,
Each flagstone, and each high, sepulchral mound,
Between the ford wherein Faerdeeah fell
And the east shore of Erin, is the grave
Or flagstone, or high, bare sepulchral mound
Of some good hero and good combatant,
After his slaying by the noble leader
Of that same band we speak of. Well for those
For whom these strive in battle ! Woe for those
Whom they contend against ! They will be equal
To half a battle for the men of Erin,
While they contend for their own lord and king
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig,
In battle in the morning of to-morrow."

Mac Roth went on : " I heard a grievous cry
 Somewhere to westward of the battle-hosts,
 Or else to eastward ; it was not amidst them."
 " What was that cry, then ?" Al-yill asked of
 Fergus.

" Truly, we know that," Fergus answered him.
 " That was Cucullin, who, after his striving
 To rise and come and take his share in battle,
 Was being forcibly laid supine down
 Upon his sick man's sod and sod of healing,
 Underneath hazel-boughs and hooks and ropes.
 The men of Ulster will not let him come,
 Owing to his sore hurts and harms and wounds ;
 Because he is not fit for fight or combat
 After his fight and combat with Faerdeeah."

That thing was true which Fergus said to them.
 It was Cucullin, who had striven to rise,
 Being again with force laid supine down
 Upon his sick man's sod and sod of healing,
 Underneath hazel-boughs and hooks and ropes.
 Hearing that thus he lay, bound to his bed,
 Two poison-tongued, searing she-satirists,
 Fehan and Collac, namely, now went forth
 From out the encampment of the men of Erin,
 Till they were falsely crying and bewailing
 Beside Cucullin, crying unto him
 Of Ulster routed, Conor slain, and Fergus
 Slain in return in the great field of battle.

THE TÁIN

This was the night wherein the fierce More-reega
Daughter of Ernmas came in the doleful dark,
Between their two wide camps, inciting them
The one against the other. She was heard
To call these words, there, in the dark and gloom :
“ Ravens shall pick the throats of men to-morrow.
Strife is promoted. Blue-mouthed bives shall scream,
Hovering o’er breasts of prostrate men of Erin.
Welcome, Ultonians ! Memorable, feastful,
Will be the slaughter of the flesh of men
Upon these fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig
In battle in the morning of to-morrow.”

BOOK XV

BOOK XV

So, in a high hill-nook on Fedain Collna,
'Mid whitening bushes of wild, spiky thorn,
Cucullin lay, held to his sick-man's bed
By hooks and ties and crooks. Through night's dark
shades

He heard the red More-reega's calls and cries,
The blood-cries of the bitter-throated Bive.
Then, in the first grey whiteness of day's light,
He called and said to his own charioteer,
Namely, to Laeg the son of Ree-angowra :
" O my friend Laeg," he said, " through many a noon
Thou hast been guarding and protecting me
In my deep sleep in gaps and ways of danger ;
And thou hast been a prince of charioteers.
It will be shameful to thee, truly, now,
If aught shall happen on yon field to-day,
On one side or the other, of the which
Thou hast for me no knowledge." " Aught," said
Laeg,
" That I may know myself, O Cucucawn,
Shall be made known to thee. And now," said Laeg,
" E'en in the first grey whiteness of day's light,
Out of the camp upon the west I see

THE TÁIN

A herd of kine stray eastward. And I see
A band of gillies speed upon the plain
To hinder them and turn them ; and I see
Out of the camp upon the east a band
Of beardless gillies speed upon that plain
To take the kine and capture them." "'Tis true,"
Cucullin said. " That is a true beginning
Of a great contest and a good contention.
The herd of kine goes forth upon the plain ;
The gillies from the west and from the east
Will clash together round the herd ; and soon
The kings and battle-warriors will be roused,
And the great day of battle will begin."

That thing was true which thus Cucullin said.
The little herd went forth upon the plain.
The gillies from the east and from the west
Clashed and encountered round the herd. " O Laeg,"
Cucullin asked, " who is now giving battle?"
" The young folk out of Ulster," Laeg made answer.
" In what way fight they there?" Cucullin asked.
" 'Tis manfully that there they fight," said Laeg,
" Contending for that herd." Cucullin said :
" Alas ! that I have not my battle-strength
To go to them and help their gillie-fray !
Had I my strength, then clear and evident
My breach would be before them there this hour !"
" Comfort thyself, my Cucucawn," said Laeg.
" This is no shame unto thy battle-honour,

BOOK XV

No stain unto thy valour. Thou didst well
Before this hour ; thou wilt do well hereafter."

"Yet, O my friend, O Laeg," Cucullin said.
"Arouse the men of Ulster towards this battle.
'Tis indeed time for them to rise." Laeg went
To arouse the men of Ulster towards that battle.
Amidst the tents, amidst the sleeping hosts,
He spake his rhapsody of rousing words,
Bidding them wake and rise. "Arise," he said,
"Arise with speed, deed-doing kings of Maha !
Arise with strength of valorous hero-deeds.
In all wide Erin there was never found
One like Cucullin son of Sooaltim,
Who hath defended you and fought for you,
And is laid, now, low with red, bitter wounds.
To save the captives and the kine of Cooley,
To-day with strength of valorous deeds arise !"

And all the men of Ulster in that camp,
Together, in obedience to their kings,
And in obedience to their chiefs and princes,
Roused by these words of rising served to them
Aloud by Laeg the son of Ree-angowra,
Rose as one man ; and in this wise they rose—
Naked, save only for their sharp-edged weapons
Held in their hands ; and every man whose tent
Opened to eastward, westward through his tent
Tore his way out, he deeming it too long
To circuit round the tent. And Laeg returned.

THE TÁIN

Cucullin said: "How rise the men of Ulster
Now toward the battle, O my friend, O Laeg?"
Full manfully," said Laeg, "for thus they rise,
Quite bare, quite naked, save for their sharp weapons
Held in their hands," said Laeg, "and he whose tent
Opens to eastward, westward through his tent
Tears his way forth, because it seems to him
It were too long to make the circuit round it."

"O Laeg," Cucullin answered, "they are men
And kingly heroes who have risen there
Round about Conor at dawn of day to-day!
To say so is not overmuch!"

Howbeit,

This was the time when Conor son of Fahtna,
On his own mound of camping, where he was,
Said to wise-worded Shenca: "Go, O Shenca,
Utter thy cry of knowledge and white wisdom
Amidst the Ultonians. Let them not fare forth
Into this fight before the strength and omen
Of happy fortune shall have come to us,—
Until the radiance of the sun shall rise
Into the cloud-built rafters of the sky,
And fill with light each knoll and slope and hill
And hollow vale and glen throughout wide Erin."

And the hosts tarried at the voice of Shenca
Speaking that cry of knowledge and white wisdom,—
Until the radiance of the sun arose
O'er the green-sided, chosen earth, and rose

BOOK XV

Into the cloud-built rafters of high heaven,
And filled with light each glen throughout that Fifth.

“Good, O my friend, O Shenca,” Conor said ;
“Arouse the Ultonians for the battle. Now
It is the time for them to rise.” And Shenca
Aroused them ; and he spake these words of rising.

“Arise !” he said, “deed-doing kings of Maha !
Generous people ! let the blood-red battle
Be fought by you. Let shields be rent in twain.
Let streams of blood flow beneath feet of men.
Let edged weapons be ground down. Let earth
Be angrily dug up. O men ! O kings !
Let grief and sorrow fill the hearts of queens.
Let the Bive drink her crimson, bitter drink.
Arise ! If only for your Bull of Cooley,
Arise ! With strength of hero-deeds, arise !”

And Laeg was not long watching in his place
Ere he saw somewhat ; for he saw the hosts
Of the men of Ulster and the men of Erin
Rise as one man. Above their heads they raised
The brown-sharp forests of their shining spears ;
And they marched forth, each chief of them inciting
And heartening his own battle-troop. Ere long,
Upon the lands called Gawrig those two hosts
Clashed into combat ; and they fell to smiting,
To hewing down, dismembering and maiming,
To slaying and to slaughtering each the other,
For a long while and a great space of time.

THE TÁIN

This was the hour wherein Cucullin said
To his own charioteer, even to Laeg
(For a bright, lustrous cloud was o'er the sun):
"Look for us, O my friend, O Laeg, how now
Fight the Ultonians in that battle." Laeg
Replied: "'Tis manfully that there they fight.
For were I now to mount my battle-chariot:
Were Aen, the charioteer of Conall Carna,
To mount his own; and were we, side by side,
To drive our chariots from the one battle-wing
E'en to the other, o'er the points of weapons,—
Not hoof or wheel or hind-shaft would touch ground,—
Owing to the true closeness, sureness, firmness,
Wherewith their warrior-weapons are held firm
In hands of Ulster warriors at this hour."

"'Tis grievous that I am not now of strength,"
Cucullin said, "to be amidst them there!
Were I of strength, then clear and evident
My battle-breach would be, e'en like the breaches
Which other warriors on that plain of battle
Will make amidst their foemen's hosts this day!"

"Comfort thyself, O Cucucawn," said Laeg.
"This is no shame unto thy battle-honour,
No stain unto thy valour. Thou didst well
Before this hour. Thou wilt do well hereafter."

The hosts of Ulster and the hosts of Erin
Held still to battle-striking and to smiting,
To hewing down, dismembering and maiming,

To slaying and to slaughtering each the other,
For a long while and a great space of time.

This was the hour when, with great urgency,
The Helping Triads of the men of Erin
Arrived to help the battle. But the share
Which Maev, when they arrived, allowed to them,
Was this alone, namely, to render sure
The slaying of great Conor son of Fahtna,
If upon him the battle should be broken ;
And, on the other part, to render sure
The safe retreat of Al-yill and herself,
If upon them there should be rout and flight.
And of these Triads of the men of Erin
There were three Abrat-rooas of Loch Ree :
There were three Mahn-yas of the Land of Murrisc :
There were three Lussens out of Looahar :
There were three Fintans from the Plain of Femen :
There were three each of very many names.

Now was the hour when, with great urgency,
Three battle-castles, three huge battle-wheels,
Arrived from Ulster, having come to Ulster
Over the many-billowed, white-foamed sea,
From a land nearer to the sunrise. Each
Of those huge battle-castles, those Bive's-folds,
Was cased with shining shields ; and each one bristled
With black, smooth, pine-long spears and blue-grey
swords ;

THE TÁIN

And each one had four doors sprinkled with gems,
So that from far they seemed like groups of stars ;
And each was filled with men having round shields ;
And each was drawn by full-maned, high, great steeds ;
And o'er the three there flew three flocks of birds,
Whereof one flock was red and one was white
And one was black like ravens. And three bives,
Red-mouthed and black, circled around those towers
Amidst the air, and prophesied and sang ;
And this is what they sang around those towers :

“ Swaths of the battle—swaths and sheaves of slain.
Force of compelling. Terrible the deed.
Towers of Slaughter. Ravens shall be full.
Flood-red the ground. Men in the clay. Long swaths.
Swaths of the battle. Swaths and sheaves of slain.”

And Maev perceived those battle-castles come.
She, in the first grey whiteness of day's light,
Had risen, and had ridden round her hosts
Three times, that she might know whether each band
Was fierce and terrible and well-arrayed
And active and prepared for valiant deeds.
And when the great, wide battle had begun,
She, from her mound of watching and of battle,
Had watched, and she had seen that neither side
Had gained advantage o'er the other side.
Then, when she saw those battle-castles come,
She said within herself: “ If now in Fergus
The son of Roy there was that rage and ardour

Which was within him, when, in former days,
 He broke great battle-rifts in distant lands—
 He, notwithstanding yon strange battle-towers,
 Would break this battle on the men of Ulster,
 So that they should be driven hence to-day
 With shame ; and so that Conor here should fall.”

And then it was that she addressed to Fergus
 Her rousing words ; and she said these words there .
 “ O royal warrior of the world, O Fergus,
 There was a time, of which men oft have spoken,
 When 'midst the heroes of the western world,
 There was not any greater than thyself
 In valour and in prowess and in battle.
 Thou, by thy prowess, brokest thirty battles
 O'er chiefs in distant lands, e'en to the City
 Of Moorn encircled by its wall of fire
 In the far distant isle of ice and snow.
 Thou, when thou wast with Esorb, King of Spain,
 Didst go, with hosts and multitudes of Spain,
 To Soda, King of Africa, and tookest
 A city of the warlike folk of Carthage
 By strength of war. There was none like to thee ;
 And all men spoke of thy renown and glory.
 And then, because thou didst appear to him
 Too great to be in the one Fifth with him,
 Conor the son of Fahtna Fahee drove thee
 Forth from thy place, with contumely and shame.
 Much he deceived thee and insulted thee.

THE TÁIN

He slew the brightest Candles of the Gael
While they were underneath thy guard and honour.
There is no theme for jest and mockery
In Avvin and in Ulster and in Erin,
Save this—thy cringing to the men of Ulster
After they so have scorned and driven thee.
Tell me, O royal warrior of the world,
Whither have gone that great renown and power
And strength of hero-deeds which once were thine—
So that men now account thee not at all
When there is need of valour and achievements
And hero-power?”

These were Maev's words to Fergus.
And with great joy she saw his wrath of rage
Come to his face, until it made his face
Red like pure, crimson flame. “Truly,” said Fergus,
“By all the gods by whom my people swear
I swear that if I had my sword to-day,
Skull-rooves of men should fly from cheeks of men ;
Middles of men should break from thighs of men ;
Fore-arms of men should part from arms of men ;
And throats of men should fall with throats of men ;
And fists of men should fall with fists of men ;
And heads of men should fall with ears of shields ;
Until they should be even as great in number
As hailstones on a plain 'twixt two dry greens,
Round which a high-king's kingly steeds might race
On a fresh morn in spring. To east and west,

Through me, with heads and limbs of the Ultonians,
If I obtain my sword !”

This was the time
When Al-yill said unto his charioteer,
Namely, unto Faer-loga : “ Let that sword
Which destroys skin come to me now, O gillie ;
And I aver that if ’tis worse with thee
To-day in bloom and tendance than it was
Upon that day on which thou tookest it
In Cooley,—then, although the hosts of Erin
And Alba should attempt to save thee from me,
They should not save thee.” And Faer-loga went,
And brought with him the sword beneath its glory
Of gentle tendance, and beneath its flaming
Of flame-like radiance. And the sword was given
Into the hand of Al-yill, and by Al-yill
Was straightway placed into the hand of Fergus.

And Fergus made great joy before his sword.
“ My love to thee !” he said, “ O Caladcolg !
O sword of Leddy !—And on whom,” said Fergus,
“ Shall it now play ?” “ On the great hosts,” said
Maev,

“ Around thee on the field on every side.
And let not anyone obtain from thee
Forgiveness or protection there to-day,
Unless he be some true friend who obtains it.”

Fergus then took his weapons, and he went
Forth to the battle ; and the first great deed

THE TÁIN

Which he performed there was to clear a gap
Of a hundred with that sword, the Caladcolg,
In his two hands. And Al-yill took his weapons ;
Maev took her weapons ; and they each fared forth
Into the battle, into that great battle
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig—
Into the last great battle of the Táin.

And Fergus played upon the Ulster hosts
The singing of his sword, so that the battle
Was three times routed toward the north before him ;
Until those battle-castles from a land
Nigh to the sunrise, with their dreadful Coo-al
Of spears and swords, wheeled toward the men of Erin,
And three times forced and drove them backward.

