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The Courtship of Ferb

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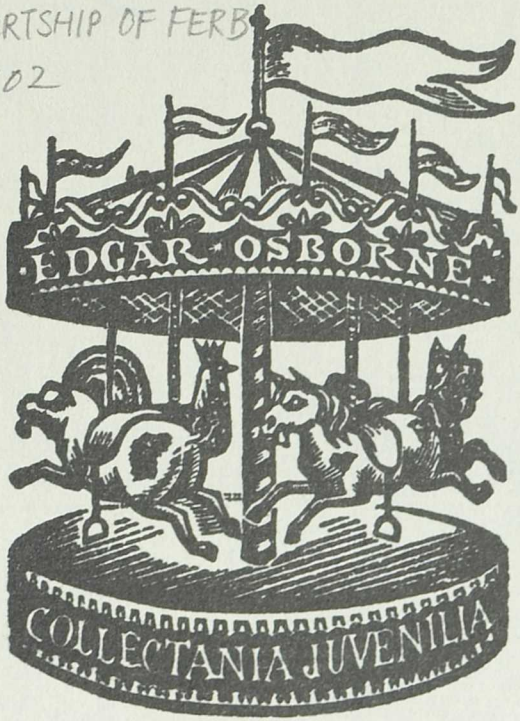
COURTSHIP OF FERB
1902



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THE COURTSHIP OF FERB

The Irish Saga Library

Early Irish Romances in Prose and Verse Translated into English Prose and Verse.

Vol. I

The Courtship of Ferb

A Romance of the Cuchulainn Cycle

Translated by

A. H. Leahy

Illustrated by

Caroline Watts.

THE COURTSHIP OF FERB

An Old Irish Romance transcribed in the Twelfth Century into the Book of Leinster

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Translated into English Prose and Verse by

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With Preface, Notes, and Literal Translations

Illustrations by

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TO

MY CRITIC.

B. M. L.

PREFACE

THE following translation of The Courtship of Ferb lays no claim to Irish scholarship, though it is, I believe, the first English translation of this very old Irish romance, whose earliest written version is found in the twelfth-century manuscript known as the Book of Leinster. With very few changes the translation follows the German rendering of the tale as given by Professor Windisch in the *Irische Texte*, III. 2. 462; and some words of explanation are required for the appearance of a version which is a simple translation from the German.

The numerous works which have recently opened up for us the long hidden treasures of Irish literature fall naturally into two groups, one consisting of modern English poems founded on Irish story, such as Sir Samuel Ferguson's poems, Aubrey de Vere's Foray of Queen Maev, The Wanderings of Oisin, by Mr. W. B. Yeats, and Mr. Trench's poem of Deirdre Wed, while in the other group we may place a large number of original Celtic romances, which in their present Irish

form are nearly nine hundred years old, and have recently been translated into French, German, and English. From the modern poems some knowledge of the subjects of the Irish stories has been widely diffused, but the poems are really adaptations, coloured by modern ideas and by the poetic fancy of the writers, so that they seldom give a correct representation of the literature from which the subjects are drawn. Literal translations, chiefly foreign, such as that of the present tale by Professor Windisch, have now been made of nearly all the leading romances, but many of these are not readily accessible to the general reader, being published in the transactions of learned societies, or in specialist periodicals; and they do not seem to have attracted sufficient attention among the literary public, if one may judge from the lack of interest in Irish literature, except in that part of it which has been treated in the more attractive poetic form of the modern works.

A remarkable instance of this lack of interest appears in a note on Mr. Andrew Lang's edition of Aucassin and Nicolete, where he discusses examples found in other countries of the *cante fable*, or interwoven song and story, in which this French romance of the twelfth or thirteenth century is written. Swahili and Arab parallels are noticed, others from Norse and from modern Scottish folk-lore; but he never mentions that many of the Irish

romances, such as the story of Deirdre, or The Courtship of Ferb, are notable examples of *cante fable;*[1] although these tales, preserved for us in manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, were certainly composed long before the actual dates of the manuscripts, and are literally centuries older than any other European examples of this style of writing.

Now, although several of these Irish instances of blended story and song have been translated, no attempt has yet been made to reproduce their form in an English version. The literal translations of the poetry found in

[1] This peculiarity of Irish romance has been pointed out by Windisch (*Irische Texte*, III. 2. p. 447 *seqq.*) and by Jacobs (*Celtic Fairy Tales*, pp. 243, 257), who there expresses his view that the *cante fable* was the original form of the folk-tale. It is, I think, quite possible that the Irish form of *cante fable* was, in some measure, the direct parent of the French form. If we recall the statement made by Eric of Auxerre, a little more than a thousand years ago, as to the "crowd of Irish learned men" who came "almost in one body to the shores of France, subjecting themselves to a voluntary exile," it will seem not improbable that the Irish plan of using both prose and verse in the same story—doubtless familiar to these learned men—was generally noticed, and that the form of *cante fable* in France was thus suggested. It is right, however, to mention that Mr. Alfred Nutt (to whom I wish to express my gratitude for several valuable suggestions both in this preface and the main body of the translation) dissents from this view; holding that, if it were true, direct Irish influence on the matter as well as in the form of the French romances would be found, and that of this direct influence there is no trace.

them often impress by their poetic imagery, but it is more often hard to realise, in face of a too close translation of the Irish idioms, that the translations do really represent verse. In the version here given of The Courtship of Ferb the verse is translated as verse and the prose as prose; and in the verse translations endeavour has been made to add nothing to a literal rendering except scansion and rhyme. The original metres are not reproduced—it is as undesirable to do so as it is to reproduce Homer in hexameters—but few deviations from the sense of the original have been allowed, the few changes made being such as seemed necessary in order to clear up the meaning of passages which, when more literally rendered, seemed too obscure. To make it easy for a reader to test how far the verse translations do give the sense of the Irish, a literal translation of the metrical passages is placed at the end. Further reference may be made to the Irish text, and to the German rendering given by Professor Windisch in the volume of the *Irische Texte*, already mentioned.

The tale of The Courtship of Ferb belongs to a group of romances which, taken together, tell the story of what has been called the Heroic Age of Ireland. The date of this Heroic Age is traditionally placed in the first century of our era, but no greater reliance need be placed on its actual date than we place on the date of 1184 B.C., which used to be given as the date of the

Capture of Troy.[1] The romances of this group are among the oldest Irish romances which we possess, and were put into their present form at various periods between the seventh and the tenth centuries; but they are based on traditions which are certainly older, and show traces of a pre-Christian origin. The leading idea of the romances is the state of open or concealed warfare between the kingdoms of Ulster and of Connaught; the principal characters being Conachar (or Conor), king of Ulster; Cuchulainn, Conall, and other Ulster champions; Medb (or Maev), queen of Connaught, with her husband Ailill; and Fergus Mac Roy, the exiled king of Ulster, who in many of the stories is a refugee at the

[1] The dates given to this period by early authorities, or by later writers who had access to old records which now are lost, differ widely; and dates given to different events are often inconsistent. The date, for instance, when the father of Queen Maev succeeded to the kingship over all Ireland, is given by the *Annals of the Four Masters* (A.D. 1630) as 137 B.C., by Flann of Monasterboice (11th century) as 56 B.C., and by O'Flaherty in his *Ogygia* as 27 B.C. Conor and the other personages in the romances are not mentioned at all in the *Annals of the Four Masters;* but the date of the death of Conor is given by Tighernach (a contemporary of Flann) as A.D. 48, while his birth is usually assigned to A.D. 1. It is difficult to reconcile these dates with the date of Maev's father, but it is as useless to try to reconcile the dates relating to the Ulster heroes as it would be to explain the different accounts of Helen of Troy, who, according to a very old legend, was carried off by Theseus in the days of the fathers of the men who fought for her under the Trojan walls.

Connaught court, while in others he holds a place second only to Conor in the councils of Ulster. A list of ninety-six romances which belong to this period is given by Miss Hull as an appendix to the *Cuchullin Saga;* but twenty of these are only known by name, the actual tales being lost. Of the remaining seventy-six, Miss Hull mentions translations of twenty-nine ; but translations of others have appeared since the publication of the list ; extracts from and outlines of many of these romances have appeared in O'Curry's published lectures and elsewhere. The central story of the cycle is the Tain bo Cuailgne, or The Cattle Raid of Kellny, which may be regarded as holding in Irish romance a place similar to that occupied by the Trojan War in early Greek legend ; for many of the other tales either lead up to the Tain, or trace the later fortunes of those who took part in it. Other romances, which may be regarded as essential to the full working out of the saga, are The Birth of Cuchulainn, The Debility of the Ultonians, The Fate of the Sons of Usnech, The Death of Cuchulainn, and The Death of Conachar ; while important tales which have less reference to the course of the central story are The Destruction of the House of Da Derga, which tells the story of the death of Conary, the high king of Ireland ; and The Courtship of Etain, of which tale The Destruction of the House of Da Derga may be regarded as a sequel.

Among these romances the tale of The Courtship of Ferb occupies a secondary place. It may be looked upon as a preface to the Tain bo Cuailgne, and tells us of one of the many provocations which led to that Raid, which commenced just seven years after the events recorded in this tale. In the construction of this story, as well as in the manner of its telling, a straightforward and simple character is shown, which is common to most of the older Irish romances, and must strike the reader at once. Although a supernatural being, the goddess of war, appears in the course of the tale, nothing can be found of the mystical "Celtic spirit," to which such prominence is given in some modern poems, whose incidents are taken from the old romances. It need hardly be said that the introduction of a supernatural element into these old stories does not necessarily imply any craving for mysticism or magic on the part of the writers; for if the ancient Irish had a mythology at all, as they undoubtedly had, divine and semi-divine beings should appear occasionally in their tales, just as the gods and goddesses appear in Homer, or as Odin appears in the Volsunga Saga. But since, on the representations of observers of the western Irish of to-day, the idea that the Celt is necessarily mystical has got firmly rooted, the mere mention of anything supernatural, like the Druidic mist in the tale of Deirdre, is held to be an example of the Celtic love of mysticism and magic;

while an apparition of Odin to break Sigmund's sword[1] in Teutonic legend is not considered to be due to any such craving for mysticism, because the Teutons are supposed to be a practical people.

On the principles of those who maintain the mystical character of the older Irish romances, Homer must surely be held to be the chief of mystics. The change of Apollo into the shape of Agenor[2] after he had enveloped the youth in a cloud to save him from the wrath of Achilles would certainly have been held to be an instance of "Celtic magic" if it had occurred in an Irish instead of a Greek poem, for it seems that it is hard to grasp the idea that when any race of men believed that their gods did really interest themselves in human affairs, it was perfectly natural that these gods should appear in the tales of the race. That Castor and Pollux should have appeared in the Forum to bring news of the battle of Lake Regillus, was accepted as a natural addition to their old legend by that most unmystical of peoples—the Romans; the goddess of war tells Conor of the approach of his foe in The Courtship of Ferb; Poseidon fights for the Greeks in their struggle to save the ships; and the warrior saint, St. James, rides before the armies of the Christian Spaniards in their battles against the Moors. There is nothing peculiarly Celtic in the instance where, in the Irish tale, divine aid is granted. Again it

1 *Volsunga Saga*, Chap. xi. 2 *Iliad*, xxi. 597.

is not at all certain that a great feeling of awe in presence of the supernatural is a specially Celtic characteristic. The western Irish display, we are told, much caution when speaking of the fairy folk, and seem to stand much in awe of them ; but, though it is reasonable to expect a similar feeling in the older romances, it is quite possible that the character of the people has somewhat changed during the thousand years or so that have passed since the romances were written in their present form ; or that this feeling of reverence was not present in the particular class who produced the romances, or for whose entertainment they were composed. As a matter of fact, if we look at the tales without preconceived opinions, we shall find that in Irish story the heroes show rather less instead of more reverence for the supernatural than is displayed by the Homeric heroes. In Homer, gods are sometimes attacked with success by men, but the men have in such cases another god to encourage and to aid them ; when Diomed attacks Apollo without divine sanction the great difference which separates the mortal from the immortal is at once evident, but in Irish story, when the goddess of war opposed Cuchulainn at the ford,[1] Cuchulainn boldly trampled that goddess under his feet, and in the original tale of The Courtship of Etain, Eochaidh needs no divine support when, so far from having any eerie feeling about

[1] Tain bo Cuailgne, 58. Also see Tain bo Regamna.

the magic power of his fairy opponent, such as that with which he is credited in a recently published version of the story, he collects his warriors, storms the fairy mound,[1] and carries off his wife from the disconsolate though divine lover. The well-known boast of Ossian: "Were God and my son Oscar hand to hand together on Knock-na-veen; if I were to see Oscar down, I would then say God was a strong man," seems to give the original Celtic feeling about the power of the supernatural better than can be got from the notion of ever-present magical spell which is now held up to us as the peculiarly Celtic view.

