

## **The Battle of Moytura or, The First Battle of Magh Turedh**

1. 'Children of powerful Nemed, what is the cause of your assembling? What has brought you here—contest, conflict, or combat?'

'What has brought us from our homes, wise Fintan, is this: we suffer at the hands of the Fomorians of Ireland by reason of the greatness of the tribute.'

'Whatever be the tribute, on whomsoever and wheresoever imposed, it is in our power either to bear it or to escape from it.'

'There is among you a party, quarrelsome though few in all the land, that do more to ruin it than the tribute of the Fomorians.'

'Depart if you feel the time is ripe, glorious sons of Nemed; do not suffer wrong, remain not here, but go far hence.'

2. 'Is that your advice to us, wise Fintan?' 'It is,' said Fintan, 'and I have yet more counsel for you: you must not go by one route or in one direction, for a fleet cannot be brought together without outbreak of fighting; a large number means quarrelling, strangers provoke challenge, and an armed host conflict. You do not find it easy to live together in any one spot in Ireland, and it would not be any easier for your hosts in seeking new homes.'

3. 'Depart from this land, children of Nemed; leave Ireland, and escape the violence of your enemies.'

'Stay here no longer, pay no more tribute. Your sons or your grandsons will recover the land from which you are now fleeing.'

'You shall travel to the land of the Greeks—'tis no lying tale I tell—and though you set out in thousands, your strength will not be found sufficient in the East.'

'The children of steadfast Beothach shall leave you and go towards the cold North, the children of Semeon to the East though you feel it strange, depart.'

4. So they parted from each other, Fintan and the famous children of Nemed. Beothach, son of Iarbone, remained, with his ten men and their wives, in Ireland, according to the poet:

Iarbone's son, Beothach of the clear-spoken judgments, remained in Ireland. His children went far eastward, to the north-west of Lochlann.

5. Astonishing is the ignorance shown by those who would have it that Tait, son of Tabarn, was sole king over the children of Nemed, for he was yet unborn. He was born in the East, and never came to Ireland.

6. Immense was the fleet, eager the gathering, considering from how few sprang the great company that set out from Ireland, for only thirty men had escaped at the taking of Conaing's Tower, and of these a third remained with Beothach in Ireland. The remaining twenty must have multiplied greatly, for the number of ships that were now leaving Ireland was ten thousand, one hundred and forty.

Those dear friends, then, separated, and sad and sorrowful was the little remnant that remained in Ireland. . .

7. ...the mysteries of wizardry, the knowledge, learning, and prophetic powers, the mastery of arms and skill in cunning feats, the travels and wanderings of the sons of Iboth, for it happened that those tales that had all gone abroad from one place came to be told. A different narrative is necessary for each race. Touching the children of Semeon, son of Starn. A storm had driven them from their course till they came to the dry strands of Thrace and the sandy shores of Greece, and there they settled. Thereupon the inhabitants and the champions of the land visited them, and made a compact of peace and concord with them. Territory was apportioned them, but on the sea-shore, on the distant borders, on cold rough stretches and rugged rocks, on the hill-sides and mountain slopes, on inhospitable heights and in deep ravines, on broken land and ground unfit for cultivation. But the strangers transported a great quantity of soil to the smooth, bare rocks, and made them into smiling clover-covered plains.

8. When the chiefs and powerful men of the land saw the smooth, broad and grassy fields, and the wide expanses of fruitful cultivated land, they would expel the occupants, and give them in exchange wild, rugged regions, hard stony lands infested with poisonous serpents. However, they tamed and cultivated the ground, and made it into good fruitful fields, smooth and broad like all their land that was taken from them.

9. But in the meantime the children of Nemed increased and multiplied till they numbered many thousands. The tribute grew heavier and their labour harder till they, now a powerful company, resolved secretly to make wide curved boats of the well-woven bags they used for carrying soil, and to sail for Ireland.

10. Two hundred years had passed since the taking of Conaing's Tower till the return of the children of Semeon to Ireland. It was at the same time that the famous warlike children of Israel were leaving Egypt in search of the happy land of promise, while the descendants of Gaidel Glas moved up from the south after the escape of the people of God and the

drowning of Pharaoh, and came to cold, rugged Scythia.

11. During the two hundred years after the taking of Conaing's Tower the children of Semeon multiplied till they numbered many thousands, forming strong bold hosts. On account of the severity of the labour and the heaviness of the bondage imposed on them they determined to flee from persecution, endeavour to escape and make their way to Ireland.

12. They made boats of their sacks, and stole some of the vessels, boats, and galleys of the soldiers of the Greeks. The lords and leaders, heads, chiefs and champions of that fleet were the five sons of Dela, according to the poet:

To noble Ireland there set out the five sons of Dela son of Loth the impetuous, Rudraige, Genann, Gann, Slainge of the spears, and Sengann.

13. They made off at nightfall, and manned their ships in the harbour where they had first landed. Slainge, the elder of the company, who was judge among his brothers, harangued them as follows:

'Now is the time for exertion, care, and watchfulness; fierce and grey with foam is the sea; each fair fleet sets forth to escape from intolerable wrong; the tyranny of the Greeks is unaccustomed; the plains of salmon-bearing Ireland we must strive to win. 'Give heed to and observe the wrong and injustice you suffer. You have in us five good men to lead the fleet, each of us a match for a hundred.'

'That is true,' his followers replied. 'Let us make the people of this land pay in full for the servitude and the heavy tribute they imposed on us.' And so they killed every one of the Greeks worth killing that they got hold of, and wasted the neighbouring land and made a devastating incursion over it and burnt it. They then brought their plunder and spoil to the place where their ships and galleys were and the smooth, black-prowed boats they had made of their sacks and bags, that is, to Traig Tresgad.

14. One thousand one hundred and thirty was the number of ships that put out, according to the poet:

'One thousand one hundred and thirty ships—that, without falsehood, is the number that accompanied Genann and his people from the East.

Numerous, indeed, were the Fir Boig when they left Greece, a stout company that set out vigorously on their voyage, but not in a fleet built of wood.

On Wednesday they put out to the West over the wide Tyrrhenian sea, and after a period of a full year and three days they arrived in Spain.'

From there to noble Ireland they made a speedy voyage; all may proclaim it, they took a period of thirteen days.'

15. So they came to Spain. They asked of their seers and druids for information and direction concerning the winds which should next carry them to Ireland. They sailed onwards before a south-west wind till they saw Ireland in the distance. But at that point the wind rose high and strong, and its violence drove huge waves against the sides of the ships; and the fleet separated into three great divisions, the Gaileoin, the Fir Boig and the Fir Domnann. Slainge put to shore at Inber Slainge in the fifth of the Gaileoin; Rudraige landed at Tracht Rudraige in Ulster; and Genann in Inber Domnann. The wind freshened, and the storm drove Gann and Senganu till they put in at Inber Douglas, where Corcamruad and Corcabaisginn meet.

16. There they landed, and this is the first place to which sheep were brought in Ireland, and Sheep's Height is its flame.

It was on Saturday, the first day of August, that Slainge put into Inber Slainge; Gann and Genann put into Inber Domnann on Friday; and Rudraige and Sengann at Tracht Rudraige on Tuesday. The latter were anxious as to whether the Fir Boig had reached Ireland or not, and sent messengers all over Ireland to gather all of them that had arrived in Ireland to one place, that is, the Stronghold of the Kings in Tara. All of them assembled there. 'We give thanks to the gods,' said they, 'for our return to thee, Ireland. Let the country be divided equitably between us. Bring hither the wise Fintan, and let Ireland be divided according to his decision.'

17. It was then that Fintan made five portions of Ireland. From Inber Colptha to Comar Tri nUisce was given to Slainge, son of Dela, and his thousand men; Gann's portion was from Comar Tri nUisce to Belach Conglais, Sengann's from Belach Conglais to Limerick. Gamin and Sengaun, thus, had the two Munsters. Genann was put over Connacht, and Rudraige over Ulster. The poet describes the division thus:

'On Saturday, an omen of prosperity, Slainge reached lofty Ireland; his bold career began at Inber Slainge.

At dark Inber Douglas the two ships of Sengann and Gann touched the glorious land.

Rudraige and prosperous Genann landed on Friday. These were all of them, and they were the five kings.

From Inber Colptha to Comar Tri nUisce Fintan made one division; that was the portion of Slainge of the spears. His host was a thousand men.

From Comar Tri nUisce to famous Belach Conglais was the fifth of wound-dealing Gann. He had a following of a thousand men.

To Sengann, methinks, was given from Belach to Limerick. He was at the head of a thousand men when strife threatened.

Genann was undisputed king of Connacht to the Maigue. Heroic Rudraige was king of Ulster; his were two thousand men in the hour of battle.

Rudraige and Sengann of the spears were, it is certain, the chiefs of the Fir Boig. The Gaileon followed glorious Slainge. A good king were he that had a more numerous host. They entered Ireland from the south, as God saw fitting.

18. The wives of these five chiefs were Auaist, Liben, Cnucha, Edar, and Fuat, as the poet says:

'Fuat was the wife of Slainge as you hold, Edar of the warrior Gamin, Auaist of Sengann of the spears, Cnucha of fair Genann.

'Liben was the wife of Rudraige the Red—they made a pleasant company on a visit. However, as for Rudraige, the feat-performing king, I have heard that his wife was Fuat.'

19. The Fir Boig then occupied Ireland, and were masters of it for thirty years.

20. As for the Tuatha De Danann, they prospered till their fame went abroad over the lands of the earth. They had a god of wizardry of their own, Eochaid Ollathir, called the Great Dagda, for he was an excellent god. They had bold, hardy chiefs, and men proficient in every art; and they determined to go to Ireland. Then set out those daring chiefs, representing the military prowess of the world, and the skill and learning of Europe. They came from the northern islands to Dobur and Indobur, to S . . . and Genann's well. There they stayed for four years, and at their coming to Ireland Nuada, son of Echtach, was king over them.

Then those warriors gathered their fleets to one place till they had three hundred ships under way. Thereupon their seers, Cairbre, Aed, and Edan asked the chiefs of the host in which ship they should sail, recommending that of Fiachra. The chiefs approved and went on board. Then they all set sail, and after three years and three days and three nights landed at wide Tracht Mughha in Ulster on Monday of the first week in May.

Now, on the arrival of the Tuatha De Danann in Ireland, a vision was revealed in a dream to Eochaid, son of Erc, high king of Ireland. He pondered over it with much anxiety, being filled with wonder and perplexity. He told his wizard, Cesard, that he had seen, a vision. 'What was the vision?' asked Cesard. 'I saw a great flock of black birds,' said the king, 'coming from the depths of the Ocean. They settled over all of us, and fought with the people of Ireland. They brought confusion on us, and destroyed us. One of us, methought, struck the noblest of the birds and cut off one of its wings. And now, Cesard, employ your skill and knowledge, and tell us the meaning of the vision.' Cesard did so, and by means of ritual and the use of his science the meaning of the king's vision was revealed to him; and he said:

'I have tidings for you: warriors are coming across the sea, a thousand heroes covering the ocean; speckled ships will press in upon us; all kinds of death they announce, a people skilled in every art, a magic spell; an evil spirit will come upon you, signs to lead you astray (?); . . . they will be victorious in every stress.'

21. 'That,' said Eochaid, 'is a prophecy of the coming to Ireland of enemies from far distant countries.'

22. As for the Tuatha De Danann, they all arrived in Ireland, and immediately broke and burnt all their ships and boats. Then they proceeded to the Red Hills of Rian in Brefne in the east of Connacht, where they halted and encamped. And at last their hearts and minds were filled with contentment that they had attained to the land of their ancestors.

23. Now it was reported to the Fir Bolg that that company had arrived in Ireland. That was the most handsome and delightful company, the fairest of form, the most distinguished in their equipment and apparel, and their skill in music and playing, the most gifted in mind and temperament that ever came to Ireland. That too was the company that was bravest and inspired most horror and fear and dread, for the Tuatha De excelled all the peoples of the world in their proficiency in every art.

24. 'It is a great disadvantage to us,' said the Fir Bolg, 'that we should have no knowledge or report of where yon host came from, or where they mean to settle. Let Sreng set out to visit them, for he is big and fierce, and bold to spy on hosts and interview strangers, and uncouth and terrifying to behold.' Thereupon Sreng rose, and took his strong hooked reddish-brown shield, his two thick-shafted javelins, his death-dealing (?) sword, his fine four-cornered helmet and his heavy iron club; and went on his way to the Hill of Rain.

The Tuatha De saw a huge fearsome man approaching them. 'Here comes a man all alone,' they said. 'It is for information he comes. Let us send some one to speak with him.'

Then Bres, son of Elatha, went out from the camp to inspect him and parley with him. He carried with him his shield and his sword, and his two great spears. The two men drew near to each other till they were within speaking distance. Each looked keenly at the other without speaking a word. Each was astonished at the other's weapons and appearance; Sreng wondered at the great spears he saw, and rested his shield on the ground before him, so that it protected his face. Bres, too, kept silent and held his shield before him. Then they greeted each other, for they spoke the same language—their origin being the same—and explained to each other as follows who they and their ancestors were:

'My flesh and my tongue were gladdened at your pleasant cheerful language, as you recounted the genealogies from Nemed downwards.

'By origin our two peoples are as brothers; our race and kin are descended from Semeon

'This is the proper time to bear it in mind, if we are, in flesh and blood, of the same distinguished race as you.

'Humble your pride, let your hearts draw nigher, be mindful of your brotherhood, prevent the destruction of your own men.'

'High is our temper, lordly our pride and fierce against our foes; you shall not abate it.

'Should our peoples meet, it will be a gathering where many will be crushed; let him who will bring entertainment, 'tis not he that will amuse them.'

25. 'Remove, your shield from before your body and face,' said Bres, 'that I may be able to give the Tuatha De an account of your appearance.' 'I will do so,' said Sreng, 'for it was for fear of that sharp spear you carry that I placed my shield between us.' Then he raised his shield. 'Strange and venomous,' said Bres, 'are those spears, if the weapons of all of you resemble them. Show me your weapons.' 'I will,' said Sreng; and he thereupon unfastened and uncovered his thick-shafted javelins. 'What do you think of these weapons?' he said. 'I see,' said Bres, 'huge weapons, broad-pointed, stout and heavy, mighty and keen-edged.

'Woe to him whom they should smite, woe to him at whom they shall be flung, against whom they shall be cast; they will be instruments of oppression. Death is in their mighty blows, destruction in but one descent of them; wounds are their hard plying; overwhelming is the horror of them.

26. 'What do you call them?' said Bres. 'Battle javelins are these,' said Sreng. 'They are good weapons,' said Bres, 'bruised bodies they mean, gushing gore, broken bones and shattered shields, sure scars and present plague. Death and eternal blemish they deal, sharp, foe-like, and deadly are your weapons, and there is fury for fratricide in the hearts of the hosts whose weapons they are. Let us make a compact and covenant.' They did so. Each came nigh to the other, and Bres asked: 'Where did you spend last night, Sreng?' 'At the hallowed heart of Ireland, in the Rath of the kings in Tara, where are the kings and princes of the Fir Bolg, and Eochaid, High-king of Ireland. And you, whence come you?' 'From the hill, from the crowded capacious camp yonder on the mountain-slope where are the Tuatha De and Nuada, their king, who came from the north of the world in a cloud of mist and a magic shower to Ireland and the land of the west.' (However, he did not believe that it was thus they came). 'It was then Sreng said: 'I have a long journey, and it is time for me to go.' 'Go then,' said Bres, 'and here is one of the two spears I brought with me. Take it as a specimen of the weapons of the Tuatha De.' Sreng gave one of his javelins to

Bres as a specimen of the weapons of the Fir Bolg. 'Tell the Fir Bolg,' said Bres, 'that they must give my people either battle or half of Ireland.' 'On my word,' said Sreng, 'I should prefer to give you half of Ireland than to face your weapons.' They parted in peace after making a compact of friendship with each other.