Now,

Conor the son of Fahtna heard that thing
In his own place of battle where he was,
Namely, that thus the battle had been routed
Against him three times toward the north. 'Twas
then

That Conor said to his own warrior-household,
The inward heart of the Creev Roe in Avvin :
“ Keep ye this place a little, O ye men,”
He said to them, “ this place in which I am,
That I myself may go to learn by whom
The battle has been three times driven and routed
So, toward the north, against us.” And 'twas then
That his own household answered him with fervour

And dearness. "We will keep this place," they said.
 "The heaven is above us and the earth
 Is underneath us and the blue-rimmed sea
 Is round us in a circuit. And unless
 The firmament with all its showers of stars
 Shall fall upon the firm face of the earth,—
 Unless the many-furrowed, blue-rimmed sea
 Shall veil the thick-haired forehead of the world,—
 Unless the earth shall break and yawn beneath us,—
 We will not yield a thumb's breath in retreat
 Backward, till thou shalt come to us again,
 Or till we shall be slain." Then Conor went
 Forth to that place, where, as he had been told,
 The battle had been three times driven and routed
 Against him toward the north. And it was there—
 Even amid the hard-fought, crowded battle—
 That a shield struck a shield. The shield of Fergus
 Struck the *Ō-hawn'*, the many-victoried,
 Great shield of Conor, which had four peaked ears
 Of gold, and four ridged borders of red gold.
 And Fergus struck his three Bive's slaughter-blows
 Against the shield of Conor; and thereat
 The great *Ō-hawn'*, the shield on Conor, moaned;
 And when it moaned, the three surge-waves of Erin,
 The Wave of Rury and the Wave of Cleena
 And the far northern Wave of Thoo-ig Inver,
 Moaned through the air athwart the lands of Erin
 In answer to the shield. And all the shields

THE TÁIN

Amidst the men of Ulster in that hour,
Upon their shoulders or within their chariots,
Moaned through the air across the plain of battle
In answer to the shield of Conor. Yet,
However great the valour and the power
Wherewith that warrior, Fergus, struck the shield
On Conor,—yet so great the battle-strength
And hero-power were wherewith the King
Maintained the shield against him—that the ear
Of the Ō-hawn' ne'er touched the king's own ear.
“Alas! O men,” said Fergus, “who is he
That can thus hold his shield against me here,
On this my day of vengeance and of battle—
Here where the Five Great Fifths of Erin meet
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig—
Here in the last great battle of the Táin?”

“Leave thou this place, O Fergus,” Conor said.
“He who is here is younger and more perfect
Than thou art; and his mother and his father
Were better born than thine. He who is here
Is he who drove thee from thy patrimony
And from thy land and thine inheritance.
It is the man who put thee in the dwelling
Of hares and foxes and wild, forest deer.
It is the man who left thee not so much
As thine own stride of all thy fields and lands.
It is the man who put thee to be kept
And to be paid and ordered by a woman.

It is the man who violated thee
 Concerning the three Candles of the Gael,
 Slaying beneath thy very word and safeguard
 Those three unfaithful, valorous sons of Usna,
 Who had deprived him of his dearest jewel.
 It is the man who will now beat thee back
 In presence of these mighty hosts and throngs—
 Conor the son of Fahtna Fahee son
 Of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury More—
 High-king of Ulster and distinguished son
 Of a High-king of all the realms of Erin.”

And Fergus heard these words which Conor said.
 Then 'midst his wrath of rage and battle-anger
 And strength of ire, he held in memory
 Those words he once had said in Avvin Maha,
 Namely, that e'en if Conor should betray him,
 And violate his honour and his safeguard
 (A thing which he was sure would ne'er be done),
 He would not seek the king's own blood or flesh ;
 Though there was not another man in Ulster
 Who should insult his honour and his safeguard
 And from his hands should not obtain red death.
 This was the promise which he once had given.
 Yet this, indeed, is truth and not a lie,
 Namely, that e'en had he ne'er given that promise,
 It would have seemed an evil thing to Fergus
 To seek to slay that king whom he had loved
 In happy days in smooth-bright Avvin Maha—

THE TÁIN

To slay the High-king of his own dear land,
The land of Ulster. Then he turned his anger
Away from Conor ; and he turned his anger
Against the Ulster hosts on every side
Throughout the battle. He hurled back his sword,
The Caladcolg, till its point touched the ground
Behind him, that he so might strike with it
Its three enchanted blows of doom and judgment
Upon the Ulster hosts on every side,
That so the dead amidst those hosts of Ulster
Might number more e'en than their quick should
number;

(Because that sword from out the Shee was thus :
When a true warrior's hands would strike with it
Its three enchanted blows of doom and judgment,
It would put on the curve and length and sheen
Of a rainbow in the air).

That now was seen
By Conor's exiled son, Cormac Conlingish,
The head of the Black Exile ; and he made
A rush as of the quick spring-wind, approaching
Fergus ; and he closed his forearms round him.
“ Unfriendly, and not friendly, were that deed !
Un-native, and not native, were that deed !
Of out-lands, not of Ulster, were that deed !
My master, Fergus ! ” Cormac said to him ;
“ And, O my tutor and my master, Fergus,
Let not the men of Ulster now be slain

By thy three blows of doom. Rather, O Fergus,
 Think of the honour of thy native land,
 Think of the honour of the men of Ulster,
 E'en in thy day of vengeance and of battle."
 "Leave me! Away from me! O son," said Fergus;
 "Because I shall not live unless I strike
 My three enchanted blows of doom and judgment
 Upon the hosts of Ulster here to-day,
 So that the dead amidst the hosts of Ulster
 May number more e'en than their quick shall number."
 "Bend thy hand sideways, O my master, Fergus,"
 Cormac Conlingish said, "and cut the hills
 Which are beside this field and plain of battle;
 And it will ease thy warrior-wrath of rage."
 Fergus delayed a moment; then he said:
 "Let Conor son of Fahtna then return
 To his own place of battle where he was."
 And Cormac said to Conor: "Go, my father,
 To thine own place of battle where thou wast;
 Because this man will not put forth his wrath
 Now on the men of Ulster in this place."
 And Conor turned and went to his own place,
 Where he had been. And Fergus bent his hand
 Sideways; and o'er the heads of the great hosts
 With the curved sword from out the Shee he struck
 His three enchanted blows of doom and judgment
 Upon the hills, which were beside the plain;
 And struck their summits from the three low hills—

THE TÁIN

That those three Maels of Meath might be for men
A sign of shame and of reproach to Ulster
Even until the ending of all time.
And it was thus that Fergus son of Roy
And Conor son of Fahtna separated
Upon this Táin.

And so the wrath of Fergus
Was one part suaged ; but still he made his path
A path of reddening ; and his warrior-slaughters
Were still scanty.

On high Fedain Collna,
Upon his sick-man's bed, while hearkening
To the far noise and clamour of that battle,
Cucullin heard the great \bar{O} -hawn' of Conor
Moan through the air, when it was struck by Fergus
The son of Roy. " Good, O my friend, O Laeg,"
Cucullin said. " What man has now this daring—
The daring thus to smite the great \bar{O} -hawn'
Of my dear guardian, Conor King of Ulster,
While I am yet alive?" Laeg said to him :
" It is the best of warriors and of men
Who smites it ; he flings blood—increase of slaughter.
It is the man, Fergus the son of Roy.
His chariot-sword from out the Shee was hidden,
And now is with him once again. The steeds
Of Conor now have come unto the battle."

" Loosen these hazel-bands, O gillie, swiftly,"

Cucullin said. "Blood shall be spent by men ;
 Swords shall sing music." Then Laeg loosened them,
 Albeit unwillingly. Cucullin leapt
 Free from his bands, so that the hazel-bands
 Went to Moy Thooaga amidst of Connaught ;
 And all his hooks flew to far Corcumroe,
 Amidst the barren places in the west ;
 And the dry wisps and twists of moss and grass,
 Which were within his wounds, rose through the air,
 And through the firmament, even as far
 As a lark flies on a bright day in summer,
 Whereon there is no wind. His many sores,
 And many hurts and gashes and deep wounds,
 Seized him afresh thereat, so that each groove
 And furrow of the earth was filled with gore
 And with his streaming blood. None of his arms,
 None of his weapons, had been left to him
 Beside his sick man's bed. Only his chariot
 He found beside him there. He took the chariot ;
 And went unto the plain ; and with the chariot
 He struck and felled and hewed the men of Erin,
 Until he reached the place wherein was Fergus
 The son of Roy. And then he spake to Fergus.
 "Come hitherward," he said, "my master, Fergus !"
 But Fergus answered not, because he heard not.
 Cucullin spake and said those words again.
 "Come hitherward," he said, "my master, Fergus !
 Or, if thou comest not, I then will grind thee

THE TÁIN

E'en as a millstone grinds fresh barley-malt.
Yea, I will cleave thee as a wood-axe cleaves
An oak of the forest : I will bind thee hard,
E'en as the woodbine binds great forest-trees :
I will attack thee as the hawk attacks
Small, helpless fledgelings : I will cast thee down
As fishes are cast down upon the sand :
Unless thou comest hitherward, O Fergus !”

“ Is it to me that these Bive's words are spoken ?”
Said Fergus ; “ and who dares to speak these words
On this my day of vengeance and of battle,
Here where the Five Great Fifths of Erin meet
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig—
Here in this last great battle of the Táin ?”

Cucullin said : “ It is thy foster-son,
The son of Dectora, of Conor's sister—
The son who is beloved by all in Ulster,
And who hath fought for all and fended all.
And thou didst promise, O my guardian, Fergus,
At thine own turn of combat on this Táin,
That when thou shouldst behold me bleeding, faint,
And filled with hurts and filled with dangerous wounds,
In this last battle of the Táin, thou truly
Wouldst flee before me on this day of battle ;
For I myself fled before thee, O Fergus,
Then, at thy turn of combat on the Táin.”

And Fergus looked and saw his foster-son,
The Hound of Ulster, covered with rough gore,

Bleeding and pierced and filled with dangerous
wounds ;

And he remembered all that he had said
Beside that ford on grass-green Moy Mweerhevna
At his own turn of combat on the Táin.

And then it was, indeed, that Fergus fled.
With his own war-troop—with the Ulster Exiles,
Who had departed with him out of Ulster
Full seven years before—he left the battle.
Toward Connaught, toward the Shannon, toward
the west,

He strode his three all-powerful hero-strides ;
And he broke forth, over the western hill,
Out of the battle. And the seven kings
From Munster, which had come upon that hosting,
When they perceived that Fergus left the battle,
Broke likewise forth, over the western hill,
Leaving the battle ; and with each of them
Was his own cantred. And the hosts of Connaught
Were left alone, maintaining the great battle
Against the Ulster hosts before them there.
Those who were left maintaining it were these :—
Maev with her cantred : Al-yill with his cantred :
The seven Mahn-yas and the Sons of Mahga,
Each with his cantred. In that hour of day
When Fergus and the seven kings from Munster
Abandoned Maev, leaving their share of battle,
And this was told to her, there came, as 'twere,

THE TÁIN

Before her eyes a dizzy, dim, blind mist,
Blinding her eyes and eye-sight, so that men
And trees appeared the same to her. Howbeit,
From midday till day's waning she maintained
The battle strongly. It was at midday
That first Cucullin came into the battle
From Fedain Collna. When the golden sun
Sank 'mid the tresses of the western woods,
The last of all the battle-troops of Connaught
Was driven and routed o'er the western hill,
Out toward the west. And of his battle-chariot
There remained then, grasped in Cucullin's hands,
Only a handful of the curving ribs
Pertaining to the body, and a handful
Of spokes from the two wheels; for with his chariot
He had been slaying, hewing, and destroying
The men of Erin throughout all that time.

 This was the hour when Maev took up her
 shield,
And put her shield of guarding and protection
Behind the hosts guarding their sad retreat.

 This was the hour when she sent off the bull,
The Donn of Cooley, swiftly to Rath Croohan
By a long circuit, having fifty heifers
And eight of her own messengers around him,—
So that, at ending of that Táin and hosting,
Whoever might arrive or not arrive
In safety at Rath Croohan on Moy Wee,



"CUCULLIN GUARDS THE RETREAT OF THE MEN OF ERIN."

The Donn of mountainous Cooley should arrive,
Even as she had promised and had sworn.

Then Maev herself came soon unto the place
Where Fergus was, nigh the great river-ford.

And on that queen at falling of that hour

There was great weakness, faintness, weariness,

After the long, hard, ever-toilsome battle ;

And there was anguish, bitterness, dejection,

After that great abandonment by Fergus,

And all that hard defeat and overthrow.

She said to Fergus then : “ O Fergus, put

Thy shield of guarding and of sure protection

Across their track, guarding the men of Erin,

That I may rest a little.” Fergus said :

“ ’Tis an ill hour to rest in.” “ Yet,” said Maev,

“ I shall not live unless I rest a little.”

Then Fergus put his shield of sure protection

Across their track, guarding the men of Erin ;

And so Maev rested. E’en as she was resting

’Mid some young trees, Cucullin came on her.

He slew her not. He deemed it were unworthy,

Dishonourable, so to slay her. Then

Maev lifted up her eyes and saw Cucullin

Before her there. She said : “ To-day, Cucullin,

I ask a boon of thee.” “ What boon ?” he said.

“ Take thou these hosts,” said Maev, “ beneath
thy honour

And sure protection, that they so may reach

THE TÁIN

Across the ford to westward.” Of all men
Of Erin who were living in his time,
Cucullin was the best for giving gifts
And generous bestowing; and thereafter,
In after time, there would be only two
Who should be equal to him, namely these—
Neev Columkillé of the race of Niall,
And Goory son of Colman in the west.
And, because thus he was the best in Erin
For giving gifts, he said to Maev: “O Maev,
I give that boon thou askest.” Then Maev rose
(Though that was hard for her); Cucullin went
Around the men of Erin, and he put
His shield of guarding and of sure protection
Across one side, guarding the men of Erin.
The Helping Triads of the men of Erin
Came to the other side; and Maev herself
Returned to her own place and firmly put
Her shield of guarding and of sure protection
Behind their central troops; and, in that way,
They which were left of all those hosts of Erin
Passed the great ford and came once more to
Connaught.

Before he left the Connaught river-shore,
His famous sword was brought unto Cucullin,
His wonder-sword, the wondrous Croo’-adeen;
And in the dusk above the darkening ford
It beamed like a king’s candle (and in days

BOOK XV

To come that sword should come to Art's son Cormac,
Greatest of monarchs of all Erin). Then,
With that straight sword, the wondrous Croo'-adeen,
Cucullin struck its three straight wonder-blows ;
And struck their summits from the three low hills
Beside the ford, that those three Maels of Connaught
Beside the Connaught river-shore, for men,
Might answer the three Maels of Meath.

And Fergus

Was watching all those hosts pass from the ford
Westward toward Croohan and Moy Wee of
Connaught ;

And through his heart there was great bitterness.
He knew that now old age would come on him
Without his doing hero-deeds, or winning
Great battles like the battles he had won.
For he—thus severed from his native land
And from the folk and heroes whom he loved
Fervently, passionately, zealously—
Was (like a spear-head parted from its shaft)
Deedless, of no avail. And he was sure
That he would die in exile and be buried
In exile, in a strange land not his own.
'Twas then he turned to Maev, " Truly," said he
(And he spake roughly, darkly, bitterly),
" Truly," he said, " the outcome of this day
Is fit and natural for all these hosts,
Which have been led and marshalled by a woman.

THE TÁIN

To-day these hosts have been deprived and robbed.
And, e'en as when a mare precedes her foals
Into a land unknown, without a head
Of counsel and of guidance going before her,
And her young foals are robbed and reft from her,
So stands it with these driven hosts to-day."
And Maev said naught to all those words of Fergus;
For there was on her too much grief and woe
And pain and dole and sadness, after all
That treachery and that abandonment
By Fergus son of Roy, whom she had welcomed,
And had maintained and cherished royally;
And there was anguish, grief, and hard dejection,
After that great defeat and overthrow.

Cucullin left the Shannon river-shore,
And fared to eastward; and he reached that place
Where Conor was, with all the chiefs of Ulster,
Awaiting him. And faintness, weakness, trembling,
Came on him there; because his rage and ardour
Had gone from him, and now his many sores
And many hurts and gashes and deep wounds
Pained freshly. Then the gillies and the striplings
From Avvin Maha, seeing thus their friend
And dear companion filled with gory wounds
And very faint, raised their great cry of woe,
And their great outcry and their lamentation,
Till even the stones and gravel of the earth

Answered their grievous clamour. And men laid him
On a fresh bed of comfort and of healing.

And Conor, the great king, came to that bed,
And bent above him; and he spake above him
His very earnest kingly words of pity
And sad deploring and strong praise and love.