Yet the Ossianic tales, which appear to be of comparatively modern date, cannot really be taken to represent the original Celtic spirit. For, whatever the Irish of a later day may have become after the history of the last thousand years, and the modifications of the race by outside influences which have been made in that time, there is little doubt that if we wish to find the true Celtic ideas, untouched by foreign additions, or by Danish or later influences of race, we must go to the old tales found in the eleventh and twelfth-century manuscripts, or to those which modern scholarship finds to be undoubtedly of equally ancient origin. There we find a mythology, the gods of that mythology appearing from

[1] Tochmarc Etaine (Egerton version), § 20; *Irische Texte*, vol. i. page 130.

time to time in the stories; but the supernatural is not, in general, the chief concern of the authors of the stories; their concern is with the deeds and griefs of men and of women. Transmigration or re-birth, that element of Celtic belief which drew the attention of the ancient world, is of frequent occurrence; in some tales this idea is the principal motive of the story, but in tales like The Courtship of Ferb the supernatural is a mere incident, the tone of the story is more Homeric than mystical. This feeling about the ancient stories pervades those poems of Sir Samuel Ferguson which are founded on Irish legends; and here, though many ideas, Christian and other, are by him introduced into the legends, we seem to breathe the spirit of the old literature far better than in the more recent versions of it, where the notion of a specially Celtic craving after magic is for ever present. Former enthusiasts have thought that Celtic held a peculiar place among languages—that Welsh was the language of Eden, that Semitic languages drew their roots from Celtic sources; these ideas have been destroyed by philologists, who have brought Irish into its proper place in the great family of languages. Others have maintained that Irish art and architecture had laws of development of its own, so that it was older than similar art and similar architecture in other countries – these ideas have been upset by antiquarians; and the more recent theory, that love of the supernatural and

a craving after magic is the special characteristic of the Celtic mind, will be found to rest upon no surer basis than did the older claims. It does not really tend to increase the interest which is felt in Irish literature when it is represented as differing widely in its subject and its interests from all the other literatures of the world ; we shall do better if we try to realise the points where it touched upon, modified, and borrowed from other stocks. Possibly Irish romance modified directly or indirectly the romances of the Middle Ages ;[1] perhaps it sprang from the same source whence flowed the far greater music of Homer. As a survival of the ideas of that Celtic race which once spread all over Western Europe, the ancient stories should be of interest in all lands where Celts once ruled, where descendants of the Celtic race to-day remain. For there is reason for the belief that, not only in those districts which are now regarded as especially Celtic, but even in countries which like England are spoken of as especially Teutonic, runs the blood of the race which composed the legends on which these Irish tales are founded, if, indeed, some of the mythology and of the incidents of the tales do not point back to that yet earlier date when Teuton and Celt were one.

[1] We have no evidence of direct Irish influence on continental literature, but this influence was undoubtedly felt in Wales; and the connection between mediæval romance, Welsh literature, and Breton literature is well known.

An interesting point in the tale, as we have it, of The Courtship of Ferb is the difference between the sources from which it is drawn. The ballad version, marked XII in the translation, supposed according to the story to have been composed by Conor's bard Ferchertne, is at the end of the tale as transcribed in the Book of Leinster, and gives what we may call the Ulster version of the story; the prose version, with the poems marked I to XI, gives the incidents as related by one who may be regarded as a sympathiser with Connaught. A manuscript of the fifteenth century in the British Museum, marked Egerton 1782, gives a third account, which in the main agrees with the ballad or Ulster version; but the short poem included in it, although somewhat corrupt, would seem to be an imperfect reproduction of the poem marked IV in the Connaught story, or of a poem similar to it. As to the comparative dates, Windisch appears to hold that the Ulster version is in the main the older, though some of the poems of the Connaught version, such as IV and IX, may be specially ancient. One of the principal tests given by Windisch is the druidical prophecy *brod ane in airidig*, in the verse marked 22 of the ballad version, with similar expressions in the poem IV, *brod in airigid;* and in the Egerton manuscript *brod ind airdig* and *brod inn airdich.* Windisch is doubtful whether the word *brod* stands for "meat" or for "drinking cups,"

but in any case the prophecy that *brod* should be in the *airidig* is actually fulfilled when the man Brod, or rather Brod's spear was in it. It appears from Windisch that the Old Irish form of *airidig* is *eridech*, a cup or beaker; and that both the ballad version and the version in the Egerton manuscript took this view, so that the prophecy was fulfilled when Brod's spear pierced the cup in Gerg's hand; while the author of the Connaught version having the old word *airidig* or *airigid* before him failed to recognise it as meaning a cup, so invented a person called Airidech, the servant of Gerg, through whom the spear passed after killing his master. As the word *brod* is of doubtful meaning, and is plainly a sort of druidical pun, I have ventured to translate the line in verse 22 of the ballad version as "broth shall in the beaker be," with similar translations of "there's broth in the cup," and "broth in the bowl is found" in the poems marked IV and in the Egerton version. This keeps pretty close to one of the suggested meanings for *brod*—namely, "meat"—and preserves in English the play on the word *brod*, and the name of Conor's charioteer who really fulfilled the prophecy. Another apparent evidence of date, which Windisch notes in his preface, is the higher literary quality of the Connaught version. Both versions are apparently, at least, as old as the tenth century, but the Ulster or ballad version and the Egerton one, which in

the main agrees with it, tell the story baldly ; while the Connaught story-teller seems to have amplified several suggestions in the original tale : in the laments of Nuagel over Gerg, and of Ferb over Mani, also in the dramatic dialogues between Ferb and the two Connaught heroes, Fiannamail and Donnell the Red, much power is shown. The difference of tone between Nuagel's lament over a hero well tried in war and in council, and that of Ferb over a gallant youth, slain in his first fight, is well sustained ; and to show the difference with as little change as possible, I have translated the two laments V and VII in the same metre.

For reasons already mentioned, I have not attempted to reproduce the Irish metres, nor have the same metres been kept throughout. The irregular metres of III, IV, and of the Druidic chant in the Egerton version are reproduced in irregular English metres, the long lines of I are reproduced by long lines, but the number of the feet does not correspond to the number in the Irish poem. The Ulster version XII, and the dialogues are all in one metre, the laments in another ; and, to break the monotony of the laments, XI has a foot added to each line. The object aimed at is not to prepare a literal translation for the use of scholars, but to take a tale which was put into its present form a thousand years ago in order to interest Irish hearers, and to reproduce it in such an English form as might interest English readers at

the present time, keeping, however, as close as possible to the sense and form of the Irish. Thus, while no attempt has been made to introduce the internal rhymes which are a peculiar feature of Irish verse, artifices like the Irish ones are sometimes used to produce the same effect; *e.g.* the echoing verses 5 and 6 in the lament marked VII correspond to similar echoes in the verses used in the original. To simplify difficulties in the pronunciation of Irish proper names and surnames, the surnames have, as far as possible, been translated, and a list of the proper names with approximate pronunciation is prefixed. In the case of names which occur pretty often I have slightly altered the spelling—thus Maev (pronounced Mayv) is written for Medb, Alill for Ailill, Eman (pronounced Aymen) for Emain, Croghan (pronounced Crowhan) for Cruachan, and Cualgne (pronounced Kell-ny) for Cuailnge. Perhaps attention should be called to the fact that Fiannamail is to be pronounced as Fee-an-ool; and, although I feel that I ought to apologise to Irish scholars for doing so, I have given an approximate pronunciation of Cá-ha for Cathach, and have left out any indication of the final guttural. I have also thought it right to follow Sir Samuel Ferguson in scanning the word "Tain" in the title of the poem Tain bo Cuailgne as rhyming with pain—not with the modern pronunciation of "taw-in."

I must here once for all acknowledge my indebtedness

to Professor Windisch's preface to his edition of this tale, and to his exceedingly close translation of the Irish text; and I wish to thank very sincerely all those friends who have assisted me in questions as to pronunciation and translation of the Irish proper names, and with general criticisms on my attempts to render this old Irish story into an English literary form.

The story in the text is plain enough, and would have required no special introduction had not the first few pages in the Book of Leinster version unfortunately been lost. Possibly the "fault" with which Nuagel reproaches her daughter Ferb in the first verse of the lament marked V, and the allusion in the second line of the third verse of the lament marked VII (see literal translation) refer to something in the lost part of the story, but I have not found any other indication of it, and no essential part of the tale seems to be missing. To replace the lost part a short introduction in italics has been added.

University College, Sheffield
Dec. 1901–*July* 1902.

SINCE the foregoing pages and the translation which follows were in type, a short version of this romance, with the title of the Wedding of Maine Morgor, has appeared in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirthemne, which seems to have been based, with a few alterations, on the translation by Professor Windisch. The statement on p. vii that this is the first English translation must therefore be qualified; but no change has been made in the text in consequence of the appearance of Lady Gregory's version; and the following pages must be regarded as an independent rendering of Windisch's text.

July 1902.

LIST OF PROPER NAMES WITH APPROXIMATE PRONUNCIATION

PEOPLE OF CONNAUGHT

MAEV, more correctly *Medb* (Mayv), Queen Regnant of Connaught.

ALILL, more correctly *Ailill* (Al-ill), her husband.

MANI MORE the tall (Mah-nee More), son of Maev and Alill, sometimes called Mani Morgor.

FINNABAIR (Fín-na-bar), sister of Mani.

FIANNAMAIL (Fee-an-ool), son of Fergus Forderg (For-dayrg),
DONNELL DERG the Red, more correctly *Domnall*, son of Duban (Doo-ban),
} Foster brothers to Mani.

BRICCRIU (Brik-roo), a scurrilous person, the Thersites of Irish story.

OLLGAETH (Oll-gay), a Druid.

PEOPLE OF GLENN GEIRG

GERG (Gurg), chief or king of Glenn Geirg (Gayrg).

NUAGEL (Noo-ă-gel), wife of Gerg.

FERB, daughter of Gerg, betrothed to Mani.

CONN the victorious, } sons of Gerg.
COBHTACH of the fair skin (Cóv-ta), }
FINDCHOEM (Finn-hó-em), friend and companion to Ferb.
AIRIDECH (Ar-ri-dech), servant of Gerg.

PEOPLE OF ULSTER

CONOR, more correctly *Conchobar*, son of Nessa, king of Ulster.
MUGAIN ETANCHAITRECH (Moó-gen Ait-en-hai-rech), daughter of Eocho Fedlech (Yeo-ho Fay-lla); Conor's queen.
NIALL the fair-headed (Neell), } sons of Conor.
FERADACH the long-handed (Fér-da), }
CUCHULAINN (Cu-hoo-lin), prime hero of Ulster, a boy at the time of the tale.
BROD (Brōd), charioteer to Conor.
CATHBA (Cah-ba), chief druid of Ulster.
IMRINN, a druid, son of Cathba.
FERCHERTNE (Fayr-hayr-ne), son of Dergerdne (Dayr-gayr-ne), a bard.

FOMORIANS

CATHACH the cat-headed (Cá-ha), daughter of Dimor (Dée-mor).
SIABARCHENN (Shee-bar-henn), son of Suilremar (Shool-ray-mar).
BERNGAL the freckled (Bayrn-gal).
BURI of the cruel speech (Bóo-ri).

Approximate Pronunciation

FACEN (Fah-ken), son of Dublongsech (Doob-lon-say).
FABRIC of the venomous tooth.
FORAIS the fratricide (For-às).

UNKNOWN WARRIORS

(in verses 32–34 of poem marked XII)

FERGUS
MURETHACH (Múr-da).
FALBE (Fal-be).
FLAND (Flann).
DOMNALL (Donnell).
COBHTACH (Cóv-ta).
COND (Conn).
CORPRE (Cór-pre).
DUBHTACH (Dúv-ta).
ROSS.
OENGUS (Angus).

SUPERNATURAL

THE BADB (Bahb), goddess of war.

PLACE NAMES

CROGHAN, more correctly *Cruachan* (Crów-han), capital of Connaught.

CUALGNE, more correctly *Cuailnge* (Kéll-ny), a district in Ulster.

EMAN MACHA, more correctly *Emain* (Ay-men Maa-ha), capital of Ulster.

IRARD (Ee-rard).

LOCH ANE (Loch-aan).

LOCH GUALA UMAI (Loch Goo-ela Oomay), a lake named after the Ol Guala.

MAG AI (Maw Ay), dwelling of Maev and Alill.

RAITH INI (Ra-heeny), dwelling of Gerg.

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The Courtship of Ferb

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

AT the time which is commonly known as the Heroic Age in Ireland, which tradition places in the first century of our era, the ruler of the kingdom of Connaught was the celebrated Queen Maev. In the tale of "The Courtship of Ferb," we hear that the son of Maev and her husband Alill, was a youth called Māni, usually known by the name of Māni More or Māni the tall, who surpassed in beauty and skill all the young men in Connaught of his time. At the opening of the tale, it was told how Māni desired to wed Ferb, the fair daughter of Gerg, who was the chief of Glenn Geirg, and dwelt at Rath Ini within the domains of the neighbouring kingdom of Ulster, whose king at that time was Conor, the son of Nessa. A magnificently equipped party was prepared by Maev and Alill to accompany their son to the wedding; it consisted of a hundred and fifty young warriors of Connaught, divided into three troops of fifty each. The appear-

ance of these three troops was described in the tale, but in the manuscript account which we have of "The Courtship of Ferb," the first few pages are missing, so that the story commences abruptly in the middle of the account of the equipment of the second of the troops. As only a small part of the account of this second troop remains, and no part of the description of the first troop, the present translation commences with the account of the third; which we can see, from the fragment which we have of the first part of the story, was far the most magnificent of the three. The following translation, which differs very slightly from the German rendering of the Irish text made by Professor Windisch, describes the departure of the wedding party from Croghan, the capital of Connaught, and the events which followed after its arrival at Rath Ini.