27. Sreng went on his way to Tara. He was asked for tidings of the people he had gone to parley with; and he told his story. 'Stout are their soldiers,' he said, 'manly and masterful their men, bloody and battle-sure their heroes, very great and strong their shields, very sharp and hard of shaft their spears, and hard and broad their blades. Hard it is to fight with them; 'tis better to make a fair division of the land, and to give them half of Ireland as they desire.' 'We will not grant that, indeed,' said the Fir Bolg, 'for if we do, the land will all be theirs.'

28. Bres reached his camp, and was asked for a description of the man he had gone to parley with, and of his weapons. 'A big, powerful, fierce man,' he said, 'with vast, wonderful weapons, truculent and hardy withal, without awe or fear of any man.' The Tuatha De said to each other: 'Let us not stay here, but go to the west of Ireland, to some strong place, and there let us face whomsoever comes. So the host travelled westward over plains and inlets till they came to Mag Nia, and to the end of Black Hill, which is called Sliabh Belgadain. On their arrival there they said: 'This is an excellent place, strong and impregnable. From here let us wage our wars, and make our raids, here let us devise our battles and hostings.' Their camping there is mentioned by the poet in the lines:

'From the Hill of Belgadain to the Mountain—lofty is the mountain round which we wage our contests. From its summit the Tuatha De laid hold of Ireland.'

29. It was then that Badb and Macha and Morrigan went to the Knoll of the Taking of the Hostages, and to the Hill of Summoning of Hosts at Tara, and sent forth magic showers of sorcery and compact clouds of mist and a furious rain of fire, with a downpour of red blood from the air on the warriors' heads; and they allowed the Fir Bolg neither rest nor stay for three days and nights. 'A poor thing,' said the Fir Bolg, 'is the sorcery of our sorcerers that they cannot protect us from the sorcery of the Tuatha De,' 'But we will protect you,' said Fathach, Gnathach, Ingnathach, and Cesard, the sorcerers of the Fir Bolg; and they stayed the sorcery of the Tuatha De.

30. Thereupon the Fir Bolg gathered, and their armies and hosts came to one place of meeting. There met the provincial kings of Ireland. First came Sreng and Semne and Sithbrugh the three sons of Sengann, with the people of the provinces of Curói.' There came too Esca, Econn, and Cirb with the hosts of Conchobar's province; the four Sons of Gann with the hosts of the province of Eochaid son of Luchta; the four sons of Slainge with

the army of the province of the Gaileoin; and Eochaid, the High-king, with the hosts of Connacht. The Fir Bolg, numbering eleven battalions, then marched to the entrance of Mag Nia. The Tuatha De, with seven battalions, took up their position at the western end of the plain. It was then that Nuada proposed to the Tuatha De to send envoys to the Fir Boig: 'They must surrender the half of Ireland, and we shall divide the land between us.' 'Who are to be our envoys?' the people asked. 'Our poets,' said the king, meaning Cairbre, Ai, and Edan.

31. So they set out and came to the tent of Eochaid, the High-king. After they had been presented with gifts, they were asked the reason of their coming. 'This is why we are come,' they said, 'to request the dividing of the land between us, an equitable halving of Ireland.' 'Do the nobles of the Fir Bolg hear that?' said Eochaid. 'We do,' they replied, 'but we shall not grant their request till doomsday.' 'Then,' said the poets, 'when do you mean to give battle?' 'Some delay is called for,' said the Fir Bolg nobles, 'for we shall have to prepare our spears, to mend our mail, to shape our helmets, to sharpen our swords, and to make suitable attire,' There were brought to them men to arrange those things. 'Provide,' said they, 'shields for a tenth, swords for a fifth, and spears for a third part. You must each furnish what we require on either side.' 'We,' said the envoys of the Tuatha De to the Fir Bolg, 'shall have to make your spears, and you must make our javelins.' The Tuatha De were then given hospitality till that was done. (However, though it is said here that the Fir Bolg had no spears, such had been made for Rindal, grandfather of their present king.) So they arranged an armistice till the weapons arrived, till their equipment was ready, and they were prepared for battle.

32. Their druids went back to the Tuatha De and told their story from beginning to end, how the Fir Bolg would not share the land with them, and refused them favour or friendship. The news filled the Tuatha De with consternation.

33. Thereupon Ruad with twenty-seven of the sons of courageous Mil sped westwards to the end of Mag Nia to offer a hurling contest to the Tuatha De. An equal number came out to meet them. The match began. They dealt many a blow on legs and arms, till their bones were broken and bruised, and fell outstretched on the turf, and the match ended. The Cairn of the Match is the name of the cairn where they met, and Glen Came Aillem the place where they are buried.

34. Ruad turned eastward, and told his tale to Eochaid. The king was glad of the killing of the Tuatha De's young soldiers, and said to Fathach, 'Go to the west, and ask of the nobles of the Tuatha De how the battle is to be fought to-morrow —whether it is to be for one day or for several.' The poet went and put the question to the nobles of the Tuatha De,

that is, Nuada, the Dagda and Bres. 'What we propose,' they said, 'is to fight them with equal numbers on both sides.' Fathach went back, and reported to the Fir Bolg the choice of the Tuatha De. The Fir Bolg were depressed, for they disliked the choice of the Tuatha De. They decided to send for Fintan to see if he could give them some counsel. Fintan came to them.

The Fir Bolg had entrenched a great fort. (It was called the Fort of the Packs, from the packs of dogs that preyed on the bodies of the dead after the battle, or the Fort of the Blood Pools, from the pools of gore that surrounded the wounded when the people came to see them.) They made a Well of Healing to heal their warriors from their wounds. This was filled with herbs. Another entrenched fort was made by the Tuatha De. (It was called the Fort of the Onsets, from the onsets directed out of the battle.) They dug a Well of Healing to heal their wounds.

When these works had been finished, Cirb asked: 'Whence come ye, and whither go ye? The care of to-morrow's battle be yours. I will lead the attack with Mogarn and his son Ruad, Laige and his father Senach,' 'We will meet them with four battalions,' was the reply.

35. Six weeks of the summer, half the quarter, had gone on the appointed day of battle. The hosts rose on that day with the first glimmer of sunlight. The painted, perfectly wrought shields were hoisted on the backs of brave warriors, the tough, seasoned spears and battle-javelins were grasped in the right hands of heroes, together with the bright swords that made the duels dazzle with light as the shining sunbeams shimmered on the swords' graven grooves. Thus the firm, close-packed companies, moved by the compelling passion of their courageous commanders, advanced towards Mag Nia to give battle to the Tuatha De. It was then that the Fir Bolg poet, Fathach, went forward in front of them to describe their fury and spread the report of it. He had raised up and planted firmly in the midst of the plain a pillar of stone, against which he rested. This was the first pillar set up in the plain, and Fathach's Pillar was its name thenceforth. Then Fathach in utter anguish wept floods of fervent, melancholy tears, and said:

'With what pomp they advance! On Mag Nia they marshal with dauntless might. 'Tis the Tuatha De that advance, and the Fir Bolg of the decorated blades.

'The Red Badb will thank them for the battle-combats I look on. Many will be their gashed bodies in the east after their visit to Mag Tured.

'...will be the host after parting with the warriors I speak of. Many a head shall be severed with vigour and with pomp.'

36. The Tuatha formed a compact, well-armed host, marshalled by fighting warriors and provided with deadly weapons and stout shields. Every one of them pressed on his

neighbour with the edge of his shield, the shaft of his spear, or the hilt of his sword, so closely that they wounded each other. The Dagda began the attack on the enemy by cutting his way through them to the west, clearing a path for a hundred and fifty. At the same time Cirb made an onslaught on the Tuatha De, and devastated their ranks, clearing a path for a hundred and fifty through them. The battle continued in a series of combats and duels, till in the space of one day great numbers were destroyed. A duel took place between Aideo of the Tuatha De and Nertchu of the Fir Bolg. The glued seams of their shields were torn, their swords wrenched from their hilts, and the rivets of their spears loosened. Aideo fell at the hands of Nertchu.

37. By the close of the day the Tuatha De were defeated and returned to their camp. The Fir Bolg did not pursue them across the battlefield, but returned in good spirits to their own camp. They each brought with them into the presence of their king a stone and a head, and made a great cairn of them. The Tuatha De set up a stone pillar called the Pillar of Aideo, after the first of them to be killed. Their physicians then assembled. The Fir Bolg too had their physicians brought to them. They brought healing herbs with them, and crushed and scattered them on the surface of the water in the well, so that the precious healing waters became thick and green. Their wounded were put into the well, and immediately came out whole.

38. Next morning Eochaid, the High-king, went to the well all alone to wash his hands. As he was doing so, he saw above him three handsome, haughty armed men. They challenged him to combat. 'Give me time,' said the king, 'to go to fetch my weapons.' 'We will allow not a moment's delay for that; the combat must be now.' While the king was in this difficulty, a young active man appeared between him and his enemies, and turning to the latter, said: 'You shall have combat from me in place of the king.' They raised their hands simultaneously, and fought till all four fell together. The Fir Bolg came up after the struggle was over. They saw the dead men, and the king told them how they had come upon him, and how the solitary champion had fought with them in his stead. The Fir Bolg brought each man a stone to the well for him, and built a great cairn over him. The Champion's Cairn is the name of the cairn, and the hill is called the Hill of the Three. The strangers were Oll, Forus, and Fir, three physicians, brothers of Diancecht, and they had come to spy upon the physicians of the Fir Bolg, when they came upon Eochaid alone washing his face.

39. The battalions of the Tuatha De were straightway drawn up in the plain to the east; and the Fir Bolg came into the plain against them from the west. The chiefs who went out in front of the Tuatha De on that day were Ogma, Midir, Bodb Derg, Diancecht, and

Aengaba of Norway. The women, Badb, Macha, Morrigan and Danann offered to accompany them. Against them came of the Fir Bolg, Mella, Ese, Ferb, and Faebur, all sons of Slainge. Strong, mighty blows were dealt by the battalions on either side, and the bosses of shields were broken as they vigorously parried the blows, while the men-at-arms showed their fury, and the warriors their courage. Their spears were twisted by the continual smiting; in the hand-to-hand combats the swords broke on splintered bones; the fearsome battle-cries of the veterans were drowned in the multitude of shouts.

Briskly the young men turned about for the number of the exploits around them on every side. The warriors blanched at the clashing of swords, at the height of the heaving, and the fury of the fall. Well-timed was the warding there, and gallant the guarding, and rapid the rending blows. Nemed, Badrai's son, approached the flank of the Fir Bolg. Then men closed round him, and in the conflict Eochaid's son, Slainge the Fair, made towards him. The two warriors attacked each other. There was straining of spears and shivering of swords and shattering of shields and battering of bodies. However, Nemed fell at the hands of Slainge; they dug his grave and erected a pillar for him, and the Stone of Nemed is its name to this day. Four sons of Slainge, son of Dela, urged the fight against the Tuatha De. On the side of the Tuatha De the four sons of Cencal battled with them. They harassed each other till the sons of Cencal fell before the sons of Slainge. The latter were then set on by the five sons of Lodan the Swift, and the five sons of Lodan fell at their hands. Aengaba of Norway began to mow down the enemy and confuse their ranks. Ruad heard this, and rushed into the fray. The three sons of Dolad met him, and he wreaked his anger on them and they fell before him. From another quarter of the battle the three sons of Telle met him, and were slain by him in the same way. Lamh Redolam and Cosar Conaire were killed by Slainge the Fair by the side of the lake. Of those seventeen the gravestones were planted by the side of the lake, for they had been driven back as far as the lake.

40. Ruad and Aengaba of Norway met; they raised their shields against each other, and kept wounding each other till Aengaba had twenty-four wounds inflicted on him by Ruad. In the end Ruad cut off his head,' and after that went on fighting till nightfall.

41. Ogma, son of Ethliu, made an attack on the host, and his track was marked by pools of crimson blood. From the east side Cirb entered the fray and made an onslaught on the hosts, and three hundred of the Tuatha Dc fell before him.

42. When night fell the Fir Bolg were driven across the battlefield. However, they brought each a head and a stone to Eochaid their king. 'Is it you that have been beaten today?' said the king. 'Yes,' said Cirb; 'but that will not profit them.'

43. Next day it was the turn of Sreng, Semne, and Sithbrug, along with Cirb, to lead the Fir Bolg. They rose early in the morning. A flashing penthouse of shields and a thick forest of javelins they made over them, and the battle-props then moved forward. The Tuatha De saw the Fir Bolg approaching them in that fashion across the plain from the east. 'With how much pomp,' they said, 'do those battle-props enter the plain and draw towards us.' And it was then that the plain got its name of Mag Tured, the Plain of Props.

44. The Tuatha De asked who should lead them on that day. 'I will,' said the Dagda, 'for in me you have an excellent god;' and, thereupon, he went forth with his sons and brothers. The Fir Bolg had firmly stationed their props and columns, and marshalled their battalions on the level of Mag Nia (which, henceforth, was called Mag Tured, the Plain of Props). Each side then sprang at the other. Sreng, son of Sengann, began to dislodge the hosts of the enemy. The Dagda set to breaking the battalions and harrying the hosts and dislodging divisions and forcing them from their positions. Cirb, son of Buan, entered the fray from the east and slaughtered brave men and spirited soldiers. The Dagda heard Cirb's onset, and Cirb heard the Dagda's battering blows. They sprang each at the other. Furious was the fight as the good swords fenced, heroic the heroes as they steadied the infantry, and answered the onslaughts. At last Cirb fell before the Dagda's battering blows.

Sreng, Sengann's son, was pressing back the hosts from their places when he came on three sons of Cairbre Cas of the Tuatha De, and the three sons of Ordan. Cairbre's sons with their three columns fell before the sons of Ordan, as Sreng drove in the hosts. The enemy fell before him on every side, and the fury of the combat grew behind him

45. After the fall of Cirb the Fir Bolg were driven into their camp. The Tuatha De did not pursue them across the battlefield, but they took with them a head and a stone pillar apiece including the head of Cirb, which was buried in the Cairn of Cirb's Head.

46. The Fir Bolg were neither happy nor cheerful that night, and as for the Tuatha De, they were sad and dispirited. But during the same night Fintan came with his sons to join the Fir Bolg, and this made them all glad, for valiant were both he and they.

47. In this cheerful mood the morning found them. The signals of their chiefs roused them on the spacious slopes of their camping-ground, and they began to hearten each other to meet danger and peril. Eochaid, the High-king, with his son, Slainge the Fair, and the soldiers and chiefs of Connaught, came forth to join them. Sengann's three sons with the hosts of Curoi's province, took their place at one side of the line. The four sons of Gann with the warriors of Eochaid's province marched to the centre of the same army. Buan's sons Esca and Egconn ranged themselves with the men of Conchobar's province on the other wing. The four sons of Slainge with the host of the Gaileoin brought up the

rear of the army. Round Eochaid, the High-king, they made a fold of valour of battle-scarred, blood-becrimsoned braves, and juggling jousts, and the world's trustiest troops. The thirteen sons of Fintan, men proven in courageous endurance of conflict, were brought to where the king was. A flaming mass was the battle on that day, full of changing colours, many feats and gory hands, of sword-play and single combats, of spears and cruel swords and javelins; fierce it was and pitiless and terrible, hard-packed and close-knit, furious and far-flung, ebbing and flowing with many adventures. The Fir Bolg, in the order told, marched boldly and victoriously straight westwards to the end of Mag Tured till they came to the firm pillars and props of valour between themselves and the Tuatha De. The passionate Tuatha De made an impetuous, furious charge in close-knit companies with their venomous weapons; and they formed one mighty gory phalanx under the shelter of red-rimmed, emblazoned, plated, strong shields. The warriors began the conflict. The flanks and the wings of the van were filled with grey-haired veterans swift to wound; aged men were stationed to assist and attend on the movements of those veterans; and next to those steady, venomous fighters were placed young men under arms. The champions and serving men were posted in the rear of the youths. Their seers and wise men stationed themselves on pillars and points of vantage, plying their sorcery, while the poets took count of the feats and wrote down tales of them. As for Nuada, he was in the centre of the fight. Round him gathered his princes and supporting warriors, with the twelve sons of Gabran from Scythia, his body-guard. They were Tolc, Trenfer, Trenmiled, Garb, Glacedh, Gruasailt Duidri, Fonnám, Foirisem, Teidm, Tinnargain and Tescad. He would have no joy of life on whom they made a gory wound. ('Twas they that killed the sons of Fintan, and the sons of Fintan killed them.) Thus they delivered their assault after fastening their bodies to rough-edged stones with clasps of iron; and made their way to the place appointed for the battle. At that moment Fathach, the poet of the Fir Bolg, came to his own pillar, and as he surveyed the armies to the east and west, said:

'Swiftly advance the hosts marshalling on Mag Nia their resistless might; 'tis the Tuatha De that advance and the Fir Bolg of the speckled swords.