"O Hound," he said, "O Battle-hound of Cooley,
O King of Heroes of our own Creev Roe,
For Ulster thou hast borne much grief and harm;
And men in Ulster will remember thee,
And all which thou hast wrought for war-like Ulster,
Long as pure waves shall break on Ulster shores.
Drink now, and sleep; and bide in rest and healing."

So nigh the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig
The hosts of Ulster made their camp that night.
On Conor son of Fahtna Fahee there,
In his own tent, in his own place of camping,
There was depression and dark gloom that night;
And he was heavy-hearted. For, indeed,
Though he that day had broken that great battle
Upon the fields of Gawrig and Ilgawrig
Against the hosts of Connaught, ne'ertheless,
That did not change this fact, namely, that truly
Maev scarce had left a stead in all his Fifth,
E'en from the Boyne and fair Moy Bray to far
Dunseverick beside the northern sea,
Without destroying it and spoiling it
And leaving it a burned and blackened ruin;

THE TÁIN

And that great bull, the gold-horned Donn of Cooley,
She had made fast and borne with her to Croohan.
And this was true besides : to him a battle
In which no king had fallen did not seem
To be indeed a battle. So on Conor
There was deep gloom and heavy woe that night.

After that time Cucullin lay at healing
In Avvin Maha for a lengthened while;
But when his wounds were healed, he donned once
more

His festal war-array, and travelled south
To rich Loolohta Lōha nigh the sea,
To take that maiden, who, 'midst other maidens,
Was as a sun 'midst pale, faint stars. He did
All that she had foretold that he would do
Ere he could reach her. Then he wedded her.
And they two—Emer daughter of Forgall Mona,
And many-victoried Cucullin—dwelt
In love throughout the space of twice five years ;
Wherein Cucullin wrought great deeds, until
His foemen for the last time came against him
And he died young in years—even as Cathbad,
Cathbad, the lord of knowledge and wise druid,
Speaking sad truth of knowledge, had foretold.

Before Maev let the men of Erin part
And separate to reach their native homes,

She gathered them around herself in Croohan,
 That they might see that combat of the bulls,
 And the contention which should finally
 Decide that contest and that strife and struggle,
 Which had been fought through many lives and
 shapes.

When the high, gold-horned Donn of Cooley saw
 That beautiful, all unknown land, which spread
 Before him there in greenness and in beauty—
 Namely, Moy Wee of Connaught—he raised up
 His three loud-speaking, voiceful bellowings;
 And the Find-benna heard him. Now no bull
 Or male wild beast 'twixt the Four Fords of Wee—
 The Ford of Moga and the Ford of Bercna,
 The Ford of Shlissen and the Ford of Coltna—
 Was wont to raise more than a little murmur,
 Or a soft, timorous moaning, through his fear
 Of that Find-benna. And the red Find-benna,
 Hearing those speaking, voiceful bellowings,
 Raised up his head and shook his three white manes,
 Which were like snow upon a noble mountain,
 And he came vehemently on toward Croohan
 To meet the Donn of Cooley.

Of those bulls,
 Each saw the other soon. Then both, in frenzy,
 Raging, infuriated, frantic, maddened,
 Paved up the ground and dug the earth between
 them,

THE TÁIN

And flung the earth back o'er their shoulder-bones.
And their eyes glared red-hot within their heads,
Like fruits or berries of pure, sparkling fire;
Their cheeks and nostrils swelled and bulged, as
bulge

A smith's huge bellows in a forge. And each
Against the other dealt his sounding blow
Of doom and judgment; and each one began
To gore, to pierce, and to destroy the other.

This is the time wherein the red Find-benna
Of bright Moy Wee caused the dark Donn of Cooley
To swerve from his straight way and road and journey;
And in his side he thrust a curved, white horn;
And he was overcoming him. But Cormac
The son of Conor saw that thing. He took
A mighty spear-shaft which filled up his grasp;
And, with this spear-shaft, to the Donn of Cooley
He gave three long stroke-blows from ear to tail.
"This jewel is to us no lasting jewel,"
Said Cormac, "for there is not force in him
To match a calf of his own age." That bull,
The Donn of Cooley, heard these railing words;
For he had man-like understanding. Then
He turned again against the great Find-benna;
And after that they, upon either side,
Were piercing and destroying each the other
For a long while and a great space of time.

And night descended on the men of Erin;

And after darkening night had so descended,
 For all the men of Erin there was nothing
 But to be listening to the storm and roaring
 Of the great bulls throughout the land that night.
 That night the two bulls ranged through Erin all ;
 So that there is not any place in Erin
 Named Clo-na-Darriv, Rath-na-Darriv, Drum-na-Darriv,
 Barna-na-Darriv, Moy-na-Darriv, Loch-na-Darriv,
 But it was named from those two bulls that night.

At very early dawn upon the morrow
 The men were not long watching nigh Rath Croohan,
 Ere they perceived the Donn of Cooley come
 From out the west ; and their own great Find-benna
 Was borne in mangled fragments and dead pieces
 On his high, peakéd horns. The men arose ;
 And in the dusky dawn they were not sure
 Which of the bulls he was. But Fergus said :
 “ O men,” he said, “ if ’tis your own Find-benna,
 Whom ye discern approaching, let him be ;
 And if it is the Donn of mountainous Cooley,
 Leave him his trophy ; for I say to you,
 Unless ye leave it, that which has been done
 Because of these two bulls, indeed is little
 To that which shall be done to you this day.”

The Donn of Cooley came. He raised on high
 His three loud, voiceful roars, vaunting his trophy.
 He turned his right toward Croohan ; and he turned
 His face to go to his own far, dear land.

THE TÁIN

He reached the margin of that Shannon-ford
Which the great hosts had crossed. He stooped to
drink,

And there he left a loin of the Find-benna,
Whence is "Athlone," "Ford of the Loin." He went
Still eastward; and he came to high Ardcullin,
And to the pillar-stone, and gazed abroad
O'er Ulster there before him. Then he lifted
His head with ardour, strength, and vehemence,
And shook the fragments of the slain Find-benna
Abroad o'er Erin; so that many places
Are named from those divided parts and fragments
Of the Find-benna. Then he reached Slieve Bray;
And thence he saw against the north-east sky
The pure-formed peaks of Cooley; and at seeing
The peaks of his own native land and country
There came on him a powerful mind and spirit;
And he strove forward.

At the hour of eve
The women and young lads and little folk
Within the beautiful, high-mountained cantred
Of Cooley of blossomful, sweet-watered glens,
Were wailing for their Donn of Cooley. Then
They saw him, where he came approaching them.
But there was on him blindness and great ire,
Because of his sore wounds. He, storming on,
Stormed up amongst them; and full many there,
Of women and young lads and little folk,

BOOK XV

Fell on that hill-slope of high Cooley, slain
By their own Donn of Cooley. He lay down
Against the hill, and his great heart broke there,
And sent a stream of blood down all the slope ;
And thus, when all this war and Táin had ended,
In his own land, 'midst his own hills, he died.

THE WRITING OF THE TÁIN

THE WRITING OF THE TÁIN

So to those saints that ancient warrior, Fergus,
Having been called from out his low, sad grave,
Had taught this history, this Táin Bo Cooley,
With its beginning and its deeds and end,
E'en as it had been acted in old days
Before the holy Faith had come to Erin.
And when he so had taught them all this tale,
He went from them ; and the blind mist and fog,
Which had been round them, went ; and they saw there
Only the flag-stone in that lonely place,
And the slow stream beside it. Then each saint
Left with his friends his tender, faithful blessing ;
And each fared forth to his own place in Erin,
To his own cell, or church, or field, or hill.

But agéd Shen'-cawn went with holy Kieran
To Kieran's holy field ; and, as they went,
They crossed Moy Wee, and passed old, high Rath
Croohan,

And passed the Place of Graves, where many mounds
Were green above high-kings and queens of Erin,
And above many kings and queens and princes
And noble chiefs of Connaught. There were buried
Al-yill and Maev—within their deep, green mound,

THE TÁIN

Enclosed from Gael and stranger. There were buried
In turfy mounds the seven sons of Mahga,
Brethren of Al-yill's mother. There were buried
The seven Mahn-yas, sons of Maev and Al-yill,
In one mound, side by side. And there was buried
Dawthy, the last renowned high-king who reigned
Ere the Faith came to Erin : he, at warfare
In far-off Latin lands, had burned the home
Of a most holy hermit, and had died,
Slain by God's lightning on the Alps ; whereon
Awley, his son, had brought him o'er far seas,
For burial in Rath Croohan.

But those two,
Shen'-cawn and Kieran, left that heathen field,
And fared south-eastward ; and at eve they came
To Kieran's Green, to holy Clonmacnoise,
To Clonmacnoise upon a flowery slope
Amid a rushry by the pure, bright Shannon,
Where all was blest and still. And in that place
In after-time a sacred School and City
Should rise—Neev Kieran's City—and should grow
Like a tall tree, whence rule and truth and wisdom
Should spread through half the land. And in that
place,
Even in dew-bright, red-rosed Clonmacnoise,
Under rich, carven flags there should be buried
In after-time great kings and lords and chiefs,
And many prayerful abbots and wise bishops,

THE WRITING OF THE TÁIN

And many poets, who in after-days
Should die in faith. Yea, and Neev Columkillé
Said that, because of God's great love for Kieran—
Sweet helper of the oft-times erring Gael—
It was at Clonmacnoise that the white souls
Of Erin should be gathered and assemble
Around Neev Patrick, when the Judgment-horn
Should blow from high Croagh Patrick o'er the
lands

And hills and vales and sacred greens of Erin.

But at that time, when agéd Shen'-cawn came
To that blest place, there were but nine small cells
Of wattled boughs, and one small oaken church;
And in that place there was not yet one grave.

Then, when they so had reached that fair, blest
place,

Neev Kieran took the wonder-working hide
Of his dun cow, who had fared forth with him,
Taking her calf, when he himself had fared—
He being young—to high renowned Clonard,
To learn beneath Neev Findian; and that cow,
While he was there learning pure truth and wisdom,
Had stayed with him, and always faithfully
Sustained him with her milk. He took that hide,
Which he had ever cherished tenderly;
And of that hide he made a noble book;
And in that book he wrote the Táin Bo Cooley,
With its beginning and its deeds and end,

THE TÁIN

E'en as it had been acted in old days
Before the holy Faith had reached their land ;
That this famed history, this Táin Bo Cooley,
Which had been taught them by that warrior, Fergus,
Who had been sent from out his lonely grave,
Might so be known in after-days in Erin.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRISH TERMS USED IN THE VERSE

Aely [*Éli*, L.U. 78^a, margin]. A spell or incantation.

An-dord' [*Andord*, L.L. 261^a31]. Apparently a kind of tenor singing. *Dord* means the bass in music. *An* here is probably a negative, not an intensive, prefix; for O'Curry (M. & C. iii. 379) says that the short strings of the harp were called *andord*, "not bass."

Bált'-thănă [*Beltene*. Mod. *I. Bealtaine*]. The first of May. This was one of the chief points of division in the year. See Corm., *Belltaine*.

Ban'-a-nah [*Bánanach*]. A kind of airy spirit.

Barnbrogues [*Bernbróic*]. Probably a long, close-fitting covering for the legs, breeches and hose combined. See Zimmer, K.S. 6, pp. 81-88.

Bive [*Badb*]. The raven, hooded-crow, carrion-crow, or other rapacious bird. Often used as a name for the More-reega, the goddess of war, who was wont to appear in the form of a carrion-bird.

Boc'-a-nah [*Bócanach*]. A kind of airy spirit.

Boo'-an-bac [*Buanbach*, *buanfach*]. A game, probably of the nature of chess or draughts. See Zimmer, K.S. 6, p. 78.

Baw'-ee Brashee [*Bdi brassi*]. One of Cucullin's feats. *Brasse* means "quickness," "readiness" (see Féi. Index). But it seems impossible to determine the nature of the feat.

Bran'-duv [*Brandub*; Mod. Ir. *brannamh*]. Chess. Dr. Joyce (Soc. Hist. ii. 480, 1) says that nothing has been discovered to show the exact nature of this game. But in Keating's *Tri Bior-ghaoithe an Bháis* ("Three Shafts of Death"), p. 25, there is a passage in which the fate of men is compared to the fate of the troop in a game of *brandubh*. It is pointed out that just as in the game of *brandubh*, so long as the game is being played, each man has his own rank, the King being in the most honoured place on the board, and the Queen in the second place, and so on,—similarly in the *brandubh* of life each man has his own place. And just as, when the game is over, the men of the *brandubh* are poured into the

THE TÁIN

bag all mingled together without any respect to their rank,—similarly, when Death comes to men he pays no more honour to one than to another.

This passage shows that in Keating's time, at all events, *brandubh* meant "chess," not "backgammon" or "draughts."

Bratt [*Bratt*]. An outer covering, cloak, or mantle.

Bressla More [*Breslech mór*]. The great breaking or slaughter. The name *Breslech mór* seems afterwards to have been given to the spot where the slaughter took place. See L.L. 75^b49.

Brewy [*Briuga*]. "A lord of land," as (following Dr. Kuno Meyer) I render it in Book vii; a wealthy farmer; a hospitaller.

Broo [*Brúgh*]. A mansion; a fairy palace. "The Broo of Angus *Ög*" was probably the great tumulus of New Grange on the Boyne. Angus *Ög* was the son of the great Dagda and of Boand ("Boyne"), whose name was given to the river. See *Aislinge Oengus*, Rev. Celt. iii. 344.

Cäläd-colg [*Calad colg*]. The name of the sword of Fergus. Apparently from *calad*, "hard," and *colg*, "a straight sword," "a dagger." But from its being compared to a rainbow, I judge that the *Calad colg* was curved, and I have treated it so. It is sometimes called the *calad bolg*.

The two Cann-bracks' [*na da chenn bricc*]. The two dappled-heads: Conor's two steeds.

Cantred [*Tricha cét*]. Following the usual custom, I render the Irish term, *tricha cét*, "thirty hundred," by the Welsh word "cantred." A *tricha cét* (defined in the Laws, vol. v, 50, 3, as "one *tuath*") was a territory containing thirty ballys or townlands. It corresponded roughly to the modern barony. When *tricha cét* is used to denote a division in an army, it seems uncertain whether it means literally 3000 men, or simply the complement of fighting men which a cantred of land was able to furnish forth.

Cass-awn' [*Cassán*]. A brooch or pin.

Cathbarr [*Cath barr*]. A helmet, a head-piece.

Cloth-nell' [*Cloth nell*, L.L. 261^a29]. I am not sure whether I have been right in interpreting this as the name of the song. It may be merely a *cheville*, a stop-gap, such as often occur in Irish poetry. In any case, I do not understand what it means.

Cōla [*Coblach*, L.L. 261^a30]. Apparently the voice or a mode of singing between bass (*dōrd*) and tenor (*andōrd*). O'Curry (M. & C. iii. 252, 379) says that the middle strings of the harp were called the *cobhlaighe*.

APPENDIX A

Con'-gan-ess [*Congan-chness*]. Horn-skin; the name of Faerdeeah's armour. It may have been a close-fitting dress of leather, sewn all over with little plates of horn.

Cooal [*Cual*, L.L. 102^a37]. The word seems to refer to the bristling mass of swords and spears with which each of these battle-castles was surrounded. See the description of them: Windisch, *Táin*, pp. 809-821. Compare L.L. 115^b19, where *cual gai* seems to mean a *cheval-de-frise* of spears.

Crann-dord' [*Crandord*]. The musical lowing made by the Donn of Cooley. *Crann* means "a tune," "a melody." *Dord* means "a humming," also "the bass in music." O'Brien has *crann dorddin*, "a kind of music made by putting the hand to the mouth."

Crann-towl' [*crantaball*]. A sling-staff, or perhaps a kind of crossbow, for shooting stones.

Creev Roe [*Crdebrúad*]. "The Red Branch": the name of Conor's great banqueting-house at Avvin Maha.

Croo'-a-deen [*Cruadin*]. The name of Cucullin's sword; formed from *cruaidh*, "hard." *Cruaidh* is the modern word for "steel."

