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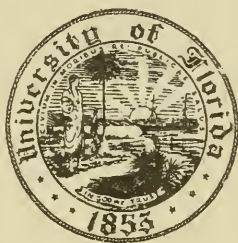
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CUCHULAINN, THE IRISH ACHILLES

“Mors Conchulaind fortissimi herois Scottorum la Lugaid mac tri con, i. ri Muman, agus la Ercc, i. ri Temrach, mac Coirpri Niad fir, agus la tri maccu Calattin de Chonnachtaib; vii mbliadna a aes intan rogab gaisced, xvii mbliadna dano a aes intan mboi indegaid Tána bó Cuáilge, xxvii bliadna immorro a aes intan atbath.”

“The death of Cuchulainn, the mightiest hero of the Scots, by Lugaid son of Three Hounds, king of Munster, and by Erc, king of Tara, son of Carbre Nia fer, and by the three sons of Calatin of Connaught. Seven years was his age when he assumed arms, seventeen was his age when he followed the Driving of the kine of Cualgne, but twenty-seven years was his age when he died.”

Such is the entry made in his *Annals*, under a date corresponding roughly to the year of Christ's nativity, by Tigernach hua Braein, Abbot of Clonmacnois, who died in the year 1088, concerning the Gaelic hero whose legend I propose to examine

briefly in the following study. It cannot but interest us to know what stories were told by the ancient Irish of their *fortissimus heros*, their most famous champion, what the manners and customs, the social and political organisation which these stories reveal, what the ideals of conduct, the outlook upon life and death of the race by which they were fashioned.

A few, but very few words are needed respecting the extent and date of the stories which have come down to us and the mode of their transmission. Fuller details will be found in the Appendix. Here it suffices to say that we possess a MS. literature of which Cuchulainn and his contemporaries are the subject, the extent of which may be roughly reckoned at 2000 8vo pages. The great bulk of this is contained in MSS. which are older than the twelfth century, or which demonstrably are copied from pre-twelfth century MSS.; where post-twelfth century versions alone remain, the story itself is nearly always known from earlier sources; in fact, there is hardly a single scene or incident in the whole cycle which has reached us only in MSS. of the thirteenth and following centuries. At the same time a not inconsiderable portion of the cycle comes before us altered in language, and to some extent in content, style of narrative, and characterisation, showing that the saga as a whole remained a living element of

Irish culture and participated in the accidents of its evolution.

The great bulk of this literature is, as I have said, certainly older than the twelfth century; but we can carry it back much farther, apart from any considerations based upon the subject-matter. Arguments of a nature purely philological, based upon the language of the texts, or critical, based upon the relations of the various MSS. to each other, not only allow, but compel us to date the *redaction* of the principal Cuchulainn stories, substantially in the form under which they have survived, back to the seventh to ninth centuries. Whether or no they are older yet, is a question that cannot be answered without preliminary examination of the subject-matter. In the meantime it is something to know that the Cuchulainn stories were put into permanent literary form at about the same date as Beowulf, some 100 to 250 years before the Scandinavian mythology crystallised into its present form, at least 200 years before the oldest Charlemagne romances, and probably 300 years before the earliest draft of the Nibelungenlied. Irish is the most ancient *vernacular* literature of modern Europe, a fact which of itself commends it to the attention of the student.

The form of these stories is a mixture of prose and verse. The men to whom they owe their

existing shape are : (1) the court story-tellers, who underwent a long and severe professional training, and were of high social standing ; the *ollamh* or chief minstrel ranks immediately after the Brehon or lawman, and occupies a position corresponding to the second class of the fighting, landholding aristocracy ; (2) the scribes, Christian monks for the most part. It is also worthy of note that many existing texts are mere skeleton summaries, and were doubtless intended to be filled out in oral recitation.

Thus these stories are the work of a professional class specially charged with the preservation of the tribal traditions, and handsomely rewarded for their labours both in wealth and honours. They formed the subject of oral recitation as well as of written record, from the seventh century onwards for at least a thousand years. I now propose to briefly summarise the most important of them in so far as they are immediately concerned with the life and personality of the hero, and have essayed to omit no incident essential to the conduct of the tale or that may throw light upon its date and nature, using, where possible, the words of the original.

The Hero's Birth.—All the stories agree in making him a son of Dechtire, sister of Conchobor, king of North-Eastern Ulster, who held his court at Emain Macha (in the present county of

Armagh), and was surrounded by a band of warriors known as the Red Branch, chief among whom was the king's nephew, Conall Cearnach. But there is by no means the same unanimity respecting his father. Some texts, especially such as have obviously been arranged to give them an aspect of historical truth, represent him as son of an Ulster chieftain, Sualtam. But there exists a small group of stories, betraying their age by their obscure, fragmentary, and confused form, which tell a very different tale. Of these, one hints at an incestuous union between Conchobor and Dechtire, whence sprang the hero. We are reminded that Siegfried, the Teutonic hero *par excellence*, had the same origin. Two other texts assign to him a divine parentage. Lug, at once Sun-god and Master of Arts and Crafts in Irish mythology, transformed himself, according to one version, into a small insect, hid himself in Dechtire's goblet, and, swallowed by her, was reborn as Cuchulainn. According to another version, Dechtire and her attendant maidens vanish suddenly and mysteriously from the Emanian court. After a while a bird flock begins to frequent the plain of Emania, consuming everything, until not a blade of grass is left. The Ulster chiefs yoke their chariots and follow in pursuit. At nightfall they come to the mansion of Lug, who reveals it was he had carried

off Dechtire and her maidens, had changed them into birds, and sent them to lure hither the warriors of Ulster. In the morning Dechtire bears a son ; Conchobor and his nobles agree to share his bringing up, and to confer upon him each his special gift, whilst Morann the lawman breaks into prophecy of his future greatness. "His praise shall be in the mouths of all men . . . kings and sages shall recount his deeds ; he will win the love of many . . . he will avenge all your wrongs ; he will decide all your quarrels."

His Boyish Exploits.—We next hear of Cuchulainn from a text the final redaction of which belongs to what may be called the Sualtam stage of the cycle. He is described as "reared in his father's and mother's house by the seaside, northwards in the plain of Muirthemne," though, as a matter of fact, the mother alones takes any part in the tale. One day the boy, whilst quite little, tells his mother he is bent upon visiting Emania, and measuring himself against the youths of Conchobor's court. In vain she objects his youth and weakness. Away he goes, taking with him his hurley of brass, his ball of silver, his throwing javelin, his boy spear. Striking the ball, he casts after it hurley, javelin, and spear, and catches all up ere the spear touches the ground. Reaching Emania, he wins goal after goal against the entire strength of Conchobor's youth ; nay, more, when

attacked by them he drives them before him into the king's presence, and does not hold his hand until they have acknowledged him as their chief. All this takes place when he is five years old.

His Naming.—The boy stays at Emania. In the following year the king and his court are bidden to a banquet by a smith named Culann. Conchobor asks the boy to come with him, but the latter, engaged in single-handed play against his comrades and not caring to interrupt his game, says he will follow. The king and his train are received in becoming fashion by Culann; fresh rushes are laid, the banquet is served, and the host asks the king's permission to let loose his ban-dog; "the strength of a hundred was in him, surely an extraordinarily cruel, fierce, and savage dog was he." Conchobor, forgetting his nephew, grants the permission. After a while, Cuchulainn, his game finished, follows up the chariot tracks and reaches Culann's house. The ban-dog charges him, minded at one gulp to swallow him down, but the boy, seizing him by the hind-legs, bangs him against a rock and slays him. The feasters rush out, and Culann, finding his dog slain, is heartily vexed, but the boy bids him not be angered; were there a whelp of the same breed, he would rear it until full-grown, and meanwhile would do a ban-dog's office in guarding the cattle and strong place of the smith. All hail the

award, and Cathbad the Druid declares that hereafter Setanta (such had been his name hitherto) shall be called Cu Chulainn, Culann's hound. The lad protests he prefers his own name, but Cathbad assures him "that all men in the world should have their mouths full of his new name," and upon that understanding it was pleasing to him.