THE MAIDEN FERB —— INCITED HIM TO THE FIGHT

THE COURTSHIP OF FERB

HERE we show how the third troop was equipped —even the troop wherein Mani was. Fifty chestnut horses were in it—they were big of body and of wondrous size—also fifty white horses with chestnut ears—their tails were long, and the manes and the tails were dyed to the colour of purple. On each horse was a bridle of two reins, shells of gold ornamented one of the reins and shells of silver were on the other. The bits of them all were of gold and of silver. At the neck of each horse hung a round plate of gold, to which little bells had been fastened, and the bells, as they swung to the horses' tread, chimed together in music as sweetly as lute strings struck by a master's hand. Each pair of horses was yoked to a chariot of white bronze, whose rim was made of silver and gold; fifty caparisons of purple, with threads of silver run through them, were bound to the bodies of the chariots; they had golden buckles to fasten them, and hung over the rims, marvellous figures were embroidered

thereon. Fifty graceful youths with fair countenances stood in these fifty chariots ; amongst them there was none who was not the son of a king and a queen, and of a hero and warrior of Connaught. They were clothed in fifty purple cloaks, whose borders were adorned with silver and gold ; there were four bronze ears on every cloak, and each was fastened with a clasp of red gold purified in the fire. Close fitting garments, woven with silk, and with fastenings of glowing yellow gold, were girded on their white bodies. Fifty silver bucklers for the fight hung on their backs, the rims of the bucklers were of gold, and they were adorned with many kinds of carbuncles and with costly stones of every colour. Two gleams of valour shone from the five-pointed spears that were in the hand of each man of them ; there were fifty rivets of white bronze and of gold upon every spear. If from each of these heroes a bushel of gold had been due, the rivets of his lance had been enough for the full payment of the debt. Each of the spears had about it rings of gold purified in the fire, and rested on a socket of carbuncles, which, in like fashion to the spears, had been embellished with many coloured costly stones. They shone in the night like the beams of the sun. At their belts hung fifty long swords ; the hilts of the swords were of tooth, adorned with gold and with silver ; the scabbards were of white silver. In their hands were fifty whips of white bronze with clasps of gold upon them.

Very beautiful and splendid was the young prince whom they accompanied ; long were his cheeks, radiant and broad was his countenance. Long, curling, and golden was his hair, and it fell to his shoulders ; proud and glowing were his eyes, blue, and clear as the crystal. Like to the tops of the woods in May, or to the foxglove of the mountain, was each of his cheeks. You might fancy that a rain of pearls had fallen into his mouth, and that his lips were twin branches of coral. White as the new-fallen snow of the night was his neck, and such was the fashion of his skin. Seven dogs of the chase surrounded his chariot, with chains of silver upon them, and an apple of gold on every chain, and the tinkle of the apples on the chains made a pleasant music. No colour can be imagined that was not upon the dogs that were with him. Seven buglers with bugles of silver and gold went with the dogs ; many coloured were the garments in which they were clad, and yellow was their hair. Before them went three Druids with crowns of silver on their heads ; their mantles were of many colours, their shields were of copper, and the rims of the shields were brass. They were attended by three harp-players in purple cloaks, each of them kingly to look upon.

In this fashion then they came to Croghan, and three times they paraded upon the plain of Croghan. They parted from Maev and from Alill, and they turned to the road for the journey to Rath Ini. "Fair is the start that

you make," said Briccriu, as he saw them go, "but will you look so fair when you return? for that I cannot tell."

"By the journey before us," said Mani, "shall the riddle you set us be solved!"

"Right well do I know," answered Briccriu, "that one day is enough for your march; nor for a night will you dare to remain within the kingdom of Conor to hold therein your feast."

"Now I pledge you my word," answered Mani, "that till for three days and three nights we have kept our feast at Dun Geirg, we turn not again to Croghan." No longer did he tarry to bandy words, but he gat him on his way for the journey.

Now when the news of their coming arrived at Dun Geirg, they commenced to prepare for the reception of the bridal party. The houses were strewn with fair-leaved, green-leaved birches, and with a deep litter of fresh rushes. And Ferb sent her friend and playmate, Findchoem, who was the daughter of Erg, that she might go with the woman who acted as herald, and observe the coming of that party in what fashion they came. Not long was the time that she needed. And when she had well beheld the host, and had noted their array, she hastened and came with sure tidings to the bower where Ferb was, and thus she spoke to her—

"I see," said she, "a host come to this burg; and

never, since Conor has ruled in Eman, hath come nor shall come to the end of time a fairer host or one more skilled in dainty feats than this that comes across the plain. It seemed to me that I was in a sweet orchard of apples, such was the fragrance that came from their garments when they were waved by the gentle breeze that swept across them. And for the feats and the frolics shown by the prince that is among them, never before saw I the like. He casts his staff for the distance of a spear cast in front of him, his dogs springing behind, in such fashion that there are the dogs bounding between the staff and the ground, there is the prince leaning over between the staff and the sky, and the staff falleth not to the ground, for together between them they seize it."

The people of Dun Geirg pressed around as the party approached, so that sixteen of the beholders were stifled at the viewing of it. And they leapt from their chariots at the gate of the burg, and the chariots were let down, and their horses were unyoked, and they came into the castle, and a right fair welcome was bid them, and preparations were made for a goodly bath. They gave them that bath in the great hall of the warriors that was hard by the castle ; and presently noble supplies came in to them of all those kinds of excellent provisions that can be found on the ridge of the earth.

But, while yet they had joy in the pleasure of the feast,

a fierce and violent blast of wind arose ; and it shook the whole hill on which the castle stood, and the house of wood, wherein the guests were, quaked at the blast ; so that the shields fell from their hooks, and the spears from their places, and the tables were moved like the leaves in a forest of oak. The young men were astonished, and Gerg demanded of the Druid who attended upon Mani what this wind should betide. And to him answered Ollgaeth the Druid of Mani—

"Truly," said he, "to me it seemeth that no good omen is this with which we have come hither for the courtship this evening. Conor shall come upon you ; beware of his coming, and at the dawn of the morning Maev shall be defeated in battle, whilst you all shall perish, as many as are within this house." And he made thereupon the following poem—a model for future times :—

I

The storm wind roars, its warning's clear, with dread we hear the cry ;
Pierced through the loins by charioteer, the kingly Gerg must die,
Slain by the javelin's cast ; a deed of poison ! to and fro
Fly lances, dripping shoulders bleed ; to triumph rides the foe !

The hands flash white, as blows they heap on shields
that roar and quake ;
A peaceful couch for men that sleep in death the cairn
shall make.
The king uplifts his spear, and slays a prince ; sharp
deeds are done ;
A tomb above the dead they raise, and sad the tale will
run :
Badb[1] shall destroy ! force wild and dread from Maev
the field shall win ;
The slain lie heaped, her host hath fled ; how sad the
storm wind's din !

"If ye be obedient to my counsel," said the Druid, "this very night shall ye depart from the castle." And Mani was wroth, and with anger he rebuked the Druid for the words which he had spoken ; and "No cause," said Gerg, "is there why ye should be in terror for him of whom he hath warned you, since no muster of heroes or of warriors from Ulster hath Conor with him at all. Even were you not here to defend yourselves," said he, "I myself with my two sons would give battle to Conor." And they lifted up their fallen weapons, and they paid no heed to the words which the Druid had spoken.

Now as Conor in the morning of that day lay asleep

[1] *Pronounced* Bahb.

in Eman, his queen, Mugain Etanchaitrech, the daughter of Eocho Fedlech, lying beside him, he saw a fair woman who came to him as he lay on his couch. Her bearing was the bearing of a queen ; her hair was golden and wavy, and was braided into a tress coiled about her head. Through a thin robe, woven of silken threads, shone her white skin, a soft and glossy kerchief of green silk lay on her neck. Two sandals of white bronze, rounded in front, appeared between her tender feet and the ground.

"All blessings be on thee, O Conor," said she.

"Tell me," said Conor, "what this vision showeth to me."

"In seven years from this night," said the lady, "shall the Raid of the Kine of Cualgne[1] be accomplished, and the land of Ulster shall be laid waste, and the Dun Bull of Cualgne shall be driven off, and the son of the man who shall do these deeds, even Mani Morgor, the son of Alill and Maev, he hath come hither for his wedding with Ferb, the daughter of Gerg of Glenn Geirg, three times fifty is the number of his companions. Make ready," said she, "three times fifty of the men of the Fomorians to match them, and victory shall be with thee." Up sprang Conor, and he waked his queen and told her of his vision.

"Truly," said Mugain the Queen, "there hath been enough of strife already betwixt us and the men of Connaught."

[1] *Pronounced* Kell-ny.

"Nevertheless," said Conor, "it is a certain thing that, even if we hold back from the war, the Raid of which she hath spoken shall be accomplished."

"Take counsel with Cathba," said Mugain, "and the counsel that he giveth to thee, let that be what thou shalt follow."

Upon that Conor spoke to Cathba on the matter, desiring him to give him a prophetic reply. And he made thereon the first lines of a poem, and Cathba replied to him, and the poem runs as follows :—

II

CONOR.

Cathba,[1] speak ! my mind is troubled
Let thine art the clouds dispel;
What destruction hangs before me,
Eman's Druid, Cathba, tell !

CATHBA.

Conor, stately king of Ulster,
As the lord of heroes known !
Many men shall fall in battle,
This was by your vision shown

[1] *Pronounced* Cáh-ba.

CONOR.

Tell me all the ill that follows ;
Give a prophecy that's true !
Cheat me not for fear of danger ;
Never Druid spoke like you.

CATHBA.

Mani, raised above dishonour,
Son of Croghan's Maev shall fall ;
Three times fifty comrades with him,
Wailing shall arise for all.

None escape or find returning
Of the troops from Croghan fair :
Higher shall your fame be burning ;
Seek it, guard yourself with care !

"In safety shalt thou return, O king," said he, "with triumph and conquest and fame."

Now it happened that at that time Cathach the cat-headed, Dimor's daughter, had arrived in Eman. A famous warrior was she ; and from the land of Spain she had come to Eman for the love that she bore to Cuchulainn, and she joined with Conor for that war.

Also there joined with him three men of renown who came of the race of the Fomorians—famous were they for their cruelty—namely, Siabarchenn, the son of Suilremar, and Berngal the Freckled, and Buri of the Cruel Speech. Thither came also Facen, the son of Dublongsech, who was of the race of the men who of old time dwelled in the land of Ulster, and Fabric, called Fabric of the venomous tooth, who came from the Greater Asia, and Foras, the slayer of his brother, who dwelt in the island of Man. And Conor marched away, three times fifty warriors who surrounded these chiefs being with him, and he took none of the Ulstermen with him, save himself only, and Brod his charioteer, and Imrinn the Druid, who was the son of Cathba. And none of these warriors had a servant with him save that servant of Conor only, but they had their shields on their backs, and their bright green spears in their hands, and their heavy hard-striking swords at their belts. Yet they were not to be despised on account of their numbers, the pride of their souls was great. And when they had come to such place that the castle of Gerg could be seen by them, they saw a vast and heavy cloud that brooded over the castle. The one end of the cloud was black as coal, and its middle was red and the other end was green. Whereupon Conor spoke to Imrinn the Druid.

"Tell me, O Imrinn," said he, "what omen signifieth that cloud that we see over the castle."

"Truly," said Imrinn, "it signifieth a night-long contest and death for this night." Then he made the following poem of lyric verse :—

III

Yon dark cloud that stifles
With poisonous breath—
Green and red are its edges,
Compelling the death :
For keen weapons cut gashes
In sides, and hands tear,
And aloft the sword flashes
And necks are swept bare !
In Gerg's lofty dwelling
The ninth hour is knelling,
Of death it is telling
That rages till noon ;
A youth in his daring
Black death is preparing,
The ground shall be bearing
A grave-harvest soon !

Conor then advanced and drew towards the castle. Now there was at that time a brazen vat set up in the house, which in later times was known by the name of

the Ol-guala, and it was filled with wine. From the hand of the cupbearer a polished drinking vessel fell into the vat, so that three ripples were formed therein, and the ripples flowed over the rim. Then thus spoke Ollgaeth the Druid :—

IV

Woe's me, said the Druid, there's "Broth in the cup";
Too soon shall a stranger the beaker fill up ;
Troops shall wounded be lying,
And heroes be dying,
Eman Macha[1] be sighing,
And houses shall fall !
Knights of Gerg fight in duel
With Conor's men cruel,
Till the daylight's renewal
Drives night from the hall !
Sad was the birth of men, foredoomed to fight
Within the house of royal Gerg to-night !

Conor came to the door, and his foreign warriors, as their custom was, raised their cry of havock round about the castle. And Gerg arose, and with him his two sons —to wit, Conn the victorious and Cobhtach of the fair

[1] *Pronounced* Aymen Maa-ha.

skin, and they caught hold of their weapons. And Gerg said to Mani, "Do then leave us Ulstermen to ourselves to decide this matter, that thou mayest see which of us is the more valiant. We are all bound in honour to see to thy safety, and it would be no hurt to thee should we all fall here together. And if it should indeed be that it is for us that death hath here been decreed, then do thou win the mastery in this place if so be that thou art able." Gerg and his two sons then went out, and his people with him. And they set them to defend the burg, and after that to go outside and to fight against Conor, and for a long time they let in none behind them. Now on a time Gerg went across the threshold to meet the foremost of those who pressed forward, and eagerly they strove to cut that hero off from the fortress, and in all directions and on all sides sword cuts and thrusts fell upon him as he stood outside the castle. And it followed that during this attack five of the Fomorians fell at the hand of Gerg, also by him fell Imrinn the Druid, who was the son of Cathba, and Gerg struck the head from his shoulders, and he took the head with him and he made for the door. Then came Cathach the cat-headed between Gerg and the door, and a sharp hot contest she gave him. Nevertheless Gerg struck off her head, and he took it with him into the house where Mani was, though he himself had been sorely wounded. And he threw the head from him in front of Mani, and he sat him

"THEN NUAGEL AROSE, THE DAUGHTER OF ERG, SHE WHO WAS THE WIFE OF GERG, AND SHE RAISED HER THREE BITTER CRIES OF GRIEF, AND SHE TOOK THE HEAD OF HER MAN IN HER LAP."

down upon a couch, and he sighed grievously and bade them give him to drink. And Conor came up with his people, so that they were on the outside of the stockade. They held their shields in their left hands over their heads, and with their right hands they tore down the stockade ; and they strode across it, so that they were on the soil of that burg ; thus they had a good door made for them after that they had broken the rampart.