Crooan [*Cruan*]. Probably a kind of red enamel. Very beautiful examples of early Irish enamel-work may be seen in the collection of the R. I. A. in Dublin.

Curragh [*Currach*]. A coracle: a light boat made of a wooden framework, which in ancient times used to be covered with hides, and in modern times is covered with tarred canvas.

Dael [*Dáel*]. Some kind of black chafer or beetle.

Dael-clish [*Deil chliss*; *deil chniss*]. Of somewhat uncertain meaning. In the passage in Book xi., where it occurs (see L.L. 77^b5; L.U. 79^b9), the context seems to suggest that it was a dart greater and more important than the eight little darts; but it may have been some kind of bow or sling for shooting the little darts. In Book v. I have rendered the word vaguely, "dael-feat"; it may mean a sling-staff with which the ball was to be cast. *Del* or *deil* meant "a rod," or "switch."

Dael-feat. See **Dael-clish**.

Doon [*Dún*]. A fortress; a fortified residence.

The Enga [*an Engach*]. The name of Conall Carna's ship, as given in the *Foghlaimh Chonchulainn*.

Eric [*Eric*]. "A fine or penalty exacted from an offender, according to the assessment of established custom, or the determination of the Brehons." *Laws vi.*, p. 311.

THE TÁIN

The Eura [*An Iubrach, in Ibhrach*]. The name of the boat belonging to Fergus. It seems to be connected with *ibar* (Mod. Ir., *iubhar*), "a yew-tree."

Faen-feat [*Foenschless*]. One of Cucullin's feats. From *foen*, "supine," "flat." A passage in the "Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel" shows that this feat was performed with the shield. See L. U. 97^b20, 21, where Mac Cecht performs the faen-feat with his shield, and the edge-feat with his sword.

Faer-dord' [*Ferdord* L.U. 78^a23, 24]. *Fer* (Mod. Ir., *fear*) is "a man." *Dord* means "a humming," also "the bass in music." Thus *ferdord* was probably some kind of deep bass crooning with the intent of inducing sleep.

Feea [*Fiach*]. A debt.

Feehill [*Fidhell, fithchioll*]. Often translated "chess." But *fidhell* and *brandubh* seem to have been distinct games. In the *Agallamh* (I. T. Vierte Serie, 1 Heft. p. 196) we are told that on a certain occasion a *fidhell* was given to every six men, a *brannabh* to every five men, and so on. As *brandubh* seems certainly to have been chess, perhaps *fidhell* may have been a game like draughts. Dr. Stokes and Dr. Meyer translate it "draughts." At the same time, a line occurring in a poem in "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne," *idir triath agus laoch*, "both chief and soldier," seems to show that in *fidhell* there were pieces of more than one value. See Oss. iii. 154.

Fertas [*Fertas*]. A distaff; a spindle; the pole of a chariot. Hence, probably in place-names, a sandy bar across the mouth of a river. Was the modern *fersad*, which has all these meanings, formed by metathesis from *fertas*? See Windisch, Táin, line 5650, where *ferrsat* is used for *fertas*.

Fin-drin'-ny [*Findruine*]. Often translated "white bronze." It seems to have been some kind of white alloy.

Foan [*Fúan*]. This seems to have been a kind of very ample wrap or mantle.

Foavróg [*Fuathbróc*]. A covering for the lower part of the body, probably short breeches. See Zimmer, K.S. 6, pp. 81-88.

Gae Bulg. The name of Cucullin's famous spear. *Gae* means "a spear," "a dart." In the L.L. text of the Táin we have the forms *gai bulgga*, *gae bulgae*, *gae bulga*. Perhaps I ought to have adopted the form *gae bulga*. But in the *Foghlaimh Chonchulainn* we have *cles an gadh builg*. In the curious poem translated by O'Curry, M. & C. ii. 311, we twice have the form *Gae Bolg*. This poem says that the spear was made from the bones of a sea-monster by Bolg mac Buain a famed champion of the east, and that after passing through various other hands it came to Scawtha.

APPENDIX A

The Gantree [*Gentraide*]. A kind of music. From *gen* (Mod. Ir. *gean*), "laughter," "a smile." See L.L. 249^a; also M. & C.

Gass, pl. *gassa* [*Geis*, pl. *gesa*. Mod. Ir. *geas*, pl. *geasa*]. A prohibition or injunction, magically imposed and involving magical penalties if disregarded. Often translated "taboo."

Gillie [*Gilla*, Mod. Ir. *Giolla*]. "A lad," "a youth," generally "a servant-lad."

The Goltree [*Goltraide*]. A kind of music; from *gol*, "the act of weeping or crying." See L.L. 249^a.

Greeanawn [*Grianán*]. A sunny apartment; from *grian*, the sun.

Guipney [*Gipne*]. A fillet passed round the forehead.

The Iarngool [*Ind ierngúali*, L.U. 121^b8]. "The Iron-coal," the name of the wonderful vat or cask in the Creev Roe. It would appear to be the same as the *ól-nguala*, the mighty *dabach* or vat of brass, which Conor took as loot from the fortress of Gerg. See L.L. 258^b14-19; L.L. 107^b11.

Imbas Forosnai [*Imbas Forosnai*]. A method of divination. It is said to have been prohibited by St. Patrick. See Corm., *Imbas Forosnai*.

Imda [*Imda*, *imdae*]. A small sleeping compartment or cubicle contained within the great dwelling-house or hall. See the excellent account given by Joyce, Soc. Hist. ii. 45-54.

Imlee of Glendomna [*Imslige glennamnach*, L.L. 78^a52; *Imsligi gleannomnach*, Y.B.L. 43^a25]. *Imslige* means "mutual slaughter." The name seems afterwards to have been given to the spot where this slaughter took place (see L.L. 92^a24); but I cannot identify it.

Innar [*Inar*]. This would seem to have been a kind of short, close-fitting body-coat or tunic.

Inver [*Inber*, Mod. Ir. *Inbhear*]. The mouth of a river.

Kenn'caem [*Cend-chaem*]. "Handsome head," the name of Conor's playing-board for feehill.

Kesh [*Cess*]. Suffering, torture. The *cess* (more fully, *cess noinden*) was the name of the peculiar suffering into which the Ultonian warriors were thrown as the result of the curse of Maha.

Layna [*léne*, *léine*]. A shirt or smock; a linen garment worn next the skin.

Liss [*Lis*, Mod. Ir. *lios*]. A dwelling or space protected by a circular mound.

THE TÁIN

Mind [*Mind*]. A crown, a diadem.

Neev [*Nóeb, nóem*]. Holy. “*Neev Kieran*” means “Saint Kieran.”

Nomad [*Nomad*]. A period of nine days.

The Nowin [*ind Neamain*]. At L.L. 76^a14 this name is glossed *in badb*, “the Bive,” and it evidently refers either to the More-reega or to a sister-goddess.

Ogam [*Ogum*, Mod. Ir. *ogham*]. A kind of writing, the letters of which were formed by combinations of points and short lines set at both sides of a stem or middle-line. In the Book of Ballymote, p. 308, there is an ancient treatise on ogam, with fascinating diagrams. Readers interested in the subject may consult ¹ Brash: *The Ogam inscribed Monuments of the Gaedhil in the British Islands*. ² Macalister: *Irish Epigraphy*.

The Ō-hawn' [*in n-óchdín*]. The name of Conor's great shield. This shield had four ears of gold. *Ō* means “an ear”; and Dr. Windisch (*Táin*, p. 864) thinks that this element is contained in the name.

Ollav [*Ollam*, Mod. Ir. *ollamh*]. A doctor of learning; a chief professor; a man in the highest rank of learned poets.

Partar [*Partar*]. This is the form of the word that occurs L.L. 259^b36 and 40. At L.L. 55^b41 we have the form *partaing*. According to Dr. Windisch (*Táin*, p. 28), it was the name of the *Purpureae Parthicae*, “the Parthian purple.”

Rath [*Ráith, raith*]. A fort, usually a circular earthen fort; a dwelling or collection of dwellings enclosed by an earthen rampart.

The Reeastartha [*in riastarde*]. “The Contorted,” a name sometimes given to Cucullin, owing to the contortion to which he was subject when overcome by rage. A description of this contortion occurs in Book xi.

Shee or Shee-mound [*Síd*]. A hill or mound which was believed to be the dwelling of supernatural beings, gods or fairies.

Shee [*Side*, Mod. Ir. *síd*h]. The supernatural inhabitants of a Shee-mound.

Shessra [*Seisrech*, L.L. 78^a50]. This is evidently derived from *sesser*, six (persons), which in its genitive form occurs two lines previously. I have rendered it “the six-fold slaughter.”

Sooantree [*Suantraide*]. A kind of music, from *suan*, “sleep.” See L.L. 249^a.

Sowin [*Samain*]. The first of November, now Hallowe'en. This was one of the chief points of division in the year. It was believed that evil spirits and also

APPENDIX A

people of the Shee were specially wont to appear on that night. See the wild, weird tale of the Adventures of Nera, edited by Dr. Kuno Meyer, *Rev. Celt.* x. 212. There can be no doubt that many Hallowe'en customs of the present day, both in Ireland and Scotland, have come down to us from pagan times.

Sról [*sról*]. This was some kind of silken material of delicate texture. An old Connaught native speaker tells me that in her youth *sról* was the name of a kind of very beautiful tabbnet made of a mixture of silk and wool.

Stooag [*Stuag*]. Something arched or curved or peaked; a hook.

Táin [*Táin*]. A cattle-raid, a cattle-driving.

Tal'-kend [*Tal-cend, tail-cend*]. See *Lib. Hym.* i. 100. "Adze-head," a name given to St. Patrick in allusion to his tonsure. It was evidently meant to express derision. I hope I do not err in using it as a term of honour! But compare *Battle of Magh Rath*, p. 182, line 17, "*Tricha Tailgenn togaide*," on which O'Donovan remarks: "Here the word 'Tailgenn' is used to denote a distinguished saint or ecclesiastic."

Timpan [*Timpan*]. Derived from the Latin *Tympanum*; yet it was certainly a stringed instrument. See O'Curry's discussion of the whole subject, *M. & C.* vol. iii. lecture xxxii.

Turlough [*Taurloch*, *L.L.* 59, 31]. A lake which dries up in summer.

Yō [*Eó*]. A brooch; probably a brooch of the familiar Irish type, having a long spike or stave. *Eó* was an old word for "tree." See *L.L.* 200^a12, *Dair dano eo Mugna*, "Now the tree of Mugna is an oak." "Spike" or "stave" was probably a derivative meaning.

APPENDIX B

THE PLACE-NAMES OCCURRING IN THE VERSE

[The "learned terms" in Book vii. are not included.]

Aenloch [*Ēnloch*, L.L. 245^{b10}]. I adopt this form in L.L. which means "bird-lake," and have supposed it to be somewhere to the north or north-west of Croohan. Elsewhere (See L.L. 31^{b29}, and Archiv. iii, p. 5) the place of the death and burial of Fergus is called *Findloch*, "white-lake"; and this, probably, was the lake still called Findloch, about seven miles south-east of Croohan. *Ēnloch for Maig Ai*, "Aenloch on Moy Wee," is mentioned Silv. Gad. i. 256, but its whereabouts is not indicated.

Africa [*Affraic*]. See Windisch, *Táin*, p. 819.

Alba [*Alba*]. Scotland.

Alps. See Appendix E.

Ard A'-had [*Ardachad*]. "High-field." There were many places so named. This "High-field" comes next after Ath Gowla in the Itinerary L.L. 56.

Ardeculin [*Ard Chuillend*, L.L.; *Iraird Cuillend*, L.U.]. In L.U. we are told that this place is called "*Crossa Cúil* to-day." *Crossa Cúil* may perhaps be the village of Crossakeel in Meath, and the pillar-stone may have been on some adjoining height from which a wide view could be obtained. The boundary of ancient Ulster, which extended from the mouth of the Boyne to the point where County Leitrim touches the sea, may very well have passed through this place.

Ard-keen'-aht [*Árd Chiannacht*]. The whole of the present barony of Ferrard, in the County Louth, was called *Árd Cianachta*. (See B.R. p. 186, note). But in the *Táin*, *Árd Ciannacht* seems to apply to some one definite spot.

Ards of Ulster. In the *Mesca Uladh*, L.L. 267^{b3}, we have the words: *Blad briuga mac Fiachna a Temair na hArda*, "Blad (= Blai) the brewy, the son of Fiachna from Tara in the Ards." This, I feel no doubt, was the very fine earthen fort still called Tara, which crowns a hill at the southern extremity of the Ards peninsula to the east of Strangford Lough. This *Bruiden* or "house of hospitality" of Blai the Brewy was one of the six most celebrated houses of entertainment in ancient Erin. (See L.L. 112^{a4}).

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Armenia. See Appendix E.

Assal. See "Road of Assal."

Assa-roë' [*Ess Ríaid*]. The falls at Ballyshannon in County Donegal.

Ath Carpat [*Áth Carpaid*]. A ford on the Nith. See "Goola Milhy."

Ath Cleea [*Áth Cliath*]. The usual Irish name for Dublin. Cf. L.L. 104^a47, *Dublind rissaraiteir Ath Cliath*, "Dublin, which is called Ath Cliath."

Ath Faerdeeah [*Áth Fhir diad*]. "The Ford of Faerdeeah," now shortened to Ardee, the name of a little town on the river Dee (the ancient Nith) in County Louth. O'Donovan says: "The grave of Ferdiah is shown at Ardee, 14 yards long, 9 or 10 feet wide. About two yards of the tumulus in the middle is cut away, so as to be level with the ground. It lies . . . about 80 perches west of Ardee."

Ath Fayna [*Áth Féinne*]. Not an uncommon ford-name. This may be the same as the *Áth fhéne* of the *Amra Choluim Chille* (see L.U. 6^a29).

Ath Frae [*Áth Fráich*, L.U. 63^b24]. "The Ford of Frae." Not identified, so far as I know. At L.U. 63^b11 we are told that its former name was *Ath Fúait*; but it was not therefore necessarily near *Sliab Fúait*, for the element *fúait* enters into various place-names.

Ath Gowla [*Áth n-Gabla*]. This has sometimes been spoken of as a ford on the Boyne, but it was not: the host came past Kells and did not go south of the Boyne. At L.L. 59.31, we are told that it was at "the turlough of the great forest, northward of Knowth of Kings." Knowth is about two miles east of Slane. A turlough is a lake which dries up in summer. L.U. 58^a33 (gloss) speaks of the pass (*beloch*) through the great forest. Was the turlough a flood-like expansion of the little river Mattock?

Ath Greena [*Áth n-grena*]. The older name of *Ath Gowla*.

Ath Lahan [*Áth Lethain*]. A ford on the Nith. See "Goola Milhy."

Athlone [*Áth luain*]. "The Ford of the Loin." The town of Athlone on the Shannon.

Ath na Foraire [*Áth na Foraire*]. See "Ford of Watching."

Ath Neermeeda [*Áth n-Irmedi*]. The older name of *Ath Fayna*, which see.

Ath Tray [*Áth Traiged*]. "Ford of the Foot." Said to be in Tir Mór; but but I cannot identify *Tir Mór*.

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Ath Vaeva [*Áth Medbi*]. "The Ford of Maev."

Avvin Maha [*Emain Macha*]. The ancient capital of Ulster was two miles due west of the present city of Armagh. The great mound, with what remains of its fosse, is now called Navan Ring. A townland to the west of the Ring still bears the name of Creeve Roe. Avvin Maha was destroyed by the three Collas, A.D. 331; and the Ulstermen did not dwell in it afterwards. It has been conjectured that Avvin Maha was Ptolemy's *Regia*.

Baeg [*Bedg*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified. *Bedg* means "a sudden spring or start."

Bally Al'-yone [*Bélat ailedin*]. "The Crossway of the Island." (See "Cooley").

Banba [*Banba*]. One of the ancient names for Ireland.

Barna na darriú [*Berna na d-tarb*]. "The gap of the bulls."

Barna Tána Bó. (See "Cooley").

