

many exploits of marvellous cunning and strength. Here is a specimen of the warfare and of the spirit of this book throughout :

" Next morning Neara's sons outsped the rest  
Car-borne with brandished spears, and, ere the dew  
Was lifted, came to where Cuchullain sat  
Beneath an oak, sporting with blackbirds twain  
That followed him for aye. Toward the youths  
He waved his hand : ' Away, for ye are young !'  
In answer, forth they flung their spears : he caught them,  
And snapt them on his knee ; next, swift as fire,  
Sprang on the twain, and slew them with his sword,  
One blow."

Ailill, who, like most timid beings, was possessed of much cunning, since cunning is the instrument of the weak, suggested that Fergus, a king exiled from Ulster who joined Queen Meave to be avenged on the perjured usurper of his throne, be commissioned to his countryman, Cuchullain, with gifts to wean him from his alliance, but Fergus had many misgivings knowing so well how greatly Cuchullain loved his country. Finally, at the request of the Confederate King, he undertook the important and difficult mission, and the Ulster hero and his wronged and exiled countryman and whilom king, met, talked for long of "ancient days heaven-fair through mist of years," but, when Fergus made his proposal, it was met by Cuchullain in the only way open to an honest man—by curt refusal. But in accordance with agreements quite frequent among Irish antagonists in ancient times, he consented to forbear Meave's host till she had reached the border of Uladh (Ulster), the Queen engaging, on her side, that the warfare should then be restricted to a combat between himself and a single champion sent against him day by day. Fergus proposed the arrangement to the Confederate Chiefs :

" Twixt southern Erin and my Uladh's realm,  
Runs Neeth : across that river lies a ford ;  
Speak to Cuchullain : ' By that ford stand thou,  
Guarding thy land. Against thee, day by day,  
Be ours to send one champion—one alone—  
While lasts the strife forbear the host beside !"

Thenceforth the mighty champion of Ulster continued his warfare, himself against a host, and during ninety days he