



THE OLD IRISH
SAGA-ROMANCE OF DEIRDRE

by

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EMENDATIONS

(References are to page and line.)

- 6, 8. For Perfectly distinct and independent, read distinct and largely independent.
- 7, last line. After some of them, add as there is reason to believe.
- 9, 14-15. For it was rather ... old Uladh, read old Uladh was rather the extreme northeastern tip of Ireland....
- 13, 2 from bottom, ff. Read as follows: On the whole, the three cycles were very largely independent of each other; especially between the Ultonian and the Fenian Cycles is the connection of the very slightest. Both these cycles, however, contain a considerable admixture, etc.
- 143, 5 and 6 from bottom. For the four still remaining ... county in Leinster, read Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, and East and West Munster.
- 158, 10. For through Connaught ... Meath, read through Connaught, the two Munsters, and Leinster.
- 210, note 7. Read: Ulster (NE), Connaught (W), West Munster (SW), East Munster (S), and Leinster (SE). Shortly after this time, at the accession of the first High-King of Ireland and the establishment of his residence at Tara, the two Munsters became one and a new province, that of Meath, was formed. Today, Meath is a county in Leinster.

PREFACE

It was my original intention, when I began the work upon this study, to include not only the old Irish versions of the saga-romance of Deirdre, but all available modern adaptations in English by the writers of the Celtic Revival; indeed, these adaptations were to be the chief subject-matter, the remarks on the source-material simply an introduction to the main body of the paper. Very soon, however, I found that this preliminary matter must inevitably grow beyond the bounds I had thought to set it; and eventually, realizing that my original field of investigation was much too large for the intensive method of study into which I had allowed myself to drift, I put aside all my notes on the Modern Versions for possible later use, and in this paper confined myself to the old saga. I have tried to be consistent in this practice, excluding all or nearly all reference to recent literary adaptations of the story, and refusing even the aid they give a posteriori to a study of the source material.

My unfamiliarity with the field of Celtic scholarship, especially during the early stages of the work, deprived me of the service of many valuable books which would have made this paper more complete and more accurate, but which came to my notice too late for use. Dr. Rudolf Thurneysen's "Irische Helden- und Königsage" was one of these, but I contrived to make it the basis of one of my later chapters (VII); but Eleanor Hull's article in Folk-Lore (Vol. XV), "The Story of Deirdre, in its bearing on the Social Development of the Folk-tale", I discovered after there was no longer time to revise my discussion of Deirdre's character.

The purpose of this elementary study is not to add another volume to the vast but still-growing library of Celtic philology, but only to furnish a background, slight though it may be, for those who read the dramas, prose-tales and poems of modern Irish writers: to supply these readers with some knowledge of the old romance, for the sake of its own great beauty and for the sake of the beauty it has called forth in our ~~own~~ day, that they may read more perfectly the meaning of these modern poets, and see "beyond the shaken reeds of the mind the depth-held star of the old passion of beauty, the

old longing, the old enchantment."

For their kindness, and for their willingness to aid me in the preparation of this paper, my sincere thanks are due to Dr. Douglas Hyde of University College, Dublin, and to Professors S. L. Whitcomb, W. S. Johnson, J. M. Burnham, R. D. O'Leary and Albert Bloch of the University of Kansas, as well as to Miss Marjorie Rumble and Miss Ida Day of the University library, for their indulgence and their patience.

B. B.

Lawrence, Kansas,

14 May 1929.

DEIRDRE

O fair first blossom in the wreath of rime!
First silver peal from a long-silenced bell!
Though Ireland hath forgot the trophied prime
 Of which her poets tell,
She dreams undimmed your beauty, and the chime
That was your voice before the dawn of time.

Though ages rot, and Ireland fall from fame,
Forgetful even of her warriors' death,
Your wonder is eternal as your name:
 Your fragrant hair, your breath
Still sweeten all her days; and in the flame
Of your fierce love, Erin is purged of shame.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY:
THE SAGA CYCLES

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THE OLD IRISH
SAGA-ROMANCE OF DEIRDRE

*

Chapter One

INTRODUCTORY: THE SAGA CYCLES

"Celtic myth and legend, where the loveliness of the world is shown through a mist of tears, and the life of a man is no more than the life of a flower."

