

harrassed the forces of the Queen, and killed a large number of her best warriors.

The third book has for subject, "The Combat at the Ford," that is to say, the combat between Cuchullain, the champion of Ulster, defending the ford situated on the outskirts of Ulster, and the champions sent against him by the Queen and her confederates. This book is essentially a continuation of the preceding one, and Cuchullain is its hero throughout. It closes with a thrilling account of the terrible duel between Ferdia and his bosom friend Cuchullain, as a result of which fray, the former was slain and the latter grievously wounded, physically weakened, and made a victim in part to the evil enchantment that had worked so much calamity to the manhood of Ulster.

The fourth book describes the advance of Queen Meave on the fastnesses of Ulster, while the famous Red Branch Knights, the heroic militia of that province, were rendered imbecile by the spells breathed over them by Faythleen the Witch. At first Meave was successful everywhere, and the immortal Bull, "Cualgne's matchless Donn," was captured and despatched southward, only to fall a victim to a rivalry the description of which furnishes one of the finest episodes in the poem, and which I cannot refrain from quoting :

" Next day, ere dawn,
Southward she sent the Donn. Suspecting fraud,
He on his keepers turning siew a score,
Yet peaceful paced at last betwixt their ranks,
At each side fifty spears. Five days past by,
Forth rolled the roar of Ailill's bull, snow white,
Fionbannah. Bursting through his guard, the Donn
Rushed t'ward the sound. Upon the midway plain
The rivals met. All day that battle raged
While wood to wood, thunder on thunder hurled,
And all the bulls of Erin sent reply.
Shepherds, through wood-skirts peering, saw the end.
The Donn at sunset rushing t'ward the north.
And, heaped upon his back—their horns entwined—
Fionbannah dead ! all night the conqueror rushed
O'er hill and plain and prone morass. When dawn
Looked coldly forth through mist along the meads
Far off he kenned a rock ; that rock he deemed
A second Bull : collecting all his might
Thereon he hurled his giant bulk, and died."