Ben Edar [*Bend Etair*]. The Hill of Howth, near Dublin.

Bill-awn' [*Bithlân, Bithslân*]. "The Ever-full," or "the Ever-healthy." One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Billi Vaeva [*Bile Medba*]. "Maev's Tree." *Bile* means generally a large, venerable or sacred tree.

Bir [*Bir*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified. *Bir* means "a spit."

Booan [*Buan*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified. *Buan* means "enduring."

Boyne [*Boand*]. The river Boyne, which joins the sea at Drogheda.

Bray Ross [*Breg Ross*]. Evidently the district just north of Ardee.

Bree Aerga [*Bri Errgi*]. I do not know that this famous place has yet been identified; but I think it should be looked for in County Donegal, not far from Ballyshannon. I take the *Raith Argi* of Trip. Life, p. 328, to be the same place, and this was in the barony of Tirhugh, County Donegal. Compare Trip. Life, 352, where it is said that the extent of the boundary of St. Patrick's see was to be: "a *pinna montis Berbicis* [= probably *Benna Boirche*, the Mourne Mountains] usque ad montem *Mis* [= Slemish in County Antrim], a monte *Miss* usque ad *Bri Erigi*, a *Bri Erigi* usque ad *Dorsos Breg* [= Drum Bray]." If, as I conjecture, *Raith Argi* and *Bri Erigi* were the same place, the extent of St. Patrick's see, as promised by the angel, was practically to coincide with the extent of ancient Ulster.

APPENDIX B

Bregan's Tower [*Tor m-Breogain*]. After the Gaels had come from Scythia to Spain, one of their number, Bregan, erected a tower and city which were named after him, Brigantia. It was from this tower that Ith, his son, in the evening of a winter day first perceived Ireland in the distance! (See L.L. 3 and 4). Brigantia was on the coast not far from the modern Betanzos, in Galicia. See the account of O'Donnell's visit to Bregan's Tower in 1602. "He was rejoiced to have landed at that place, for he deemed it to be an omen of good success that he had arrived at the place from whence his ancestor had formerly obtained power and sway over Ireland." (F.M. 1602).

Brenid [*Brenide*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified. It probably means "stinking," "rotten." Let us hope that the stream belied its name at the time when Cucullin was bathed in it.

Bressla More [*Breslech Mór*]. (See the same name, Appendix A.) It must have been somewhere in the northern half of County Louth. *Ath Aladh* was another name for the same place. Windisch, *Táin*, p. 337, n. 6.

Britain [*Bretain, Breatain*]. Those western parts of Great Britain which were inhabited by the Britons.

Bush [*Buas*]. The river Bush in County Antrim. It was "one of the sovereign waters of Ireland." See Rev. Celt. xxii. 321.

Caha [*Catha* L.L. 56^b42]. Apparently a river flowing into the Boyne, some way to the west of Slane.

Cahir Conree [*Cathir Conrui*]. "The City of Cúruí." The remains of this cahir are still to be seen on Slieve Mish, near Tralee, in Kerry. In the Triads (Y.B.L. 415^a2) it is mentioned as one of the Three Doons, or strong places of Ireland, the other two being Dunseverick and Duncermna.

Callan [*Calland*]. The river which flows past Armagh, and joins the Black-water near Moy. It is still called the Callan.

Cann Teera More [*Cend Tiri Móir*]. "The Head of the Great Land." The same term occurs *Rennes* 66. I do not understand it.

Carrloig [*Carrlóig*, L.L. 94^b1]. I think that this place, from which Kehern was to be summoned, was probably an old name for *Dun-Ceithirn*, now the Giant's Sconce, in the parish of Dunboe, in the north of County Londonderry. Kehern's father, Finntan, and his grandfather, Niall Niamhghlonnach, lived at *Dún dā bheann*, now Mount Sandel, not very far away. The words *laoch* and *carrn* occurring in the two last lines of Inda's Lament (Windisch, *Táin*, p. 639), though they suggest a different etymology, contain, I fancy, an allusion to this place-name.

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The *Carrlaoigh* of "Fragments of Irish Annals," p. 14, and the *Cairloegh* of F.M. 478, appear to be the same place as the *Carrlóig* of the *Táin*.

Carthage. See Windisch, *Táin*, p. 819.

Cenannas [*Cenannas*]. Now Kells, in Meath.

City of Moorn [*Cathair Muirne*]. See the full account in "The Martial Career of Conghal Cláiringhneach" (Irish Texts Soc., vol. v.). Is the story founded on an account of Iceland and its volcano by some very early traveller? Fergus was said to be a fortnight and a month sailing to it from Lochlann (Denmark).

Clahra [*Clathra, Clartha*]. This may possibly be Clara on the Brosna in King's County; but it is more likely, I think, to be *Caislean Clártha*, now anglicised Clare Castle, which "is situated on a conspicuous hill in the parish of Killare, not far from the celebrated but now poor village of Ballymore Lough Sewdy, in the County of Westmeath." See F.M. 1544, note *y*.

Cleer Bó Ulla [*Clithar bō Ulad*]. "The shelter of the cows of the Ultonians." Probably somewhere towards the centre of County Louth.

Cletty [*Cleittech*]. This was a famous royal residence "above the brink of the Boyne" not far from Slane.

Clon-ard' [*Cluain Iraid*]. On the Boyne about ten miles above Trim. See the account of it in Wilde's "Beauties of the Boyne."

Clō-na-Darriv [*Clodh na d-tarb*]. "The dyke, or earthen wall, of the bulls."

Clonmacnoise [*Cluain-mic-Nois*]. On the Shannon about nine miles below Athlone.

Connallia Mweerhevna [*Conailli Muirthemni*]. See "Moy Mweerhevna."

Connaught [*Connacht*]. The ancient Connacht included the present County of Clare. See O'Mahony's Keating, p. 88.

Cooley [*Cualnge*]. In dealing with the topography of Cooley we are met by two difficulties. The first lies in our ignorance of the exact extent of the ancient Cooley, the Cooley of the *Táin*. It would seem to have included not only the mountainous Carlingford peninsula in County Louth, but also Slieve Gullion in County Armagh, and the Mourne Mountains in County Down.

Compare 1. *Echtra Nerai* (Rev. Celt. x. 224), where there is a poem containing the line *i m-Bairchi hi Cualgniu*, "in Bairchi in Cooley." *Bairchi* seems to mean the Mourne Mountains, the old name of which was *Benna Boirche* (or *Bairche*).

APPENDIX B

2. *Cóir Anmann*, 269 (I.T.) where *Glenn Samaisce* is said to be in Cooley. In the Táin we are told that it is in Slieve Gullion.

3. Y.B.L. 53^a26, where we are told that the bull on returning to Cooley, "went upon the Road of Meedlougher into *Cuib*. It is there that he used to be with the dry kine of Dawra." *Cuib* is "Moy Cova" in the baronies of Upper and Lower Iveagh in County Down. Hence it seems likely that the house of Dawra may have been on one of the northern slopes of the Mourne Mountains.

Our second difficulty lies in this: we have three versions of the harrying of Cooley. The first is contained in L.L. 69^a44-69^b46. It is the simplest and clearest; but much of the most interesting material is omitted. The other two accounts are in L.U., whose redactor in his usual scholarly manner gives them successively, so that the reader may compare them for himself. The second of these two L.U. accounts is chiefly in poetry, archaic and difficult, and it perhaps represents the oldest Táin-material which has come down to us. To reconcile the topography of these three versions is impossible, though there are some points wherein they seem to agree. Thus, up to the present we have been able to identify hardly any of the places in Cooley. I can only make the following suggestions:—

Drumenna [*Druim En* L.L., *Druim Féne* L.U.]. I think this was perhaps the wooded height now called Trumpet Hill, near Ballymascanlan, County Louth. In the very interesting old "map of County Down" by Gerard Kremer-Mercator this hill is marked *Drommena*, and an old woman living near the place told me that in her childhood Irish-speakers called it by this name. The situation would fit the story: it was just on the borders of Cooley and Connallia.

Slieve Fauhan [*Sliab Ochdine*]. If Trumpet Hill was *Druim En*, Slieve Fauhan, whence Cucullin hurled at the camp, must have been one of the higher mountains to the east of it. Now, in Mercator's map one of these mountains is marked *Slew Wyaghno*, a name which might easily be a corruption of *Sliab Ochdine*. Perhaps the name applied to the whole line of mountains between Ballymakellett and Piedmont. Does it still survive? I failed to find it.

Glen Fauhan [*Glend Fochdine*]. If the identification of Slieve Fauhan is right, Glen Fauhan was probably the valley of the little river which joins the sea a short mile to the east of Bellurgan Station.

Glass Crond [*Crond: Glais Cruind*]. It seems likely that this may have been the stream now called the Piedmont River. It issues from the mountain just below the Windy Gap (at "the Long Woman's Grave") by which the roadway crosses the Carlingford Peninsula, and it falls into Dundalk Bay.

Barna Tana Bo Cooley. If the Piedmont River is Glass Crond, then the famous pass which Maev caused to be made is the above-mentioned Windy Gap.

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Glass Colpa [*Glaiss Colptha*]. This seems to be the same as the *Aband cholpthai i cualngiu* of L.L. 110^b33 (the story of Goll and Garb). But I cannot identify it.

These are all the suggestions I can make.

The account of the harrying of Cooley which I give in Book viii, is a much abbreviated conflation of the three versions described above. Those, therefore, who wish to work at the topography of Cooley, will not find help in it; they must work from original sources.

Cool Shibrilly [*Cúil Sibrilli, Cúil Sibrinni*]. Said in the Táin to be south-west of Kells. According to F.M., A.M. 399I, *Dún Chuile Sibrinne* was an old name for Kells.

Cool Shillinny [*Cúil Silinne*]. Now Kilcooley, only four miles or so to the south-east of Croohan. See F.M. 1418.

Corann [*Corann*]. This territory is now represented by the barony of Corran in County Sligo.

Coreum-roe [*Corcumruad*]. Now represented by the barony of Corcumroe in County Clare; but in ancient times the territory of Corcumroe included Burren.

(The) **Corry of Glenn Gatt** [*Dub cairiu glinni Gatt*. L.U. 65^a21]. See "Cooley."

(The) **Craggs of Manann** [*Cairrge Manann*]. Rocks on the coast of the Isle of Man.

Crannig [*N. Crandach*; *G. Crandche*; *D. Crandaig*]. In making Crannig the old name of Faughard, I was relying on L.L. 73^a47-51; but in reality *Crandach*, "the Woody Place," seems to be used somewhat vaguely; and it may have been applied to a good stretch of country.

Crithny [*Cruithnech*]. The Land of the Picts. The Irish Picts were settled in the ancient *Dál araidhe*, namely, the southern half of County Antrim and the northern part of County Down.

Croagh Patrick [*Cruach-Phádraig*]. A high mountain on the southern side of Clew Bay in County Mayo. On a clear afternoon it may be seen from Rath Croohan, fifty miles to the east of it.

Cromma [*Cromma*]. Apparently a river flowing into the Boyne a little to the west of Slane.

Croohan [*Cruachan* or *Rath Cruachan*]. The ancient capital of Connaught, now Rathcroghan, near Bellanagare in County Roscommon. Many mounds and raths are still to be seen there, as well as the ancient royal burial-field and the pillar-stone over the grave of Dawthy.

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Cullin [*Cuilend*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Is it the Cully Water which flows southward from County Armagh into County Louth to the west of Forkill ?

Cumung [*Cumung*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified. *Cumung* means "narrow," "constricted."

Dalriada [*Ddl riada*]. The northern part of County Antrim. See the account of it, Reeves, p. 318.

Deehaem [*Dichaem*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Delind [*Delaind*]. A river crossed by the hosts on their way eastward to Kells. Not identified.

Delt [*Delt*]. A river crossed by the hosts on their way eastward to Kells. Not identified.

Delt [*Delt*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. It may possibly have been the *Doaille* in *Crich Roiss* which is mentioned F.M., A.M. 4169. *Crich Roiss* was partly in the barony of Farney in County Monaghan, and partly in the adjoining portion of County Louth.

Dooglass [*Dubglass*]. "The black stream." One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Doolough [*Dubloch*]. "The black lake." Somewhere between Kilcooley and Slieve Bawne in County Roscommon.

Doon Borríg [*Dún Borraig*]. This famous fortress was on the headland of Torr in County Antrim, a point at which there are only about twelve miles between the coasts of Ireland and Scotland. It would now be pronounced "Dunwarry" or "Dunvarry." See the very interesting account, O'Lav. iv. 479 and 520.

Doon Dalgan [*Delga* L.U. 68*8 ; *go Dun Dealgan* C.R.R. 66]. Now anglicised Dundalk. The ancient doon, now called the Castletown Moat, is about a mile inland.

Doon Feea [*Dún-fidhgha* ; *Dún fiodhaigh*]. "The doon of the wood, or thicket." Perhaps near Loch Etive.

Doon Finn [*Dún Finn*]. "The white doon." Perhaps near Loch Etive.

(The) **Doon of the Sons of Nahta Scaena** [*Dún mac Nechtáin Scéne*]. O'Curry says this was "on the right bank of the little river Mattock, where it falls into the Boyne." See M. and C. ii., p. 292. This doon is mentioned in the *Dindsenchas*. See Rev. Celt. xvi., p. 83 ; but outside the Táin, I remember no other reference to it.

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Drong [*Drong*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Drum Bray [*Druimne Breg* T.E. § 38.] = Slieve Bray [*Sliabh Breg*]. A line of low heights stretching across the barony of Upper Slane in Meath and the barony of Ferrard in Louth, and forming the northern watershed of the Boyne.

Drumenna. See under "Cooley."

Drum Keen [*Druim Cáin*, L.L. 56^b20]. "The fair or beautiful ridge." There were many places so named.

Drum Leek [*Druimm Licci*]. "The ridge of the flagstone." Somewhere near Slane.

Drum-na-darriú [*Druim na d-tarbh*]. "The ridge of the bulls."

Drum Saulinn [*Druim Salainn*, L.L.; *Druim Salfinn*, L.U.]. Is this Drum-shallon about six miles north of Drogheda? It seems possible.

Dunseverick [*Dún Sobairche*]. About three miles east of the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim. One of the Three Doons of Ireland. (Triads, Y.B.L. 415^a2).

Dub [*Dub*]. "The Black." The first river passed after leaving Kells. Therefore, almost certainly, the Blackwater.

Edon More [*Eo dond mór*]. "The great brown tree." Somewhere towards the middle of County Louth. Probably the same place as that in which the battle of *Eduind mór* was fought. See F.M. 590.

Erin [N. *Eriu*; G. *Erend*; D. *Erind*] Ireland. I have adhered to the dative form, which has already been adopted in English.

Farney [*Fernmag*]. "The plain of alders." Now the barony of Farney in County Monaghan.

Faughard [*Fochaird*]. The height still called Faughard about three miles north of Dundalk.

Fauhan. See under "Cooley."

Fawl [*Fál*]. An old name for Ireland. See L.L. 261^a37. Sometimes we have *Inis Fáil*, "the Island of Fál." The name was derived from the *Fál* or *Lia Fáil* in Tara, "the stone that used to roar under the feet of every king that would take possession of Ireland." See Rev. Celt. xv. 281 and 285.

Fedain Collna [*Fedain chollna*, Y.B.L. 50^a28]. This must have been somewhere near Clahra, which see.

Fëven [*Femen*]. The Plain of Femen was in the south of Tipperary. It is now the barony of Iffa and Offa East. I do not know whether the famous Sheemound of Bove has been identified or not; but see *Ac. na Sen.* 2775, where we are told that in

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somewhat later times it was called *Sídh ban find*, "the Shee-mound of white women." O'Donovan says that *Sliabh na mban bhfionn*, "the mountain of the white women," was the ancient name of Slieve-na-man; so, probably, it was this striking mountain which was the residence of Bove.

Findabair. (See under "Cooley").

Finn carn. (See under "Slieve Mourne").

Finn glass [*Finn glais*]. "The white stream." One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Finn glass [*Finn glass Assail*]. A river crossed by the hosts. Not identified. See "Road of Assail."