'Methinks the Fir Boig will lose some of their brothers there—many will be the bodies and heads and gashed flanks on the plain.

'But though they fall on every side (?), fierce and keen will be their onset; though they fall, they will make others to fall, and heroes will be laid low by their impetuous valour.

'Thou hast subdued (?) the Fir Bolg; they will fall there by the side of their shields and their blades; I will not trust to the strength of any one so long as I shall be in stormy Ireland.

I am Fathach, the poet; strongly has sorrow vanquished me, and now, that the Fir Bolg are gone, I shall surrender to the swift advance of disaster.'

48. The furies and monsters and hags of doom cried aloud so that their voices were heard in the rocks 'and waterfalls and in the hollows of the earth. It was like the fearful agonising cry on the last dreadful day when the human race will part from all in this world. In the van of the Tuatha De advanced the Dagda, Ogma, Alla, Bres, and Delbaeth, the five sons of Elatha, together with Bres, grandson of Net, the Fomorian, Aengus, Aed, Cermad the Fair, Midir, Bodb Derg, Sigmall Abartach, Nuada the High-king, Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, the three sons of Turenn Bigrenn, Cu, Cian and Cethenn, the three sons of Cainte, Goibnenn the Smith, Lucraidh the Joiner, Credne the Craftsman, Diancecht the Physician, Aengaba of Norway, the three queens, Ere, Fotla and Banba, and the three sorceresses, Badb, Macha and Morigan, with Bechuille and Danann their two foster-mothers. They fixed their pillars in the ground to prevent any one fleeing till the stones should flee. They lunged at each other with their keen sharp spears, till the stout shafts were twisted through the quivering of the victims on their points. The edges of the swords turned on the lime-covered shields. The curved blades were tempered in boiling pools of blood in the thighs of warriors. Loud was the singing of the lances as they cleft the shields, loud the noise and din of the fighters as they battered bodies and broke bones in the rear. Boiling streams of blood took the sight from the grey eyes of resolute warriors. It was then that Bres made an onset on the Fir Bolg army, and killed one hundred and fifty of them. He struck nine blows on the shield of Eochaid the High-king, and Eochaid, in his turn, dealt him nine wounds. Sengann's son, Sreng, turned his face to the army of the Tuatha De, and slew one hundred and fifty of them. He struck nine blows on the shield of the High-king Nuada, and Nuada dealt him nine wounds.

Each dealt dire blows of doom, making great gory wounds on the flesh of the other, till under their grooved blades shields and spears, heads and helmets broke like the brittle branches hacked with hatchets wielded by the stout arms of woodsmen. Heroes swayed to this side and that, each circling the other as they sought opportunity for a blow. The battle champions rose again over the rims of their emblazoned shields. Their courage grew, and the valiant virulent men became steadfast as an arch. Their hands shot up with their swords, and they fenced swiftly about the heads of warriors, hacking their helmets. For a moment they thrust back the ranks of the enemy from their places, and at the sight of them the hosts wavered like the water flung far over its sides by a kettle through excess of boiling, or the flood that, like a water-fall, an army splashes up over a river's banks, making it passable for their troops behind them. So a suitable space was cleared for the chiefs; the

heroes yielded them their places, and agile combatants their stations; warriors were dislodged by them, and the serving-men fled for horror of them. To them was left the battle. Heavily the earth was trodden under their feet till the hard turf grew soft beneath them. Each of them inflicted thirty wounds on the other. Sreng dealt a blow with his sword at Nuada, and, cutting away the rim of his shield, severed his right arm at the shoulder; and the king's arm with a third of his shield fell to the ground. It was then that the High-king called aloud for help, and Aengaba of Norway, hearing him, entered the fray to protect him. Fierce and furious was the attack Aengaba and Sreng made on each other. Each inflicted on his opponent an equal number of wounds, but they were not comparable as an exchange, for the broad blade of Sreng's lance and his stout spear-shaft dealt deeper, deadlier sounds. As soon as the Dagda heard the music of the swords in the battle-stress, he hastened to the place of conflict with deliberate bounds, like the rush of a great waterfall. Sreng declined a contest with the two warriors; and though Aengaba of Norway did not fall there, it was from the violence of that conflict that he afterwards died. The Dagda came and stood over Nuada, and, after the Tuatha De had taken counsel, he brought fifty soldiers, with their physicians. They carried Nuada from the field. His hand was raised in the king's stead on the fold of valour, a fold of stones surrounding the king,' and on it the blood of Nuada's hand trickled.

49. The Tuatha De maintained the conflict keenly and stoutly, after their king was gone. Bres made his way into the ranks of the Fir Bolg to avenge his king, and came to the spot where Eochaid was urging the battle, and fortifying his fighters and exhorting his heroes and encouraging his captains and arranging his combats. Each of them then made for his opponent, and wounds were inflicted where they were undefended. Before the fierceness of their fury and the weight of their blows, soldiers were thrown into confusion. At last Bres was slain by Eochaid; and the Dagda, Ogma, Alla and Delbaeth attacked the latter to avenge their brother. Eochaid was urging the fight, collecting and encouraging his captains, making close and compact the ranks of the soldiery, holding his fighting men firm and steadfast. The four brothers, in their search for Eochaid, drove the hosts before them to the place where they heard him urging the fight. Mella, Ese, Ferb and Faebur, sons of Slainge, met them and each struck at the other's shield. Their swords clashed and the conflict grew, and the edges of the curved blades cut gory wounds. The four sons of Slainge fell before the other four; and the Gravestones of Slainge's sons is the name of the place where they were buried. The four sons of Gann then entered the fray. Against them advanced Goibnenn the Smith, Lucraid the Joiner, Dian Cecht and Aengaba of Norway. Horrible was the noise made by the deadly weapons in the champions' hands. Those

combatants maintained the fight till the four sons of Gann were slain; and the Mound of the Sons of Gann is the name of the place where they were buried.

50. Bedg, Redg and Rinne, the three sons of Ordan, set on the Tuatha De, and the ranks shook before their onset. The three sons of Cainte met them, but they wearied of the fray; and the Mound of the Wizards is the place where they were buried.

51. Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, the three sons of Turenn Bigrenn, set on the Fir Bolg host. They were opposed by two sons of Buan, and Cairbre son of Den. The sons of Buan were overcome by the sons of Turenn Bigrenn, and the Gravestones of Buan are the gravestones that cover them, and Cairbre's tomb is beside the gravestones.

52. Eochaid and his son, Slainge the Fair, now joined in the fray, and destroyed innumerable companies of the Tuatha De. 'Our best men,' said Eochaid, 'have been destroyed, our people slaughtered, and it befits us to acquit us valorously.' So they made their way across the battlefield once again, and mowed down men and slaughtered soldiers and hacked hosts, and confused the ranks with their onsets. After this long-continued effort Eochaid was overcome by great weariness and excess of thirst. 'Bring Sreng to me,' he said. That was done. 'You and Slainge the Fair,' said Eochaid, 'must maintain the fight till I go in search of a drink, and to bathe my face, for I cannot endure this consuming thirst.' 'It shall be maintained right well,' said Slainge, 'though we are but few to wage it in your absence.' Eochaid then went out of the battle with a guard of one hundred of his soldiers. The Tuatha De followed them, and shouted at them.

53. But Slainge the Fair advanced to meet the host, and offered them battle, and prevented them from following the High-king. He was attacked by powerful Lugaid, son of Nuada, and the two fought a cruel, fierce, strenuous fight, in which there were wounds and bruises and gory gashing. As soon as the rest saw that Slainge was prevailing they gave their support to Lugaid. Lugaid and Slainge fell together; and Lugaid's Grave is the place where Lugaid was buried, and Slainge's Mound the mound where they buried Slainge.

54. When the Tuatha De wizards saw how the king of Ireland was suffering from a burning thirst, they hid from him all the streams and rivers of Ireland till he came to the strand of Eothail. Three sons of Nemed, son of Badrai, followed him, with a hundred and fifty men. They fought on the strand, and a number fell on either side. Eochaid and the sons of Nemed met in combat. Venomous in battle were the sons of Nemed, and tried in fighting against odds was Eochaid. They fought till their bodies were torn and their chests cut open with the mighty onslaughts. Irresistible was the king's onset as he ceaselessly cut down his opponents, till he and the three sons of Nemed fell. Eochaid's Cairn is the cairn where Eochaid was buried (it is also called the Cairn of Eothail), and the Gravestones of

the Sons of Nemed are at the western end of the strand.

55. As for Sreng, son of Sengann, he continued fighting for a day and a night after his fellows, till in the end neither side was capable of attacking the other. Their swift blows had grown feeble through all the slaughter and their spirits had fallen through all their ills, and their courage faint through the vastness of their disasters; and so they parted. The Tuatha De retired to the fastness of Cenn Slebe and to the sloping Glen of Blood, and to the Mound of Tears. There the Dagda said:

'Soldiers slain without measure, many a wound on heroes; cruel swords have torn your bodies. The Fir Bolg have overcome you (?) . . . about their lands.'

56. 'What have been your losses in this last battle?' said Nuada to the Dagda. The Dagda told him in these words:

'I will tell, noble Nuada, the tales of the dread battle, and, after that, its calamities and disasters I will tell, O son of Echtach.

'In it fell our nobles before the violence of the Fir Bolg; so great are our losses that few know of them.

'Bres, son of Elatha, a warrior like a tower, attacked the ranks of the Fir Bolg, a glorious fight, and killed one hundred and fifty of them.

'He dealt nine blows—savage was the deed—on the broad shield of Eochaid, and Eochaid dealt Bres nine blows.

'Huge Sreng came and slew three hundred of our host. He dealt nine blows on your shield, Nuada,

'You, Nuada, coolly dealt Sreng nine mighty blows, but Sreng cut off your right arm, impetuous hero, at the shoulder.

'You raised a loud cry for help, and he of Norway came up. Sreng and Aengaba fought with a will a well-contested fight of clashing weapons.

'As Aengaba cried for help, I came up speedily; when I arrived, still unwearied, Sreng refused a contest with both of us.

'Mella, Ese, Ferb and blood-red Faebur fell before us in the same battle.

'The four sons of Gann fell at the hands of Goibnenn the Smith, of Aengaba of the exploits, of Lucraidh and of Diancecht.

'Bedg and Rinde and Redg, the three Sons of Ordan of the crafts, were slain surely by the fair sons of Cainte.

'Eochaid and his son, Slainge the Fair, slew in the battle a great number of the heroes of the Tuatha De.

'In the battle thirst overcame king Eochaid, and he got not the draught he sought till he

came to the Strand of Eothail.

'The three sons of Nemid overtook him on the silent strand, and there they fought till they all fell together.

'Lugaid, Nuada's son, methinks, was slain by Slainge the Fair; and Slainge, though so fierce before, was killed in fighting with the Tuatha De.

'Brian, Iucharba and Iuchar, the three sons of Turenu Bigrenn, slew Esca and Econn and Airbe.

'After that 'twas Sreng that ruled the fight—and many were those that changed colour—for three days, but neither he nor we turned in the struggle.

'Weary were we now on either side, and we resolved to separate. Each man's combats, as I heard, so shall I exactly tell of.'

57. Sad and weary, wounded and full of heavy reproaches were the Fir Bolg that night. Each one buried his kinsfolk and relatives, his friends and familiars and foster-brothers; and then were raised mounds over the brave men, and gravestones over the warriors, and tombs over the soldiers, and hills over the heroes, After that Sreng, Semne and Sithbrug, the sons of Sengann, called a meeting for council and deliberation to which three hundred assembled. They considered what it was their interest to do, whether they should leave Ireland, or offer regular battle, or undertake to share the land with the Tuatha De. They decided to offer the Tuatha Dc battle, and Sreng said:

'Resistance is destruction for men; we resolutely gave battle; there was clashing of hard swords; the strong plying of spears on the sides of noble warriors, and the breaking of buckler on shield; full of trouble are the plains of Ireland; disaster we found about its woods, the loss of many good men.'

58. They took up their strong, hooked shields, their venomous spears and their sharp swords with blue blades. Thus equipped they made a keen, murderous charge, a wild fiery company, with their spears close-pressed in the onset, cutting their way in a flaming fire of fury to meet any hardship and any tribulation. It was then that Sreng challenged Nuada to single combat, as they had fought in the previous battle. Nuada faced him bravely and boldly as if he had been whole, and said: 'If single combat on fair terms be what you seek, fasten your right hand, as I have lost mine; only so can our combat be fair.' 'If you have lost your hand, that lays me under no obligations,' said Sreng, 'for our first combat was on fair terms. We ourselves so took up the quarrel.' The Tuatha De took counsel, and their decision was to offer Sreng his choice of the provinces of Ireland, while a compact of peace, goodwill, and friendship should be made between the two peoples. And so they make peace, and Sreng chooses the province of Connacht. The Fir Bolg gathered round

him from every side, and stubbornly and triumphantly' took possession of the province against the Tuatha De. The Tuatha De made Bres their king, and he was High-king for seven years. He died after taking a drink while hunting in Sliab Gam, and Nuada, his missing hand having been replaced, became king of Ireland. And that is the story of the battle of Mag Tured Cunga.

This was written in the Plain of Eithne, the Goblin's daughter, by Cormac O'Cuirnín for his companion Sean O'Glaimhmn. Painful to us is his deserting us when he goes from us on a journey.

### **The Second Battle of Mag Tuired**

THIS TALE BELOW IS THE BATTLE OF MAG TUIRED AND THE BIRTH OF BRES SON OF ELATHA AND HIS REIGN

1. The Tuatha De Danann were in the northern islands of the world, studying occult lore and sorcery, druidic arts and witchcraft and magical skill, until they surpassed the sages of the pagan arts.

2. They studied occult lore and secret knowledge and diabolic arts in four cities: Falias, Gorias, Murias, and Findias.

3. From Falias was brought the Stone of Fal which was located in Tara. It used to cry out beneath every king that would take Ireland.

4. From Gorias was brought the spear which Lug had. No battle was ever sustained against it, or against the man who held it in his hand.

5. From Findias was brought the sword of Nuadu. No one ever escaped from it once it was drawn from its deadly sheath, and no one could resist it.

6. From Murias was brought the Dagda's cauldron. No company ever went away from it unsatisfied.

7. There were four wizards in those four cities. Morfesa was in Falias; Esras was in Gorias; Uiscias was in Findias; Semias was in Murias. Those are the four poets from whom the Tuatha De learned occult lore and secret knowledge.

8. The Tuatha De then made an alliance with the Fomoiré, and Balor the grandson of Net gave his daughter Ethne to Cian the son of Dian Cecht. And she bore the glorious child, Lug.

9. The Tuatha De came with a great fleet to Ireland to take it by force from the Fir Bolg. Upon reaching the territory of Corcu Belgatan (which is Conmaicne Mara today), they at once burned their boats so that they would not think of fleeing to them. The smoke and the

mist which came from the ships filled the land and the air which was near them. For that reason it has been thought that they arrived in clouds of mist.

10. The battle of Mag Tuired was fought between them and the Fir Bolg. The Fir Bolg were defeated, and 100,000 of them were killed including the king, Eochaid mac Eire.

11. Nuadu's hand was cut off in that battle--Sreng mac Sengainn struck it from him. So with Credne the brazier helping him, Dian Cecht the physician put on him a silver hand that moved as well as any other hand.

12. Now the Tuatha De Danann lost many men in the battle, including Edleo mac Allai, and Ernmas, and Fiacha, and Tuirill Bicroe.

13. Then those of the Fir Bolg who escaped from the battle fled to the Fomoire, and they settled in Arran and in Islay and in Man and in Rathlin.