The Assumption of Arms.—In the following year Cathbad, the Druid, being one day with eight of his pupils, declared that should any stripling take arms on that day, his fame would transcend that of all Ireland's youth, but his life would be fleeting, short. Though separated from the Druid and his throng by Emania's breadth, Cuchulainn hears this. Putting off his playing suit, he comes before Conchobor and declares his wish to take arms. The king consents, but every weapon he bestows upon Cuchulainn is broken, until he gives his own spear and sword and shield. These Cuchulainn proves and finds good. Cathbad entering, and amazed at seeing so young a lad equipped warrior-like, learns that his own speech had determined Cuchulainn's decision. The Druid confirms his sooth, "noble and famous shall Cuchulainn be, but transitory, soon gone." "Little care I," says the hero, "not though I were to live but one day and night, so long as after me the tale of myself and my doings may endure."

Thereafter Cuchulainn mounts a chariot, but not until he has broken seventeen does he find the car of Iubar, son of Rianganab, strong enough to bear him. With Iubar for his charioteer he makes his way to Slievefuad, where Conall Cearnach, Ireland's pre-eminent man of war, is mounting guard over the province of Ulster. Joining him, he expresses his intent to start forth alone on a venture of danger. To free himself from Conall, who would follow and protect him, Cuchulainn hurls a stone at his cousin's chariot, and Conall, dashed to the ground, wrathfully lets him continue his way alone. Despite his charioteer's reluctance, Cuchulainn pushes on into enemies' country until he nears the *dún* of Nechtan's three sons, "the tale of Ulster braves now alive exceeded not the count of those fallen by their hands." Cuchulainn challenges and slays the three champions, and, on his way back to Emania, runs down on foot and captures two wild stags. Wrathfully and fiercely he approaches the king's court, "for when his battle fury was upon him he knew not friend from foe." To overcome him, the ladies of the court appear before him unclad, and, when he shuts his eyes to the sight, he is seized, passed through three vats of cold water, which his fury causes to boil, and his rage departs from him.

Such before his seventh year was accomplished

were the mighty deeds of Cuchulainn, and the position he held at Conchobor's court.

How he Wooed Emer.—As the hero grows up he surpasses all his comrades, and the women of Ulster love him greatly "for his dexterity in feats, the excellency of his wisdom, the sweetness of his speech, the beauty of his face." He has no wife, and the men of Ulster are troubled—had he, thought they, a maiden to woo, 'tis the less he would spoil their daughters and accept the love of their women. Moreover, knowing he is to perish early, they wish he may have an heir, for his re-birth would be of himself. Messengers are sent throughout Ireland, but a year's search reveals no maiden whom he deigns to woo. "One such alone of all the maidens of Erin was there, one having the six gifts, voice, sweet speech, needlework, wisdom, and chastity . . . none were a fitting match for him, save his equal in age and form and race, in skill and deftness, and the best handworker of the maidens of Erin. Such a one was Emer, daughter of Forgall the Wily."

So Cuchulainn dons his festal array and mounts his chariot, with his charioteer, Laeg, son of Rianganbra, "that was the one chariot that the hosts of the horses of the chariots of Ulster could not follow on account of its swiftness and speed." Surrounded by her maidens, Emer receives the

hero, who woos her with dark sayings which she alone understands. He vaunts his descent and valour and accomplishments, "all the men of Ulster have taken part in my bringing up, chariot chiefs, kings, and head poets . . . I am the darling of the host . . . I fight for the honour of all alike." In reply to his inquiry as to her bringing up, Emer answers, "In ancient virtues, in lawful behaviour, in the keeping of chastity." Has he a wife, she asks, and when he says no, declares she may not marry before her elder sister; but her Cuchulainn will in nowise have, because she has slept once with Cairpre Niafer, the King of Ireland's son, and "never would Cuchulainn accept a woman who had known man before him." Emer is scornful of Cuchulainn's exploits, which she derides as the "goodly feats of a tender boy," but she gives him to understand that if he slay so and so many of her kindred she will be his. And so they part.

Forgall is away whilst this is passing. On his return he plans to hinder the lovers. Donning the garb of a foreigner, as it were an embassy from the King of the Gauls, he journeys to Conchobor's court. There he witnesses the feats of Cuchulainn and the other champions, and asserts that if the former would but go to Domnall the Soldierly in Alba, and to Scathach, to acquire soldier's skill, he would excel all the warriors of

Europe. Cuchulainn consents to go, but first exacts Forgall's oath to grant him his wish on his return. Before starting, he and Emer meet again, and promise to keep their chastity until they met again, unless either should get death thereby.

As he journeys to seek Scathach, Cuchulainn encounters many and great dangers. But helpers present themselves; a lion serves him as guide and steed through a desert in which he had lost his way, a magic wheel and apple bestowed upon him are clues across the Plain of Ill Luck and through the Perilous Glens. Finally he achieves the venture of the swinging bridge which gives access to the isle of Scathach the Amazon. Here he perfects himself in all warlike exercises, loves and is loved by Uathach, Scathach's daughter, and finally overcomes Aife, an Amazon chieftainess, Scathach's rival. Upon her he begets a son, whom the mother promises to send to Erin in seven years' time, and for whom he leaves a name. Thereafter he journeys back to Erin, and comes, on his homeward way, to the house of Ruad, King of the Isles. Sounds of wailing are audible, and Cuchulainn learns that the king's daughter is to be given as a tribute to the Fomori. He rescues her, slaying three of the sea-robbers, but departs without making himself known. She seeks him later in bird guise, is wounded by him, and, when she reassumes human form, is cured by

his sucking the blood from her wound ; this sets a barrier between them, so he gives her to his comrade Lugaid of the Red Stripes. So well is Emer guarded by her kinsmen, that a year passes before Cuchulainn can overcome and slay the guard and carry her off to Emania. They wed, and Bricriu of the Poison Tongue, intent as ever upon mischief-making, points out that Conchobor, as king, has the right of passing the first night with Emer. The nobles of Ulster conciliate Cuchulainn, whilst safeguarding the king's right by insisting upon a purely symbolical exercise of it. In the morning the king pays Emer's wedding gift, the marriage is consummated, and "Cuchulainn and his wife did not separate till they were both dead." And the chieftancy of the youths of Ulster was given to Cuchulainn.