Thereupon Brod—the servant aforementioned of Conor—hurled one of the two spears that he had in his hand ; and the spear flew into the house, and it went through the shield that was on the breast of king Gerg, and into his tender flesh, so that a cross was made by the spear as it passed through his body after piercing his heart, also it passed through Airidech the servant of Gerg, so that both fell lifeless. Conor then turned him to attack the followers of Gerg throughout the castle, so that thirty fighting men of Gerg's people fell at his single hand, besides what fell by the hands of his followers. And many of the people also fell at their hands.

Then Nuagel arose, the daughter of Erg, she who was the wife of Gerg, and she raised her three bitter cries of grief, and she took the head of her man into her lap.

"Truly," said she, "a great deed do I reckon that deed

which the servant Brod hath wrought, in that he hath slain Gerg in his own palace. And many," said she, "will lament thee ; and though it was in thy daughter's quarrel that thou art fallen, many were the maidens to whom thou thyself wert dear." And loudly she gave testimony of this, and thus she commenced her lay :—

V

Here Gerg lies slain ; his daughter's fault
Hath caused the woe that now I tell ;
For her, struck down in fierce assault,
That lordly chieftain, fighting, fell.

Gerg's wars were great ; to war he went
With blood-red weapons, active still,
Fair, noble, and magnificent,
Wise, handsome, manly, full of skill.

No hero ever Gerg surpassed ;
Each heath that knew his martial tread
Boils up with wrath ; the tears fall fast
In every host, for Gerg is dead.

The Courtship of Ferb

'Tis sad your death-bed thus to tend,
My lovely Gerg, with locks so fair,
Whom armies hailed as constant friend ;
'Tis woe for me to see you there.

With me who in Glenn Geirg here stand,
By Irard and by Loch Ane's shore,
By many a spring in southern land,
Are loving dames who weep you sore.

All hosts to you were friends, and each
Your lightest wish with joy obeyed ;
To all was dear your friendly speech ;
Your counsels wise their judgment swayed.

The lawyers hailed your wise decrees,
Assemblies of your state could learn,
Your nobles knew your courtesies,
And foes your deeds in battle stern.

Your house was great, and widely known,
Although you wounded were therein ;
They killed you there, upon your throne ;
The deed they did was deadly sin.

For little he deserved such fame,
The servant Brod, his spear passed through,
And with one cast it overcame
Your henchman Airidech and you.

Brod's feat of arms was great, although
An impious deed that slave hath wrought ;
Before his time a king's laid low,
And I with him to death am brought.

Now after these things had been done the two sons of Gerg, namely Cobhtach of the fair skin and Conn the victorious, strove to hold the castle, and deadly was the fight that was fought before they gave way. Nor did the might of Mani permit him to bide still in his place, or to hold back from avenging his father-in-law against the men of Ulster. He arose, and he took his great battle-shield upon him, and his two smooth sharp spears into his hand, and his heavy hard-striking sword at his belt ; and three times fifty of his comrades rose together with him. It were no easy thing to restrain him ; the mind and the nature of each of these heroes was swollen with pride, the hearts of them all overflowed with their arrogance, greatly they longed and desired to do some doughty deed.

Stately, love-worthy, and of gallant bearing was the

king's son that went before them ; though to the eyes of an older man he seemed but a boy, he showed himself afterward to be a warrior of great valour. Pleasant was he in the banqueting-hall, and stubborn in the strife ; he was a snake full of poison ; he was wary of the craft of his enemies ; he was the flame of war ; he was a fit match for a foe that rose up against him ; he was liberal with his treasure ; he could show compassion to the wounded ; he could blaze up at an insult ; he stood like a firm-rooted rock against violence ; he could overwhelm wild might like a billow of justice ; he was swift as a roebuck ; he was steadfast as an oak ; he was the head of the three provinces of Connaught in battle and wounding ; he was their chief in assemblies, their distributor of treasure, and their good material for an accomplished king.

He held it to be dishonourable that any man at all in the world should come with numbers no greater than his own and take the house where he was ; therefore he and his warriors chased the Fomorians, and they drove them from the palace. In that hour the hand of Mani was not the hand of a healer, for nine of the men of the Fomorians fell at his first attack. And then to the front of the fight came the pirate of Greater Asia—even Fabric of the venomous tooth ; and upon the press of people that were before him came blows, and destruction, and confusion, and death ; nor could any resist him till he

came to that part of the battle where Mani was. Then those two set shield against shield, and they strove with each other in a strife that lasted till the middle of the night ; and Fabric dealt Mani three grievous wounds, and Mani smote the head off him after that he had grown weary in the strife. And as to Conor, the might of a hero was his, for at his hand fell thirty valiant men of the people of Gerg, and with them fell the son of Gerg, even Conn the victorious. Thus on either side the army rushed to the attack ; almost it seemed that the toes on their feet warred together in the strife. Throughout the castle the warriors stood knee-deep in blood, and through the surrounding country was heard the splintering of the shields and the bucklers, and the whirr of the bright green lances, and the clash of the sharp hard swords, and the shattering of skulls in the slaughter, and the cries of the warriors who were overcome in a strife that was greater than they could endure.

Now, after the death of the chief of the Fomorians, Mani met Facen, the son of Dublongsech, and for a long time they fought, and Facen fell at the end of that fight. Also at the hand of Cobhtach the fair-skinned, who was the son of Gerg, died Siaburchenn, the son of Suilremuir. But Mani and Cobhtach were forced into the royal palace after their people had suffered defeat, and they held that palace bravely and manfully till the morning, nor could any enter in of those who fought against them.

At the end of this night, the same woman who had brought the message to Conor went on her way, and came to Maev, where she lay asleep on her couch at Cruachan Ay, and thus she addressed her: "Hadst thou the gift of prophecy, O Maev," said she, "thou wouldest not be sleeping!"

"What then hath happened?" said the queen.

"Conor," said the woman, "hath all but gained the victory over Mani, and Mani shall fall at his hand. Arise, and thou shalt avenge him."

Then she made the first lines of a poem, and Maev, while she slept, replied to her:—

VI

THE BADB.

Hath your fate from you been hidden,
Maev, that sleeping here you lie?
Rest to you would be forbidden,
Were you skilled in prophecy!

MAEV.

Sure your tale's of evil omen,
Lady pale, divinely fair!
Tell me whence they come, my foemen,
What their state, what name they bear.

THE BADB.

Conor, many a field who gaineth,
Chief of Ulster's lords in fight,
Rage and fury naught restraineth
Till he sack Glenn Geirg to-night!

MAEV.

Why of Conor be affrighted?
He will hardly win the glen!
Gerg, to Mani's power united,
Is enough for Conor's men.

THE BADB.

Mani is of noble figure,
Lofty courage fires his mind;
Yet too small to-night his vigour
In the glen the war shall find.

MAEV.

Well, if Mani More is dying,
Death shall rage through vanquished hosts;
Connaught raises heroes, vieing
With the best that Eman boasts!

THE BADB.

Rise ! the hosts of Connaught calling,
Vengeance full for Mani take ;
Troops shall at your hand be falling,
Royal Maev, when you awake.

Thereupon Maev awoke, and she waked Alill, and she told him of the vision which she had seen ; and afterwards she recounted it to her people.

"I know well that there is no truth in that story," said Briccriu. But when Fiannamail, the son of Fergus Forderg, even the son of him that was the steward of Croghan, heard the news, he waited not for any other, but departed before Maev was ready, for Mani was his foster-brother ; now the eighth place among the youths of Connaught belonged to Fiannamail. Maev selected seven hundred armed men, the best that could at the time be found in Croghan. Then came Donnell the Red, surnamed Donnell of the broad countenance, the son of Duban, who was the son of Ingamain ; he was the best warrior under shield and sword and spear to be found in the province of Connaught, and he also was foster-brother to Mani. And he followed on the track of Fiannamail in front of all the others ; thirty warriors had he with him, and the name of each one of them was

Donnell. Maev also followed with her host behind Donnell and his men. Thus far runs the tale of the Vision of Maev, and the cause of the war that she made.

Now we return to tell of the doom of Mani. He held the palace till sunrise, and pleasant was the dawn of the day; but no cheerful or pleasant rest for him and his foes had been found that night. And when those two warring hosts saw each other by daylight, they bethought them anew of their quarrel, each of them desiring to do each other hurt, and thus began Conor to urge on his followers to the fight: "Had it been Ulstermen that I had with me," said he, "this battle would not have been fought in such fashion as it hath been by the Fomorians." Courage rose high in the hearts of all the Fomorians as they heard this rebuke, and stubbornly and vehemently they rushed to the fight, and they ceased not from it till they had entered through the door of the royal palace. The palace into which they had come was fair and of great renown; evil and sad was the fate that befell it. There were therein a hundred tables of silver, and three hundred of brass, and three hundred of white bronze. There were, moreover, thirty drinking bowls, with white silver from Spain on the rims of the bowls. Also there were two hundred drinking horns made from the horns of oxen, with chasings of gold and of silver, and thirty beakers of silver and thirty of brass.

And at the wall there was a bed-place with fair white linen sheets, wondrous designs were woven upon them.

Then came both those hosts together into the midst of the house, and much of death befell. Cobhtach the fair-skinned, he who was the son of Gerg, after that he had smitten the Fomorians, came to that part of the fight where Berngal the Freckled was raging and smiting the heads off the warriors of Connaught. And Berngal became weary in the strife, and he fell by the hand of Cobhtach. In another part of the palace Buri of the Cruel Speech died at the hand of Mani, who then fell into a wild frenzy, and raged among the Fomorians throughout the palace, thirty falling at his hand. But when that valiant hero Conor, the ever-victorious in war, saw the fury of Mani, he turned to meet him, and Mani awaited him, vigilant in his wrath ; and they fought a long time together, and they trampled nine young men under foot. Mani hurled his spear the breadth of a spear-cast with wrath and fury, so that it made a cross passing through the body of Conor. And as Conor struggled to draw out the spear, Mani wounded him again with the bright green spear that was in his hand. And Brod came up to aid Conor, and Mani fetched him three grievous wounds, and Brod was after that unfit for war. Conor turned him again upon Mani, and overwhelmed him with crushing blows, so that he fell lifeless

and dead. Then he began to hew down upon all sides the men that were round him, so that they fell foot to foot and neck to neck throughout the palace. Moreover it so chanced that of the thrice fifty warriors who came with Conor into that house, none escaped alive save himself and Brod, and although these two came out, yet they came not out unhurt. And Cobhtach, the son of Gerg, fled from out of the castle, and Conor chased him. And as he followed him over the plain, the maiden, namely Ferb, the daughter of Gerg, came, and with her her comrade who had brought her the news of the coming of Mani. They came together to the place where Mani lay in his gore, a bloody disfigured form; and she mourned and she wept.

"Truly," said she, "thou art lonely now, yet on many nights, as I reckon, thou hast had the fellowship of many.' And she sang this lament while she made testimony for him :—

VII

O boy, your couch is red with gore,
Ill-omened from your home you came!
For signs had told, that weeping sore
Your kindred soon should hear your name.

The Courtship of Ferb

O son of Maev, her people's queen,
O lofty shoot of high renown !
Who cause of all our grief hast been
Since here at dusk you laid you down.

No weakling Alill is, whose deeds
On you as son his fame confer ;
My heart for grief within me bleeds
That low you lie in sepulchre.

O golden sceptre on a bed !
Your skill, bright youth, all skill surpassed ;
Yet, when to fight your foe was led,
For you that contest was the last !

Your hand was rough in fiercest fight,
Fomorians of your force can tell ;
Down crashed your blows with thund'ring might,
Not few the men on whom you fell.

Your colour beauteous was, and bright,
With care you did all duties well ;
Across each vale your foot flew light,
Not few the men on whom you fell.

The Courtship of Ferb

'Tis right that I your loss should moan ;
Although I never knew your kiss
Not less my love, in silence shown,
Though love hath set my life amiss.

O son of Maev, my heart is woe
For you, my love, that here you lie ;
My heart itself, I mourning know,
Awaits the self-same destiny.

Not often weaponless you went
Till, stiff and cold, in death you lay ;
One shining spear your flesh hath rent,
Another took your life away.

And you were hacked by cruel sword,
And down your cheeks fell crimson rain,
And all the troop that called you lord
Have felt, with you, death's grievous pain.

Small note I make of all on earth,
For none such grief as mine can see ;
My sweetheart dear, my man of worth,
And chosen from the world for me.

My man of worth for all my days,
My Mani More, great Alill's son—
Not once mine eyes to his to raise—
I cannot bear it, life is done !

Upon his purple robe I look,
His royal garb, and know with grief
That none that vesture from him took
Since first he stood, a weaponed chief.

He on the ground, his hand lies near,
Cut by a blow some foeman dealt ;
And in a hero stands his spear,
His head, it hangs at Conor's belt !

The heavy sword he well could wield
Has Conor taken far from hence ;
And, where he fell, there lies his shield
Wherewith for all he made defence.

Thrice fifty warriors lie around,
Alas ! they no protection gave ;
They sighed to leave their native ground,
But bravely died, their prince to save.