14. There was contention regarding the sovereignty of the men of Ireland between the Tuatha De and their wives, since Nuadu was not eligible for kingship after his hand had been cut off. They said that it would be appropriate for them to give the kingship to Bres the son of Elatha, to their own adopted son, and that giving him the kingship would knit the Fomorians' alliance with them, since his father Elatha mac Delbaith was king of the Fomoire.

15. Now the conception of Bres came about in this way.

16. One day one of their women, Eriu the daughter of Delbaeth, was looking at the sea and the land from the house of Maeth Sceni; and she saw the sea as perfectly calm as if it were a level board. After that, while she was there, she saw something: a vessel of silver appeared to her on the sea. Its size seemed great to her, but its shape did not appear clearly to her; and the current of the sea carried it to the land.

Then she saw that it was a man of fairest appearance. He had golden-yellow hair down to his shoulders, and a cloak with bands of gold thread around it. His shirt had embroidery of gold thread. On his breast was a brooch of gold with the lustre of a precious stone in it. Two shining silver spears and in them two smooth riveted shafts of bronze. Five circlets of gold around his neck. A gold-hilted sword with inlayings of silver and studs of gold.

17. The man said to her, "Shall I have an hour of lovemaking with you?"

"I certainly have not made a tryst with you," she said.

"Come without the trysting!" said he.

18. Then they stretched themselves out together. The woman wept when the man got up again.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

"I have two things that I should lament," said the woman, "separating from you, however

we have met. The young men of the Tuatha De Danann have been entreating me in vain--and you possess me as you do."

19. "Your anxiety about those two things will be removed," he said. He drew his gold ring from his middle finger and put it into her hand, and told her that she should not part with it, either by sale or by gift, except to someone whose finger it would fit.

20. "Another matter troubles me," said the woman, "that I do not know who has come to me."

21. "You will not remain ignorant of that," he said. "Elatha mac Delbaith, king of the Fomoir, has come to you. You will bear a son as a result of our meeting, and let no name be given to him but Eochu Bres (that is, Eochu the Beautiful), because every beautiful thing that is seen in Ireland--both plain and fortress, ale and candle, woman and man and horse--will be judged in relation to that boy, so that people will then say of it, 'It is a Bres.'"

22. Then the man went back again, and the woman returned to her home, and the famous conception was given to her.

23. Then she gave birth to the boy, and the name Eochu Bres was given to him as Elatha had said. A week after the woman's lying-in was completed, the boy had two weeks' growth; and he maintained that increase for seven years, until he had reached the growth of fourteen years.

24. As a result of that contention which took place among the Tuatha De, the sovereignty of Ireland was given to that youth; and he gave seven guarantors from the warriors of Ireland (his maternal kinsmen) for his restitution of the sovereignty if his own misdeeds should give cause. Then his mother gave him land, and he had a fortress built on the land, Dun mBrese. And it was the Dagda who built that fortress.

25. But after Bres had assumed the sovereignty, three Fomorian kings (Indech mac De Domnann, Elatha mac Delbaith, and Tethra) imposed their tribute upon Ireland--and there was not a smoke from a house in Ireland which was not under their tribute. In addition, the warriors of Ireland were reduced to serving him: Ogma beneath a bundle of firewood and the Dagda as a rampart-builder, and he constructed the earthwork around Bres's fort.

26. Now the Dagda was unhappy at the work, and in the house he used to meet an idle blind man named Cridenbel, whose mouth grew out of his chest. Cridenbel considered his own meal small and the Dagda's large, so he said, "Dagda, for the sake of your honor let the three best bits of your serving be given to me!" and the Dagda used to give them to him every night. But the satirist's bits were large: each bit was the size of a good pig. Furthermore those three bits were a third of the Dagda's serving. The Dagda's appearance was the worse for that.

27. Then one day the Dagda was in the trench and he saw the Mac Oc coming toward him.

"Greetings to you, Dagda!" said the Mac Oc.

"And to you," said the Dagda.

"What makes you look so bad?" he asked.

"I have good cause," he said. "Every night Cridenbel the satirist demands from me the three best bits of my serving."

28. "I have advice for you," said the Mac Oc. He puts his hand into his purse, and takes from it three coins of gold, and gives them to him.

29. "Put," he said, "these three gold coins into the three bits for Cridenbel in the evening. Then these will be the best on your dish, and the gold will stick in his belly so that he will die of it; and Bres's judgement afterwards will not be right. Men will say to the king, 'The Dagda has killed Cridenbel with a deadly herb which he gave him.' Then the king will order you to be killed, and you will say to him, 'What you say, king of the warriors of the Feni, is not a prince's truth. For he kept importuning me since I began my work, saying to me, "Give me the three best bits of your serving, Dagda. My housekeeping is bad tonight." Indeed, I would have died from that, had not the three gold coins which I found today helped me. I put them into my serving. Then I gave it to Cridenbel, because the gold was the best thing that was before me. So the gold is now in Cridenbel, and he died of it.'"

"It is clear," said the king. "Let the satirist's stomach be cut out to see whether the gold will be found in it. If it is not found, you will die. If it is found, however, you will live."

30. Then they cut out the satirist's stomach to find the three gold coins in his belly, and the Dagda was saved.

31. Then the Dagda went to his work the next morning, and the Mac Oc came to him and said, "Soon you will finish your work, but do not seek payment until the cattle of Ireland are brought to you. Choose from among them the dark, black-maned, trained, spirited heifer.

32. Then the Dagda brought his work to an end, and Bres asked him what he would take as wages for his labour. The Dagda answered, "I require that you gather the cattle of Ireland in one place." The king did that as he asked, and he chose the heifer from among them as the Mac Oc had told him. That seemed foolish to Bres. He had thought that he would have chosen something more.

33. Now Nuadu was being treated, and Dian Cecht put a silver hand on him which had the movement of any other hand. But his son Miach did not like that. He went to the hand and said "joint to joint of it, and sinew to sinew"; and he healed it in nine days and nights.

The first three days he carried it against his side, and it became covered with skin. The second three days he carried it against his chest. The third three days he would cast white wisps of black bulrushes after they had been blackened in a fire.

34. Dian Cecht did not like that cure. He hurled a sword at the crown of his son's head and cut his skin to the flesh. The young man healed it by means of his skill. He struck him again and cut his flesh until he reached the bone. The young man healed it by the same means. He struck the third blow and reached the membrane of his brain. The young man healed this too by the same means. Then he struck the fourth blow and cut out the brain, so that Miach died; and Dian Cecht said that no physician could heal him of that blow.

35. After that, Miach was buried by Dian Cecht, and three hundred and sixty-five herbs grew through the grave, corresponding to the number of his joints and sinews. Then Airmed spread her cloak and uprooted those herbs according to their properties. Dian Cecht came to her and mixed the herbs, so that no one knows their proper healing qualities unless the Holy Spirit taught them afterwards. And Dian Cecht said, "Though Miach no longer lives, Airmed shall remain."

36. At that time, Bres held the sovereignty as it had been granted to him. There was great murmuring against him among his maternal kinsmen the Tuatha De, for their knives were not greased by him. However frequently they might come, their breaths did not smell of ale; and they did not see their poets nor their bards nor their satirists nor their harpers nor their pipers nor their horn-blowers nor their jugglers nor their fools entertaining them in the household. They did not go to contests of those pre-eminent in the arts, nor did they see their warriors proving their skill at arms before the king, except for one man, Ogma the son of Lain.

37. This was the duty which he had, to bring firewood to the fortress. He would bring a bundle every day from the islands of Clew Bay. The sea would carry off two-thirds of his bundle because he was weak for lack of food. He used to bring back only one third, and he supplied the host from day to day.

38. But neither service nor payment from the tribes continued; and the treasures of the tribe were not being given by the act of the whole tribe.

39. On one occasion the poet came to the house of Bres seeking hospitality (that is, Coirpre son of Etain, the poet of the Tuatha De). he entered a narrow, black, dark little house; and there was neither fire nor furniture nor bedding in it. Three small cakes were brought to him on a little dish--and they were dry. The next day he arose, and he was not thankful. As he went across the yard he said,

"Without food quickly on a dish,

Without cow's milk on which a calf grows,  
Without a man's habitation after darkness remains,  
Without paying a company of storytellers--let that be Bres's condition."

"Bres's prosperity no longer exists," he said, and that was true. There was only blight on him from that hour; and that is the first satire that was made in Ireland.

40. Now after that the Tuatha De went together to talk with their adopted son Bres mac Elathan, and they asked him for their sureties. He gave them restoration of the kingship, and they did not regard him as properly qualified to rule from that time on. He asked to remain for seven years. "You will have that," the same assembly agreed, "provided that the safeguarding of every payment that has been assigned to you--including house and land, gold and silver, cattle and food --is supported by the same securities, and that we have freedom of tribute and payment until then."

"You will have what you ask," Bres said.

41. This is why they were asked for the delay: that he might gather the warriors of the sid, the Fomoire, to take possession of the Tuatha by force provided he might gain an overwhelming advantage. He was unwilling to be driven from his kingship.

42. Then he went to his mother and asked her where his family was. "I am certain about that," she said, and went onto the hill from which she had seen the silver vessel in the sea. She then went onto the shore. His mother gave him the ring which had been left with her, and he put it around his middle finger, and it fitted him. She had not given it up for anyone, either by sale or gift. Until that day, there was none of them whom it would fit.

43. Then they went forward until they reached the land of the Fomoire. They came to a great plain with many assemblies upon it, and they reached the finest of these assemblies. Inside, people sought information from them. They answered that they were of the men of Ireland. Then they were asked whether they had dogs, for at that time it was the custom, when a group of men visited another assembly, to challenge them to a friendly contest. "We have dogs," said Bres. Then the dogs raced, and those of the Tuatha De were faster than those of the Fomoire. Then they were asked whether they had horses to race. They answered, "We have," and they were faster than the horses of the Fomoire.

44. Then they were asked whether they had anyone who was good at sword-play, and no one was found among them except Bres. But when he lifted the hand with the sword, his father recognized the ring on his finger and asked who the warrior was. His mother answered on his behalf and told the king that Bres was his son. She related to him the whole story as we have recounted it.

45. His father was sad about him, and asked, "What force brought you out of the land

you ruled?"

Bres answered, "Nothing brought me except my own injustice and arrogance. I deprived them of their valuables and possessions and their own food. Neither tribute nor payment was ever taken from them until now."

46. "That is bad," said his father. "Better their prosperity than their kingship. Better their requests than their curses. Why then have you come?" asked his father.

47. "I have come to ask you for warriors," he said. "I intend to take that land by force."

48. "You ought not to gain it by injustice if you do not gain it by justice," he said.

49. "I have a question then: what advice do you have for me?" said Bres.

50. After that he sent him to the champion Balor, grandson of Net, the king of the Hebrides, and to Indech mac De Domnann, the king of the Fomoiré; and these gathered all the forces from Lochlainn westwards to Ireland, to impose their tribute and their rule upon them by force, and they made a single bridge of ships from the Hebrides to Ireland.

51. No host ever came to Ireland which was more terrifying or dreadful than that host of the Fomoiré. There was rivalry between the men from Scythia of Lochlainn and the men out of the Hebrides concerning that expedition.

52. As for the Tuatha De, however, that is discussed here.

53. After Bres, Nuadu was once more in the kingship over the Tuatha De; and at that time he held a great feast for the Tuatha De in Tara. Now there was a certain warrior whose name was Samildanach on his way to Tara. At that time there were doorkeepers at Tara named Gamal mac Figail and Camall mac Riagail. While the latter was on duty, he saw the strange company coming toward him. A handsome, well-built young warrior with a king's diadem was at the front of the band.

54. They told the doorkeeper to announce their arrival in Tara. The doorkeeper asked, "Who is there?"

55. "Lug Lormansclech is here, the son of Cian son of Dian Cecht and of Ethne daughter of Balor. He is the foster son of Tailtiu, the daughter of Magmor, the king of Spain, and of Eochaid Garb mac Duach."

56. The doorkeeper then asked of Samildanach, "What art do you practice? For no one without an art enters Tara."

57. "Question me," he said. "I am a builder."

The doorkeeper answered, "We do not need you. We have a builder already, Luchta mac Luachada."

58. He said, "Question me, doorkeeper: I am a smith."

The doorkeeper answered him, "We have a smith already, Colum Cualeinech of the

three new techniques."

59. He said, "Question me: I am a champion."

The doorkeeper answered, "We do not need you. We have a champion already, Ogma mac Ethlend."

60. He said again, "Question me." "I am a harper," he said.

"We do not need you. We have a harper already, Abcan mac Bicelmois, whom the men of the three gods chose in the sid-mounds."

61. He said, "Question me: I am a warrior."

The doorkeeper answered, "We do not need you. We have a warrior already, Bresal Etarlam mac Ehdach Baethlaim."

62. Then he said, "Question me, doorkeeper. I am a poet and a historian."

"We do not need you. We already have a poet and historian, En mac Ethamain."

63. He said, "Question me. I am a sorcerer."

"We do not need you. We have sorcerers already. Our druids and our people of power are numerous."

64. He said, "Question me. I am a physician."

"We do not need you. We have Dian Cecht as a physician."

65. "Question me," he said. "I am a cupbearer."

"We do not need you. We have cupbearers already: Delt and Drucht and Daithe, Tae and Talom and Trog, Gle and Glan and Glesse."

66. He said, "Question me: I am a good brazier."

"We do not need you. We have a brazier already, Credne Cerd."

67. He said, "Ask the king whether he has one man who possesses all these arts: if he has I will not be able to enter Tara."

68. Then the doorkeeper went into the royal hall and told everything to the king. "A warrior has come before the court," he said, "named Samildanach; and all the arts which help your people, he practices them all, so that he is the man of each and every art."

69. Then he said that they should bring him the fidchell-boards of Tara, and he won all the stakes, so that he made the cro of Lug. (But if fidchell was invented at the time of the Trojan war, it had not reached Ireland yet, for the battle of Mag Tuired and the destruction of Troy occurred at the same time.)

70. Then that was related to Nuadu. "Let him into the court," said Nuadu, "for a man like that has never before come into this fortress."

71. Then the doorkeeper let him past, and he went into the fortress, and he sat in the seat of the sage, because he was a sage in every art.

72. Then Ogma threw the flagstone, which required fourscore yoke of oxen to move it, through the side of the hall so that it lay outside against Tara. That was to challenge Lug, who tossed the stone back so that it lay in the centre of the royal hall; and he threw the piece which it had carried away back into the side of the royal hall so that it was whole again.

73. "Let a harp be played for us," said the hosts. Then the warrior played sleep music for the hosts and for the king on the first night, putting them to sleep from that hour to the same time the next day. He played sorrowful music so that they were crying and lamenting. He played joyful music so that they were merry and rejoicing.

74. Then Nuadu, when he had seen the warrior's many powers, considered whether he could release them from the bondage they suffered at the hands of the Fomoiré. So they held a council concerning the warrior, and the decision which Nuadu reached was to exchange seats with the warrior. So Samildanach went to the king's seat, and the king arose before him until thirteen days had passed.

75. The next day he and the two brothers, Dagda and Ogma, conversed together on Grellach Dollaid; and his two kinsmen Goibniu and Dian Cecht were summoned to them.

76. They spent a full year in that secret conference, so that Grellach Dollaid is called the Amrun of the Men of the Goddess.

77. Then the druids of Ireland were summoned to them, together with their physicians and their charioteers and their smiths and their wealthy landowners and their lawyers. They conversed together secretly.

78. Then he asked the sorcerer, whose name was Mathgen, what power he wielded. He answered that he would shake the mountains of Ireland beneath the Fomoiré so that their summits would fall to the ground. And it would seem to them that the twelve chief mountains of the land of Ireland would be fighting on behalf of the Tuatha De Danann: Slieve League, and Denda Ulad, and the Mourne Mountains, and Bri Erigi and Slieve Bloom and Slieve Snaght, Slemish and Blaisliab and Nephin Mountain and Sliab Maccu Belgodon and the Curliou hills and Croagh Patrick.