How Cuchulainn Guarded the Marches of Ulster.—We now come to the culminating point alike of the hero's prowess and renown, and of Irish heroic legend, the description of how, single-handed, he held at bay the forces of all Ireland bent upon raiding Ulster to carry off the famous Brown Bull of Cuailgne. This was no common bull. Two members of the god-clan of the ancient Irish, after passing through a series of transformations in which they perpetually strive against each other but without either gaining the mastery, contrive to be reborn as bulls ; one, Finnbennach,

the White-horned, is the property of Meave, Queen of Connaught, but scorning to be under petticoat rule, he departs and takes his place among the herds of her husband Ailill ; the other, the Brown Bull, is owned by Daire mac Fachtna, an Ulster chieftain. Now, one day Meave and Ailill dispute as to which is the better of the two. They total up their belongings and find them equal in value, save that Ailill's bull, the White-horned, surpasses all Meave's cattle, "and because she had not a bull of his size, it was as though she owned no pennyworth of stock." She is told of the Brown Bull, and sends MacRoth, the Connaught herald, to beg it of Daire, offering him most liberal terms of purchase. MacRoth plays his part with his wonted discretion and skill, but unfortunately one of his attendants drinks too freely, and boasts in the hearing of Daire's men that if the latter did not give up the bull freely Meave would take it by force. Daire, told of this, swears by his gods that unless taken by foul means the bull shall never be Meave's. Incensed at his refusal, the queen summons all her forces and allies ; chief among the latter are Fergus, Conchobor's uncle, and Cormac, Conchobor's son, exiled from Ulster after the treacherous slaughter of the sons of Usnech, as is told in the tale of that name. Meave determines to attack at a time when the Ulster warriors are prostrate from a

weakness that overtakes them periodically in requital of a shameful wrong wrought by one of Conchobor's ancestors upon a member of the Irish god-clan, who had put off her goddess-hood to wed an Ulster chief. Before starting she decides to confer with her wizard, and seek of him foreknowledge and prophecy. The wizard reassures her, "whoever comes or comes not back, she should return." But on the homeward way she is stayed by a maiden, who announces herself as a seeress out of Cruachan's fairy hill. "How seest thou our host?" asks Meave. "I see them all in red, I see them all becrimsoned," is the answer returned again and again to the repeated and incredulous expostulations of the queen. Finally the seeress bursts into an enthusiastic panegyric of Cuchulainn and his prowess.

Meave persists, and her army, drawn from every part of Ireland save north-east Ulster, sets forth under the guidance of Fergus, but he, though bitterly wronged by Conchobor, has still an overwhelming affection for his land, and misleads the host whilst he secretly warns Ulster. In spite of all, the invaders draw near Ulster's borders, and are beheld from afar by Sualtam and Cuchulainn, who are free from the weakness that overcomes all the other Ulstermen. Cuchulainn refuses to give up a love tryst he has that night, saying that his word has been passed, and must be kept at

t all costs. Certain feats, however, he performs, the effects of which fill the invaders with amazement. Nevertheless, they cross the borders. On the morrow, Cuchulainn, following up their tracks, gives a most accurate account of their numbers, and "this was one of the three best estimates ever made in Ireland." Slight skirmishes follow, in which Cuchulainn cuts off and slays the invading scouts, but the host draws near Daire's homestead and would have carried off the Brown Bull, had not the latter, warned by the Morrighu (= the Great Queen, the war-goddess of the ancient Irish), retired with fifty of his heifers into the mountains. Cuchulainn continues to harass the invaders, whom he slays by the hundred at a time, until at last Meave seeks an interview, which he grants. She is greatly disappointed at finding in him but the bulk of a small boy. Her terms he rejects, and slays his hundred every night until the queen accepts his terms; every day he is to meet a warrior of Ireland in single combat; during the fight the invaders may progress unhindered, but must stop as soon as it is finished; food and clothing are to be supplied to him the while.

Combats follow in which, though Cuchulainn is always victorious, he cannot prevent the driving of the Brown Bull into the invader's camp. The Morrighu comes to proffer him her love, but he

urges that his bloom is wasted with hardship and that it is uneasy for him to hold intercourse with a woman so long as he is engaged in such strife. It was like to go hard with him in consequence, for at his next conflict the spurned goddess comes against him as a white-eared heifer, as a black eel, and as a rough grey wolf-bitch, and he is sore pressed to overcome both her and Loch More, with whom he is fighting. But he does so, and grants the dying request of Loch that he may be suffered to rise and fall on his face, and not backwards, towards the men of Erin. "Surely a warrior's boon," answers Cuchulainn.

The Morrighu disguises herself as an old crone, and obtains healing from Cuchulainn of the three-fold wound he had inflicted upon her. In the contests that follow faith is broken with Cuchulainn, and he is assailed by numerous adversaries at a time. But one of his fairy kin comes to succour him, throws him into a deep sleep, and takes his place for three days, at the end of which the hero rises refreshed, and avenges fearfully upon the men of Ireland the slaughter of his schoolfellows of Emania who had attacked the invaders in the interval. At length Meave induces Fergus to proceed against Cuchulainn, and the latter consents to retreat on condition that Fergus will do the same another time. Again Meave sends against him Calatin and his twenty-

seven sons, a gang of poisonous wizards. Cuchulainn, hard pressed, is succoured at the right moment by one of the Ulster exiles. At length in despair Meave calls upon Ferdia, an old comrade of Cuchulainn's whilst the latter was learning arms with Scathach. All unwillingly the hero consents, but he does consent, and the two friends meet face to face at the ford. Ferdia asks how his old fag ("his attendant to tie up his spears and prepare his bed") dare stand up against him. All day they fight but without result, and ere they separate for the night each puts his arms round the other's neck, and gives him three kisses. Their horses are in the same paddock, their charioteers at the same fire; and of every herb and healing plant that is applied to the wounds of Cuchulainn he sends an equal portion to Ferdia, that the men of Ireland may not say should the latter fall it was through lack of means of cure. And of every food and pleasant drink brought to Ferdia, he sends a half to Cuchulainn.

On the morrow they fight, but again without result, and again they interchange gifts and courtesies. But on the eve of the third day's fighting their parting is mournful, sorrowful, disheartened. The fourth day dawns, and each knows that one of them would fall there that day, or that both of them would fall. Terrible is the fight, and Cuchulainn must needs have re-

course to the mysterious *gae bulga* before Ferdia falls. "It did not behove thee that I should fall by thy hand," says the dying warrior. "Then Cuchulainn ran towards him, and clasped his two arms about him, and brought him across the ford that he might not be with the men of Erin. And he began to lament and mourn for Ferdia, and to utter a panegyric over him—

"Dear to me was thy beautiful ruddiness,
Dear to me thy perfect form,
Dear to me thy clear grey-blue eye,
Dear to me thy wisdom and thine eloquence."

"We will leave now, my friend Laegh," says the hero, "but every other combat and fight that ever I have made was but a game or a sport compared to the combat and the fight of Ferdia."

After this Cuchulainn is borne away to be healed of his wounds, and divers of the Ulster-men come to keep up the conflict, until at last Sualtam succeeds in arousing Conchobor, and the king, summoning all Ulster, moves against the invaders. In the great and terrible battles that ensue, the fortunes of war are balanced until Cuchulainn, escaping from his leeches, rushes to the field. Fergus retreats before him, as he had pledged his word, and the men of Ireland withdraw from Ulster. But Meave carries off the Brown Bull, "whoso might or might not come to Connaught, at all costs the Bull should do so."

The rivals meet, the Brown Bull is victorious and returns to his own land, but his heart bursts, and vomiting black mountains of dark red gore, he expires.

This, then, was the hosting of the men of Ireland for the driving of the kine of Cualgne, and their withstanding by Cuchulainn, and their retreat before the men of Ulster.

The Death of Cuchulainn.—Three posthumous sons and three daughters are borne at one birth by the wife of the wizard Calatin. These join with Lugaid, son of Curoi of Munster, with Erc, King of Tara, and with other chiefs whose fathers had been slain by Cuchulainn, and invade the hero's land. As he goes to his last fight he is begirt with terrible omens—the land is filled with smoke and flame, and weapons fall from their racks. His faithful charioteer refuses to harness his steed, the Grey of Macha, and thrice does the horse turn his left side to his master. Then Cuchulainn reproaches him: he was not wont to deal thus with his master. So the Grey of Macha obeys, but as he does so, his big round tears of blood fall on Cuchulainn's feet. In vain do the thrice fifty queens who were in Emain Macha beseech him to stay. He turns his chariot from them, and they give a scream of wailing and lamentation, for they know he will not come to them again.

