

Before Queen Meave had penetrated to the heart of the province of Ulster, the confederate kings fell out among themselves—a peculiarity Irish leaders yet retain—and there burst forth a contention between them and the "Exile Band," the Ulidian followers of Fergus; but notwithstanding the dissensions, Queen Meave managed to make the circuit of Ulster, plundering as she went along, yet enacting nothing memorable, but on the contrary rather fore-enacting the events that hand down to posterity, just as effectively as if they had been heroic ones, the memory of the King of France who, with forty-thousand men, more or less, marched up a hill, and then—marched down again! She met with little opposition, for, owing to enchantment, the inhabitants of Ulster were as imbecile as if they were two modern Home Rule factions, slandering each other for mastery. The resistance offered by the fearless Ketherine in the very teeth of spells and enchantments, is magnificent:

"First of these
Was Ketherene. Hewing oaks on Ferad's crest
He marked her host, and rushed, a naked man
From waist to head, his axe within his hand,
In fury on it. Late that eve his kernes
Forth from the battle tore him bleeding fast
From fifty wounds."

When Queen Meave grew tired of wandering and plundering, she became despondent, and, heading for home, recrossed the Ulidian frontier.

The fifth and concluding book, called "Queen Meave's Retreat," tells how she, having reached the Plain of Uia, declared sacred by the Druids, wrongfully camped thereon, and proceeded to divide the spoil.

"From morn to eve
That spoil's partition lasted; first, huge herds:
Flocks snowy-white through water-weeds and grass
Followed, homed-driven. War-horses few were there
But many from the plough: with these in crowds
Poor hinds, and swine-herds, maidens skilled in works
That knew to spin the flax or mix the dye,
Or card the wool. Next followed wild-eyed boys
Round each to each. No tear they shed, but scowled
Defiance on their lords and sang fierce songs