He truly valiant was, to all
Largesse he freely gave of gold ;
No little quarrel caused his fall ;
To save his people, life he sold.

His guards lie round, of life bereft,
The prince of Connaught lieth there !
Woe for his folk !—though Honour's left,
And woe for me, his consort fair.

And nothing I for you can do,
An evil deed hath wrecked my joy,
And, as the grisly sight I view,
My heart is broken for you, boy !

Then came Fiannamail, the son of Fergus Forderg, to the castle, and three times fifty was the number of the warriors that were with him. And a herald who preceded him gave to Ferb the news of his coming, and to Fiannamail he brought back a sad message to tell him of the deeds which had been done. Fiannamail immediately flew into a rage, and sought eagerly for tidings of where Conor was to be found, and he and Ferb between them made this song :—

VIII

FERB.

Fiannamail,[1] whose kin for ever
Lie in death, draws nigh the hall ;
Truly gallant is his bearing,
As he answers to our call.

FIAN.

Maiden, much your message moved me,
Mournful was the news it brought,
"That my kin were dead" ; but valiant
Was the fight, if here they fought.

FERB.

Here your kindred lie ; yet little
Need to speak, their forms you know ;
Far and wide they fell, and falling
Slew in blood full many a foe.

FIAN.

Speak of Mani, is he living?
Is my comrade lying here?
Whom as chief in hall I follow,
Who as friend to me is dear.

[1] *Pronounced* Fee-an-ool.

FERB.

Champion Fiannamail, arouse you,
Grief, as yet unknown, to face ;
Grieved I hear your word ; and answer—
You have found his resting-place.

FIAN.

Fairest Ferb, my wrath is rising,
Tell me all the tidings sore
If you know—the son of Alill—
Tell me—where is Mani More?

FERB.

Ah, ochone ! the bitter sorrow !
Was not all my meaning plain?
Mani's dead ; and in the battle
All his chivalry were slain.

FIAN.

Who has caused the cruel conflict?
Whose the arms that shone in strife?
Who has slain the royal Mani?
Have his foes been left in life?

FERB.

Blood-red swords of warlike Ulster
Came in strength from out the north ;
Three times fifty valiant warriors
From the palace drove us forth.

FIAN.

Though the guilty now escape us
Not for them the poet's lay !
Ulster east and west shall perish,
Connaught's sons are here to-day !

FERB.

Fiannamail, the skilled in battle,
Listen ! all the tale I tell :
Two of those who came are living,
All the rest from Ulster fell.

FIAN.

Name for me the two ; who are they?
Tell me how in fight they fared !
Whither fled they, who, to hurt us,
Such a deed to do have dared?

FERB.

Fear no lie from me ! with Conor
Brod escaped that slaughter great ;
With two spears was Conor smitten,
Brod with three, alike their state.

FIAN.

Who hath wounded crookèd Conor ?
Who hath made him thus to bleed ?
Though from here he fled in safety,
Woe to him ! if leech he need.

FERB.

Thus it chanced. The spear of Mani
Twice the blood from Conor drew ;
To the death then Conor smote him ;
Fiannamail, the tale is true.

After this Fiannamail pushed forward in pursuit of Conor, and to meet him came Niall the fair-headed, who was the son of Conor, and with him a hundred armed men of Conor's household, who were seeking where the king might be. A hot, wild battle was fought between

them, and as the upshot thereof, Fiannamail, 'overcome by the numbers against him, was vanquished,' nor did he reap advantage from the equal number on his own side, for he fell lifeless and dead; yet thirty of his foes fell by his single arm alone. And then the maiden, namely Ferb, turned her and looked at the young warriors of Connaught.

"Truly," said she, "do I reckon that it is not owing to lack of valour or of skill that you died; nay, but you, overcome by the numbers against you, were vanquished; yet," said she, "an equal number of your foes have been slain by you, even though you also have fallen." And she sang the following song:—

IX

For Connaught's young warriors
Hard cushions are spread;
Their eyes have been smitten,
Their light step has fled!

What army excelled you
In beauty, or strife?
Ah! masterless flutter
The threads of your life!

For your eye-strings are shattered ;
Death's poison prevails ;
As the cold corpses gather,
The stubborn fight fails.

A hundred armed heroes
The Dog for you tore ;
Your grim tale foreshadows
Fresh fights, sorrow sore.

I know you with sorrow,
And, weeping, I yearn
In company with you
To ashes to burn !

Young Connaught men,—Erin
No fairer troop knows,—
I mourn for you ; slaughtered
By ill-shapen foes.

Your fight with Fomorians
A fierce fight has been ;
Behind your proud corpses
The women will keen.

To the house you came proudly,
No vassal your sire ;
As chieftains it was not
For you to retire.

Pale Badb have you feasted
The weapons among ;
Of the fair youths of Connaught
The sad fate is sung.

Then came Donnell the Red, the son of Duban—he that was called Donnell of the broad countenance—and he arrived at the foot of the hill upon which the castle stood.

"Donnell the Red, the son of Duban," said the maiden who had been Ferb's messenger, "is a trusty man in all matters where the spear and the sword can avail. Dauntless in the hour wherein valiant deeds are done is each of those who have come hither, and mighty would have been the aid that Donnell would have lent to his foster-brother had it been his fortune to come hither while Mani was yet in life." And when the maiden Ferb heard that, she went out that she might meet Donnell, and much she incited him to the fight, and she made a part of a song, and Donnell Derg of the broad countenance, he made answer to her :—

X

FERB.

Valiant hawk of danger, flying
Forth for fame, who here hast sped ;
Donnell, see ! before thee lying
Is thy foster-brother, dead.

DONNELL.

Mani died in fight ; the story
Lives how he his rivals still
Passed in fame, in valour, glory,
In his mercy, in his skill.

FERB.

Not for heroes is such prattle,
Sighs, laments, and anguish sore !
You can meet his foes in battle,
Mani will return no more.

DONNELL.

As a bull, behold me rushing
On King Conor's ruddy sword ;
Blood shall through his skin be gushing
As with many a stroke he's gored !

FERB.

Well, the death of noble Conor
Vengeance were, yet none too great ;
Never Mani's match in honour
Lived, nor shall in Connaught's state.

DONNELL.

Now, for Mani's slaughter paying,
Famous Conor's death is nigh ;
Ferb, my hand shall do the slaying,
Niall and Ferdach with him die !

FERB.

Donnell Derg, had you, contending
Here with Ulster, died for me ;
Glorious vengeance for your ending
All from Mani's deeds would see.

DONNELL.

In his warrior might lies yonder
Mani Morgor, dead to-day.
From my western home I'll wander
Till all Ulster for him pay !

FERB.

Ah, my soul would then be cheerful,
Peace would then my heart enjoy,
If but Donnell's arms so fearful
All of Ulster would destroy.

No long time had Donnell to wait, for he saw a great host coming towards him, in which were four hundred armed men, and their leader was Feradach of the long hand, who was the son of Conor. Each of these foes set themselves against the other. Then Donnell, finding himself overcome by the numbers against him, fell into a rage ; fifty warriors fell at his single hand ; and all the men of his following were slain, while he himself twice succeeded in wounding Feradach. But with murder his foes strove against him, and Feradach struck off his head, and he raised the shout of victory ; moreover, the heads of all his companions were struck off, and loudly the cries of triumph were raised by the victors.

And that maiden went back to the castle, and she entered in ; and as her eyes fell upon Mani she was overwhelmed with her grief. "Hideous," said she, "is that which hath befallen us, oh youth ; and it is on your account that in sorrow I will die, although my father and his son also have died in your quarrel, and methinks that

yet more of slaughter shall there be when Maev shall have come." And she made the following lament in her sorrow :—

XI

O son of Maev, in sadness I complain,
O lovely youth, endowed with wondrous skill!
Your skin so clear the ruddy blood-drops stain,
In you I see the cause of all our ill.

On your account my father fought and fell;
A vassal true was he, a warrior stout,
In your defence his son has died as well,
Not easily such thoughts are blotted out.

Much evil springs from you; full well I know
The cause that did our quiet life disturb,
Whence much of evil shall in future flow
For all the folk of Mani, and of Ferb.

My heart within me with sharp pain was racked
When first your death-bed to mine eyes was shown;
I curse the hands that thus your flesh have hacked
And on a cruel couch your corpse have thrown.

The Courtship of Ferb

To dames and maidens comes a bitter grief
For you, who showed such skill the spear to toss ;
And many hosts are mourning for their chief,
Lamenting you, a single, deepest loss.

But yesterday you shone in beauty bright,
Your hounds careering in the cheerful chase,
Your soul was lofty, and a youthful light
Was proudly shining in your glorious face.

Ill favoured now your countenance, and dead
Beside you lie your hands so cold and pale ;
And severed from your body is your head,
Alas for him who cannot for you wail !

An evil news they carry to the west
To that bright hostage, Finnabar the fair ;
Her brother's death with grief will fill her breast,
She'll weep for Ferb who such a loss must bear.

Nor Maev, nor Alill, on Mag Ay[1] who dwell,
Can yet endure to live and bear such woes ;
And none thy countenance so changed can tell,
Alas, my cup of sorrow overflows !

[1] *Pronounced* Maw Ay.

Then came to the side of Conor his two sons, even Niall and Feradach. And Maev drew nigh till she was in sight of the field of battle, and seven hundred warriors was the following that she had with her. She formed her troops into a compact and stubborn band, and she raised weapons fit for the battle before her; and she made straight for Conor to take vengeance on him for the death of her son and of the people that were with him. And although Conor was full of wounds and of hurts, yet he was not minded to give way and to retire before Maev, but he advanced eagerly to seek her out till those two stood face to face. Each then commenced to deal out blows and mutilation and destruction, and to hew down and to crush and to slay; and the "Piercer of the ranks of War" was by Maev carried into the battle host of Ulster, so that five men fell at her hand besides the two sons of Conor, even Niall the fair-headed and Feradach of the long hand. And on the other side Conor began to rend asunder the remaining part of her host, and to tear and to slay like a wrathful wounded lioness among swine, so that quickly had he found his healing from his wounds, after which, as it were, great pieces of flesh, full of blood, fell from him in the greatness of the wrath that had seized him after his two sons had been slain.

Then Maev was defeated; and three times fifty mightily valiant warriors of her people fell in the fight,

and her guards, as their custom was, bore her safely back ; and Conor followed hard upon her routed host till he passed beyond Mag Ini. Then back he turned him, and he made for the castle of Gerg with the intent to lay it in ruins. Thereupon the people of Gerg gathered together, and Cobhtach of the fair-skin, who was the son of Gerg, led them to the fight ; a violent and a well-matched battle they fought in defence of their fortress. But Conor rushed upon them like a wolf among sheep, and he and Cobhtach fought in single combat, and Cobhtach fell in that fight, and then fell also all of his people that were doomed to death. And Conor took with him whatsoever he found there of gold and of silver and of white bronze and of horn and of beakers and of vessels and of weapons and of apparel. He took with him also the brazen vat that stood in the house, which when full of beer was wont to be sufficient for the whole land of Ulster, and this is that vat which by the men of Ulster was called the Ol Guala or Coal-vat, since a fire of coals (guail) was wont to be in that house in Eman in which that vat was drunk. And from it hath been named Loch Guala Umai in the island of Daim, which is in the realm of Ulster ; for underneath the lake unto this day is that vat, hidden in a secret place. Also Conor took with him the queen, even Nuagel, the daughter of Erg, and her daughter Ferb, and three times fifty maidens with her. And immediately after this, Ferb and her

maidens all died from the sorrow that they felt at the death of the young man Mani; Nuagel also died of grief for the death of her husband and her two sons. And they dug a grave for Ferb, and a pillar of stone was erected for her, and her name was written upon it in letters of Ogham, and a monument of stone was made, so that Duma Ferbe is the name that is now for Raith Ini—in the north-west doth that monument stand.

Conor returned to Eman with victory and triumph, and to Mugain he related his tale from the beginning to the end; and he gave command to his bard Ferchertne, the son of Dergerdne, who was the son of Garb, who was the son of Fer Rossa the Red, who was the son of Rury, that he should forthwith make a great poem which should serve as a model to future times, and should preserve the memory of that tale. He then sang the poem that now follows; and he prophesied that in future days, by means of the tale he had told, should men unravel the threads of the story of the Tain bo Cualgne :—

XII

Hear the dream of upright Conor,
Cathba's son, so fair and great,
From his foray safe returning,
He who rules in Ulster's state.

The Courtship of Ferb

Conor lay one night in Eman,
Heavy sleep had wrapped his frame,
Something rose to view, a woman
Towards his couch of slumber came.

Red her robe, with gold embroidered,
Far from mean her garments were,
And a golden crown was shining
On her silken, braided hair.

Thus the noble dame addressed him,
"Conor! good's the sign I bring!
Honour and good luck in all things
Wait for thee, illustrious king."

"Tell me what the future brings me," 5
Thus spoke Nessa's royal son,
"Glorious lady, tell the moment
When the strife shall be begun."

"Seven years hence thy forces gather,
Wives and boys the ranks fill full;
Then shall glory slay them, fighting
For the Dun—for Cualgne's Bull."

The Courtship of Ferb

"Who shall drive the Dun? speak truly;
Who prepares the deadly war?"
"Alill on the plains of Connaught
Draws all Ireland near and far."

"Nay," said Conor, lord of armies,
"Evil path is here foretold;
Is none other battle fated,
Whitest dame, with locks of gold?"

"Fear no lie, a deed is ready,
Food to cheer thy waiting days,
Alill's son approaches boldly,
Mani More, whom heroes praise."