As he fares onwards he encounters the three daughters of Calatin, as crones blind of the left eye. They are cooking a hound on a spit, and because Cuchulainn will not seem to scorn the offer of poor food, he accepts the flesh they present, although it was a *geis* (taboo) for him to do so. Then he comes in sight of his foes, and he rushes against them. "The halves of their heads and skulls and hands and feet, and their red bones were scattered broadcast throughout the plain in numbers like unto the sand of the sea, and the stars of the heaven; like dewdrops in May; like leaves of the forest, and grass under the feet of the herbs on a summer's day. And grey was that field with their brains after the onslaught which Cuchulainn dealt out to them."

His spear is claimed of him. "I need it myself," says the hero. "I will revile thee if thou givest it not," says his foe. "Never yet have I been reviled because of my niggardliness," and with that Cuchulainn dashes his spear at the claimant, killing him and nine others. But with a cast of that spear Lugaid slays Laegh the charioteer. A second time the claim is made for the spear, and Cuchulainn is threatened that Ulster shall be reviled if he refuses. "Never was Ulster reviled for my churlishness," and again he parts with his weapon, and with it Erc, son of Ireland's high king, makes a cast that lights on

the Grey of Macha, and he and Cuchulainn bid each other farewell. A third time the spear is claimed—Cuchulainn's kin should be defamed if he refuse. "Tidings that my kin has been defamed shall never go back to the land to which I myself shall never return, for little of my life remains to me," and again he parts with his weapon. Then Lugaid seizes it and strikes Cuchulainn, so that his bowels come forth on the cushions of the chariot, and the King of the Heroes of Erin is left dying alone on the plain. "I would fain," says he, "go as far as that loch to drink a drink thereout." "We give thee leave if thou come again." "I will bid you come for me unless I return myself." Then he gathers his bowels into his breast and drinks, and when he has drunk his eye rests upon a pillar stone in the plain; to it he fastens himself by his breast girdle, "that he may not die seated nor lying down, but that he may die standing up." His foes gather round him, but they dare not go to him, thinking him to be yet alive. But in vain does the Grey of Macha return to protect his master, so long as his soul was in him, "and fifty fall by his teeth and thirty by each of his hoofs." Lugaid cuts off Cuchulainn's head, but even in death the hero avenges himself; the sword falls from his right hand and smites off that of Lugaid. They strike off Cuchulainn's right hand in re-

quital, and bear away head and right hand to Tara, where they give them burial.

How Conall Cearnach Avenged Cuchulainn.—

There was a compact between the two Ulster champions to avenge each other. "If I be the first killed," said Cuchulainn, "how soon wilt thou avenge me?" "On thy death day before its evening." And on his part Cuchulainn swore vengeance before Conall's blood was cold upon the earth.

Conall pursues Lugaid and comes up with him. "I am thy creditor for the slaying of my comrade, and here I stand suing thee for the debt." At Lugaid's request Conall binds one hand to his side that they may fight on equal terms, but in the end overcomes him. "Take my head," says the dying warrior, "and add my realm to thy realm, and my valour to thy valour. I prefer that thou shouldest be the best hero in Erin."

The foregoing incidents are, as may be seen from the Notes, taken from tales independent in themselves, but which allow of a chronological classification, and which fall into their place as component parts of a cycle. There are also other tales which, whilst they cannot so definitely be assigned to a particular period of the hero's life, are obviously of a cyclic character. Thus the fact that Cuchulainn is slain by Lugaid, son of the

Munster chief Curoi mac Daire, cannot but be connected with the tale which presents the Ulster hero as the lover of Blathnait, wife of Curoi, whom he kills. Curiously enough, this story is one of a group which presents Cuchulainn in an unfavourable light; it must, I think, have had its final shaping, if not its origin, in Munster. It is not only that Cuchulainn figures as eloping with another man's wife, and as overcoming the injured husband by stratagem; there was, I think, no matter for reproach in this when the story was framed. But, what is far more grave, he is at first worsted, and worsted ignominiously, and this can only be the version of an inimical clan.

Another story of a cyclic character is unfortunately only known to us by a very late version, although it is alluded to by a tenth-century poet, and is presupposed by the story of Cuchulainn's sojourn in Scathach's isle. It tells of the son born to him by the Amazon Aife, of his journey to Emania to defy the warriors of Ulster, of the concealment of his name, and of the combat between father and son, in which the latter succumbs, revealing his personality when it is too late. Of all the Aryan versions of the father and son combat—woven into the Rustum saga in Persia, into the Dietrich saga in Germany—this is probably the most archaic, and it is an unkind fate which has destroyed the early Irish form of the story.

There also exist a number of episodic tales of which Cuchulainn is the hero. I imply by this that they have no assigned place in the chronological sequence of the tales, and that they might be removed without mutilating the saga as a whole, although their loss would greatly impoverish it. They may very possibly represent an earlier stage of the saga before it had been thrown into cyclic form.

Three of these tales deserve detailed notice, both on account of their intrinsic interest and for the help they afford in determining the true nature of the Cuchulainn legend.

How Cuchulainn was Wooed by the Sea-God's Queen.—One of these tales, known as the *Sick-bed of Cuchulainn*, tells of Fann, wife of Manannan mac Lir, the Irish Poseidon, and of her love for the hero. She and her sister visit the Ulster court in bird guise. Cuchulainn tries to kill them as a present for Emer, but fails. At night he is visited by two women magnificently clad, each armed with a horse-switch. They smile and strike him, continuing until they leave him nearly dead, in which state he lies for a year, speechless. A messenger comes to promise him healing if he will accept Fann's invitation to go to her land. Cuchulainn first sends his charioteer, Laeg, who returns after a while with the most glowing description of the exquisite beauty and

manifold delights of Fann's country. Cuchulainn proceeds thither himself, aids the goddess's brother-in-law to overcome his foes, and, after passing a month with Fann, returns to Ulster, but appoints a trysting-place for her to join him. But Emer hears of the assignation, and taking with her fifty maidens armed with knives, goes to the appointed place of meeting. Fann appeals to Cuchulainn for protection, and he promises it, in spite of Emer's bitter upbraidings—he had dishonoured her before the women of Erin, once they were together in dignity, and might be so again were it pleasing to him. Cuchulainn takes pity upon her, and a generous strife arises between the two women which should give the hero up. The goddess yields to the mortal with the words:—

“Woe 'tis to give love to one
If he take no notice of it.
Better far to be turned away,
Save one is loved as one loves.”

Then Manannan appears, visible only to his immortal wife, who is seized with remorse at his sight, and is minded of their ancient love. She frankly tells him she would prefer Cuchulainn, but as he has abandoned her she will return to her husband. So Manannan shakes his cloak between the two lovers to the end that they should never meet again, and the immortals vanish.

How Cuchulainn Won the Headship of the Champions of Ulster.—The famous story known as *Bricriu's Feast* tells how Bricriu of the Poison Tongue, minded, as was his wont, to stir up strife and dissension, incites the charioteers of Cuchulainn, of Conall Cearnach, and of Loagaire Buadach to claim each for his master the *curadmir*, or hero's portion. He also urges the wives of the three champions to claim right of first entry into the banqueting hall. This brings the heroes to blows, as Bricriu had foreseen, and peace is only restored by the proposal of Sencha the lawman to remit the decision to Meave and Ailill. The three heroes journey to the Connaught court, undergo divers trials, in all of which Cuchulainn is pre-eminent, but none of which is accepted as decisive by the other two. They are then sent to Curoi, who is a great wizard as well as a famous warrior. More trials follow, and though Cuchulainn is always successful, yet there is room for dispute. They return to Emania, and one day an ugly, ill-shapen giant appears at the court. He offers to let any one cut off his head on condition of undergoing the same fate on the morrow. The other heroes essay the feat, but when on the morrow the giant returns none the worse and claims fulfilment of the bargain, they go back upon their word. Cuchulainn alone keeps his pledged faith, and after being tried to the utmost by the giant, is

saluted thus: "Arise, O Cuchulainn! Of the warriors of Ultonia and Erin, no matter their mettle, none is found to be compared with thee in valour, bravery, and truthfulness. The sovrantry of the heroes of Erin to thee from this hour forth, and the champion's portion undisputed, and to thy lady the precedence alway of the ladies of Ultonia in the Mead Hall."