79. Then he asked the cupbearer what power he wielded. He answered that he would bring the twelve chief lochs of Ireland into the presence of the Fomoiré and they would not find water in them, however thirsty they were. These are the lochs: Lough Derg, Lough Luimnig, Lough Corrib, Lough Ree, Lough Mask, Strangford Lough, Belfast Lough, Lough Neagh, Lough Foyle, Lough Gara, Loughrea, Marloch. They would proceed to the twelve chief rivers of Ireland--the Bush, the Boyne, the Bann, the Blackwater, the Lee, the Shannon, the Moy, the Sligo, the Erne, the Finn, the Liffey, the Suir--and they would all be

hidden from the Fomoiré so they would not find a drop in them. But drink will be provided for the men of Ireland even if they remain in battle for seven years.

80. Then Figol mac Mamois, their druid, said, "Three showers of fire will be rained upon the faces of the Fomorian host, and I will take out of them two-thirds of their courage and their skill at arms and their strength, and I will bind their urine in their own bodies and in the bodies of their horses. Every breath that the men of Ireland will exhale will increase their courage and skill at arms and strength. Even if they remain in battle for seven years, they will not be weary at all.

81. The Dagda said, "The power which you boast, I will wield it all myself."

"You are the Dagda [‘the Good God’]!" said everyone, and "Dagda" stuck to him from that time on.

82. Then they disbanded the council to meet that day three years later.

83. Then after the preparation for the battle had been settled, Lug and the Dagda and Ogma went to the three gods of Danu, and they gave Lug equipment for the battle; and for seven years they had been preparing for them and making their weapons.

Then she said to him, "Undertake a battle of overthrowing." The Morrigan said to Lug, "Awake. . . ."

Then Figol mac Mamois, the druid, was prophesying the battle and strengthening the Tuatha De, saying,

"Battle will be waged.

84. The Dagda had a house in Glen Edin in the north, and he had arranged to meet a woman in Glen Edin a year from that day, near the All Hallows of the battle. The Unshin of Connacht roars to the south of it.

He saw the woman at the Unshin in Corann, washing, with one of her feet at Allod Echae (that is, Aghanagh) south of the water and the other at Lisconny north of the water. There were nine loosened tresses on her head. The Dagda spoke with her, and they united. "The Bed of the Couple" was the name of that place from that time on. (The woman mentioned here is the Morrigan.)

85. Then she told the Dagda that the Fomoiré would land at Mag Ceidne, and that he should summon the aes dana of Ireland to meet her at the Ford of the Unshin, and she would go into Scetne to destroy Indech mac De Domnann, the king of the Fomoiré, and would take from him the blood of his heart and the kidneys of his valor. Later she gave two handfuls of that blood to the hosts that were waiting at the Ford of the Unshin. Its name became "The Ford of Destruction" because of that destruction of the king.

86. So the aes dana did that, and they chanted spells against the Fomorian hosts.

87. This was a week before All Hallows, and they all dispersed until all the men of Ireland came together the day before All Hallows. Their number was six times thirty hundred, that is, each third consisted of twice thirty hundred.

88. Then Lug sent the Dagda to spy on the Fomoiré and to delay them until the men of Ireland came to the battle.

89. Then the Dagda went to the Fomorian camp and asked them for a truce of battle. This was granted to him as he asked. The Fomoiré made porridge for him to mock him, because his love of porridge was great. They filled for him the king's cauldron, which was five fists deep, and poured four score gallons of new milk and the same quantity of meal and fat into it. They put goats and sheep and swine into it, and boiled them all together with the porridge. Then they poured it into a hole in the ground, and Indeich said to him that he would be killed unless he consumed it all; he should eat his fill so that he might not satirize the Fomoiré.

90. Then the Dagda took his ladle, and it was big enough for a man and a woman to lie in the middle of it. These are the bits that were in it: halves of salted swine and a quarter of lard.

91. Then the Dagda said, "This is good food if its broth is equal to its taste." But when he would put the full ladle into his mouth he said, "'Its poor bits do not spoil it,' says the wise old man."

92. Then at the end he scraped his bent finger over the bottom of the hole among mould and gravel. He fell asleep then after eating his porridge. His belly was as big as a house cauldron, and the Fomoiré laughed at it.

93. Then he went away from them to Traigh Eabha. It was not easy for the warrior to move along on account of the size of his belly. His appearance was unsightly: he had a cape to the hollow of his elbows, and a gray-brown tunic around him as far as the swelling of his rump. He trailed behind him a wheeled fork which was the work of eight men to move, and its track was enough for the boundary ditch of a province. It is called "The Track of the Dagda's Club" for that reason. His long penis was uncovered. He had on two shoes of horsehide with the hair outside.

As he went along he saw a girl in front of him, a good-looking young woman with an excellent figure, her hair in beautiful tresses. The Dagda desired her, but he was impotent on account of his belly. The girl began to mock him, then she began wrestling with him. She hurled him so that he sank to the hollow of his rump in the ground. He looked at her angrily and asked, "What business did you have, girl, heaving me out of my right way?"

"This business: to get you to carry me on your back to my father's house."

"Who is your father?" he asked.

"I am the daughter of Indech, son of De Domnann," she said.

She fell upon him again and beat him hard, so that the furrow around him filled with the excrement from his belly; and she satirized him three times so that he would carry her upon his back.

He said that it was a guess for him to carry anyone who would not call him by his name.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Fer Benn," he said.

"That name is too much!" she said. "Get up, carry me on your back, Fer Benn."

"That is indeed not my name," he said.

"What is?" she asked.

"Fer Benn Mach," he answered.

"Get up, carry me on your back, Fer Benn Mach," she said.

"That is not my name," he said.

"What is?" she asked. Then he told her the whole thing. She replied immediately and said, "Get up, carry me on your back, Fer Benn Bruach Brogail Broumide Cerbad Caic Rolaig Builc Labair Cerrce Di Brig Oldathair Boith Athgen mBethai Brightere Tri Carboid Roth Rimaire Riog Scotbe Obthe Olaithe. . . . Get up, carry me away from here!"

"Do not mock me any more, girl," he said.

"It will certainly be hard," she said.

Then he moved out of the hole, after letting go the contents of his belly, and the girl had waited for that for a long time. He got up then, and took the girl on his back; and he put three stones in his belt. Each stone fell from it in turn-and it has been said that they were his testicles which fell from it. The girl jumped on him and struck him across the rump, and her curly pubic hair was revealed. Then the Dagda gained a mistress, and they made love. The mark remains at Beltraw Strand where they came together.

Then the girl said to him, "You will not go to the battle by any means."

"Certainly I will go," said the Dagda.

"You will not go," said the woman, "because I will be a stone at the mouth of every ford you will cross."

"That will be true," said the Dagda, "but you will not keep me from it. I will tread heavily on every stone, and the trace of my heel will remain on every stone forever."

"That will be true, but they will be turned over so that you may not see them. You will not go past me until I summon the sons of Tethra from the sid-mounds, because I will be a giant oak in every ford and in every pass you will cross."

"I will indeed go past," said the Dagda, "and the mark of my axe will remain in every oak forever." (And people have remarked upon the mark of the Dagda's axe.)

Then however she said, "Allow the Fomoiré to enter the land, because the men of Ireland have all come together in one place." She said that she would hinder the Fomoiré, and she would sing spells against them, and she would practice the deadly art of the wand against them--and she alone would take on a ninth part of the host.

94. The Fomoiré advanced until their tents were in Scetne. The men of Ireland were in Mag Aurfolraig. At this point these two hosts were threatening battle.

"Do the men of Ireland undertake to give battle to us?" said Bres mac Elathan to Indech mac De Domnann.

"I will give the same," said Indech, "so that their bones will be small if they do not pay their tribute."

95. In order to protect him, the men of Ireland had agreed to keep Lug from the battle. His nine foster fathers came to guard him: Tollusdam and Echdam and Eru, Rechtaid Finn and Fosad and Feidlimid, Ibar and Scibar and Minn. They feared an early death for the warrior because of the great number of his arts. For that reason they did not let him go to the battle.

96. Then the men of rank among the Tuatha De were assembled around Lug. He asked his smith, Goibniu, what power he wielded for them.

97. "Not hard to say," he said. "Even if the men of Ireland continue the battle for seven years, for every spear that separates from its shaft or sword that will break in battle, I will provide a new weapon in its place. No spearpoint which my hand forges will make a missing cast. No skin which it pierces will taste life afterward. Dolb, the Fomorian smith, cannot do that. I am now concerned with my preparation for the battle of Mag Tuired."

98. "And you, Dian Cecht," said Lug, "what power do you wield?"

99. "Not hard to say," he said. "Any man who will be wounded there, unless his head is cut off, or the membrane of his brain or his spinal cord is severed, I will make him perfectly whole in the battle on the next day."

100. "And you, Credne," Lug said to his brazier, "what is your power in the battle?"

101. "Not hard to answer," said Credne. "I will supply them all with rivets for their spears and hilts for their swords and bosses and rims for their shields."

102. "And you, Luchta," Lug said to his carpenter, "what power would you attain in the battle?"

103. "Not hard to answer," said Luchta. "I will supply them all with whatever shields and spearshafts they need."

104. "And you, Ogma," said Lug to his champion, "what is your power in the battle?"

105. "Not hard to say," he said. "Being a match for the king and holding my own against twenty-seven of his friends, while winning a third of the battle for the men of Ireland."

106. "And you, Morrigan," said Lug, "what power?"

107. "Not hard to say," she said. "I have stood fast; I shall pursue what was watched; I will be able to kill; I will be able to destroy those who might be subdued."

108. "And you, sorcerers," said Lug, "what power?"

109. "Not hard to say," said the sorcerers. "Their white soles will be visible after they have been overthrown by our craft, so that they can easily be killed; and we will take two-thirds of their strength from them, and prevent them from urinating."

110. "And you, cupbearers," said Lug, "what power?"

111. "Not hard to say," said the cupbearers. "We will bring a great thirst upon them, and they will not find drink to quench it."

112. "And you, druids," said Lug, "what power?"

113. "Not hard to say," said the druids. "We will bring showers of fire upon the faces of the Fomoiré so that they cannot look up, and the warriors contending with them can use their force to kill them."

114. "And you, Coirpre mac Etaine," said Lug to his poet, "what can you do in the battle?"

115. "Not hard to say," said Coirpre. "I will make a glam dicenn against them, and I will satirize them and shame them so that through the spell of my art they will offer no resistance to warriors."

116. "And you, Be Chuille and Dianann," said Lug to his two witches, "what can you do in the battle?"

117. "Not hard to say," they said. "We will enchant the trees and the stones and the sods of the earth so that they will be a host under arms against them; and they will scatter in flight terrified and trembling."

118. "And you, Dagda," said Lug, "what power can you wield against the Fomorian host in the battle?"

119. "Not hard to say," said the Dagda. "I will fight for the men of Ireland with mutual smiting and destruction and wizardry. Their bones under my club will soon be as many as hailstones under the feet of herds of horses, where the double enemy meets on the battlefield of Mag Tuired."

120. Then in this way Lug addressed each of them in turn concerning their arts, strengthening them and addressing them in such a way that every man had the courage of

a king or great lord.

121. Now every day the battle was drawn up between the race of the Fomoiré and the Tuatha De Danann, but there were no kings or princes waging it, only fierce and arrogant men.

122. One thing which became evident to the Fomoiré in the battle seemed remarkable to them. Their weapons, their spears and their swords, were blunted; and those of their men who were killed did not come back the next day. That was not the case with the Tuatha De Danann: although their weapons were blunted one day, they were restored the next because Goibniu the smith was in the smithy making swords and spears and javelins. He would make those weapons with three strokes. Then Luchta the carpenter would make the spearshafts in three chippings, and the third chipping was a finish and would set them in the socket of the spear. After the spearheads were in the side of the forge he would throw the sockets with the shafts, and it was not necessary to set them again. Then Credne the brazier would make the rivets with three strokes, and he would throw the sockets of the spears at them, and it was not necessary to drill holes for them; and they stayed together this way.

123. Now this is what used to kindle the warriors who were wounded there so that they were more fiery the next day: Dian Cecht, his two sons Octriuil and Miach, and his daughter Airmed were chanting spells over the well named Slaine. They would cast their mortally-wounded men into it as they were struck down; and they were alive when they came out. Their mortally-wounded were healed through the power of the incantation made by the four physicians who were around the well.

124. Now that was damaging to the Fomoiré, and they picked a man to reconnoitre the battle and the practices of the Tuatha De--Ruadan, the son of Bres and of Brig, the daughter of the Dagda--because he was a son and a grandson of the Tuatha De. Then he described to the Fomoiré the work of the smith and the carpenter and the brazier and the four physicians who were around the well. They sent him back to kill one of the aes dana, Goibniu. He requested a spearpoint from him, its rivets from the brazier, and its shaft from the carpenter; and everything was given to him as he asked. Now there was a woman there grinding weapons, Cron the mother of Fianlach; and she ground Ruadan's spear. So the spear was given to Ruadan by his maternal kin, and for that reason a weaver's beam is still called "the spear of the maternal kin" in Ireland.

125. But after the spear had been given to him, Ruadan turned and wounded Goibniu. He pulled out the spear and hurled it at Ruadan so that it went through him; and he died in his father's presence in the Fomorian assembly. Brig came and keened for her son. At first

she shrieked, in the end she wept. Then for the first time weeping and shrieking were heard in Ireland. (Now she is the Brig who invented a whistle for signalling at night.)

126. Then Goibniu went into the well and he became whole. The Fomoiré had a warrior named Ochtriallach, the son of the Fomorian king Indech mac De Domnann. He suggested that every single man they had should bring a stone from the stones of the river Drowes to cast into the well Slaine in Achad Abla to the west of Mag Tuired, to the east of Lough Arrow. They went, and every man put a stone into the well. For that reason the cairn is called Ochtriallach's Cairn. But another name for that well is Loch Luibe, because Dian Cecht put into it every herb that grew in Ireland.

127. Now when the time came for the great battle, the Fomoiré marched out of their encampment and formed themselves into strong indestructible battalions. There was not a chief nor a skilled warrior among them without armor against his skin, a helmet on his head, a broad spear in his right hand, a heavy sharp sword on his belt, a strong shield on his shoulder. To attack the Fomorian host that day was "striking a head against a cliff," was "a hand in a serpent's nest," was "a face brought close to fire."

128. These were the kings and leaders who were encouraging the Fomorian host: Balor son of Dot son of Net, Bres mac Elathan, Tuire Tortbuillech mac Lobois, Goll and Irgoll, Loscennlomm mac Lommgluinigh, Indech mac De Domnann, king of the Fomoiré, Ochtriallach mac Indich, Omna and Bagna, Elatha mac Delbaith.

129. On the other side, the Tuatha De Danann arose and left his nine companions guarding Lug, and went to join the battle. But when the battle ensued, Lug escaped from the guard set over him, as a chariot-fighter, and it was he who was in front of the battalion of the Tuatha De. Then a keen and cruel battle was fought between the race of the Fomoiré and the men of Ireland.

Lug was urging the men of Ireland to fight the battle fiercely so they should not be in bondage any longer, because it was better for them to find death while protecting their fatherland than to be in bondage and under tribute as they had been. Then Lug chanted the spell which follows, going around the men of Ireland on one foot and with one eye closed. . . .

130. The hosts gave a great shout as they went into battle. Then they came together, and each of them began to strike the other.

131. Many beautiful men fell there in the stall of death. Great was the slaughter and the grave-lying which took place there. Pride and shame were there side by side. There was anger and indignation. Abundant was the stream of blood over the white skin of young warriors mangled by the hands of bold men while rushing into danger for shame. Harsh

was the noise made by the multitude of warriors and champions protecting their swords and shields and bodies while others were striking them with spears and swords. Harsh too the tumult all over the battlefield-the shouting of the warriors and the clashing of bright shields, the swish of swords and ivory-hilted blades, the clatter and rattling of the quivers, the hum and whirr of spears and javelins, the crashing strokes of weapons.

132. As they hacked at each other their fingertips and their feet almost met; and because of the slipperiness of the blood under the warriors' feet, they kept falling down, and their heads were cut off them as they sat. A gory, wound-inflicting, sharp, bloody battle was upheaved, and spearshafts were reddened in the hands of foes.