Finn gower [*Fingabair*]. Probably in Slieve Foo-id; for at L.L. 89^b26 Fingin is said to be at *Leccain Sleibe Fúait*.

Fo-dromma [*Fodromma*]. This seems to be a river flowing into the Boyne very close to Slane.

Ford of Bercna [*Áth Bercna*]. Probably to the north-west of Croohan, near Bellanagare or Frenchpark. See also *Ac. na Sen.* 7862.

Ford of Coltna [*Áth Coltna*]. This seems to be connected with *Coltna* L.L. 56^b15, and *Móin Coltna* L.L. 58^a17. It must have been somewhere near Slieve Bawne, and south-east of Croohan.

Ford of Moga [*Áth Moga*]. A ford over the river Suck. Now Ballymoe, about ten miles south-west of Croohan.

Ford of Shlissen [*Áth Shlissen*]. A ford over the Owenure River, near Elphin, now Bellaslishen Bridge. See F. M. 1288. It is about six miles to the north-east of Croohan.

Ford of the two Magic Deeds [*Áth da Féirta*, Y.B.L. 55^a23, cf. *vadum duarum virtutum* (*Mirabilium*), An. Ulster 818]. At L.L. 79^b7 this ford is said to be in Slieve Foo-id. Elsewhere it is said to be in Moy Mweerhevna. Therefore, probably, it was at a point where the hills (Slieve Foo-id) join the plain (Moy Mweerhevna) on the southern border of the barony of Upper Fews in County Armagh.

Ford of Watching [*Áth na Foraire*]. This was evidently on the road between Avvin Maha and Loch Ahtra (Lake Muckno). Outside the *Táin* I remember no reference to *Áth na Foraire*; but there are many references to *Carn na foraire*, "the Cairn of Watching"; and the latter may perhaps be identified with Carnagh, a hill about four miles south of Keady. This hill must have commanded a wide view towards the territory of Mourne and the sometimes hostile sub-kingdom of Farney in the south.

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Gan'-a-win [*Gáinemain*]. "The sandy." One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Gaul. See the remarks by Dr. Kuno Meyer, *Rev. Celt.* xi. 438.

Gawrig [*Gárech*, dat. *Gárig*]. I think the site of the great battle was near Ballymore, in Westmeath. See "Clahra."

Glass Colpa [*Glaiss Colptha*]. See under "Cooley."

Glass Crond [*Cronð*; *Glaiss Cruind*]. See under "Cooley."

Glass Gatlig [*Glaiss Gatlaig*]. See under "Cooley."

Glen'-a-win [*Glenamain*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Glen Bray [*Gleunn mBreogaind*, T.E. §39]. A glen between Drum Bray and the Boyne. Moy Bray, Glen Bray, &c., are said to have been named after Bregan, the builder of Bregan's Tower.

Glen Daw Roo [*Glenn Da Rúadh*]. Said to be Glendaruel, in Argyle. For an account of the various glens in Argyle, supposed to be those which are described in Daerdra's song, see "Loch Etive and the Sons of Uisneach," by the late Dr. Angus Smith.

Glendomna. See "Imlee of Glendomna," Appendix A.

Glen Etive [*Glenn Eitich*]. Glen Etive in Argyle.

Glen Faer'-bay' [*Glend Fírbaithe*, L.U. 74^a11]. This must have been close to Faughard.

Glen Fauhan [*Glend Focháine*]. See under "Cooley."

Glen Gatt [*Glend ngat*, L.U. 65^a23]. See under "Cooley."

Glen Law'-ee [*Glend Ldid*]. Said to be Glenlochry in Argyle.

Glen Massan [*Glend Masain*]. Said to be Glenmasan, at the head of Loch Striven, in Argyle.

Glen Samaska [*Glend na Samaisce*]. "Glen of the heifers." This must have been close to Slieve Gullion, in County Armagh.

Glen Taul [*Glend Táil*]. See under "Cooley."

Glen Urkeen [*Glend Urchán, Orchaoin*]. Said to be Glenorchy, in Argyle.

Glore [*Gleóir*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Goola Milhy [*Guala Muilchi*]. On the river Dee (the ancient *Nith*). Is this the townland of Drumgoolestown between Dromin and Stabannan in County Louth?

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Gower [*Gabair*]. Perhaps to the west of Loch Neagh. See *Fir Gabrae*, Trip. Life, Index.

Granard [*Granard*, L.U. 57^a30 *gloss*]. The town of Granard, in the east of County Longford.

Great Greece. See Appendix E.

Great Snowy Land. See Appendix E.

Greece. See Appendix E.

Grellah Cul'-gäry [*Grellach Culgairi*]. "The miry place of the chariot-noise." One gathers from *Táin Bo Regamna* that this was the old name for Grellah Dollud, which see.

Grellah Dollud [*Grellach Dolluid*]. O'Donovan (F.M. 693, note) suggests that this place was Girly near Kells. But *Tochmarc Emire* and *Táin Bo Regamna* show clearly that it was somewhere in Moy Mweerhevna.

Grey Lake [*Lind Liath*]. Somewhere in Slieve Foo-id.

(The) **Height of Willows** [*Árd na Sáileach*]. Now Armagh, cf. Trip. Life, ii. 473.

(The) **Hill of Usna** [*Uisneach*]. In the barony of Rathconrath, in Westmeath. "The reputed centre of Ireland."

Ilgawrig [*Ilgáirig*]. See "Gawrig."

Imlee of Glendomna. See Appendix A.

Immil. See "Loch Laery."

Innish Cooscree [*Inis Cuscraid*]. Now Inch, near Downpatrick.

Innish Draiguen [*Inis Draigen*]. Perhaps "a projecting rocky land called *Ruadh nan Draighnean*," near Bunawe, in Argyle. See "Loch Etive and the Sons of Uisneach."

Inn'-yone [*Indeóin*]. This was the old name of the Dungolman River, which separates the baronies of Rathconrath and Kilkenny West, in Westmeath. It seems to mark the southern limit of "the long devious course" by which Fergus led the hosts.

Inver Colpa [*Inbher Colptha*]. The estuary of the Boyne.

Iona [*I Choluim Chille*]. An island off the Ross of Mull in Scotland. Of great fame in connexion with St. Columba.

Irrus Domnann [*Irros Domnand*]. Now the barony of Erris in County Mayo.

Islands of the Athishec. See Appendix E.

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Islands of the Foreigners } [*Insi-Gall*]. The Hebrides, or Western Isles of
Islands of the Gall } Scotland.

Isles of Gat [*Indsi Gaid*. Y.B.L. 46^a27]. When writing, I understood these to be the same as the *Insi Cadd* of C.R.R. p. 10, and the *Insi Cat* of G and G, p. 152, namely, the Shetland Islands; and I recast the passage. But Dr. Windisch (*Táin*, p. 722) quite rightly, I think, understands them to be the Islands of Cadiz. The sentiment expressed by Fergus is not affected by the difference!

Isles of Ore [*Indsi Orcc*. Y.B.L. 46^a26]. The Orkney Islands.

Kell Coonan [*Caill Cuan*]. "The Wood of Coonan." I cannot identify this; but there was a high road leading to it from Moy Mweerhevna. *Cuan* means "a harbour."

Kyle Coonan [*Caill Cuan*]. Somewhere in Argyle. I don't know whether it has been identified.

Knowth [*Cnogba*]. A great tumulus on the Boyne, a couple of miles east of Slane. In the Triads the Cave of Knowth is one of the three Dark Places of Erin.

Land of Sorca [*Tír na Sorcha*; *Tír Sorcha*]. A supernatural country, the same as *Tír Tairngiri*, "the Land of Promise." In the story called *Serglige Conculaind* (L.U. 43-50) it is described in very beautiful poetry: the name occurs at L.U. 48^a41.

(The) **Larguey** [*Lerga*]. *Lerga* means "a slope," "a hillside," and is found in very many place-names in Ulster. The Larguey of Book xi. must have been close to the place afterwards called the Bressla More.

Leek More [dat. *ic Liúc Móir*]. Not identified.

Leesa Leek [*Liasa liac*]. See under "Cooley."

Le-Glass [*Lethglais, Dún Leithglaisse*]. Now Downpatrick. The great doon of Keltar, which has given its name, "Down," to the whole country, may still be seen there.

Leinster [*Lagen*]. An ancient name for Leinster was *Gailean*. In the *Táin* the men of Leinster are called the *Galeóin*.

Letteree [*Leitir-Ruige*]. Unfortunately I have not read the *Cath Leitreach-Ruige*, of which there is a copy, R.I.A. 23 k. 37. It may supply data for the identification of this place.

Lind Format. See Appendix E.

Loch Ahtra [*co Fertais Locha Echtrand*]. Now Muckno Lake, County Monaghan. See F.M., A.M. 2535, note ¹.

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Loch Etive [*Loch Eitche*]. Loch Etive in Aygyle

Loch Laery [*Loch Laoghair*, Haliday's Keating, p. 390]. This must have been Belfast Lough. Compare "Death-Tales of Ulster Heroes" by Dr. Kuno Meyer, p. 22, and "Deaths of some Irish Heroes" by Dr. Stokes, Rev. Celt. xxiii, pp. 320, 325, 335: from these passages we learn that the house of the great Laery the Victorious was on the brink of *Loch Lái*, *Loch Laogh*, *Loch Láig*, *Loch Lóig*, all various spellings of the old name for Belfast Lough. The country near his house was called *Crioch Ldaghair Bhudhaigh*, "the Territory of Laery the Victorious." In the *Táin* the name of his rath is variously given as *Immiailli*, *Impail*, *Ráith Imbil*, *Ráith Impail*, &c., a name which possibly, I think, contains an allusion to its situation on the edge of the sea, for *Imbel* means "an edge," "a border." I would suggest that it may have been at Carnalea, the last syllable of which name is probably derived from the ancient name of the Lough.

Loch-na-darriv [*Loch-na-d-tarb*]. "The lake of the bulls."

Loch Ree [*Loch Rí*]. Lough Ree, an expansion of the Shannon.

Loo'-a-her [*Luachair*]. Perhaps Slieve Lougher near Castleisland in County Kerry.

Loolohta Lōha [dat. *Luglochtaib Loga*]. In "*The Battle of Magh Rath*," p. 52, we are told that the *bruighean* of Forgall Mona was *i taeb Lusca* "beside Lusk" (County Dublin).

Maeda of the Bird [*Méide ind ébín*].

Maeda of the Squirrel [*Méide in togmaill*].

Méide means "a neck."

} These places must have been near
} the middle of the County Louth.

(The Three) **Maels of Meath** [*na tri Maela Mide*]. There is a reference to these Silv. Gad. i. 308; but I cannot identify them.

(The Three) **Maels of Connaught** [*na tri maoldáin Atha Lúidín*, "the three Maels of Athlone"]. These must be three hills close to Athlone, on the Connaught side.

Meath [*Mide*]. The ancient Meath contained the present counties of Meath and Westmeath and much territory besides. See O'Mahony's Keating, p. 86.

Meedlougher. See "Road of Meedlougher."

Meelic [*Miliuc*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Mone Coltna [*Móin Chóiltnae*, L.U. 57^a9]. This seems to be the same place as the *Coltain* of the Itinerary L.U. and L.L. Apparently a moor between Slieve Bawne and the Shannon.

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Mooah [*Muach*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Mound of Ercmon [*Sid Ercmon*, Celt. Zeit. 241]. In the unedited *Coga Fergus* agus *Conchobar*, "Wars of Fergus and Conor," R.I.A. 23 k. 37, there is a *Síodh Ealcmar*, which may be the same place; but I cannot identify it.

Mourne [*a Moduirn atúaid*, L.L. 98⁴²]. It seems likely that this territory of Munnrower son of Guerkind was *Mughdhorn Breagh*, "Mourne of Bray," which was partly in Cavan, partly in Meath. Munnrower met his death "in his own lake," Loch Munreamair (Rev. Celt. xxiii, 327) now Lough Ramor, County Cavan. At L.L. 114³⁸ he is called *Munremur lond Locha Sáil*; and *Loch Sáil* seems to be *Loch Sailind*, now Lough Sheelin, not far from Lough Ramor.

Movilla [*Magh bhile*]. Near Newtownards in County Down.

Moy Bray [*Magh Breagh*]. Used vaguely for the whole of the comparatively level country between Dublin and Kells and Dundalk.

Moy Cova [*Magh Cobha*]. The plain north-west of the Mourne Mountains, in the baronies of Upper and Lower Iveagh, County Down.

Moy Cronn [*Magh Cruinn*]. This would seem to have been part of Moy Wee.

Moy Innish [*Magh Inis*]. Now the baronies of Upper and Lower Lecale in County Down.

Moy Linny [*Magh Line*]. Chiefly in the barony of Upper Antrim, County Antrim.

Moy Mweerhevna [*Magh Muirthemne*]. The level plain in the north of County Louth.

Moy-na-darriv [*Magh-na-d-tarbh*]. The plain of the bulls.

Moy Thooaga [*Mag Tuaga*]. Somewhere in Connaught.

Moy Traega [*Mag Trega*]. The level country in the barony and county of Longford.

Moy Twirra [*Mag Tuireadh*]. Near Lough Arrow in the barony of Tirerrill, County Sligo. See F.M., A.M. 3330, note *.

Moy Wee [*Mag Ái*, *Mag Aei*]. The plain in County Roscommon on which Rath Coohan was situated. It extended from Ballymoe to Elphin, and from Bellanagare to Strokestown.

Munster [*Muma*].

Murrise [*Muiresc*]. The barony of Murrisk in County Mayo.

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Nemud [*Nemud*]. Somewhere in Slieve Foo-id. It may be the same place as the *nemed* in Trip. Life, p. 240.

Nith [*Nith*]. The ancient name of the river of Ardee. See F.M., A.M. 4169, note. Now called the Dee.

Ohawn [*Ochun, Ochuind*]. This seems likely to be the *Ochonn* of Meath, where Niall of the Nine Hostages was buried. (See Rev. Celt. xv, p. 295.) I don't know whether it has been identified.

Ollbinni [*Ollbine, Ailbine*. T.E. § 46]. The river Delvin, which falls into the sea at Gormanstown a little north of Balbriggan. See Reeves, Col., p. 108, note ^d.

Ooanub [*Uanabh, Uanuib*]. Is this the White River between the baronies of Ferrard and Ardee in County Louth?

Oorawn Garad [*Uaradn Garad*]. In O'Donovan's map of Hy Many this is marked due south of Croohan. Our old literature contains some singularly charming references to this well.

Orkill [*Oircel, Orcel*]. Now Forkill; the valley of the Forkill river, west of Slieve Gullion in County Armagh.

Oughter Netmon [*Ouchter Nedmon*]. Somewhere a little to the north of Drum Bray.

Partry [*Partraigi*]. Does this name still survive a little to the south-west of Kells?

Pass of Awny [*Belach nane*. L.U. 63^{b7}]. *Belach* being a neuter noun, I take the following *n* to be "transported." Not identified so far as I know.

Poopal Vaeva [*Pupall Medba*]. "Maev's tent."

Raeda Lōha [*Rēde Loche*]. See under Cooley.

Rath Aerheer [*Rdith Airthir*]. "The Eastern Fort." There was a *Rdith Airthir* close to Taltin (See Trip. Life, p. 70), but this was not in Farney, of which Owen was king.

Rath Immil. See "Loch Laery."

Rathlin [*Rachriu*]. A large island off the northern coast of Antrim. An old name for it was *Inis Cuilinn*.

Rath-na-darriy [*Rdith na dtarbh*]. "The rath of the bulls."

Reedonn [*Rigdond*]. Is this the same place as that in which St. Patrick afterwards founded his church of *Domnach Rigduind*, "The church, or cathedral, of Rigdond"? *Domnach Rigduind* was in the south of County Derry, between Slieve Gullion and Loch Neagh. See Trip. Life, p. 169, and Reeves, p. 294. At Y.B.L. 47^b45, the place whence Rohee came is called *Brig dumaē*.