"Ferb, the child of Gerg, awaits him, 10
For the wedding is he come,
Three times fifty warriors round him,
This their number—true the sum."

"Nine hours after noon this evening
They the wedding feast prepare,
In Glenn Geirg they wait assembled,
Hear me, king of Eman fair!"

"If we wisely plan our foray
In what numbers should we go?"
"Three times fifty bold Fomorians—
Trust my words—to match the foe."

"Conor, rich in wars, thy valour
Triumph from the foe shall bear;
Mine the task to tell the story,
Hear me, king of Eman fair!"

Conor woke, and swift arising
From his couch, he waked his queen;
All the wondrous tale he told her
In the trusty vision seen.

Up and spoke the gracious Mugain, 15
Conor's noble, prudent wife,
"Far too much with Connaught's kingdom
We in Ulster have of strife."

Answered her the glorious Conor,
He who war with skill can guide,
"Connaught brings the battle to us
If we in our house abide!"

Said the queen, "Since fate hath willed it,
From your foray to restrain
I attempt not ; Lord of Ulster,
May you conquering come again !"

Conor, with the self-same numbers
That the trusty vision told,
Marches bravely to Rath Ini,
Where dwelt Gerg in royal hold.

To the feast set forth in splendour
Comes the stedfast warrior band ;
Guided skilfully they enter,
In the castle porch they stand.

Three times fifty warriors waited, 20
Conor sought the court alone,
All his force outside disposing
With the skill he oft had shown.

Up the hall the son of Nessa
Passed, the glorious battle-lord ;
Silently approached a vessel
All of brass, where wine was stored.

Then the Druid, who attended
On king Gerg, cried, "Woe is me !
Knowledge is to us extended,
Broth shall in that beaker be !"

Brod the charioteer, who waited,
Hurled his spear without delay ;
This through Gerg within his palace
And the 'beaker' made its way.

Conor through the house of feasting
Three times fifty warriors led ;
Seven times twenty men were slaughtered,
He from Mani struck the head.

In that house he left behind him 25
All his troops, who fighting fell ;
Brod excepted, of his people
None escaped the tale to tell.

Westward flew the fairy woman,
And to Maev brief tidings brought :
"Lo ! thy son is slain by Conor,
Bad the hour in which they fought !"

From the west Queen Maev to battle
Marched with seven hundred men ;
On the plains of royal Ulster
Conor took the field again.

Maev upon the plains of Ulster
Far surpassed a hero's might,
Slew two sons of Conor, vanquished
Seven heroes in the fight.

Yet her host was routed, westwards
Home she fled, of might bereft ;
And upon the field of battle
Seven times twenty warriors left.

Proudly marched the Ulster heroes 30
Towards the ancient home of Gerg,
There they swarmed the walls and plundered
All the treasures of the burg.

Bloody was the battle truly
That Gerg's folk with Ulster waged,
When, to death each other dooming,
King and kingly hero raged.

Seven fair-haired, seven brown-haired,
Seven black-haired nobles died ;
And of those who filled the castle
Thirty fell by Fergus' side.

Thirty heroes, as the battle
Ceased, with Muredach death have found ;
Falbe thirty, Fland led thirty,
Donnell thirty men renowned.

Cobhtach thirty, Cond led thirty,
Corpre thirty, dark they were :
Dubhtach thirty, Ross led thirty,
Angus thirty warriors fair.

Of their hero-craft and valour 35
There is none the truth to speak,
There is none their end who knoweth,
All are numbered with the weak !

Loudly rose the cries, for terror
On the followers pressed with power ;
With their lords who fought the battle
They were slain that very hour.

Thus the Vision runs—a prelude
To the Tain-bo-Cualgne's strain—
Greater grows the battle story,
Mani, son of Maev, is slain.

Mighty deeds are then unfolded,
Though the Vision terrifies,
Gerg must fall, with all his people,
Famed for hospitalities.

Home with conquering banners flying, 39
Praised on many a foughten field,
Conor comes to fame undying :
Thus the Vision is revealed.

THE STORY OF THE COURTSHIP OF FERB

AS IT IS FOUND IN THE MANUSCRIPT IN THE EGERTON COLLECTION (EGERTON 1782)

CONOR, the son of Nessa, lay one night in his sleep, and as he lay he saw a vision, for there came to him a lady in the bloom of her youth, fair in form and in semblance. "Good is my greeting," said that lady. "Is it in very truth a good greeting?" said Conor. "What meaneth the vision?" said he. "Honour and good fortune await thee," she answered. "And what then," said Conor, "hath the future allotted to me?" "The men of Ireland shall seek thee out," said the dame, "and thy women, thy sons, thy daughters, and thy cattle shall be carried off by Maev and by Alill, and the crafty counsel of Fergus shall aid them." "When is the time," said Conor, "when they shall start for this raid?" "Upon a night," said she, "that is from this night distant by seven years, shall the White One lay waste the land of Cualgne for the sake of that Dark One that cometh from

Cualgne, in the pursuit of whom shall this onslaught on thy people be made." "No liking," said Conor, "have I for any such deed as this of which thou hast spoken." "But ere that day cometh," said she, "a glorious deed is there for thee to do. Upon the outer marches of thy kingdom is Mani Morgor, the son of Alill; three times fifty is the number of the warriors with him, and in Glen Geirg near to thee is he now, for his wedding with the daughter of Gerg is he come: the name of the maiden is Ferb. Thither hie thee against him; for to-morrow at the ninth hour shall the banquet be spread." "What," said Conor, "is the number of the warriors whom I should take?" "Gather together three hundred fighting men," said she; and she went away from his side, and she removed herself out of his sight. In the morning Conor awoke, and to Mumain Aitenchaitrech, his queen, he told the tale he had heard. "If thou wouldest hearken to me," said she, "thou wouldest not go—enough cause of strife is there already for our folk and for them." "By the road that we take for our raid," answered Conor, "shall I surely return." "Well then," said she, "depart on the path that thou seekest."

And those three hundred departed, and went on till they had come to the house of Gerg, even until they had reached (the fortress of) Raith Imbuee, where Gerg the king abode. The strains of music within the walls came

to their hearing, and the fortress was open before them. Into the castle went Conor, and his three hundred beside him, so that they stood at the door. Fair was the house of the king. Within it were Gerg and Buan his wife, thirty with Flann, thirty with Dubhtach, thirty with Donnell, thirty with Angus, and thirty of his clansmen with Falbe Flann. They were there for the fealty that they owed to the house of Gerg, beside the retainers who in like manner were there; moreover, there was Mani and his followers — three times fifty was their number.

Now all these had their shields made of copper. If from each man a bushel of gold and a bushel of silver and of bronze had been due, the rivets of the spear of each man of them, with the rings of gold that were about their hair, would have made good the debt. In the house were a hundred tables of brass. A brazen vat was upon the floor of the house, and it had been filled up with wine. For the whole time of three days and three nights had they been feasting; and, when Conor came to the door, only one half of the wine remained. In the house was Gerg and Buan his wife and Mani Morgor, with his troop of warriors, drinking the wine and the ale; and the gate of the fortress and the house in which they sat were defenceless. Conor advanced till he came to the door of the house; also the servant of Conor went forward till he was within that house. Now,

the name of that servant was Broth. Then did the Druid who was with them raise his cry of lament, and all heard this lay which he chanted :—

Broth[1] in the bowl is found,
Soon strangers pass it round ;
Troops are roused at battle's sound,
Heroes shall bleed !
Down crashes many a hall,
Warriors in duels fall,
Warlike deeds are rousing all.
Thus 'tis decreed !

Then Brod hurled his spear against Gerg, so that it passed right through his body. And king Gerg let the cup fall from his hand, and it fell on the floor of the house. "Broth has been found in the beaker, O Gerg !" cried Conor. "Rouse yourselves, ye young men !" said he ; and into that house strode thirty warriors by Conor's side. And from the son of Alill, Conor smote the head, and one hundred heads were smitten off beside. Then out of the house went Conor and Brod, and he left

[1] *Literally.*—There is "broth" in the beaker. Not long is it ere it is in the hands of strangers. Troops shall be (?) provoked. Heroes shall perish. Houses shall be destroyed. Battles . . . Duels shall be provoked for deeds with weapons. Thus shall it be.

all the rest of his young warriors there behind him; for three days and for three nights were they in that house.

Meanwhile the lady, namely the Badb, went on her way, and in Croghan she appeared. "Thy son," said she to Maev, "hath been overcome in Glenn Geirg." "Who hath overcome him?" said she. "Conor, with the valiant heroes of Ulster around him." Maev took her weapons, and she gathered together six hundred of her warriors and young heroes, also she took with her Fergus and the exiles of Ulster, and she marched till she came to Glenn Geirg, and there they fought together. Maev with her own hand struck down sixteen warriors, also the two Amalgaid, even the two sons of Conor. One hundred of the men of Ulster were slain; but four hundred of the men of Connaught and the people of Maev fell in the fight, and Maev was defeated. Then the men of Ulster went to the burg (where Gerg had dwelt), and none of the folk of that burg escaped from their hands; and they took all of treasure and of costly things that were there; and they carried off the brazen vat, so that into the land of Ulster it came, and they cleared the land from that troop of the men of Connaught, and they returned in triumph back to their own land. Now this tale hath to do with that raid wherein the Bull was carried off to the west, for thus the men of Ulster carried off that vat. When they had all come together

for a foray, or when they were together in assembly, that vat was enough for them all ; and in this manner came the vat called the Ol-guala into the possession of the men of Ulster, and thence also was (the name of) Loch Guala, which is now in Daminis within the Ulster borders.

NOTES

PAGE 2. — *The celebrated Queen Maev.* — Maev, the queen of Connaught, the Irish Semiramis as she has been called, is one of the few personages in the romances of the Heroic Age of Ireland who has claims to be regarded as a historical character. She is described as the daughter of Eochaidh Feidlech (Yeo-hay Faylla), who was high-king over all Ireland, and should not be confounded with his successor, Eochaidh Airem, the hero of the tale of the "Courtship of Etain." The first husband of Maev was Conor (or Conachar), king of Ulster, from whom she soon separated ; and at the period of the tale of the "Courtship of Ferb," she was the wife of Ailill, a prince of Connaught, who is associated with his wife in the tales which describe her long warfare with Conor, and plays the part of a king-consort. In most of the romances connected with the Heroic Age, a general knowledge is assumed of the state of open or concealed warfare between Connaught under Maev and Ailill, and the kingdom of Ulster under Conor, supported by the celebrated heroes of the Red Branch, who are alluded to in the poem marked II. line 6 : "As the lord of heroes known." An

extant Ogham inscription to "Fraech, son of Medb,"[1] found on the site of her traditional palace, has been supposed to refer to this queen; and, in later times, she was regarded by the Irish peasantry as the queen of the fairies; so that she has finally become the Queen Mab of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," and of Mercutio's speech in "Romeo and Juliet."

PAGE 5.—*Yoked to a chariot of white bronze.*—The metal, whose name *findruine* is translated usually as "white bronze," was of unknown composition, but it appears to have stood next to silver in value—far superior to bronze.

PAGE 8.—*Said Briccriu.* — Briccriu of the Poison Tongue occurs several times in the tales of this period, and is a leading character in the story called the "Feast of Briccriu." He is sometimes found at the court of Connaught, sometimes in Ulster; always with the same character of mischief-maker and scoffer. Though he is not a prominent character in the "Courtship of Ferb," his few appearances are in full keeping with his traditional character.

PAGE 11.—*Badb shall destroy.*—The Badb (Bahb), who furnishes the tale of the "Courtship of Ferb" with its super-

[1] *Journal of the Royal Historical and Archæological Association of Ireland for* 1898, pp. 234, 409.

natural element, was one of the three Irish Valkyr maidens or goddesses of war. Her sisters were Macha and the Morrigu, wife of the Dagda ; all three of the sisters appear prominently in the tales. Appearances like that of the Badb to Conor (p. 12) and to Maev (p. 25) in order to excite war are found elsewhere, *e.g.* in the *Tain bo Dartada* or "The Cattle Raid of Dairt."

PAGE 12.—*Shall the Raid of the Kine of Cualgne be accomplished.*—The *Tain bo Cualgne* ("The Cattle Raid of Kell-ny") has been called the Irish Iliad. It is by far the longest and most important of the Irish romances, and like many others contains both prose and verse. Its subject is the attack made upon Conor and his kingdom of Ulster by the remaining provinces of Ireland, led by Maev and Ailill. In the course of this epic Maev overruns all Ulster, but is finally defeated at the battle of Gaîrech and Ilgaîrech. Between twenty and thirty tales belonging to the Heroic Age, including the "Courtship of Ferb," are prologues to the *Tain bo Cualgne*, which may be regarded as central in that cycle of story, for few of the tales are without a reference to it of some kind. The hero of the epic is Cuchulainn.

PAGE 14.—*For the love that she bore to Cuchulainn.*—Cuchulainn (Cu-hoolin), mentioned in the last note, is said to have been seventeen only at the time of the *Tain.* If, as stated in the passage last referred to, this took

place seven years after the events mentioned in the "Courtship of Ferb," Cuchulainn must have been a boy at the time; but this visit of the Spanish Amazon to Ulster "for the love that she bore him" may be a survival of the conception of Cuchulainn as a divine character, which he is supposed to have been in the original form of the story.