133. Then Nuadu Silverhand and Macha the daughter of Ernmas fell at the hands of Balor grandson of Net. Casmael fell at the hands of Ochtriallach son of Indech. Lug and Balor of the piercing eye met in the battle. The latter had a destructive eye which was never opened except on a battlefield. Four men would raise the lid of the eye by a polished ring in its lid. The host which looked at that eye, even if they were many thousands in number, would offer no resistance to warriors. It had that poisonous power for this reason: once his father's druids were brewing magic. He came and looked over the window, and the fumes of the concoction affected the eye and the venomous power of the brew settled in it. Then he and Lug met. . . .

134. "Lift up my eyelid, lad," said Balor, "so I may see the talkative fellow who is conversing with me."

135. The lid was raised from Balor's eye. Then Lug cast a sling stone at him which carried the eye through his head, and it was his own host that looked at it. He fell on top of the Fomorian host so that twenty-seven of them died under his side; and the crown of his head struck against the breast of Indech mac De Domnann so that a gush of blood spouted over his lips.

136. "Let Loch Lethglas ["Halfgreen"], my poet, be summoned to me," said Indech. (He was half green from the ground to the crown of his head.) He came to him. "Find out for me," said Indech, "who hurled this cast at me." . . . Then Loch Lethglas said,

"Declare, who is the man? . . ."

Then Lug said these words in answer to him,

"A man cast

Who does not fear you.

137. Then the Morrigan the daughter of Ernmas came, and she was strengthening the Tuatha De to fight the battle resolutely and fiercely. She then chanted the following poem:

"Kings arise to the battle! . . ."

138. Immediately afterwards the battle broke, and the Fomoiré were driven to the sea. The champion Ogma son of Elatha and Indech mac De Domnann fell together in single combat.

139. Loch Lethglas asked Lug for quarter. "Grant my three requests," said Lug.

140. "You will have them," said Loch. "I will remove the need to guard against the Fomoiré from Ireland forever; and whatever judgement your tongue will deliver in any difficult case, it will resolve the matter until the end of fife."

141. So Loch was spared. Then he chanted "The Decree of Fastening" to the Gaels. . . .

142. Then Loch said that he would give names to Lug's nine chariots because he had been spared. So Lug said that he should name them. Loch answered and said, "Luachta, Anagat, Achad, Feochair, Fer, Golla, Fosad, Craeb, Carpat."

143. "A question then: what are the names of the charioteers who were in them?"

"Medol, Medon, Moth, Mothach, Foimtinne, Tenda, Tres, Morb."

144. "What are the names of the goads which were in their hands?"

"Fes, Res, Roches, Anagar, Each, Canna, Riadha, Buaid."

145. "What are the names of the horses?"

"Can, Doriadha, Romuir, Laisad, Fer Forsaid, Sroban, Airchedal, Ruagar, Ilann, Allriadha, Rocedal."

146. "A question: what is the number of the slain?" Lug said to Loch.

"I do not know the number of peasants and rabble. As to the number of Fomorian lords and nobles and champions and over-kings, I do know:  $3 + 3 \times 20 + 50 \times 100$  men +  $20 \times 100 + 3 \times 50 + 9 \times 5 + 4 \times 20 \times 1000 + 8 + 8 \times 20 + 7 + 4 \times 20 + 6 + 4 \times 20 + 5 + 8 \times 20 + 2 + 40$ , including the grandson of Net with 90 men. That is the number of the slain of the Fomorian over-kings and high nobles who fell in the battle.

147. "But regarding the number of peasants and common people and rabble and people of every art who came in company with the great host--for every warrior and every high noble and every overking of the Fomoiré came to the battle with his personal followers, so that all fell there, both their free men and their unfree servants--I count only a few of the over-kings' servants. This then is the number of those I counted as I watched:  $7 + 7 \times 20 \times 20 \times 100 \times 100 + 90$  including Sab Uanchennach son of Coirpre Colc, the son of a servant of Indech mac De Domnann (that is, the son of a servant of the Fomorian king).

148. "As for the men who fought in pairs and the spearmen, warriors who did not reach the heart of the battle who also fell there--until the stars of heaven can be counted, and the sands of the sea, and flakes of snow, and dew on a lawn, and hailstones, and grass beneath the feet of horses, and the horses of the son of Lir in a sea storm--they will not be

counted at all."

149. Immediately afterward they found an opportunity to kill Bres mac Elathan. He said, "It is better to spare me than to kill me."

150. "What then will follow from that?" said Lug.

"The cows of Ireland will always be in milk," said Bres, "if I am spared."

"I will tell that to our wise men," said Lug.

151. So Lug went to Maeltne Morbrethach and said to him, "Shall Bres be spared for giving constant milk to the cows of Ireland?"

152. "He shall not be spared," said Maeltne. "He has no power over their age or their calving, even if he controls their milk as long as they are alive."

153. Lug said to Bres, "That does not save you; you have no power over their age or their calving, even if you control their milk."

154. Bres said, "Maeltne has given bitter alarms!"

155. "Is there anything else which will save you, Bres?" said Lug.

"There is indeed. Tell your lawyer they will reap a harvest every quarter in return for sparing me."

156. Lug said to Maeltne, "Shall Bres be spared for giving the men of Ireland a harvest of grain every quarter?"

157. "This has suited us," said Maeltne. "Spring for plowing and sowing, and the beginning of summer for maturing the strength of the grain, and the beginning of autumn for the full ripeness of the grain, and for reaping it. Winter for consuming it."

158. "That does not save you," said Lug to Bres.

"Maeltne has given bitter alarms," said he.

159. "Less rescues you," said Lug.

"What?" asked Bres.

160. "How shall the men of Ireland plow? How shall they sow? How shall they reap? If you make known these things, you will be saved."

"Say to them, on Tuesday their plowing; on Tuesday their sowing seed in the field; on Tuesday their reaping."

161. So through that device Bres was released.

162. Now in that battle Ogma the champion found Orna, the sword of Tethra, king of the Fomoiré. Ogma unsheathed the sword and cleaned it. Then the sword told what had been done by it, because it was the habit of swords at that time to recount the deeds that had been done by them whenever they were unsheathed. And for that reason swords are entitled to the tribute of cleaning after they have been unsheathed. Moreover spells have

been kept in swords from that time on. Now the reason why demons used to speak from weapons then is that weapons used to be worshipped by men and were among the sureties of that time. Loch Lethglas chanted the following poem about that sword. . . .

163. Then Lug and the Dagda and Ogma went after the Fomoiré, because they had taken the Dagda's harper, Uaithne. Eventually they reached the banqueting hall where Bres mac Elathan and Elatha mac Delbaith were. There was the harp on the wall. That is the harp in which the Dagda had bound the melodies so that they did not make a sound until he summoned them, saying,

"Come Daur Da Blao,  
Come Coir Cetharchair,  
Come summer, come winter,  
Mouths of harps and bags and pipes!"

(Now that harp had two names, Daur Da Blao and Coir Cetharchair.)

164. Then the harp came away from the wall, and it killed nine men and came to the Dagda; and he played for them the three things by which a harper is known: sleep music, joyful music, and sorrowful music. He played sorrowful music for them so that their tearful women wept. He played joyful music for them so that their women and boys laughed. He played sleep music for them so that the hosts slept. So the three of them escaped from them unharmed--although they wanted to kill them.

165. The Dagda brought with him the cattle taken by the Fomoiré through the lowing of the heifer which had been given him for his work; because when she called her calf, all the cattle of Ireland which the Fomoiré had taken as their tribute began to graze.

166. Then after the battle was won and the slaughter had been cleaned away, the Morrigan, the daughter of Ernmas, proceeded to announce the battle and the great victory which had occurred there to the royal heights of Ireland and to its sid-hosts, to its chief waters and to its rivermouths. And that is the reason Badb still relates great deeds. "Have you any news?" everyone asked her then.

"Peace up to heaven.  
Heaven down to earth.  
Earth beneath heaven,  
Strength in each,  
A cup very full,  
Full of honey;  
Mead in abundance.  
Summer in winter. . . .

Peace up to heaven . . ."

167. She also prophesied the end of the world, foretelling every evil that would occur then, and every disease and every vengeance; and she chanted the following poem:

"I shall not see a world  
Which will be dear to me:  
Summer without blossoms,  
Cattle will be without milk,  
Women without modesty,  
Men without valor.  
Conquests without a king . . .  
Woods without mast.  
Sea without produce. . . .  
False judgements of old men.  
False precedents of lawyers,  
Every man a betrayer.  
Every son a reaver.  
The son will go to the bed of his father,  
The father will go to the bed of his son.  
Each his brother's brother-in-law.  
He will not seek any woman outside his house. . . .  
An evil time,  
Son will deceive his father,  
Daughter will deceive . . ."

### **Here Begins The Wooing of Etain**

There was a famous king of Ireland of the race of the Tuatha De, Eochaid Ollathair his name. He was also named the Dagda [i.e. good god], for it was he that used to work wonders for them and control the weather and the crops. Wherefore men said he was called the Dagda. Elcmar of the Brug had a wife whose name was Eithne and another name for her was Boand. The Dagda desired her in carnal union. The woman would have yielded to the Dagda had it not been for fear of Elcmar, so great was his power.

Thereupon the Dagda sent Elcmar away on a journey to Bres son of Elatha in Mag nInis, and the Dagda worked great spells upon Elcmar as he set out, that he might not return betimes (that is, early) and he dispelled the darkness of night for him, and he kept hunger

and thirst from him. He sent him on long errands, so that nine months went by as one day, for he had said that he would return home again between day and night. Meanwhile the Dagda went in upon Elcmar's wife, and she bore him a son, even Aengus, and the woman was whole of her sickness when Elcmar returned, and he perceived not her offense, that is, that she had lain with the Dagda.

2. The Dagda meanwhile brought his son to Midir's house in Bri Leith in Tethba, to be fostered. There Aengus was reared for the space of nine years. Midir had a great playing-field in Bri Leith. Thrice fifty lads of the young nobles of Ireland were there and thrice fifty maidens of the land of Ireland. Aengus was the leader of them all, because of Midir's great love for him, and the beauty of his form and the nobility of his race. He was also called in Mac Oc (the Young Son), for his mother said: "Young is the son who was begotten at the break of day and born betwixt it and evening."

3. Now Aengus quarreled with Triath son of Febal (or Gobor) of the Fir Bolg, who was one of the two leaders in the game, and a fosterling of Midir. It was no matter of pride with Aengus that Triath should speak to him, and he said: "It irks me that the son of a serf should hold speech with me," for Aengus had believed until then that Midir was his father, and the kingship of Bri Leith his heritage, and he knew not of his kinship with the Dagda.

4. Triath made answer and said: "I take it no less ill that a hireling whose mother and father are unknown should hold speech with me." Thereupon Aengus went to Midir weeping and sorrowful at having been put to shame by Triath. "What is this?" said Midir. "Triath has defamed me and cast in my face that I have neither mother nor father." "Tis false," said Midir. "Who is my mother, from whence is my father" "No hard matter. Thy father is Eochaid Ollathair," said Midir, "and Eithne, wife of Elcmar of the Brug, is thy mother. It is I that have reared thee unknown to Elcmar, lest it should cause him pain that thou wast begotten in his despite." "Come thou with me," said Aengus, "that my father may acknowledge me, and that I may no longer be kept hidden away under the insults of the Fir Bolg."

5. Then Midir set out with his fosterling to have speech with Eochaid, and they came to Uisnech of Meath in the center of Ireland, for 'tis there that was Eochaid's house, Ireland stretching equally far from on every side, south and north, to east and west. "Before them in the assembly they found Eochaid. Midir called the king aside to have speech with the

lad. "What does he desire, this youth who has not come until now?" "His desire is to be acknowledged by his father, and for land to be given to him," said Midir, "for it is not meet that thy son should be landless while thou art king of Ireland." "He is welcome," said the Eochaid, "he is my son. But the land I wish him to have is not yet vacant." "What land is that?" said Midir. "The Brug, to the north of the Boyne," said Eochaid. "Who is there?" said Midir. "Elcmar," said Eochaid, "is the man who is there I have no wish to annoy him further."

6. "Pray, what counsel dost thou give this lad?" said Midir. "I have this for him," said Eochaid. "On the day of Samain let him go into the Brug, and let him go armed. That is a day of peace and amity among the men of Ireland, on which none is at enmity with his fellow. And Elcmar will be in Cnoc Side in Borga unarmed save for a fork of white hazel in his hand, his cloak folded around him and a gold brooch in his cloak, and three fifties playing before him in the playing-field; and let Aengus go to him and threaten to kill him. But it is meet that he slay him not, provided he promise him his will. And let this be the will of Aengus, that he be king for a day and a night in the Brug; and see that thou not yield the land to Elcmar till he submit himself to my decision; and when he comes let Aengus plea be that the land has fallen to him, and that he in fee simple for sparing Elcmar and not slaying him, and that what he had asked for is kingship of day and night, and" said he, "it is in days and nights that the world is spent."

7. Then Midir sets out for his land, and his foster-son along with him, and on the Samain following, Aengus having armed himself came into the Brug and made a feint at Elcmar, so that he promised him in return for his life kingship of day and night in his land. The Mac Oc straightway abode there that day and night as king of the land, Elcmar's household being subject to him. On the morrow Elcmar came to claim his land from the Mac Oc, and therewith threatened him mightily. The Mac Oc said that he would not yield up his land until he should put it to the decision of the Dagda in the presence of the men of Ireland.

8. Then they appeal to the Dagda, who adjudged each man's contract in accordance with his undertaking. "So then this land accordingly belongs henceforth to this youth," said Elcmar. "It is fitting," said the Dagda. "Thou was taken unawares on a day of peace and amity. Thou gavest thy land for mercy shown thee, for thy life was dearer to thee than thy land, yet thou shalt have land from me that will be no less profitable to thee than the Brug." "Where is that?" said Elcmar. "Cleitech," said the Dagda, "with the three lands that are

round about it, thy youths playing before thee every day in the Brug, and thou shalt enjoy the fruits of the Boyne from this land." "It is well," said Elcmar; "so shall it be accomplished." And he made a flitting to Cleitech, and built a stronghold there, and Mac Oc abode in the Brug in his land.

9. Then Mider came on that day year to the Brug on a visit to his fosterling, and he found the Mac Oc on the mound of Sid in Broga on the day of Samain, with two companies of youth at play before him in the Brug, and Elcmar on the mound of Cleitech to the south, watching them. A quarrel broke out among the youths in the Brug. "Do not stir," said Midir to the Mac Oc, "because of Elcmar, lest he come down to the plain. I will go myself to make peace between them." Thereupon Midir went, and it was not easy for him to part them. A split of holly was thrown at Midir as he was intervening, and it knocked one of his eyes out. Midir came to the Mac Oc with his eye in his hand and said to him: "Would that I had not come on a visit to thee, to be put to shame, for with this blemish I cannot behold the land I have come to, and the land I have left, I cannot return to it now.

10. "It shall in no wise be so," said the Mac Oc. "I shall go to Dian Cecht that he may come and heal thee, and thine own land shall be thine and this land shall be thine, and thine eye shall be whole again without shame or blemish because of it." The Mac Oc went to Dian Cecht. [...] that thou mayest go with me," said he, "to save my foster-father who has been hurt in the Burgh on the day of the Samain." Dian Cecht came and healed Midir, so that he was whole again. "Good is my journeying now," said Midir, "since I am healed." "It shall surely be so," said the Mac Oc. "Do thou abide here for a year that thou mayest see my host and my folk, my household and my land."

11. "I will not stay," said Midir, "unless I have a reward therefore." "What reward?" said the Mac Oc. "Easy to say. A chariot worth seven cumals,"<sup>3</sup> said Midir, "and a mantle befitting me, and the fairest maiden in Ireland." "I have," said the Mac Oc, "the chariot, and the mantle befitting thee." "There is moreover," said Midir, "the maiden that surpasses all the maidens in Ireland in form." "Where is she?" said the Mac Oc. "She is in Ulster," said Midir, "Ailill's daughter Etain Echraide daughter of the king of the north-eastern part of Ireland. She is the dearest and gentlest and loveliest in Ireland."