How Patrick called up Cuchulainn from the Dead.—In spite of Patrick's preaching, Laegaire, High King of Ireland, remains incredulous. He will believe neither in Patrick nor in God, until Cuchulainn be called up in his dignity, as is recorded in the old stories, after which he will believe. "Even this is possible for God," answers Patrick. On the morrow saint and king meet, and the king is speechless until the saint has blessed him, when he describes how Cuchulainn had appeared to him in his chariot. But he is still unsatisfied; he would have liked a longer conversation with the hero. Thereupon Cuchulainn appears a second time, performs his chief feats, and exhorts Laegaire to believe in God and holy Patrick. But the king's disbelief will not be conquered until the hero tell of his great deeds. Cuchulainn then tells of his battles against Lochland, and of his capture of Dun Scaith, a fortress full of serpents and monsters, whom he slew, and from which he carried off a wonderful caldron,

He also tells how after death demons carried off his soul, and though he plied the *gae bulga* on them, yet he was crushed into the red charcoal. He winds up by beseeching Patrick to bring him to heaven. The saint grants the boon, and Laegaire believes.

A few words may here be interposed setting forth certain more or less assured results of criticism concerning the date and development of these stories, and the conclusions that may legitimately be drawn as to the age and true nature of the saga as a whole. The section of the above summary which describes Cuchulainn's defence of the Ulster marches is from the tale entitled the *Tain bó Cuailgne*. The distinguished French and German scholars, Mons. d'Arbois de Jubainville and Professor Zimmer, have made it almost certain that this tale substantially assumed, during the first half of the seventh century, the shape under which it has come down to us in eleventh century MSS.; existing texts, which vary considerably among themselves, represent, they hold, modifications of a written original rather than independent transcripts from oral tradition. Granting this, what follows? The *Tain* obviously belongs to a late stage of development of the saga; it gathers up and throws into cyclic form a vast amount of older episodic material. If it belong to the early seventh

century the matter which it codifies and stereotypes must be very much older. Again, our present texts of *Bricriu's Feast* are obviously an amalgam of at least two, and probably four, separate versions which, originally, differed considerably. These versions can be traced back linguistically to the ninth or even eighth century; they must in their turn represent tribal variations of a common theme, which common theme must itself be carried back much earlier. Now, *Bricriu's Feast*, like the *Tain*, cannot belong to an early stage of the saga; it has been romanticised, at times it produces an almost parodistic effect; it necessarily presupposes a much earlier and a well-developed body of literature, and yet, as we have seen, its earliest form can hardly be dated later than the end of the seventh century. The *Demoniac Chariot* (as the tale of Cuchulainn's appearance to Laegaire and Patrick is styled) clinches this contention. Whilst it must of course be later than the introduction of Christianity, it must equally date from a time when it was felt desirable to reconcile the old and new faiths, when belief in and love of Cuchulainn were so vivid and potent as to compel alike his reception by the apostle and his acceptance of the new teaching. If this be granted, it is noteworthy that, as far as actual language and wording go, the *Demoniac Chariot* is decidedly less archaic than many other texts of the cycle, whilst at

the same time the adventures which it records are almost unknown from other sources, and have a strongly mythical aspect.

Thus taking the tales as they stand and applying ordinary critical tests, we are forced to assign them to a period not only far antedating that of their existing transcript (tenth to twelfth century), but also that of their substantial redaction (seventh to eighth century). We may pass to the consideration of the broader issues which they raise with the certainty that we are dealing with material of relatively great antiquity.

One point there is which readers of the foregoing pages will not, I think, require me to labour—the futility of any discussion as to the historical reality of Cuchulainn. It is really indifferent whether a warrior of this name did or did not flourish in Ireland at the beginning of our era. If he did, he did not perform the feats ascribed to him in these tales, for the all-sufficient reason that the feats are superhuman. But although the record is necessarily untrue as involving impossibilities, it may nevertheless be true in the sense of being a faithful reflection of manners and customs, a faithful expression of mood and thought. In this sense I believe the Cuchulainn tales to be true, and, as being true, to be infinitely precious. As do no other surviving monuments they reflect the manners and customs, they

express the mood and thought of the men who sacked Rome and harried Delphi, who founded a state in Asia Minor, and withstood for long years the greatest of the Romans.

It is not often that, as in the present case, a claim such as this can be substantiated decisively, and in a way to be apprehended even by those who have not specially studied the matter. When the Romans first came into contact with the Gauls in the third century B.C., the Gaulish war-chariot impressed them profoundly. Two hundred years later Caesar found this mode of fighting disused in Gaul proper, the Gaulish warriors having taken to horseback in imitation of the Romans, but on crossing over to Britain he was again confronted by the war-chariot, of which he left the vivid description familiar to every schoolboy. Now Cuchulainn and his fellow-champions invariably fight from the war-chariot, and are thus exponents of a system of military equipment and tactics already obsolete on the Continent in the middle of the first century B.C. The reform which substituted cavalry for chariots probably took place in Ireland towards the close of the first century of our era, and was a consequence of the intercourse between Ireland and Romanised Britain. At all events, in the large number of semi-historic Irish tales of which the scene is laid in the second and subsequent centuries, there is no

longer any mention of the war-chariot. As it would obviously have been impossible for the story-teller of the seventh century to invent a mode of fighting disused for centuries, it is equally obvious that the Cuchulainn tales have in this respect preserved a contemporaneous record of the life they depict. It is more than probable that in other respects their record is equally to be relied upon, and that they do depict with substantial accuracy the life of the warrior and chieftain class in Ireland in the first century of our era, a mode of life which, there can be little doubt, was that of the Continental Celts before they came into contact with the advanced civilisation of Greece and Rome.

This conclusion will appear the more justified when we consider how similar in essentials the life of the Irish Celts of the Cuchulainn period is to that of the Gauls as presented by the classic writers. The predominantly military organisation, the power and status of the war-chief, who would be absolute were it not for the counter-vailing influence of the wizard or Druid class, the highly-developed clan system which splits the people up into a number of rival and jarring groups, these marked traits of Celtic Ireland may also be discovered on the Continent. But the Continental Celts, warring as they did against more highly-organised foes, had cohesion forced

upon them, and could not but borrow organisation in their turn. Here, again, the Irish Celt of A.D. 1 stands on a more primitive level than the Continental Celt of the second or even third century B.C. In fact, to find his parallel within the Aryan speaking group we must fall back upon the Homeric Greek of 1000 B.C., and if we bear in mind that the Homeric Greek inhabited a richer land, was in contact with ancient, powerful, and wealthy civilisations, and has been depicted for us by poets themselves familiar with a material culture far in advance of anything known to the Irish Celts, we shall yet find the parallel extraordinary close and suggestive. Herding and raiding, such are the bases upon which alike in ancient Ireland and in Homeric Greece the social organism rests; the chiefs are large farmers, surrounded by fighters picked to defend their own and despoil their neighbours' cattle; wealth is expressed in terms of slaves, kine, personal ornaments, and chattels. The differences are for the most part such as naturally arise from the varying advance in culture made by the two peoples: one of the most marked is in the position of women. This was, if we may accept the evidence of the tales, freer and more independent in ancient Ireland than in Homeric Greece. Nor is this to be wondered at: the contact with the East which brought about such a degradation of woman

in historic Greece had already begun in Homeric times. Again, then, we may hold that in this respect the Irish tales take us back to an earlier stage of Aryan custom.