PAGE 15.—*Who came of the race of the Fomorians.*—This name denotes in Irish mediæval legend a race of prehistoric pirates who had a fortress at Tory Island off the north-western coast of Donegal. The name occurs in the accounts of more than one race which is recorded to have dwelt in Ireland before the Celts arrived there; and the prehistoric tale of the "Second Battle of Moytura" relates a defeat of the Fomorians, led by the giant Balor of the Mighty Blows. The name of Fomorians was generally applied to pirates who appeared as late as the heroic period; and in our tale Conor is, in his attack on the house of Gerg, supported by[1] the Fomorians only, not by the warriors of Ulster. A poet, who sympathised with the defeated men of Connaught, could therefore with safety show his sympathy without any fear of wounding the susceptibilities of the ruling race of Ulster, pro-

[1] The Gaulish mercenaries, who marched with Queen Maev on the occasion of the *Tain bo Cualgne*, may be compared with these foreign allies of Conor. See Miss Hull's "Cuchullin Saga," p. 126.

vided he did full justice to the valour of the Ulster king who employed the pirate warriors. The Ulstermen, apart from Conor and his two servants, do not appear in fight until the conflict with Fiannamail, after all the Fomorians had been slain.

PAGE 46.—*Bright hostage, Finnabar the fair.*—Finnabar, the beautiful daughter of Maev, was offered in marriage to several warriors in succession during the *Tain bo Cualgne*, on condition that they would meet Cuchulainn in fight; and she may have been regarded as a hostage for the fidelity of these warriors. The literal translation is "Finnabar of the fair hostages"; and Windisch, in a note to this passage, says that he is unable to give any reason for this epithet. If Finnabar can be reckoned as a hostage herself, the above explanation is obvious; but I am not at all certain that the Irish *na n-glangiall* will bear this meaning, *na n-* being the genitive plural of the article.

PAGE 50.—*On her silken braided hair.*—The original is "Silken stripes upon her head"; the stripes may simply mean her hair, or may mean that, like the Roman deities, her hair was in fillets (*vittæ*) to show her divine origin. The verse translation gives both meanings.

PAGE 56.—*Thirty fell by Fergus' side.*—Of the eleven warriors mentioned here, Windisch, from grammatical

reasons, considers that Fergus, Donnell, Corpre, and Angus belonged to Ulster, the rest to Connaught. This does not, however, agree with the Egerton version (p. 60), where Donnell and Angus are, as pointed out by Windisch, immediate followers of Gerg. All the men in each group of thirty appear to have had the same name; this is shown in the literal translation placed at the end of the book; but in the verse translation I have merely represented the thirty Donnells, &c., as surrounding a chief called Donnell to whose clan they may be supposed to belong, and no other indication is given that the thirty had the same name. As there seems to be some doubt as to the respective sides of the warriors, nothing is said in either translation to indicate any difference.

PAGE 58.—*Shall the White One lay waste all the land.*—The White One and the Dark One are the two bulls; the White Bull of Connaught, and the Dark Bull of Cualgne, whose capture was the ostensible cause of the Raid. The two bulls were supernatural—two rival magicians called Friuch and Rucht of prehistoric times being incarnated in their bodies; and in one of the mythological explanations of the story of the Raid of Cualgne these bulls are supposed to signify the powers of Day and Night. A full account of the two magicians and of their numerous transformations is given in the *Chophur in da muccida*, the Begetting of the two Swineherds.

Notes

PAGE 59.—*Mumain Aitenchaitrech.*—This lady is called Mugain (Moogen) in the Book of Leinster version ; also in the "Feast of Briccriu," where she appears as Conor's wife. In the tale called the "Sick Bed of Cuchulainn," the name of Conor's wife is Ethne Aitencaithrech, apparently the same lady. She was sister to Maev, and the tale of her death in the river Eithne, which was named after her, is given in the ancient compilation of the *Coir Anmann* or "Fitness of Names," a sort of classical dictionary for names occurring in Irish romance. The story is also in the *Dinnshenchas*, a mediæval Irish collection of legends of places. These two works, the *Coir Anmann* and the *Dinnshenchas*, are in effect a summary of the entire body of Irish legend, arranged according to persons or places.

PAGE 60.—*Buan his wife.*—The wife of Gerg is called Nuagel in the longer version. Another variation of names occurs in the name of Gerg's dwelling, Rath Ini, which in the Egerton version is called Raith Imbuee.

PAGE 62.—*Fergus and the exiles of Ulster.*—This is Fergus MacRoy, formerly king of Ulster, one of the most picturesque figures in this cycle of romance, and the reputed author of the *Tain bo Cualgne.* The cause of his exile can be found in the well-known tale of the "Death of the Sons of Usnech."

Notes

PAGE 63.—*Loch Guala which is now in Daminis.*—Daim-inis, or the island of the Ox, is the name given in early Irish records to Devenish Island in Lough Erne near Enniskillen. There is a priory on the island, and other remains including a Round Tower ; the founder of the ecclesiastical establishment on the island is said to have been St. Molaise, who lived in the sixth century. There are other islands called "Daim-inis," in Mayo, Roscommon, and Galway ; from a passage in the Dinnshenchas it would seem that there was another in Wexford ; but the island here spoken of would appear to be the island in Lough Erne ; though Lough Guala has not yet been identified.

LITERAL TRANSLATION OF THE POEMS IN THE COURTSHIP OF FERB

I

A din raised by the wind, dreadful the alarm ! . . .
Certain is the warning, the man shall triumph !
A spear through Gerg !
The cast of the spear of the charioteer through the loins of the king, a deed with poison.
Blood shall drip from the shoulders of the men.
Spear against spear !
The shield shall roar from heavy blows dealt by white hands.
Corpses shall be in the bed of the cairn. Men shall die !
Death of the son of the king from the lance of the king !
sharp deeds shall be (done).
High memorial over the stubborn bodies, melancholy the tale !
Badb shall destroy them, wild strength shall be (shown),
it is a breach in the power of Maev,
Murders in abundance, rout of the army !
Sorrowful is the din of the wind !

II

CONOR.

Find out by your art, O good Cathba !
what disquietude is in my mind,
what great distraction is before me
O Cathba, O Druid of Emain !

CATHBA.

O Conor of the heroes !
O dignified king of Ulster !
Many heroes shall fall therefrom
that will be the omen shown in your vision.

CONOR.

Name all the evil that shall come therefrom !
Produce the truth of prophecy !
Speak not a lie from fear of danger
for no Druid is your equal.

CATHBA.

Mani shall fall who is elevated above every disgrace
the son of Maev of Cruachan-Mag.
And on account of the deed of the complaint shall fall
three times fifty of his companions.

All the troops from fair Cruachan
they escape not back from you.
Then so much the greater is your glory ;
guard yourself with vigilance and find it.

III

Dark cloud of poison
green. . . .
red two-edged blade,
death compelling !

For sides shall be cut to pieces,
hands shall be dislocated,
bodies shall be lacerated,
necks shall be made bare
in the house of Gerg
from the time of the death-dealing ninth hour
even to the middle of the day !
Grave-beds on the ground !
A young man it is who distributes the blackness of death.

IV

"Woe," said the Druid, brod in airigid.
Not long is the time ere it is in the hands of strangers,
for troops shall be grievously wounded,
warriors shall be destroyed,
houses shall be demolished,
Emain shall find a cry,
single combats shall be appointed,
day and night,
between the troop of Gerg and that of Conor
in this house to-night.
Not with good fortune did the mother bear a son
who is in this house to-night.

V

Gerg is this who lies here.
Through the fault of his daughter it is,
through her fault is he here,
the magnificent one, struck down in the battle.

Great was the war that Gerg undertook,
a warrior (active) as a youth, white, red with weapons,
a man noble, magnificent, manly,
expert, handsome, truly wise.

Who is the hero that was better than Gerg?
What heather did not boil with wrath?
Where is the host that would not lament your death?
that would not break out into lamentation
for you without ceasing?

Sorrow for me to see you on your bed of death,
O beautiful, fair-haired Gerg!
O friend of hosts at all times,
sad it is for me that you are dead.

Before us in Glenn Geirg,
by Loch Ane and by Irard,
and by those springs in the south lands,
many were the women whose love you found.

You were a friend to every host;
each was obedient to your will;
dear to each was your friendly word;
it is certain that you were a good counsellor.

Great were your legal sentences,
stately your assemblies.
You were a king who showed kindness to your lords,
you were bloody in real war.

Your house was great and well known,
though therein befell your wound ;
there has he killed you in the place of the king ;
although it has been done, yet it was blasphemous.

Brod has slain you and it became him not
so that through you he thrust through Airidech,
you yourself and your servant thus
at one time are fallen.

Great was the deed of the servant though an impious one—
what Brod has done was a mischief—
to slay a king of kings before his time.
He has slain us and him.

VI

THE BADB.

O Maev, why lie you in sleep?
Do you know how it is with you?
If you be skilled in prophecy
it should be time for you to arise.

MAEV.

O white lady, fair with brilliancy,
what is this dreadful tale that you tell me?
Who are the foes that have come hither?
What is the condition of the men? what their names?

THE BADB.

Conor, the head of heroes,
the much-conquering, high king of Ulster,
holds not back his ardour and fury
that he may destroy Glenn Geirg to-night.

MAEV.

Where is the place where Gerg and Mani are?
Are they not in the same place?
If that be so, not easy is that destruction
for the troops of the house of Conor!

THE BADB.

Though high is the mind of Mani,
on account of the beauty of his handsome form,
he has not the might on his head
for the raid to-night to the glen.

MAEV.

If Mani More is slain
it will lead to the perishing of troops,
to the defeat of hosts.
Heroes shall rise in bravery
in Cruachan as well as in Emain.

THE BADB.

Raise thyself and avenge thy son,
assemble the province of Connaught.
Thou shalt cruelly cut asunder troops
when thou awakest, O Maev !

VII

O boy, your couch is red

. . . . . .

Evil the sign with which you came from your house.
A token will it be of tears for your kindred.

Many are they to whom you brought evil
in the night, there you were on your couch.
O son of Maev (lady ruler) of her tribe !
O lofty twig of high honour !

Son of Alill, who is not weak,
Not of you the deeds that you have boasted for yourself!
Sad it is for my heart and my body
that you there for ever lie.

O boy, the most dexterous that I have seen!
Thou wert a rod of gold on the cushion!
When also thy meeting with any one took place
it was yet this—thy last meeting.

Your hand was rough in war,
you were (*iarsla?*) of the Fomorians.
Great was the thundering of your blows on the head,
Many were the men upon whom you fell.

Your colour was beautiful, lovely,
You were mindful, fulfilling your duty,
You were light over every valley.
Many were the men upon whom you fell.

Fitting for me was sorrow for you
on account of our meeting, though it came not to that.
Not less on that account my love, without lamentation
even if from you my ill luck springs.

It hurts me that you lie here
O my lad ! O son of Maev !
and it hurts my own heart
the same fate that awaits you.

It was seldom for you to be without your weapons
until it had befallen you to be stiff in death.
The bright shining spear has wounded you grievously,
and another has transfixed you.

And the cruel sword has cut you to pieces,
and a rain of blood has fallen down your cheeks.
And they took all about you,
all the warriors that were of one troop.

Ah ! what were they for me
who have not seen my chief of sorrows ?
My loved one, my chosen out of the crowd,
and my man worth good treasure.

He is my man of worth for all my days,
Mani More, the son of Alill.
I will die therefore, to be in want of him,
that he will not come to be perceived by my senses.

His purple robe of kingly state
much its (sight) puts me in grief,
No one took it away from him
after that he had taken weapons to brandish them.

He himself on the floor of the house,
and his hand since it has been cut off,
and his spear, into a hero he thrust it,
and his head in the hand of Conor.

And his sword, heavy, hard-striking, stout,
took Conor from him in the distance ;
and his shield there where it fell from him
for the defence of his people.

Three times fifty warriors round him—
'Tis sad that they all went for nothing.
Great their sighs when he took them ;
while they defended him they are fallen.

He himself was a hero—it is no lie—
he distributed much treasure ;
Not a little thing it is that he has fallen for
while he defended his people.

He lies there in grisly manner,
the young man of Connaught with the flower of his
army.
Woe for his people—bright gleaming honour—
and woe for his fair companion !

I can do nothing for you,
for it is an evil deed that has been done to me.
My heart is broken therefor
while I look upon you, O boy !

VIII

FERB.

Fiannamail comes here to us,
he was sought for by us :
how good also his demeanour in the house.
He is for ever separated from his kindred.

FIAN.

O maiden, the message is painful
that you send sharply provoking me,
"That I have lost my kindred." Much was the valour
if it is here that they are fallen.

FERB.

These are your kindred—
yet without that you can discover them.
They have slain, they have been slain far and wide ;
it was a war of blood-red foes.

FIAN.

And Mani, is he in life ?
my comrade, my companion,
my king, my chief in the house,
my fair, well-loved friend.

FERB.

Bitter to me is what you say,
O champion Fiannamail !
You are in error without a doubt,
here you shall find his last bed.

FIAN.

Make it known to me—wrath has mastered me—
if you know it, O fair Ferb !
tell me the place where is
Mani More, the son of Alill.

FERB.

Ochone ! Ochone !
Do you know it not, Fiannamail ?
Mani is fallen,
and with him all his forces.

FIAN.

Who has caused the cruel war ?
Who has glittered (in arms) at the overthrow ?
and who has slain Mani ?
and are they in like place ?

FERB.

The Ulster men came from the North
With their might of red-sworded war ;
so that they took the house against us,
with three times fifty bold warriors.

FIAN.

The tale shall go against the men of Ulster,
they are guilty without being hurt.
They shall be slain west and east,
if the men of Connaught yet remain in life.

FERB.

I give you my assurance,
O Fiannamail, since you are very skilful,
that of the Ulster men—without concealment—
only a single pair came back alive.

FIAN.