12. The Mac Oc went to seek her until he came to Ailill's house in Mag nInis. He was made welcome, and he abode three nights there. He told his mission and announced his

name and race. He said that it was in quest of Etain that he had come. "I will not give her to thee," said Ailill, "for I can in no way profit by thee, because of the nobility of thy family, and the greatness of thy power and that of thy father. If thou put any shame on my daughter, no redress whatsoever can be had of thee." "It shall not be so," said the Mac Oc. "I will buy her from thee straightway." "Thou shall have that," said Ailill. "State thy demand," said the Mac Oc. "No hard matter," said Ailill. "Thou shalt clear for me twelve plains in my land that are under waste and wood, so that they may be at all times for grazing cattle and for habitation to me, for games, assemblies, gatherings, and strongholds."

13. "It shall be done," said the Mac Oc. He returns home and bewailed to the Dagda the strait he was in. The latter caused twelve plains to be cleared in a single night in Ailill's land. These are the names of the plains: Mag Macha, Mag Lemna, Mag nItha, Mag Tochair, Mag nDula, Mag Techt, Mag Li, Mag Line, Mag Murthemne. Now when that work had been accomplished by the Mac Oc he went to Ailill to demand Etain. "Thou shalt not obtain her," said Ailill, "until thou draw out of this land to the sea twelve great rivers that are in wells and bogs and moors, so that they may bring produce from the sea to peoples and kindreds, and drain the earth and the land."

14. He came again to the Dagda to bewail the strait he was in. Thereupon the latter caused twelve great waters to course towards the sea in a single night. They had not been seen there until then. These are the names of the waters: Find and Modornn and Sléna and Nas and Amnas and Oichen and Or and Banda and Samair and Loche. Now when these works were accomplished the Mac Oc came to have speech with Ailill in order to claim Etain. "Thou shall not get her till thou purchase her, for after thou hast taken her, I shall have no profit of the maiden beyond what I shall obtain forthwith." "What dost thou require of me now?" said the Mac Oc. "I require," said Ailill, "the maiden's weight in gold and silver, for that is my portion of their price; all that thou has done up to now, the profit of it goes to her folk and her kindred." "It shall be done," said the Mac Oc. She was placed on the floor of Ailill's house, and her weight of gold and silver was given for her. That wealth was left with Ailill, and the Mac Oc brought Etain home with him.

15. Midir made that company welcome. That night Etain sleeps with Midir, and on the morrow a mantle befitting him and a chariot were given to him, and he was pleased with his foster-son. After that he abode a full year in the Brug with Aengus. On that day year

Midir went to his own land, to Bri Leith, and he brought Etain with him. On that day he went from him the Mac Oc said to Midir, "Give heed to the woman thou takest with thee, because of the dreadful cunning woman that awaits thee, with all the knowledge and skill and craft that belongs to her race," said Aengus, "also she has my word and my safeguard before the Tuatha De Danann," that is, Fuamnach wife of Midir, of the progeny of Beothach son of Iardanel. She was wise and prudent and skilled in the knowledge and magic power of the Tuatha De Danann, for the druid Bresal had reared her until she was betrothed to Midir.

16. She made her husband welcome, that is Midir, and the woman spoke much of... to them. "Come, O Midir," said Fuamnach, "that I may show thee my house and thy meed of land... Midir went round his land with Fuamnach, and she showed his seizin to him and... to Etain. And after that she brought Etain again to Fuamnach. Fuamnach went before them into the sleeping chamber where she slept, and she said to Etain: "The seat of a good woman hast thou come into." When Etain sat down in the chair in the middle of the house, Fuamnach struck her with a rod of scarlet quicken tree, and she turned into a pool of water in the middle of the house; and Fuamach comes to her foster-father Bresal, and Midir left the house to the water into which Etain had turned. After that Midir was without a wife.

17. The heat of the fire and the air and the seething of the ground aided the water so that the pool that was in the middle of the house turned into a worm, and after that the worm became a purple fly. It was as big as a man's head, the comeliest in the land. Sweeter than pipes and harps and horns was the sound of her voice and the hum of her wings. Her eyes would shine like precious stones in the dark. The fragrance and the bloom of her would turn away hunger and thirst from any one around whom she would go. The spray of the drops she shed from her wings would cure all sickness and disease and plague in any one round whom she go. She used to attend Midir and go round about his land with him, as he went. To listen to her and gaze upon her would nourish hosts in gatherings and assemblies in camps. Midir knew that it was Etain that was in that shape, and so long as that fly was attended upon him, he never took to himself a wife, and the sight of her would nourish him. He would fall asleep with her humming, and whenever any one approached who did not love him, she would awaken him.

18. After a time Fuamnach came on a visit to Midir, and along with her as sureties came the three gods of Dana, namely Lug and the Dagda, and Ogma. Midir reproached

Fuamnach exceedingly and said to her that she should not go from him were it not for the power of the sureties that had brought her. Fuamnach said that she did not repent of the deed she had done, for that she would rather do good for herself than to another, and that in whatsoever part of Ireland she might be she would do naught but harm to Etain so long as she lived, and in whatsoever shape she might be. She brought powerful incantations and... spells from Bresal Etarlam the wizard to banish and warn off Etain from Midir, for she knew that the purple fly that was delighting Midir was Etain herself, for wherever he saw the scarlet fly, Midir loved no other woman, and he found no pleasure in music or in drinking or eating when he did not see her and hear the music of her and her voice. Fuamnach stirred up a wind of assault and magic so that Etain was wafted from Bri Leith, and for seven years she could not find a summit or a tree or a hill or a height in Ireland on which she could settle, but only rocks of the sea and the ocean waves, and (she was) floating through the air until seven years from that day when she lighted on the fringe on the breast of the Mac Oc as he was on the mound of the Brug.

19. There it was that the Mac Oc said "Welcome, Etain,"wanderer careworn, thou that hast encountered great dangers through the cunning of Fuamnach. Not yet have you found, your side secure in alliance with Mider. As for me, he has found me capable of actions with hosts, the slaughter of a multitude, the clearing of wildernesses, the world's abundance for Ailill's daughter. An idle task, for your wretched ruin has followed."

20. The Mac Oc made the girl welcome, that is, the purple fly, and gathered her in his bosom in the fleece of his cloak. He brought her to his house and his sun-bower with its bright windows for passing out and in, and purple raiment was put on her; and wherever he went that sun-bower was carried by the Mac Oc, and there he used to sleep every night by her side, comforting her, until her gladness and colour came to her again. And that sun-bower was filled with fragrant and wondrous herbs, and she throve on the fragrance and bloom of those goodly precious herbs.

21. Fuamnach was told of the love and honour that was bestowed by the Mac Oc on Etain. Said Fuamnach to Midir, "Let thy fosterling be summoned that I may make peace between you both, while I myself go in guest of Etain." A messenger comes to the Mac Oc from Midir, and he went to speak to him. Meanwhile Fuamnach came by a circuitous way until she was in the Brug, and she sent the same blast on Etain, which carried her out of her sun-bower on the very flight she had been on before for the space of seven years

throughout Ireland. The blast of wind drove her along in misery and weakness until she alit on the rooftree of a house in Ulster where folk were drinking, and she fell into the golden beaker that was before the wife of Etar, the champion from Inber Cichmaine, in the province of Conchobar, so that she swallowed her with the liquid that was in the beaker, and in this wise she was conceived in her womb and became afterwards her daughter. She was called Etain daughter of Etar. Now it was a thousand and twelve years from the first begetting of Etain by Ailill until her last begetting by Etar.

22. After that Etain was brought up at Inber Cichmaine by Etar, and fifty daughters of chieftains along with her, and he it was that fed and clothed them to be in attendance on Etain always. day it befell that all the maidens were bathing in the estuary when they saw from the water a horseman entering the plain towards them. He was mounted on a broad brown steed, curvetting and prancing, with curly mane and curly tail. Around him a green mantle in folds, and a red-embroidered tunic, and in his mantle a golden brooch which reached to his shoulder on either side. A silvern shield with rim of gold slung over his back, and a silver strap to it and boss of gold thereon. In his hand a five pronged spear in bands of gold round about it from haft to socket. Bright yellow hair he had reaching to his forehead. A fillet of gold against his forehead so that his hair would not fall over his face. He halted a while on the bank gazing at the maiden, and all the maidens loved him. Thereupon he uttered this lay:

*23. This is Etain here to-day  
at Sid Ban Find west of Ailbe,  
among little boys is she  
on the brink of Inber Cichmaine.*

*She it is who healed the King's eye  
from the well of Loch Da Lig:  
she it is that was swallowed in a drink  
from a beaker by Etar's wife.*

*Because of her the King shall chase  
the birds from Tethba,  
and drown his two steeds  
in the pool of Loch Da Airbrech.*

*Full many a war shall be  
on Eochaid of Meath because of thee:  
there shall be destruction of elfmounds,  
and battle against many thousands.*

*'Tis she that was sung of (?) in the land;  
'tis she that strives to win the King;  
'tis she... Be Find,  
She is our Etain afterwards.*

The warrior departed from them after that and they knew not whence he had come or whither he had gone.

24. When the Mac Oc came to confer with Midir, he did not find Fuamnach there, and he (Midir) said to him: "The woman has played us false, and if she be told that Etain is in Ireland and she will go to do her ill." "Methinks 'tis likely so," said the Mac Oc. "Etain has been at my house in the Brug since a little while in the shape in which she was wafted from thee, and perhaps it is she that the woman is making for."

25. The Mac Oc returns home and finds the crystal sun-bower without Etain in it. The Mac Oc turns upon Fuamnach's traces and came up on her at Aenech Bodbgna at the house of Bresal Eterlam. The Mac Oc attacked her and shore off her head, and he brought that head with him until he was on the brink of the Brug.

26. Howbeit, this is the version elsewhere, that they were both slain by Manannan, namely Fuamnach and Midir, in Bri Leith, whereof was said:

*Fuamnach the foolish one was Midir's wife,  
Sigmall, a hill with ancient trees,  
in Bri Leith 'twas a faultless arrangement,  
they were burned by Manannan.*

## **II. The Wooing of Etain**

Eochaid Airem took the kingship of Ireland. The five Fifth of Ireland submitted to him, that is a king of each Fifth. These were their kings at that time: Conchobar son of Nesa and Mess Gegra and Tigernach Tetbannach and Cu Rui and Ailill son of Mata Murisc.

Eochaid's strongholds were Dun Freamainn in Meath and Dun Freamainn in Tethba.

Freamainn in Tethba was the one most dear to him of the strongholds of Ireland.

2. Eochaid, the year after he became king, commanded the men of Ireland to hold the Festival of Tara, in order to assess their tributes and taxes for five years. The men of Ireland made the same reply to Eochaid, that they would not convene the Festival of Tara for a king that had no queen; for Eochaid had no queen when he took the kingship. Thereupon Eochaid dispatched envoys to every Fifth throughout Ireland so to seek out for him the fairest (woman or) maiden in Ireland. For he said that none should be his wife save a woman that none of the men of Ireland had known before him. There was found for him at Inber Cichmaine, Etain daughter of Etar, and Eochaid wedded her then, for she was his match in beauty and form and lineage, in splendour and youth and fame.

3. The three sons of Find son of Findlug, the queen's sons, were Eochaid Feidlech and Eochaid Airem and Ailill Anguba. Ailill Anguba came to love Etain at the Festival of Tara, after she had lain with Eochaid, for it was his wont to gaze at her continually, and such gazing is a token of love. His heart reproached Ailill for the deed that he had wrought, but it availed him in no wise. Desire was stronger than character. Ailill fell into a decline lest his honour should be strained, nor had he spoken of it to the woman herself.

4. When he expected death, Fachtna, Eochaid's physician, was brought to see him. the physician said to him, "One of the two pains thou has that kill man and no physician can heal, the pain of love and the pain of jealousy." Ailill did not confess to him, for he was ashamed. Then Ailill was left in Freamainn Tethba dying, and Eochaid went out on a circuit of Ireland. And Etain was left with Ailill that his last rites might be paid by her--that is, his grave dug, his lamentation made, his cattle slain.

5. Every day Etain used to come to the house wherein Ailill lay sick to speak with him, and thus his sickness was alleviated, and as long as Etain remained there he would be gazing at her. Etain observed this, and pondered the matter. One day as they were together in her house, Etain asked him what was the cause of his sickness. "It is from love of thee," said Ailill. "Pity that thou has been so long without telling it," said she. Had we but known thou shouldst have been healed a while ago." "Even this day I shall be whole again if thou be willing." "I am willing indeed," said she.

6. Every day then she would come to bathe his head and to carve his meat and to pour water on his hands. After thrice nine days Ailill was healed. He said to Etain: and when shall I have from thee what is still lacking to cure me?" "Thou shalt have it to-morrow," said she; "but not in the prince's dwelling shall he be put to shame. Come to me to-morrow on the hill above the court."

7. Ailill watched through the night. But at the hour of his tryst he fell asleep, and did not wake until the third hour on the morrow. Etain went to meet him, and saw a man awaiting her like unto Ailill in appearance, and he lamented his weakness due to his ailment. The speech that Ailill would have wished is that is what he spoke. At the hour of tierce Ailill awoke. He began to be sorrowful for a long while when Etain came into the house "Why are thou sad?" said she. "That I should have sent thee to a tryst with me and was not there to meet thee. For sleep fell upon me, and I am only now arisen It is manifest that I have not yet attained my cure." "That matters not," said Etain, "one day follows another." He watched that night with a huge fire in front of him and water by his side for bathing his eyes.

8. At the hour of her tryst Etain come to meet him and saw the same man like unto Ailill. Etain returned home. Ailill fell to weeping. Three times Etain came and Ailill did not keep his tryst. She found ever the same man. "Tis not with thee that I have trysted," said she. "Who art thou that hast come to meet me? The man with whom I have made a tryst, 'tis not for sin or hurt that the tryst has been made with him, but that one fit to be king of Ireland might be saved from the sickness that has fallen upon him." "Twere more fitting for thee to come to me, for thou wast Etain Echraide, daughter of Ailill, tis I that was thy husband. I have paid thy huge brideprice in great plains and rivers of Ireland, and had left in place of thee thy weight of gold and silver." "Tell me," said she, "what is thy name?" "No hard matter, Midir of Bri Leith," said he. "Tell me," said she, "What was it that parted us?" "No hard matter, the sorcery of Fuamnach and the spells of Bresal Etarlam." Midir said to Etain, "Wilt thou go with me." "Nay," said she, "I will not barter the king of Ireland for a man whose kindred or race I know not." "It was I," said Midir, "that put love for thee into Ailill's mind, so that his flesh and blood fell away from him. And it was I that took from him all carnal desire, so that thine honour might not suffer therein. But come to my land with me if Eochaid bids thee." "Willingly," said Etain.

9. Then she comes to her house. "We are well met," said Ailill. "Now am I healed, and yet thine honour had not suffered." "It is well thus," said Etain. After that Eochaid returned

from his circuit, and rejoiced that his brother was still alive, and Etain received thanks for what she had done until he had come again.

### III. The Wooing of Etain

Another time on a lovely summer day Eochaid Airem king of Tara arose and climbed the terrace of Tara to gaze over Mag Berg. It was radiant with bloom of every hue. As Eochaid looked round him he saw a strange warrior on the terrace before him. A purple tunic about him, and golden yellow hair on him to the edge of his shoulders. A shining blue eye in his head. A five-pointed spear in one hand, a white-bossed shield in the other, with golden gems thereon. Eochaid was silent, for he was unaware of his being in Tara the night before, and the courts had not been opened at that hour.

2. Thereupon he came up to Eochaid. Then Eochaid said, "Welcome to the warrior whom we do not know." "Tis for that we have come," said the Warrior. "We know thee not," said Eochaid. "I know thee, however," replied the warrior. "What is thy name?" said Eochaid. "Not famous," said he, "Midir of Bri Leith." "What has brought thee?" said Eochaid. "To play chess<sup>1</sup> with thee," said he. "Of a truth I am good at chess," said Eochaid. "Let us make trial of it," said Midir. "The queen is asleep," said Eochaid, "and it is in her house that the chess-board is." "I have here," said Midir, "a chess-board that is not inferior." That was true: a silver board and golden men, and each corner there lit up by precious stone, and a bag for the men of plaited links of bronze.