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Rind [*Rind*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Road of Assal [*Slighe Asail*]. One of the great high roads of ancient Ireland. It ran from Tara westwards, at least as far as *Tig Lommain* (now Portloman) on the western shore of Lough Owel, in Westmeath. See L.U. 631-33.

Road of Meedlougher [*Slighe Midhluachra*]. One of the great high roads of ancient Ireland. It ran northward from Tara; and from various passages in the literature (especially Y.B.L. 5326) we are able to gather that it went through the western part of Cooley—perhaps through the Moyry Pass—and so past Newry into Moy Cova.

Sawss [*Sás*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Saxon land [*Saxain*]. England. But the Saxons had not come to Britain at the time when the *Táin* took place. The first mention of Saxons in F.M. is under the year 683 A.D.

Sayer [*Saighir*]. Now Seir-kieran, about six miles to the east of Parsonstown, in the King's County.

Scythia. See Appendix E.

Seel [*Síil*]. Somewhere in Lecale, in County Down.

Shannon [*Sionainn*]. The river Shannon.

Slahta [*Slechtsa*]. To the south-west of Kells. Does the name survive?

Slane [*Sláne*]. The town of Slane, on the Boyne.

Slane of Meath [*Slemain Mide*]. "Now divided into Slanebeg and Slanemore, two townlands in the parish of Dysart, County Westmeath." An. Ulster i., p. 33, note. An adjoining townland is called Slanestown. This district is about three miles to the west of Mullingar.

Slawnga [*Slánga*]. The ancient name of Slieve Donard, the highest of the Mourne Mountains.

Slieve Bawne [*Badbagna*]. "A mountainous territory extending from Lanesborough to Rooskey, on the west side of the Shannon, in the County of Roscommon." F.M. 678, note.

Slieve Bray [*Slíab Breg*]. See "Drum Bray."

Slieve Fauhan [*isín tsleíb tuath ochaine*, L.U. 6715]. See under "Cooley."

Slieve Findabair [*Findabair Slebe*]. There were many places named Findabair. I cannot identify this one. The name is usually anglicised Fennor.

Slieve Foo-id [*Slíab Fúaid*]. This name seems to have been applied vaguely to almost all the mountainous country west and north-west of Slieve Gullion, in the

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southern half of County Armagh. One could make a long list of names of places which in our old literature were said to be "in Slieve Foo-id."

Slieve Gullion [*Sliab Culind*]. A striking mountain in the barony of Upper Orior, County Armagh. See under "Cooley."

Slieve Mourne [*Sliab Moduirn*]. A country of low hills in the southern part of the barony of Cremourne, County Monaghan. Finncarn, "the white cairn," must have been on a height which commanded a wide view towards the south.

Spain [*Espain*].

Suir [*Siúir*]. The river which forms the northern boundary of County Waterford.

Tahg [*Tadg*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Taltin [*Taltiu*; dat. *Taltin*]. Now Teltown, on the Blackwater between Kells and Navan. A very famous place in ancient Erin.

Tamlaht Orlam [*oc Tamlahtain órláib*, L.L. 68.28]. Said in L.L. to be to the north of *Disert Lochad*, but where was this? *Tamlachta* means a plague-grave. Near Drumshallon, to the west, there is a townland called *Kiltallaght*. Was this the place?

Tara [*Temair*]. The ancient capital of Ireland. In the barony of Screen, County Meath.

Tara in the Ards. See "Ards of Ulster."

Tara of Cooley. See under "Cooley."

Teffia [*Tethba*]. North and south Teffia were large territories, the boundaries of which doubtless varied at different periods. In early times the river Inny, which flows into Lough Ree, divided north Teffia from south Teffia. See B.R., p. 11.

Telamet [*Telaméit*]. One of Cucullin's rivers of healing. Not identified.

Thromma [*Tromma*]. A river evidently flowing into the Boyne close to Slane. In F.M. 512 there is mention of a *Sidh Truim* close to Slane. The names are probably connected. *Sidh Truim* is also mentioned L.U. 47.33.

Toom Mona [*Tóm Mona, Tuaim Mona*]. Now Toomona, two or three miles south of Rath Croohan. See the interesting note, F.M. 1488, note *a*.

Tyrrhene Sea [*Muir Toirrian*]. See Appendix E.

Ulster [*Ulaid*]. The boundary of ancient Ulster extended from the estuary of the Boyne to the river Drowes, which flows from Lough Melvin into Donegal Bay. In the Táin, however, *Ulaid* is occasionally used in a more restricted

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sense, and seems to apply only to the north-eastern corner of Ireland, Antrim and Down and Armagh.

Wave of Cleena [*Tond Chlidna*]. In Glandore Harbour, County Cork. See the very interesting note by O'Donovan, F.M. 1557.

Wave of Bury [*Tond Rudraige*]. In the Bay of Dundrum, County Down. This place was also called *Inbhear n-Gaoth*, "the River-mouth of Winds." See I.T.S. v. 168.

Wave of Thoog Inver [*Tond Tuage Inbir*]. At the mouth of the Bann, in County Derry.

APPENDIX C

NAMES OF PERSONS, TRIBES, AND ANIMALS OCCURRING IN THE VERSE.

Three **Abrat-rooas** [*Tri Abrat-rúaid*].

Aen, charioteer of Conall Carna [*Oen*].

Aen, son of Mahga [*Én mac Magach*].

Aerrga Ecbael [*Errge Echbél*].

Āl'-yill [*Ailill*].

Angus [*Oengus*].

An'-loean [*Anlúan*].

Annly [*Ainnle*].

Ar-dawn' [*Arddn*].

Av'-ver-guin [*Amargin*].

Awley [*Amhalgaidh*].

Baefinn [*Befind*].

Bahlor [*Balor*].

Bas [*Bas*].

Bashny [*Baiscne*].

Baskell [*Bascell*].

Blai [*Blai*].

Blawth [*Bláth*].

Bled [*Bled*].

Blod [*Blod*].

Bō'-guin-ā [*Bogaine*].

Boi [*Bude*].

Borrig [*Borrach*; gen. *Borraig*].

Bove [*Bodh*].

Boyne [*Boand*].

Brendan [*Brenainn*].

Bress [*Bress*].

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Brian [*Brian*].
 Brigit [*Brigit*].
 Broo'-ä-her [*Briúachar*].
 Bwinn'-ye [*Buinne*].
 Caillin [*Caillin*].
 Cäl'-a-teen [*Calatin*].
 Carpry neea Faer [*Carpre Nia fer*].
 Four Casses [*Cethri Caiss*].
 Cathbad [*Cathbath, Cathbad*].
 Catt [*Catt*].
 Caur [*Caur*].
 Three Cauriths [*Tri Caurith*].
 Clothra [*Clothra*].
 Five Coffys [*cóic Cobthaig*].
 Collac [*Collach*].
 Colum-killé [*Columb-cille*].
 Three Com'-beergas [*tri Combirgi*].
 Conall Carna [*Conall Cernach*].
 Conmac [*Conmac*].
 Conn [*Conn*].
 Eight Connlas [*Ochtar Conlai*].
 Connra Cae [*Connra Caech*].
 Connud [*Connud*].

Conor the son of Fahtna Fahee son of Ross the Red-haired son of Rury
 [*Conchobar mac Fächtna Fáthaig meic Rossa Ruaid meic Rudraigi*].

Cooar [*Cuar*].
 Coor son of Daw-loath' [*Cúir mac Da Lóth*].
 Cooroi son of Dawra [*Cúiríi mac Daire*].
 Cooscree Mend Maha [*Cuscraid Mend Macha*].
 Core [*Corc*].
 Cormac Con-ling'-ish [*Cormac Condloinges*].
 Cotreb [*Cotreb*].
 Crin'niuc [*Cruinniucc*].
 Three Cromms [*tri Cruim*].
 Two Croo'-ees [*dd Chruaid*].

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- Crunniuc** the son of **Agnoman** [*Crunniuc mac Agnoman*].
Cruthen [*Cruthen*].
Cullan [*Culand*].
Cu-cullin [*Cúchulaind*].
Daerbra [*Derbriu*].
Daerdra [*Derdriu*].
The Dagda [*In Dagda*].
Nine Dahmahs [*nói n-Dámaig*].
Nine Daigiths [*nói n-Daigith*].
Dawra son of **Feeacna** [*Dára mac Fiachnai*].
Dawthy [*Dathi*].
Dec'-tor-a [*Dechtire*].
Ten Delbaes [*deich n-Delbait*].
Dess [*Dess*: explained in a gloss to mean *Dia*, "God."].
Dôha son of **Mahga** [*Dóche mac Magach*].
Domnall [*Domnall*].
Donn of **Cooley** [*Donn Cualnge*].
Six Dooahs [*sé Duaich*].
Doo Sanglenn [*Dubh Sainglend*].
Dorndoll [*Dorndoll*].
Duffa Dael [*Dubthach Dóel*].
Six Dungalls [*Sé Dungail*].
Two Eckells [*Dá Éicell*].
Ecket [*Ecet*].
Edarcool son of **Feda** and **Leth'-rinny** [*Etarcumul mac Feda ocus Lethrnini*].
Ella [*Éle*].
Emer [*Emer*].
Ere [*Ercc*].
Err [*Err*].
Esorb [*Esorb*].
Ethna [*Ethne*].
Etty [*Eitte*].
Faebur [*Faebur*].

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Faer'-a-dah [*Feradach*].

Faer-bay' son of Baet'-an [*Fer báeth mac Baetain*].

Faer-bay' son of Faer-bend' [*Fer báeth mac Fir bend*].

Faer-daet' son of Dám'-an [*Fer dét mac Damáin*].

Faer-dee'-ah son of Dám-an [*Fer diad mac Damáin*].

Faer-lō-ga [*Fer loga*].

Fann'-la [*Faindle*].

Faylim [*Feidlimid*].

Faylim [*Feidlimid*].

Faylimy [*Feidlimid*].

Fedelm [*Feidelm*].

Fed'-il-mid [*Fedlimid, Feidilmid*].

Ten Fee'-acs [*Deich Féic*].

Fee'-ac-na [*Fiachna*].

Fee'-a-ha [*Fiacha*].

Fee'-al [*Fial*].

Fehan [*Fethan*].

Fergus son of Leddy [*Fergus mac Leti*].

Fergus the son of Roy the son of Yōhee Lenny [*Fergus mac Roeich meic Ehdach Lenni*].

Findabair [*Findabair*].

Find-benn'-a [*Findbennach*].

Findian [*Finnén*].

Find-more' [*Find mór*].

Finguin [*Fingin*].

Finn the son of Ross the Red [*Find mac Rosa Ruaid*].

Finn'-caem [*Findcoem*].

Finn-ha Faer-bend' [*Findchad Fer bend*].

Fintan [*Fintan*].

Fohair [*Feochair*].

Fohnam [*Fochnam*].

Foill [*Fóill*].

Foll-oon' [*Follomain*].

Foorbee Faer benn [*Furbaide Fer bend*].

Forgall Mona [*Forgall Monach*].

Four Fotas [*Cethri Fotai*].

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- Frae the son of Eedath [*Froech mac Idaith*].
 Four Furacars [*Cethri Furachair*].
 Germanus [*German*].
 Glass the son of Delga [*Glass mac Delga*].
 Ibbur [*Iubar*].
 Illann Finn [*Illann Find*].
 Ill'-i-ah [*Illach*].
 Imha [*Imchad*].
 Inguen [*Ingen*].
 Inn'-yel [*Innell*].
 Ivor [*Ibar*].
 Two Kahlas [*Da Chaladh*].
 Keear [*Ciar*].
 Keen'-bill [*Cdinbili*].
 Two Keers [*Dá Chir*].
 Kë'-hern [*Cethern*].
 Keltar the son of Oo'-híder [*Celtchar mac Uthecair*].
 Five Kermans [*Cóic Cermain*].
 Ket the son of Mahga [*Cet mac Magach*].
 Kieran [*Ciaran*].
 Laeg son of Ree-angowra [*Lóg mac Rianganbra*].
 Laer'-íny [*Lairine*].
 Laery [*Lógairé*].
 Lath Gobla [*Lath Gaiblie*].
 Lath son of Daw-brō' [*Lath mac Da Bro*].
 Lawry Ling-sha [*Labhraidh Loingseach*].
 Leddi [*Leiti*].
 Leea Maha [*Liath Macha*].
 Lewy son of Nōs son of Alamac [*Lugaid mac Nois mac Alamaic*].
 Lewy son of Solmoy [*Lugaid mac Solamaig*].
 Lō'-har [*Lóthar*].
 Lōk son of Emonis [*Lóch mac Emonis*, L.U. 74^b 9].
 Long [*Long*].
 Loo son of Ethlenn [*Lug mac Ethlend*].
 Looan [*Lúan*].

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Looath [*Luath*].

Two Looees [*Da Lui*].

Low'-er-cam [*Leborcham*].

Three Lussens [*Tri Lussin*].

Mac Roth [*Mac Roth*].

Maccorb [*Maccorb*].

Maellia [*Meille*].

Maev [*Medb*].

Maha daughter of Sanrith son of Imba [*Macha ingen Sainrith mac Imbait*],
L.L. 126^a 13].

Mahn'-ya Ath-roo'-il [*Mane Athremail*].

Mahn'-ya Con'-da-gau Illy [*Mane Condagaib uile*].

Mahn'-ya Math-roo'-il [*Mane Mathremail*].

Mahn'-ya Mō-æpert [*Mane Mœpert*].

Mahn'-ya Meen'-gar [*Mane Mingor*].

Mahn'-ya More'-gar [*Mane Mórgor*].

Mahn'-ya Toi [*Manc Tái*].

Manannawn [*Mannandán*].

Marc [*Marc*].

Mar-vawn' [*Marbhan*].

Mawta Murrisc [*Máta Murisc*].

Mend son of Sal-colg'-an [*Mend mac Salcholgan*]

Mess Lahan [*Meslethan*].

Mess Leea [*Mesldighe*].

Mess Linny [*Meslinni*].

Mil [*Mil*].

Milhy [*Muilchi*].

Moo'-gawn [*Mugain*].

The More-reega daughter of Ernmas [*In Mórrígu ingen Ernmais*].

Mu-gar'-ny [*Mugairne*].

Eight Mullahs [*Ocht Mulaig*].

Munn-row'-er son of Guerkind [*Munremur mac Gercind*].

Mur'-i-dah [*Muridach*].

Nahta Scaena [*Nechta Scene*].

Nath-corp'-a [*Nathcoirpthe*, L.U. 70·12].

Nath-crant'-il [*Nathcrantail*].

Neesha [*Nóisi*].

Ōkill [*Ochall*; gen. *Ochail*].

Oo'-a-ha [*Uathach*].

Oo'-al [*Ūal*].

Seven **Oo-arguses** [*secht nudrgusa*, L.U. 75·5].

Oola [*Uala*].

Orlam [*Ōrlam*; *Orldb*].

Owen [*Eogain*].

Patrick [*Patraic*].

Raen [*Ró-en*].

Renc [See L.L. 58^b 4. I think I ought to have read this word *rechtaire*, “steward,” as Dr. Windisch does. I took it to be an abbreviation for the name of the mother of Err and Innel, and made her *Renc*].

Riceny [*Ruicni*].

Rind [*Rind*].

Eight **Rindahs** [*Ocht Rindaich*].

Rinn [*Rinn*].

Seven **Rohas** [*Secht Rochaid*].

Röhee son of Fa'-ha-win [*Reochaid mac Fathemain*].

Eight **Rohties** [*Ocht Rochtaid*].

Roneu [*Roncu*].

Seven **Ronawns** [*Secht Rondin*].

Rooad [*Ruad*].

Root [*Rucht*].

Ross the son of Feeacna [*Ros mac Fiacna*].

Roy [*Rói*].

Seven **Ruras** [*Secht Rurthig*].

Six **Saxans** [*Sé Saxain*].

Scandall son of Mahga [*Scandal mac Magach*].

Scaw [*Scath*].

Scawtha daughter of Aird'-gămă [*Scathach ingen Airdgeme*, cf. Y.B.L. 214^a 4].