Who are the two who came back?
What is the condition of the men? what their names?
and whither are they gone from hence
who have done a great thing for our hurt?

FERB.

Conor and Brod, without deceit,
are they who have come back from the battle;
two spears through Conor himself,
and three of them through Brod, not far from that.

FIAN.

Who has wounded Conor the crooked?
Who has put him into an evil state?
Not lucky his going without prohibition,
if he has a desire for healing!

FERB.

Mani it was who wounded Conor—
two spears ! it was not an appointment
He killed Mani thereafter.
That is the truth about him, Fiannamail.

IX

Sad is this, you young men of Connaught.
There is no down to your cushions.
Your springing is a springing without (footstep ?).
You have found yourselves struck by a blow over the eyes.

What army was fairer than you were,
and better for noble strife ?
Your form was a glorious form ;
your life thread is a bitter masterless possession.

The thread of your eyes is broken.
You have found the drink of conquest, of death poison.
Stubborn for them was the strife with you—
the war departed in cold bodies.

You have slain a hundred armed men.
For you the noble dog has torn (them) in pieces.
Your tale is stubborn and a cause of strife.
It is a fore-token of tears in dreadful manner.

Sorrowful is my knowledge of you,
while I shed tears and lament.
Dear were it for me to go with you
and to be burnt to ashes.

You were the fairest troop in Ireland.
Young men of Connaught, I lament you,
Each who has killed you, he is not stately,
I see . . .

Great was your host in war
against the Fomorians.
Many women are there who will cry "uch" and "ach"
behind the very proud.

Proudly you came into the house ;
you had no vassal for father.
Since you had accepted the privilege of the chiefs
it was not suitable for you to fly !

You have feasted the Badb, the pale one,
amidst the weapons ; sufficient your boldness.
The young men of Connaught with beauty
are men in a heavy state of sorrow.

X

FERB.

O Donnell, son of dear Duban !
O hawk of dangerous valour !
since you are dauntless for the sake of a deed
of fame,
your foster-brother has been killed.

DONNELL.

Though Mani the warrior is fallen,
yet he surpassed all his contemporaries
in skill, in valour, in glory,
in honour, and clemency.

FERB.

This is not the deed of a hero that you do
sighs, crying of woe, and laments !
Since Mani will not return after that
it were better to go valiantly against his foes.

Literal Translation of the Poems

DONNELL.

I will be a fiery bull in the war.
I will make blood spring through the skin.
I will give many incessant blows
to Conor the red-sworded.

FERB.

Not too much would be that Conor the fair
should die, as vengeance for Mani the courageous ;
For there will not come, and there is not born
The equal of Mani in Croghan !

DONNELL.

Conor, though great his glory,
and Niall and Feradach
are vengeance for Mani—a sharp hewing in pieces.
My hand shall slay them, O Ferb !

FERB.

If you it were, O Donnell Derg,
whom the Ulstermen had slain for the sake of Ferb,
so would the revenge taken for you be glorious
in the tale of Mani, the doer of great deeds.

DONNELL.

Since he himself it is who is dead,
Mani Morgor with the greatness of a warrior,
I will not go westwards to my home
while any of the Ulstermen live !

FERB.

It would be peace for my good heart,
it would be a comfort for my soul,
if all the Ulstermen were destroyed for the deed
they have done,
by your violent hand, O Donnell !

XI

Sorrowful is it, O son of Maev !
O beautiful and skilful youth,
Bloody and red is your skin,
from you has our ill fortune come.

It is through you that my father has been slain ;
he was a good warrior, a good vassal.
Through you has his son been slain ;
not easy for me to forget it.

Through you has much evil been done.
I have learnt by its appearance that it is due to you.
Much evil shall follow therefrom
for the people of Mani and of Ferb.

My heart is broken on this account
at the sight of your bed of death.
A curse on the hand that has cut you to pieces
and has brought you to an evil bed.

Many are the maidens to whom you shall give sorrow,
many ladies—that you, oh marvellously skilful youth,
art dead.
Many are the assemblies who shall lament for you
and because you are missing, you alone.

You were till now beautiful,
with your young dogs at the chase ;
lofty was your mind,
on account of the beauty of your handsome form.

You are ugly now,
pale are your hands,
Methinks that woe should be to him who will not
lament,
your head is off your body.

Evil is the tidings which shall be carried westward
to Finnabair of the fair hostages ;
The message about her brother is full of grief for her,
and that he is wanting to the fair Ferb.

Alill and Maev from the plains of Mag Ai,
they will not remain in life.
The appearance of thy cheeks is terribly changed.
I am not one who has not had a sufficiency of misery.

XII

The vision of Conor the upright,
The son of Cathba, the valiant, fair and great,
The high king of Ulster—an unhurt journey.

. . . . . .

Conor there lay on a night
in sleep—it was not a light sleep ;
there saw he Something come to him : a woman
to him on his couch.

Purple-red her robe with figures of gold,
this was her apparel—she was not indigent—
silken stripes upon her head,
a high diadem of gold round about it.

To him spoke the woman with renown,
"Good is the sign, O Conor!
Honour and fortune for thee
from every side since thou art illustrious."

"What is the next thing for us?" 5
said the son of Nessa, the noble of race.
"Say to me, oh woman of brightness,
How long is it to the war?"

"Seven full years from to-night
thou shalt be compelled to gather to one place,
with boys and women—an honour that shall slay them—
for the sake of the Dun of Cualgne, rich in wars."

"Who carries it off—give an answer without a lie—
who has undertaken the war to the death?"
"The high army of Ireland manœuvres
under Alill of the plain of Cruachan."

"That wish I not, it is a track that is not good,"
said Conor, the head of war.
"Is there another glorious meeting,
O woman, yellow haired, white limbed?"

"There is a renowned deed ; food to eat on the way,
and there is no need to watch for a lie ;
the son of that man, he comes to you without shame,
Mani More, he who is praised by warriors.

"He is come to sleep with Ferb, 10
with the daughter of Gerg of Glenn Geirg,
with three times fifty warriors, a real design,
this is their number, no false reckoning.

"At the ninth hour, quite clear is my speech,
is the setting forth of the feast ;
there they delay together,
O king of great and fair Emain."

"In what numbers should we go—an expedition without blame?"
said Conor the upright one, the fair shaped.
"Bring against them—a speech without treason—
three times fifty of the Fomorians.

"You shall have triumph with valour,
O Conor, greatly rich in wars.
I will take the glorious story on me,
O king of great and fair Emain."

Conor waked thereat
and awoke his queen.
He told her what had appeared to him
by a revelation without falsehood.

His wife with bounty spoke to him, 15
Mugain, rich in honour, of great wisdom.
"It is yet enough what has already happened
between us and Connaught."

Conor spoke, the bright glorious,
the lordly ruler of war,
"'Tis certain that, although we abide in our house,
Connaught will come to us."

"Since fate has directed you to go
I will not hold you back by force,
O lord of Ulster, with ornament of the army,
may you come again to complete victory."

Thereupon Conor departed thither
with the self-same numbers—it was no lie—
to Raith Ini, a valiant gathering,
where Gerg dwelt, to whom the royal burg belonged.

When they were come to the renowned feast,
the weaponed troop with clear motive,
they entered in—marvellous was their order—
through the door of the great castle.

Conor went into the court ; 20
three times fifty warriors — a strength that
was known—
he left his people outside
in his strategy—a skilful plan.

A brazen vessel in the house of the king
that was there filled with wine,
he approached—a speech (was not)—
The son of Nessa, renowned in strife.

" Woe," said the Druid,
who turned not away from the king's side,
" I have known . . . .
Brod ane in airidig."

There was no delay on that ;
then Brod threw his spear
so that it went through Gerg in his house,
and through the beaker.

Conor came into the house
with three times fifty warriors,
so that he struck the head from Mani
with his seven times twenty.

Conor left behind him in the house 25
his people in the manner of war ;
Beside himself and Brod
none of them escaped to report of it.

The same woman, westwards to Maev,
spoke a message that was not long :
" Conor has slain thy son,
Evil the hour when he went to the war with him."

Maev went forth from the west to war
with seven hundred men with weapons.
They warred face to face
on the plains of Ulster against Conor.

Maev slew there on the plain
seven men in the manner of war
with her own hand, better than any hero,
including the two sons of Conor.

Thereafter Maev was defeated westwards,
so that it was damage to her possessions,
whilst she left behind ; so was it
seven times twenty bold warriors with valour.

They went thereupon to the burg ; 30
the proud men of Ulster, they filled the walls,
they laid waste whatever was therein
with a crowd. . . .

They fought a fight with blood,
the people of Gerg there against the Ulster men,
so that they all killed each other,
king and kingly lord.

There died—noble were the men—
seven fair haired, seven dark haired, seven black
haired.
Of the men who filled the castle
(they slew) thirty fair men whose name was Fergus.

Thirty nobles named Murethach
who held out to the end of the war,
thirty Falbe, thirty Fland,
a noble thirty named Donnell.

Thirty Cobhtach, thirty Cond,
thirty—all dark men—named Corpre,
thirty Falbe, thirty Fland,
a fair thirty named Oengus.

Thenceforward altogether 35
of the eager men of hero strength and valour
there is no one that knows the end,
they were all in weakness.

All these—mighty was the clamour
through the shrieks of the followers with heavy terror—
round their lords who fought the fight
they in that hour are fallen.

A prelude to the fair Tain bo Cualgne,
it will be for an enlargement of the combat,
and from the vision originates
the death of Mani More, the son of Maev.

Great the deeds that therefrom arise
though the vision was terrifying ;
Gerg fell with his host,
the lusty lord of hospitality.

in the Courtship of Ferb

Conor came with victory,
the son of Nessa, whom great hosts honoured,
to Eman Macha—a glorious deed :
so that the vision has revealed itself.

THE END

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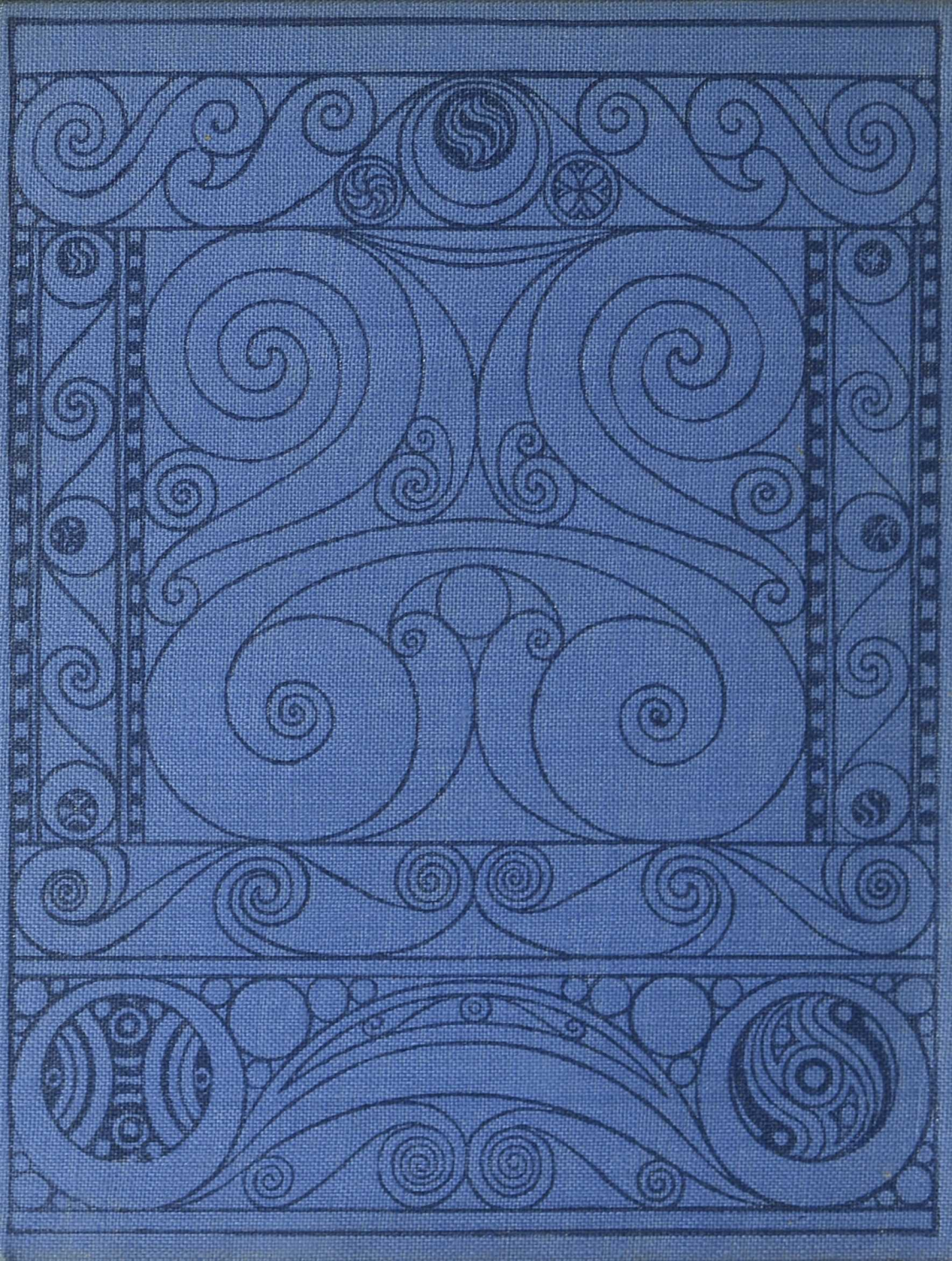
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