3. Thereupon Midir arranges the board. "Do thou play," said Midir. "I will not play save for a stake," said Eochaid. "What shall the wager be?" said Midir. "It is all one to me," said Eochaid. "Thou shalt have from me," said Midir, "if thou win my stake, fifty dark grey steeds with dappled blood-red heads, pointed-ears, broad-chested, with distended nostrils, slender limbs, mighty, keen ..., huge, swift, steady easily yoked, with their fifty enamelled reins. They shall be here at the hour of tierce to-morrow." Eochaid said the same to him. Thereupon they play. Midir's stake is taken. He goes off taking his chess-board with him. When Eochaid arose on the morrow he came on the terrace of Tara as sunrise, and he saw his opponent also by coming towards him along the terrace. He knew not whither he had gone or whence he had come, and he saw the fifty dark grey steeds with their enamelled reins. "This is honourable," said Eochaid. "What is promised is due," said

Midir.

4. "Shall we play at chess?" said Midir. "Willingly," said Eochaid, "so it be for a stake." "Thou shalt have from me," said Midir, "fifty young boars, curly-motted, grey-bellied, blue-backed, with horses hooves to them, together with a vat of blackthorn into which they all will fit. Further, fifty gold-hilted swords, and again fifty red-eared cows with white red-eared calves with a bronze spancel on each calf. Further, fifty grey wethers with red heads, three-headed, three-horned. Further, fifty ivory-hilted swords. Further, fifty speckled cloaks, but each fifty of them on its own day."

5. Eochaid's fosterfather questioned him, and asked him whence he had brought his great wealth. He said to him, "That is indeed fit to relate." "Verily Indeed. Thou must take heed of him; it is a man of magic power that has come to thee, my son, lay heavy burdens on him." After that his opponent came to him, and Eochaid laid upon him the famous great tasks, namely to clear Meath of stone, to put rushes over Tethba, a causeway over Moin Lamraige, and a wood over Breifne. Concerning which the poet uttered the followings staves:

*These are the four things  
that Eochaid Airem imposed  
on many a manly-visaged throng  
with many a shield and spear:*

*A causeway over Moin Lamraige,  
a wood over Breifne, without difficulty,  
a clearing of stone from the hillocks of great Meath,  
and rushes over Tethba.*

6. These then are the pledges and the hardships that were imposed. "Thou layest too much upon me," said Midir. "I do not indeed," said Eochaid. "Then do thou grant me a request and a boon. As far as thou holdest sway let no man or woman be out of doors until sunrise to-morrow." "It shall be done," said Eochaid. No one had ever trodden that bog before.

7. Then Eochaid commanded his steward to watch the effort they put forth in making the causeway. The steward went into the bog. It seemed to him as though all the men in the world from sunrise to sunset had come to the bog. They all made one mound of their

clothes, and Midir went up to that mound. Into the bottom of the causeway they kept putting a forest with its trunks and roots, Midir standing and urging on the host on every side. One would think that below him all the men of the world were raising a tumult.

8. After that, clay and gravel and stones were placed upon the bog. Now until that night the men of Ireland used to put the strain on the foreheads of oxen, (but) it was seen that the folk of the elfmounds were putting it on their shoulders. Eochaid did the same, hence he is called Eochaid Airem [i.e. ploughman], for he was the first of the men of Ireland to put a yoke upon the necks of oxen. And these were the words that were on the lips of the host as they were making the causeway: "Put in hand, throw in hand, excellent oxen, in the hours after sundown; overhard is the exaction; none knoweth whose is the gain, whose the loss, from the causeway over Moin Lamraige."

There had been no better causeway in the world, had not a watch been set on them. Defects were left in them. There after the steward came to Eochaid and brings tidings of the vast work he had witnessed, and he said there was not on the ridge of the world a magic power that surpassed it.

9. While they were speaking they saw Midir coming towards them, his loins girt and an evil look on him. Eochaid was afraid, but bade him welcome. "Tis for that we have come," said Midir. "It is fierce and unreasonable of thee to lay such hardship and infliction upon me. I would have wrought something else to please thee, but my mind is inflamed against thee." "Thou shalt not get wrath in return for thy rage: thy mind shall be set at ease," said Eochaid. "It shall be accepted then," said Midir; "Shall we play at chess?" said Midir. "What shall the stake be?" said Eochaid. "The stake that either of us shall wish," said Midir. That day Eochaid's stake was taken. "Thou has taken my stake," said Eochaid. "Had I wished I could have taken it before now," said Midir. "What wouldst thou from me?" said Eochaid. "My arms around Etain and a kiss from her," said Midir. Eochaid was silent. "Come a month from to-day and that shall be given thee."

10. The year before Midir came to play chess with Eochaid he was wooing Etain, but he could not win her, the name by which Midir called her was Be Find [Fair Lady], and he spake to her:

*O Be Find, wilt thou come with me  
to the wondrous land wherein harmony is,*

*hair is like the crown of the primrose there.  
and the body smooth and white as snow.*

*There, is neither mine or thine,  
white are teeth there, dark the brows.  
A delight of the eye the number of our hosts,  
every cheek there is of the hue of the foxglove.*

*A gillyflower is each one's neck,  
a delight of the eye are blackbirds' eggs.  
Though fair the prospect of Mag Fail,  
'tis desolate after frequenting Mag Mar.*

*Though choice you deem the ale of Inis Fail,  
more intoxicating is the ale of Tir Mar.  
A wondrous land is the land I tell of;  
youth departs not there before old.*

*Warm sweet streams flow through the land,  
the choice of mead and wine.  
Stately folk without blemish,  
conception without sin, without lust.*

*We see everyone on every side,  
and no one sees us.  
It is the darkness of Adam's transgression  
that hath prevented us from being counted.*

*O woman, if thou come to my proud folk,  
a crown of gold shall be upon thy head  
honey, wine, ale, fresh milk, and drink,  
thou shalt have with me there, O Be Find.*

"I will go with thee" said Etain, "if thou obtain me from my husband, if thou obtain me not, I will not go."

11. After that Midir came to Eochaid, and he yielded his stake at once in order that he might have a ground of quarrel with Eochaid. Therefore it was that he fulfilled the onerous conditions, and it was for that reason he stipulated the unnamed pledge, so that it afterwards it was named.<sup>10</sup> When Midir and his people were carrying out the terms of the night, i.e. the causeway over Moin Lamraige, and the clearing away the stones from Meath and putting rushes over Tethba, and the wood over Breifne, these are the words people were saying, according to the Book of Druim Snechta:

12. [Cuirthe i iland toche i iland airderg damrudh trom an coidben cluinitar fir ferdi buidne balethruim crandchuir forderg saire fedhar sechuib slimprib snithib sciathu lama indrochad cloena fo bith oenmna duib in digail duib an tromdam tairthrim flatho fer ban fomnis in fer mbraine cerpai fomnis diadh dergage fer arfeidh solaid fri ais estild fer bron fort ier techta in delmnad o luachair for di Teithbi dictlochad Midi indracht coich les coich aimles.]

13. Midir made a tryst of a month from that day. But Eochaid mustered the flower of the warriors of Ireland to Tara, and the best of the war-bands of Ireland, each encircling the other around Tara, in the midst, without and within, and the king and queen in the middle of the house, and the courts locked, for they knew that a man of great magic power would come. Etain was serving the lords on that night, for the serving of drink was a special gift of hers.

14. Thereafter as they were speaking they saw Midir coming towards them in the midst of the royal house. He was fair at all times, but on that night he was fairer. The hosts were astonished. Then silence fell upon them, and the king bade him welcome. "'Tis that we have come for," said Midir; "what has been pledged to me," said he, "let it be given to me. What is promised is due. What was promised, I have given thee." "I have not thought further of that until now," said Eochaid. "Etain herself promised me that she would come away from thee," said Midir. Thereupon Etain blushes. "Do not blush, O Etain," said Midir. "It is not unwomanly for thee. I have been a year," said he, "seeking thee with gifts and treasures the most beautiful in Ireland, nor did I take thee until I had Eochaid's leave. It is not through any... though I should win thee?" "I have told thee," said she, "that I will not go to thee until Eochaid sell me. As for me, thou mayst take me if Eochaid sell me."

15. "I will not sell thee indeed," said Eochaid, "but let him put his arms round thee in the middle of the house as thou art." "It shall be done," said Midir. He takes his weapons in his

left hand, and the woman he took under his right arm, and bore her away through the skylight of the house. The hosts rose up in shame around the king. They beheld two swans in flight round Tara.

And the way they went was to Sid ar Femuin, and Eochaid went with a flower of men of Ireland around him to Sid ar Femuin, that is Sid Ban Find. And this was the counsel of the men of Ireland, to dig up every elfmound in Ireland until his wife came there out to him.

16. They dug up Sid Ban Find, and a certain person comes forth and told them that the woman was not there. "The king of the elfmounds of Ireland, he is the man who came to you. He is in his royal stronghold with the young woman. Set out thither until ye come to it." They go northwards. They began to dig up the elfmound. They were a year and three months at it. What they would dig up one day would be restored on the morrow. Two white ravens went forth from the mound to them, and there came two hounds, Schleth and Samair. They went south again to Sid Ban Find. They began to dig the elfmound. One comes forth to them and said to them, "What hast thou against us, O Eochaid?" said he. "We have not taken thy wife. No injury had been done thee. Beware of saying aught that may be harmful to a king." "I will not go hence," said Eochaid, "till ye tell me how I may attain my wife." "Take blind welps with thee, and blind cats, and leave them. That is the work thou must do every day." They turn away, and that is done by them. And in this manner they set about it.

17. As they were razing Sid Bri Leith they beheld Midir coming towards them. "What hast thou against me," said Midir. "Thou dost me wrong. Thou hast put great tribulations upon me. Thou didst sell thy wife to me. Injure me no more," said he. "She shall not be with thee," said Eochaid. "She shall not," said Midir. "Get thee home, Thy wife shall reach thee at the third hour to-morrow...," said Midir. "Injure me not again if thou art contented with me this time." "I accept," said Eochaid. Midir bound his covenants and departs from them. As they were there at the third hour on the morrow, they saw fifty women all of like form and raiment as Etain. Silence fell on the hosts. There was a grey slut before them. They say to Eochaid, "Choose thy wife now, or bid one of the women to abide with thee. It is meet that we set out for home."

18. "What will ye do," said Eochaid to the men of Ireland, "because of the doubt that has come upon you?" "We have no resolve as to what we shall do," said the men of Ireland. "I

have," said Eochaid. "My wife is the best at serving drink in Ireland. I shall recognize her by her serving." Twenty-five were placed at the side of the house and twenty five at this, and still he did not find Etain. It came at last to two women. One of them poured out first. Said Eochaid, "This is Etain, and it is not herself." Then they all took counsel. "Truly it is Etain, but it is not her serving." The rest of the women departed. That deed which he did was a great satisfaction to the men of Ireland, and the high feat the oxen had done, and the rescue of the woman from the men of the elfmounds.

19. One fine day Eochaid arose, and he and his queen were conversing in the middle of the court, they saw Midir coming towards them. "Well, Eochaid," said Midir. "Well," said Eochaid. "Thou has not played me fair with the hardships thou has inflicted on me, considering the backing thou hadst and all that... to demand from me. There was naught that thou didst not suspect me of." "I did not sell thee my wife," said Eochaid. "Answer, dost thou consider thy conscience in regard to me?" said Midir. "Until thou proffer another pledge, I will not consider it," said Eochaid. "Answer, is thy mind at ease?" said Midir. "It is," said Eochaid. "So also is mine," said Midir. "Thy wife was pregnant when she was taken from thee, and she bore a daughter, and it is she who is with thee. Thy wife, moreover, is with me and it had befallen thee to let her go a second time." Thereupon he departs.

20. After that Eochaid did not dare to dig again an elfmound of Midir's, for there was a bond against him. It grieved Eochaid that his wife had eloped, and that his own daughter had lain with him. And she was with child by him and bore him a daughter. "O ye gods," said Eochaid, "I and my daughter's daughter shall never look on one another," Two of his household go to throw her into a pit among beasts. They visit the house of Findlam the herdsman of Tara in Slaib Fuait, in the midst of a wilderness. There was no one in the house. They ate the food with in. Then they threw the girl to the bitch and her welps that was in the kennel in the house. They go away again. The herdsman and his wife return home and saw within the fair infant in the kennel. They were amazed at that. They take her out of the kennel. They brought her up without knowing whence she had come, and she waxed strong, moreover, being the daughter of a king and queen. She surpassed all women at embroidery. Her eyes saw nothing that her hands could not embroider. In that wise then she was reared by Findlam and his wife, until one day Etarscel's people saw her and told the king, and she was taken away forcibly by Etarscel, and was with him after that as his wife. So she is the mother of Conaire son of Etarscel.

21. And after that Eochaid Airem was in Fremain of Tethba, after he had lost Etain, and his mind was troubled. Sigmall Cael, grandson of Midir, that is, the son of Midir's daughter, Oicnis was her name, came and burned Eochaid's Dun Fremainn, and Eochaid fell by him and his head was brought by Sigmall to Sid Nennta in revenge for the honour of his grandfather, even Midir.

This is not so, however, for Sigmall and Fuamnach the wife of Midir had fallen at the hands of Manannan in Bri Leith long before that in the reign of the Tuatha De Danann: whereof the poet said:

*R. Fumnach the foolish one, was Midir's wife,  
Sigmall, a hill with ancient trees  
in Bri Leith, twas a faultless arrangement,  
they were burned by Manannan.*

22. It is this wise however that the death of Eochaid Airem came about, as the learned in ancient lore say:

Eochaid was in Fremainn of Tethba, as we have said, and it is there was his mansion and his ancestral domain towards the end. Hence there arose hard tribute of service beyond telling on the people of the district and the land, because the sustenance of the king usually fell on them, wherefore Tethba is called the seventh part of Ireland, for the seventh part of the tribute and the maintenance of the king fell on them. The Fir Chul of the Luigne of Tara were in Tara at this time, and on them that the tribute was laid. Normael was king of the Fir Chul then and he was the steward in Fremainn. His mother's son was Sigmall of Brestine son of Midir king of Bentraige. A plot was then hatched by them, and what they resolved on was the slaying of Eochaid.

23. Then they both set out, the Bentraige under Sigmall and the Fir Chul under Mormael, and they took Dun Fremainn, Eochaid's stronghold, and burned it, and slew him there. After that they went to Connacht with their spoils, and bore Eochaid's head along with them to Sid Nennta iar nUsicu (west of the water), so that commemorate that deed the historian uttered the following:

*Eochaid Airem, noble, fair and graceful,  
eminent high-king of Ireland,  
extended his bold hard tribute,  
it spread through Banda of of the brown cloaks.*

*The folk of Tethba of the stubborn fights  
got the tribute of the king of Ireland.  
The lawgiving king who...them, put  
the seventh (part) on them alone.*

*Heavy sorrow of the host came  
because of the monstrous unjust law,  
anger was kindled among because of it,  
until Eochaid Airem was slain.*

*The folk of Tethba, mighty of yore,  
slew Eochaid of Fremaind  
'Twas not strength with cause on their part,  
because of the monstrous unjust law.*

*Mormael was the name of the king at first  
by whom the great deed was done,  
Fir Chul the name of the men of Tethba in the east  
when Dun Fremainn was overpowered.*

*Though 'tis said that Sigmal of the spears  
slew Eochaid Airem,  
he died himself prior to Eochaid of Fremaind  
in the succession of leaders.*

*Sigmall of the battling spears died  
by the smooth bright face of Manannan;  
a vast long time in the east, without weakness,  
before Eochaid met his death.*

*The two Sigmalls of Sid Nennta,  
intrepid their feet, mighty their prowess,  
Sigmall son of Coirpre of the battles,  
Sigmall who was at Eochaid's death.*

*Sigmall son of Brestine of lasting [memory],  
king of Bentraige with great triumph,  
and great Mormael from the plain,  
by them Eochaid perished.*