Setanta [*Setanta*].

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Sheen [*Sin*].
Shenca [*Sencha*].
Shen'-cawn [*Senchan*].
Shennel Oo-aha [*Senal Uathach*].
Skeeath [*Sciath*].
Skibbur [*Sciuhar*].
Soda [*Soda*].
Soo'-al-tim [*Sualtaim*].
Sreb-loo'-ah [*Srebluath*].
Srub Dawra son of Fedaig [*Srub dare mac Fedaig*].
Tethra [gen. *Tetrach*].
Thoo'-a-ha Dae Danann [*Túatha Dé Danann*].
Tin'-niuc [*Tinniuc*].
Tinny son of Conrig Cass [*Tinndi mac Conrach Cais*].
Toohal son of Nahta [*Tuachall mac Nechtain*].
Trescath [*Trescad*].
Triath [*Triath*].
Ultonians [*Ulaid*].
Ul'-becawn [*Ulbecan*].
Weefa [*Aiffe*].
Yóhee Bec [*Eochaid Bec*].
Yóhee Fayla [*Eochaid Feidlech*].

APPENDIX D

THE PRINCIPAL SOURCES FROM WHICH THE NARRATIVE HAS BEEN DRAWN

THE FINDING OF THE TÁIN

1. *Do fallsigud tána bó cualnge*, "The revealing of the Táin bo Cualnge." L.L. 245^b3-42..
2. *Imtheacht na Tromdhíme, Ina bh-foillsighthear cionas do fuaras an Táin ar tús*, 7c. "The journeying of the burdensome learned men, in which it is revealed how the Táin was first found," &c. Oss. vol. v.
3. The version of the Revealing of the Táin in Egerton 1782, fol. 87^b. Printed in Archiv. iii. 3.
4. The version of the Revealing of the Táin, MS. D. 4. 2 (R.I. A.) fol. 49^b2. Printed in Archiv. iii. 4.
[These four versions differ very much from each other.]
5. "Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, Oxford, 1890.
6. "Life of St. Kieran of Saighir." Silv. Gad.

BOOK I

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. *De chophur in da muccide*, "of the Generation (?) of the two Swineherds." L.L. 246^a-247^a. Also the Egerton Text, edited by Windisch, I.T., Dritte Serie., 1 Heft.
3. *Ferchuitred Medba*. "Maev's Three Husbands," Rawlinson MS. B 512. [I made a transcript of this in the Bodleian several years ago.]
4. *Cath Boinde*. "The Battle of the Boyne," Book of Lecan, 351^b-353^a, a text almost identical with *Ferchuitred Medba*. It has been edited by Mr. Joseph O'Neill, in *Ériu* ii. 173.

In causing the Druid to give the account of the transmigrations of the swineherds, and in causing Maev to be the narrator of her own youthful history, I merely adopt the characteristic Gaelic device for introducing episodes from the past, the same device which is used in the texts of the Táin itself, where the three distinguished exiles from Ulster are made to relate the boyish exploits of Cucullin.

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BOOK II

1. *Cid dia-mboi loḡses mac nUsnig*. "What caused the exile of the Sons of Usna?" L.L. 259^b-261^b. This text has been edited by Dr. Windisch, I.T., first series.

2. *Oided mac nUisnig*. "The Tragic Deaths of the Sons of Usna," edited by Dr. Stokes, I.T., Zweite serie, 2 Heft.

3. *Déirdre*, edited by Dr. Douglas Hyde from a manuscript in the Belfast Museum, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. ii.

4. *The Glenmasan Manuscript*, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. This ms. is invaluable for the account which it gives of the events that occurred between the deaths of the sons of Usna and the opening of the Táin. Some years ago I began to make a copy of it; but I was happily saved from continuing this difficult labour by its gradual appearance, edited by Professor Mackinnon, in the *Celtic Review*.

5. *Caithréim Conghail Cláiringnig*, "Martial Career of Conghal Cláiringh-neach," edited by P. M. MacSweeney, M.A., I.T.S., vol. v. This tells us also of the "martial career" of Fergus in the days before the exile of the Sons of Usna.

It is necessary to know the story of the children of Usna in order to understand the position of Fergus in the Táin. In supposing Lowercam to be exiled in Connaught, and in making her the narrator of the story, I again merely adopt the characteristic Gaelic device.

BOOK III

1. T.B.C.; L.L.

2. T.B.C.; L.U.

3. *Cóir Anmann*, "Fitness of Names," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, I.T., Dritte Serie, 2 Heft.

4. *Ferchuitred Medba* and *Cath Boinde*, as in Book I.

5. *Táin bo Fraech*, "The Driving of the Kine of Frae," L.L. 248^a-252^b.

6. *Noinden Ulaḡ cid di-atá*, "What was the origin of the 'noinden' of Ulster?" L.L. 125^b-126^a.

In making the Druid the narrator of this tale I again, as in Books I and II, adopt the Gaelic method. A knowledge of the tale is essential to the proper understanding of the Táin.

BOOK IV

1. T.B.C.; L.U.

2. T.B.C.; L.L.

The description of the making of Maev's camp was suggested by a passage in *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, "The Battle of Magh Léana"; and the account of the harpers and their music was suggested by *Táin bo Fraech*.

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BOOK V

1. T.B.C; L.L.
2. T.B.C.; L.U.

BOOKS VI AND VII

(See Appendix E.)

BOOK VIII

1. T.B.C; L.L.
2. T.B.C; L.U.

The account of "Laeg's one combat on the Táin" was taken from the ms. marked H. 2. 17 in Trinity College, Dublin.

The account of Cucullin's meeting with the More-reega is from the *Táin bo Regamna*, edited by Dr. Windisch, I.T., Zweite Serie, 2 Heft.

BOOK IX

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. T.B.C.; L.U.

BOOK X

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. T.B.C. ; L.U.

I took the account of the combat of Laeriny from the ms. marked Addendum 8748 in the British Museum. The same narrative from Egerton 93 is printed by Nettlau, *Rev. Celt.* xiv, 261.

BOOK XI

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. T.B.C. ; L.U.

For the account given of himself by Loo the son of Ethlenn see "The Second Battle of Moytura," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Rev. Celt.* xii; and for the substance of Maev's speech to Fergus, see the Glenmasan ms.

BOOK XII

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. T.B.C. ; L.U.
3. "The Ferdiad Episode in the Táin Bo Cuailnge," by Nettlau, *Rev. Celt.* x and xi.

BOOK XIII

1. T.B.C. ; L.L.
2. T.B.C. ; L.U.
3. T.B.C. ; Y.B.L.

For the description of Cooroi see the passage in *Fled Bricrend*, L.U. 110^b44-111^a3.

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For *Taltin*, see passage in *Senchas na relec*, "History of the Cemeteries," L.U. 51^b1; also L.U. 38^b34.

For *Brigit*, see *Corm*, s. v. *Brigit*; also Rennes, section 159; also L.L. 170^b55 and L.L. 187^e55.

BOOK XIV

1. T.B.C.; L.L.
2. T.B.C.; Y.B.L.

BOOK XV

1. T.B.C.; L.L.
2. T.B.C.; Y.B.L.

For the Battle-castles see Windisch, *Táin*, pp. 785-803, where a long extract from the Stowe MS. is given.

For the idea of Maev's going three times round the hosts see a passage in "The Battle of Magh Rath."

For the substance of Maev's first speech to Fergus see the above-mentioned extract from the Stowe MS., also the Glenmasan MS., &c.

For the Three Waves see C.R.R.

For the comparison of Cucullin to St. Columcille see the "Life of Colum cille," edited by Dr. Henebry.

For the sword of Cucullin see the "Decision as to Cormac's sword," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, I.T. Dritte Serie, 1 Heft.

For the cry of the striplings see Rennes, section 120.

For Conor's gloom and depression see opening of C.R.R.

For the wedding of Emer, see close of T.E.

For the death of Cucullin (only alluded to here, since it does not come within the scope of the narrative) see the text abridged from L.L. by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Rev. Celt.* iii, 175.

THE WRITING OF THE TÁIN

1. The same materials as in "The Finding of the Táin."
2. *Senchas na relec*, "History of the Cemeteries," L.U. 50^b-52^a.
3. *Aided Nathi ocus a adnacól*, "The Violent Death and the Burial of Dathi," L.U. 38.
4. "Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language," edited by Petrie.
5. "Life of Colum cille," edited by Dr. Henebry.

APPENDIX E

NOTES ON BOOKS VI AND VII

IT is necessary to know the story of Cucullin's training to arms, in order that we may understand his relationship to his fellow-pupils in Books X and XII.

Most writers who in recent times have touched upon this story have assumed that the place of his training was the Isle of Skye, in Scotland. The treatment of the subject which I present in Book VII will, therefore, be regarded by some readers as a new departure, and one which requires justification.

The story of his training is found in two quite different versions. One version forms a part of the *Tochmarc Emire* [T.E.], "The Wooing of Emer." An account of the various MSS. in which the *Tochmarc Emire* has come down to us is given to us by Dr. Kuno Meyer, *Rev. Celt.*, vol. xi. I have used chiefly the Harleian text, printed by Dr. Meyer in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. iii. The other version of his training is found in the *Foghlaimh Conchulaind* [F.C.], "The Education of Cucullin," a tract which, so far as I know, has not yet been edited. I have worked from a copy which is in the R.I.A. This version exists now only in rather modern MSS.; but its substance is ancient. It represents the version of Cucullin's training which is presupposed both in the L.L. and L.U. recensions of the Táin; it is the version which tells of the solemn binding together of her pupils by their teacher, Scawtha.

Now, in F.C. Cucullin is trained, not in Skye, but in the east of Europe—in Scythia, and in "Great Greece" [*san nGréig mhóir*]. Scythia was a vague term for a region extending from what is now Hungary, eastward, far into Asia. In Ptolemy Scythia is made to cover a vast expanse. The name occurs frequently in our old Irish literature. "Great Greece," I think, was an equally vague term for the countries in which Greek was spoken, and which bordered on Scythia. It is to be remembered that at the time of the Táin the Celts were found over a great part of central Europe, and probably in "Scythia"; and they still spoke their own language. That there should have been frequent intercourse between them and the Celts of Ireland, and that our young nobles should have gone from Ireland to get a warlike training amongst the Celts of the Continent, is only

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what we might have expected. Compare various passages in Professor Bury's "Life of St. Patrick," concerning the frequency of intercourse in early times between Ireland and the continent of Europe. The tradition of this intercourse has never died out in Irish literature.

In T.E., which contains the first-named version of Cucullin's training, if we look closely into it, we find the same continental tradition. Owing to their close likeness, it was very easy to confuse the Gaelic words for Scotland and for the Alps. I believe that the *Alpi* of T.E. means the Alps. The land of Scawtha was *fri Alpi allaanoir*, "eastward from Alpi." That would not answer to the position of Skye with regard to Scotland; but it would answer very well to the position of Scythia with regard to the Alps.

In the text of the Táin itself we have references to Cucullin's training in the East. One of these is at L.L. 69^a6, where he is said to have gone to the mountains of Armenia, and also to have brought slaughter amongst the *Cichloiste* (read *-loiscthe*). *Cichloiscthe* is the Irish word for Amazons. It occurs in Middle-Irish translations from the classics, and it means "Burnt-breasts." The classical "myths" concerning the Amazons, and the apparently quite independent Irish tradition of warrior-women in Scythia and "Great Greece," are interesting in relation to each other. Why should we suppose that such warrior-women did not really exist?

Other references in the text of the Táin are in the Germanus poem, L.L. 88^a4-88^b24. At Y.B.L. 37^b51-2 we are told that the fortress of Germanus was above the edge-borders of the *Muir Toirrian*, which, following Dr. Stokes and others, I have rendered by "the Tyrrhene Sea." But the *Muir Toirrian* really meant the whole Mediterranean. (Compare L.L. 3^a23-28, where Bráth, starting from somewhere in the East, sails along the length of the *Muir Toirrian* to Crete and Sicily, and finally to Spain.)

As to the whereabouts of *Lind Format* I can offer no suggestion. In the *Isles of the Athisech* we might suspect an allusion to Athens; but it seems doubtful whether the *n* would have disappeared.

Did the later statements that Scawtha lived in the Isle of Skye arise from a double confusion between the Irish words for Skye and for Scythia on the one hand, and for Scotland and for the Alps on the other hand? Or was there really an early and independent Scotland-tradition? Perhaps some Scottish Gael will work out the subject.

The sources for Books VI and VII, besides the texts mentioned above, are the L.L. text of the Táin, and "The Fer Diad episode of the Táin Bó Cuailnge," by Dr. M. Nettlau, in Rev. Celt. x. and xi.

I have chosen Faerdeeah as the teller of this tale in order that he may become

APPENDIX E

known to us as the friend of Cucullin. From the artistic point of view the great defect in the account of the combat between Cucullin and Faerdeeah, as it occurs in both the recensions of the Táin, is that in one of the pair of combatants we have no previous interest.

I had completed the writing of Books VI and VII, and prepared my notes on them, before I had the gratification of seeing that on the question of the geography implied in T.E., Dr. Windisch is in agreement with me. See his *Táin*, pp. 436-437.

Dr. Whitley Stokes allows me to have the great pleasure of saying that he hopes some day to give us an edition of the *Foghlaimh Conchulaind*.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE APPENDICES

- Ac. na Sen.** . *Acallamh na Senórach*, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. Irische Texte, Vierte Serie, 1 Heft.
- An. Ulster.** . *Annals of Ulster*, edited by W. M. Hennessy.
- Archiv.** . *Archiv für Celtische Lexicographie*, herausgegeben von Whitley Stokes und Kuno Meyer.
- B.R.** . *Book of Rights*, edited by O'Donovan, 1847.
- Corm.** . *Cormac's Glossary*, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. Calcutta, 1868.
- C.R.R.** . *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn*, edited for the Royal Irish Academy by Edmund Hogan, s.J. Dublin, 1892.
- F.C.** . *Foghlaimh Conchulaind*.
- F.M.** . *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, edited by O'Donovan.
- Fél.** . *The Calendar of Oengus*, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, 1880.
- G. and G.** . *The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, edited by James Henthorne Todd, D.D. 1867.
- I.T.** . *Irische Texte*, edited by Stokes and Windisch.
- I.T.S.** . *Irish Texts Society*.
- Laws.** . *Ancient Laws of Ireland*.
- Lib. Hym.** . *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, edited for the Henry Bradshaw Society by Drs. Bernard and Atkinson.
- L.L.** . The lithographic facsimile of the Book of Leinster, published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1880.
- L.U.** . The lithographic facsimile of the *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1870.
- M. and C.** . *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, by Eugene O'Curry. 1873.
- O'Brien.** . O'Brien's *Irish-English Dictionary*. Dublin, 1832.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE APPENDICES

- O'Lav.** . *An Historical Account of the Diocese of Down and Connor*, by the Rev. James O'Laverty. Dublin, 1878.
- Oss.** . Transactions of the Ossianic Society. Dublin, 1854-1861
- Reeves.** . *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor, and Dromore*, by the Rev. William Reeves. 1847.
- Reeves, Col.** . Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, edited by William Reeves, D.D. 1857.
- Rennes.** . "The Prose Tales of the Rennes Dinsenchas," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. *Revue Celtique*, vols. xv. and xvi.
- R.I.A.** . Royal Irish Academy.
- Rev. Celt.** . *Revue Celtique*.
- Silv. Gad.** . *Silva Gadelica*, by S. H. O'Grady. 1892.
- Soc. Hist.** . *A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, by P. W. Joyce. 1903.
- T.B.C.** . Text of the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*.
- T.E.** . *Tochmarc Emire la Coinculaind*, edited by Dr. Kuno Meyer. *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. iii.
- Trip. Life.** . *The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. 1887.
- Windisch, Táin.** The *Táin Bó Cualnge*, edited, with German translation, by Dr. Windisch. Leipzig, 1905.
- Y.B.L.** . Photographic facsimile of the Yellow Book of Lecan, published by the Royal Irish Academy, 1896.
- Zimmer, K. S.** Zimmer, *Keltische Studien*.

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