Bearing in mind this fundamental likeness of the two culture groups—Greeks of the Homeric period, say, 1200–900 B.C., Irish Celts of the heroic period, lasting well down into the first centuries of the Christian era—it need not surprise us to find their heroic ideal embodied in such markedly similar forms. In styling Cuchulainn the Irish Achilles, I do but emphasise a parallel which must suggest itself to whomsoever, familiar with the *Iliad*, familiarises himself with the Irish heroic romances. The parallel carries with it a danger against which the reader must be on guard. Hallowed by two and a half millenniums of reverence and classic use, the work of Homer comes before us with a glamour which, for most of us, distorts our view of his world. That world is barbaric alike in its mode of life and in its conception of life. If we seek for nineteenth-century analogues to Achilles and Cuchulainn, we are probably best advised in turning to the Maories of New Zealand as offering the nearest parallel alike of the conditions and conception of life. In the case of the Irish tribes the parallel is probably very close; the Homeric Greek, as already noted, stood on a higher level as far as the material conditions of life were concerned.

In the comparison, a fair and legitimate one between Achilles and Cuchulainn, the hero of the less advanced, of the more barbaric race suffers nothing from our point of view. In both cases the ideal is, of course, purely warrior-like: the pre-eminent hero cannot but be the chief fighting brave of the race. Superb and fiery courage, passionate and irresistible energy, fierce and utter devotion to the standard of honour recognised by himself and his fellows, such are the dominant traits. Barbarians both are, but magnificent and admirable barbarians, and of the two the hero of the ruder race is nearer to our ideal—more admirable. The Gael is a better gentleman than the Greek. Cuchulainn fighting for his land and tribe is nobler than Achilles fighting in revenge of personal injury. Cuchulainn granting, in admiration, the dying request of his foe, Loch More—" 'tis a warrior's boon thou askest"—appeals to our sympathies where Achilles, rejecting Hector's last appeal, repels them. Cuchulainn, lamenting the much-loved comrade of his youth, whom all unwillingly he must needs slay in defence of his land, moves us yet more poignantly than Achilles yielding to the prayer of suppliant Priam. Fate, an unkind fate, has denied us the picture of Achilles' doom, that doom foretold him by his horse, Xanthos of the Glancing Feet, even as the Grey of Macha foreknew the doom of Cuchulainn. It could not, even had it

come down to us limned by the Father of Poetry himself, have surpassed that vision of the King-chief of the Heroes of Erin, self-attached to the immemorial menhir "that he might not die lying or sitting, but that he might die standing up."

There is yet another aspect under which Cuchulainn may be compared with Achilles. In both cases the saga of the mortal, of the hero, has preserved for us, with the necessary modifications due to altered conditions, the legend of an immortal, of a god. At first blush it would seem that the Greek tale, wholly the outcome of pagan times and pagan life, must preserve such a legend far more faithfully than does the Irish. In one sense this is so. The supernatural machinery occupies its proper place in Homer, the gods appear in all their power and splendour. In the Irish tales this element has been almost entirely eliminated, or, where suffered to remain, glossed over, minimised. Could a second or third century story-teller be evoked from the dead and made to recite *his* version of the *Tain* we should certainly find the Great Queen of Battles, the god-sire of Cuchulainn, the deities reincarnated in the two bulls, appearing in the visible might and glory of their god-hood. The partly Christian story-tellers, the Christian scribes of the seventh and following centuries, whilst they altered little and added scarce anything, as far as we can judge, have certainly left

out much. Yet in spite of the obvious difference between the two bodies of legend, it may confidently be urged that Cuchulainn belongs to an earlier, more primitive stage of saga evolution than does Achilles. In the *Iliad*, despite the prominence of the supernatural element, the original myth has been heroicised, suited to human conditions, set within the limits of a historic framework, and thereby compressed, modified, run into new forms, more than is the case with the Cuchulainn stories. In the former, although scholars are agreed in regarding Achilles as the heroic reflection of a mythic prototype, the utmost diversity of opinion has existed as to the nature of that prototype; nor can the current interpretation of him as a personification of the rushing torrent be regarded as securely established or as commanding universal assent. In the case of Cuchulainn no doubt is possible; here, if anywhere, we have the sun-hero, hypostasis, or, as in this case, actual reincarnation of the sun-god; the story of his origin, his adventures and his fate modelled upon and partly reproducing those of his divine original, but modified by their transposition from immortal to mortal conditions, from the realm of divine happenings, dateless, limitless, featureless as that is, to a community of men and women related to each other by definite historic ties, and assigned to a definite historic period.

In asserting the mythic nature of Cuchulainn I do not assert that the tales about him which have come down to us were regarded by their tellers in a symbolic or allegorical light. They and their hearers, as did Homer and his hearers, most certainly believed in the historic reality of their heroes ; one of the main causes of the continued popularity of the Cuchulainn stories was that they flattered the pride of the North Irish chiefs, and that for over 500 years the High Kingship of Ireland was, though nominally elective, practically hereditary in the leading North Irish family, the O'Neills. In the tenth century, South Ireland, in the person of the Munsterman Brian, wrested the High Kingship from the North. Had this taken place in the sixth or seventh century, the Cuchulainn saga would in all probability either have been lost, or he would have been the villain rather than the hero of the piece.

In spite, however, of the precise way in which the Irish sun-hero is localised in a particular district and associated with a definite group of quasi-historic personages, it is wonderful with what clearness the outlines of his mythic personality have been preserved, and in how many of his adventures we can detect his mythic nature as the animating and controlling element in the story. In the first place, it should be noted that all the leading characters of the cycle are descendants in the third or

fourth generation of the chief member of the Tuatha de Danann, or ancient Irish god-clan, the Dagda or good god. Long after the Cuchulainn stories had assumed a fixed literary shape, the mediæval Irish annalists turned the Tuatha de Danann into early kings and warriors. The annals represent the Dagda as reigning in Ireland some 1700 years before the date of Fachtna Fathach, his great grandson, according to the stories. But, apart from this fact, which shows how long anterior to the annalistic scheme the stories must be, and how tenaciously they have retained the original framework, the mythic nature of Cuchulainn is self-apparent even in the bare recital of his chief adventures which I have given. Attention may also be called to some features in his personality best explained by reference to his original solar nature. That which practically distinguishes him from every other hero of Irish romance is his capacity, when wrought up into a paroxysm of fury by opposition, of startling and terrific transformation. The passages in which this transformation is described are in the last degree obscure; they were probably unintelligible to the scribes of our present texts, and have suffered from the corruptions to which all archaic and obscure passages are liable in the course of transcription. Translated literally into English, they often have an aspect of ridiculous bombast, redeemed by flashes

of barbaric force and insight. One example may suffice : "Then it was that he suffered his *riastradh*, whereby he became fearsome and many-shaped, a marvellous and hitherto unknown being. All over him, from his crown to the ground, his flesh and every limb and joint . . . quivered as does a tree, yea, a bulrush in mid-current. . . . His mouth was twisted awry until it met his ears. His lion's gnashings caused flashes of fire, each larger than the fleece of a three-year-old wether, to steam from his throat into his mouth. . . . Among the clouds over his head were visible showers and sparks of ruddy fire, which the seething of his savage wrath caused to mount up above him. . . . His hero's paroxysm thrust itself out of his forehead longer and thicker than a warrior's whetstone. Taller, thicker, more rigid, longer than a ship's mast, was the upright jet of dusky blood which shot upwards from his scalp, and then was scattered to the four airts."

It is, I think, legitimate to refer these archaic descriptions of the sun hero "hindered" (the original signification of *riastradh* according to Professor Zimmer) by foe or obstacle to pre-heroic and purely mythical descriptions of the sun-god hindered by cloud and storm-wrack, and assuming unwonted and terrific aspects. They are part of the sun-god's gear bequeathed by him to his hero-son.

In ancient Irish heroic romance the heroes are almost invariably subject to *geasa* (nom. *geis*), taboos, the breaking of which generally heralds or effects the tragic issue of the story. On p. 21 we saw that Cuchulainn broke such a *geis* when he accepted from the daughters of Calatin the flesh of the hound, his namesake. Another of his *geasa* is significant. The Irish sea-god is Manannan mac Lir; it is a *geis* of Cuchulainn's "to see the horses of Manannan, or to hear the harp of Maner's son play soothingly and sweetly." It is taboo for the sun-god to "see the wild white horses foam and fret"; when he does so it is that his course is ended in the western waves.

Miss Hull has summarised so admirably the argument for the mythic nature of Cuchulainn, that I need not apologise for borrowing her words: "He reaches his full development at an unnaturally early age, and even as a boy of seven years he conquers heroes and performs the feats of a prime champion. Small, but comely of person, he waxes in conflict to a prodigious size, a halo shines from his head, the 'bird of valour' flutters over him, a furious heat exudes from his body; he destroys armies by his look; he has power in his eyes to blind the women of Ulster when they look upon him with love. His feats are terrific; he is irresistible both in war and in love. He is bound by his *geasa* to rise before

dawn falls on Emain Macha ; he is seldom at rest, for his energy is untiring. He rides a chariot drawn by a black and a grey horse, symbols of day and night. He himself has caught those famous steeds, which have emerged from a magic lake and return thither on the death of their master. On them when caught he scours the plain and rises at a leap over the mountains. Three times without pausing for breath they carry their tamer round the entire circuit of Erin. Such is the Irish conception of the Solar Hero."

One further point, but that of capital importance, should be noted in this connection. The quest of the Brown Bull takes place in winter ; the forces of Meave start in October, and from the end of that month until the end of January Cuchulainn has to fight single-handed because the warriors of Ulster lie prostrate in their pains. When Lugaid, Erc, and the sons of Calatin finally overpower the hero, his fellow-warriors are unable to aid him for the same reason ; thus his death takes place in winter. It is impossible not to recognise that Cuchulainn's life record is here modelled upon earlier year myths which picture the sun-god assailed or vanquished during the winter season. In the cycle, as we have it, racial and historical elements have been added to the myth ; Cuchulainn's adversaries are not simply personifications of cold and darkness ; we can detect in the cycle the clash of races, possibly even of

mythologies. The hardest struggle which the hero has to undergo is that with Ferdia, and Ferdia is expressly described as the chief champion of the Firbolgs, a race which preceded the sons of Mil on Irish soil, and which in other tales of a decidedly mythical character is found allied with the Fomori, dark and evil powers, against the Tuatha de Danann, gods of light, and life, and increase.

If this view of Cuchulainn as the sun-hero, the hypostasis of the sun-god, be admitted, it may be asked if traces of his legend exist in Celtdom outside Ireland. Monsieur d'Arbois de Jubainville has interpreted the sculptures on a Gaulish altar found at Paris as illustrative of a sequence of mythic incidents analogous to that set forth in the *Tain bó Cuailgne*. Even if the interpretation be correct it would only prove that the Celts of France had stories about the sun-hero similar to those told by the Celts of Ireland. We cannot speak of a pan-Celtic Cuchulainn. The latter is, I believe, substantially the sun-hero, but the sun-hero localised in a particular district of Ireland, associated with particular Irish tribes, with a particular period and set of events which may or may not be mythical. It is not the features he has in common with other sun heroes, but the *differentia* of his saga which establish his individuality, which make him Cuchulainn.

To sum up. In these stories we have the oldest

Gaelic form of a widespread Aryan hero-myth; in certain respects this Gaelic form is more archaic than can be found elsewhere, is nearer the mythic prototype, is less influenced by the human conditions to which it has been adapted. It is thus of priceless value to the student of heroic myth. To the historian the environment and the material conditions of the saga are perhaps of greater interest. Thanks to the isolation of the Irish Gael, to their escape from the far-reaching influence of Rome, they have preserved for us a polity, a social organisation, a mode of life more archaic than those recorded of any other Aryan people, and of this social organisation, these manners and customs, the Cuchulainn stories are the oldest and, in some respects, the most genuine witness. Finally, they embody the heroic ideal of races which have contributed largely and influentially to the mixed population of the British Isles; they give warrant of a lofty and inspiring, if barbaric, outlook upon life and death, which is in consonance with the little we learn of the Celts from classic writers. If we seek for a commentary upon Cæsar's record of the superb self-sacrifice of Vercingetorix, we shall best find it in what for century after century the ollamhs of Erin told of their *fortissimus heros*, of Cuchulainn.

Sar. loc
Feb. 27. 1813.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX AND NOTES

THE reader of the foregoing Study who wishes to pursue the subject further should first turn to the following work: *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature*, being a collection of Stories relating to the hero Cuchullin. Translated from the Irish by various Scholars. Compiled and Edited with Introduction and Notes by Eleanor Hull, 1898. The contents of this volume are as under:—

(1) The Birth of Conachar; (2) How Conachar gained the Kingship over Ulster; (3) The Origin of Cuchullin (abridged); (4) The Tragical Death of the Sons of Usnach; (5) The Wooing of Emer (abridged); (6) The Siege of Howth; (7) The Debility of the Ultonian Warriors; (8) The Appearance of the Morrighu to Cuchullin before the Tain bo Cuailgne; (9) The Tain bo Cuailgne: a summary analysis with translation of important passages in full; (10) The Instruction of Cuchullin to a Prince; (11) The great Defeat on the Plain of Muirthemne before Cuchullin's death; (12) The Tragical Death of Cuchullin; (13) The Tragical Death of Conachar; (14) The Phantom Chariot of Cuchullin.

Miss Hull has prefixed an excellent Introduction dealing with the Saga as a whole in its various aspects, and has added careful bibliographical and critical notes.

The present Study and Miss Hull's work fully enable any intelligent reader to form a fair and accurate conception of this body of heroic literature.

FORTISSMUS HEROS SCOTTORUM (page 1).

It may be necessary to say that the Scotti are first heard of as inhabiting Ireland; that they settled in

Western Scotland (heretofore known as Alba) in the fifth century, and that by the eleventh century they imposed their name upon the northern half of the island. Down to the eleventh century Scotia in mediæval texts means Ireland, and not Scotland.

TIGERNACH (page 1).

The *Annals of Tigernach* have been edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vols. xvii., xviii. Tigernach was one of the distinguished native scholars who flourished from 950 to 1100, to whom we owe the *Irish Annals* substantially in their existing form, and also, in all probability, the learned compilations of Irish saga and legend. Tigernach is remarkable among the earlier Irish historical writers for his almost entire disregard of all pre-Christian history save precisely in so far as the kings and warriors who flourished at Emania are concerned.

DATE OF THE STORIES (pages 2, 3).

Almost every story about Cuchulainn is contained in or alluded to in the two oldest Irish MSS., the Book of the Dun Cow, transcribed before 1104, the Book of Leinster, transcribed before 1154. Both MSS. are avowedly transcripts of, or compilations from, older MSS. The Book of the Dun Cow comprises almost certainly, as shown by Prof. Zimmer in his masterly study (*Keltische Studien, V.: Ueber dem compilerischen Charakter der irischen Sagentexte im sogenannten Lebor na L. Uidhre. Zeitschrift für vgl. Sprachforschung*, vol. xxviii., 1887), the versions of heroic legend made by Flann of Monasterboice, the most learned Irishman of the early eleventh century, and Flann's versions are, as Prof. Zimmer has shown, harmonies of pre-existing versions. In several cases one of the texts used by Flann in his harmony, continued to be copied in its entirety and has been pre-

served by the Book of Leinster or later MSS. Another point which Prof. Zimmer has clearly brought out is the intrusion of glosses into our existing texts; this, of course, presupposes that a scribe, finding the original text partly unintelligible, added glosses in the margin to explain it, and that a later scribe transferred these marginal glosses into the text, a process testifying to a long period of repeated transcribing.

THE FORM OF THE STORIES (page 3).

As a rule, the verse and prose are repetitions of the same portion of the narrative. The same device is used in *Aucassin and Nicolette*, as readers of that charming tale will recollect. But sometimes the verse is complementary to the prose. This is especially the case with passages composed in *rosc*, an abrupt, compressed, irregular metre, which is apparently the earliest kind of Irish verse. Many of the passages in *rosc* are so archaic and obscure as to defy all attempts at translation. Apart from *rosc*, the Irish metres are extremely complicated, and abound in formal difficulties of the most severe nature. In this respect Irish versification transcends even the Provençal Troubadour poetry.

THE HERO'S BIRTH (page 4).

See Miss Hull, No. 3. The versions summarised are found partly in the Book of the Dun Cow, partly in much later MSS., which have, however, preserved an older form of the story than that of the Book of the Dun Cow. I have discussed and illustrated the critical questions involved, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. ii.

THE BOYISH EXPLOITS—THE ASSUMPTION OF ARMS (pages 6-10).

These form an episode of the *Tain bó Cuailgne*. As

soon as the invaders enter Ulster, Fergus recognises Cuchulainn's handiwork, and tells the wondering Con-naught court of his youthful prowess. The episode is translated almost in full, Miss Hull, pp. 135-155.

THE WOOING OF EMER (pages 10-13).

Two main redactions are known, (*a*) a fragmentary, simple one found in a thirteenth-century MS., but assigned by its editor and translator, Prof. K. Meyer, to the eighth century; (*b*) a longer and fuller one, found in the Book of the Dun Cow and later MS., and probably redacted as late as the tenth century. Redaction (*a*) is edited and translated, *Revue Celtique*, xi. pp. 442-453; redaction (*b*) is translated by Prof. Meyer, *Arch. Review*, vol. i., which translation is reprinted in a modified and abridged form by Miss Hull, pp. 58-84. Prof. Meyer has just edited this text, *Zeit. für Celt. Philologie*, iii. 2.

THE DROIT DU SEIGNEUR IN ANCIENT IRELAND (page 13).

If we may trust, and there is no reason to doubt the evidence of the heroic and historic romances, this right was tenaciously exercised by the early Irish chiefs. But the Wooing of Emer is not the only text which betrays a feeling of aversion and revolt on the part of the inferior chiefs. It may be thought that this feeling is due to the introduction of Christianity, but I believe it to be earlier, and to be symptomatic of the greater power acquired by the lesser chiefs once the Gael had fairly settled down in Ireland and crushed out the resistance of the aboriginal population. The legal fiction by which both the king's right and the champion's susceptibilities are conciliated is interesting as anticipating similar devices of the late feudal period.

HOW CUCHULAINN GUARDED THE MARCHES OF
ULSTER (pages 14-20).

Summarised from Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's summary of the *Tain bó Cuailgne* in Miss Hull, pp. 112-227. The *Tain* has not yet been edited and translated in its entirety, but Prof. Windisch promises an edition shortly. Mr. O'Grady's summary is based upon a late text in which the language has been modernised.

THE STORY OF THE BULLS (page 13).

Summarised from the story known as the *Engendering of the Two Swineherds*. Prof. Windisch has edited this curious tale, *Irische Texte*, iii.; and I have printed an abridged English version, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. ii.

THE DEBILITY OF THE ULTONIANS (page 15).

See for this story, Miss Hull, pp. 97-100.

THE FIGHT WITH FERDIA (page 18).

The Book of Leinster text of this episode of the *Tain* has been printed and translated in full by O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, vol. iii., pp. 414-463.

THE DEATH OF CUCHULAINN (page 20).

Summarised from Dr. Whitley Stokes' magnificent rendering of the more salient portions of the Book of Leinster version (*Revue Celtique*, vol. iii.). Miss Hull prints an abridgment of Dr. Stokes's rendering, pp. 255-263. She also prints, pp. 237-249, portions of a much younger version. Comparison between the two is very interesting and illustrates the extreme limits of literary development in the Cuchulainn cycle.

THE SICK BED OF CUCHULAINN (page 23).

Edited and translated by O'Curry, *Atlantis*, vols. i. and ii. A complete French translation in M. d'Arbois de Jubainville's *Épopée Celtique en Irlande*. I have given a fuller English summary than in the text, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. i.

BRICRIU'S FEAST (page 27).

Edited and translated by Dr. George Henderson. *Publications of the Irish Text Society*, vol. ii.

THE DEMONIAK CHARIOT OF CUCHULAINN (page 28).

Edited with translation, from the Book of the Dun Cow, by O'Beirne Crowe, *Journal of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 1870-71. Crowe's translation has been partly reprinted, with considerable improvements, by Miss Hull, pp. 275-287.

THE DATE OF THE TAIN BÓ CUAILGNE (page 29).

The story runs that by the early seventh century the memory of the Iliad of the Western Gael had faded away, and not an ollamh in Ireland could repeat it. At the entreaty of the head ollamh, Senchan Torpeist, and according to one version, by intercession of the Saints of Ireland, Fergus rises from the dead to narrate the tale, which is forthwith carefully noted, so that never again it may be lost. Senchan Torpeist, an historical personage, was chief ollamh at the date assigned to him by this story, the interpretation put upon which by M. d'Arbois de Jubainville and Prof. Zimmer is undoubtedly correct, namely, that Senchan was the author of a redaction which effectually silenced all competing versions. It is possible even that he was the first to put the tale in writing, and that before his day it had only been preserved orally. All existing texts have been shown to go back to a common original. The

version of the *Finding of the Tain*, which brings in the Saints of Ireland, has been edited and translated by O. Connellan in vol. v. of the Ossianic Society's publications.

CELTDOM AND HOMERIC GREECE (page 34).

See M. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de Littérature Celtique*, vol. vi. : "La civilisation des Celtes et celle de l'épopée homérique."

THE MYTHIC DESCENT OF THE ULSTER HEROES
(page 39).

See the genealogical table, Miss Hull, p. lv.

CUCHULAINN'S DISTORTION (page 41).

Slightly altered from Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's version, Miss Hull, p. 175. See also Prof. Zimmer's article, "Beiträge zur Erklärung irischer Sagentexte," *Zeit. für Celt. Philologie*, vol. iii. part 2.

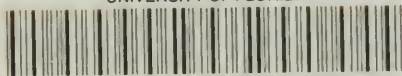
POSSIBLE GAULISH TRACES OF CUCHULAINN (page 44).

See M. d'Arbois de Jubainville's article, *Revue Celtique*, vol. xix. p. 245.

361
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