---Oscar Wilde

"The ancient literature of the Celt leads us into a world of pure romance. To study it, we must be content for a while to loosen our hold upon external fact; legends of strange gods, romantic adventures that seem to belong to fairyland, strange over-sea voyages and descents into the mysterious unseen world believed to exist beneath the hills or across the lakes and seas will meet us everywhere. We shall find the tenderest love-tales and songs of love; we shall find poems on natural scenery, in which there is revealed what Matthew Arnold calls 'a magic intimacy with nature'; we shall hear alike the ring of battle, the bugle-call of the chase, the eulogy of the chieftain, the

passionate lament of the down-trodden and lonely peasant." 1

With these words Eleanor Hull, one of the most sympathetic writers on Irish legend, opens her discussion of the subject; yet before the dawn of the Celtic Revival forty years ago, ancient Celtic literature --- in particular ancient Irish literature --- was known, except for the greatly transformed Arthurian legends and a few pseudo-Celtic fabrications like Ossian or Moore's Melodies, to none but folklorists and philologues. Matthew Arnold could still call ~~it~~ the Irish "a despised literature"; ^{so late as 1897,} and Francis T. Palgrave, the editor of the Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics, in his notes to the Second Series, commented thus upon a piece by Sir Samuel Ferguson: "This nobly, if roughly, energetic ballad raises a regret that the writer should have so largely given away his genius to the attempt to vivify the ancient Irish legends, scattered over as they are with beauty, to English readers. It must be feared they are too remote, too lost from tradition, for that process." 2 To-day, through the work of poets who believed that the Gaelic Past was not too remote and not too lost from tradition to give Ireland a

new literature of her own, in her own language and in English, there is no more active group of writers anywhere than those who followed the leadership of Douglas Hyde, William Butler Yeats, ^{and} George William Russell, the founders, in their several capacities, of the Celtic Revival. ³

Ireland, writes M. Darmesteter in his "English Studies", "has the peculiar privilege of a history continuous from the earliest centuries of our era until the present day. She has preserved in the infinite wealth of her literature a complete and faithful picture of the ancient civilization of the Celts. Irish literature is therefore the key which opens the Celtic world." ⁴ Some idea may be gained of this "infinite wealth" from the following quotation: "Eugene O'Curry says, that the great vellum manuscript books belonging to Trinity College, Dublin, and to the Royal Irish Academy, --- books with fascinating titles, the Book of the Dun Cow, the Book of Leinster, the Book of Ballymote, the Book of Lecain, the Yellow Book of Lecain, --- have, between them, matter enough to fill 11,400 of these pages [large folios, closely printed]; the other vellum manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, have matter enough to fill 8200 pages more; and the paper manuscripts of Trinity College, and the Royal

Irish Academy together, would fill, he says, 30,000 such pages more": 5 just short of 50,000 pages in all, and counting the material not mentioned here, far exceeding that number! Much of this vast bulk of literature is of an ecclesiastical nature: writings upon church matters by the innumerable monks who gave "the Isle of Saints and Scholars" her pre-eminence among European countries, for holiness and learning, in the early Middle Ages. But by far the greater part of it consists of the so-called Historic Tales and Imaginative Tales, --- the former curiously classified as battles, voyages, sieges, tragedies, cow-spells, courtships, adventures, land-expeditions, sea-expeditions, banquets, elopements, loves, lake-irruptions, colonizations and visions. "Of what a treasure-house of resources", cries Arnold, "for the history of Celtic life and the Celtic genius does that bare list, even by itself, call up the image!" 6

The finest type of Irish literature and the most distinctively Irish is the saga-romance: the popular tale, of incalculable antiquity and unknown origin, for centuries carried on by oral tradition among bards and professional story-tellers; during the

later Middle Ages collected in the great anthologies by monastic and secular scribes; and of late years rendered in large part accessible to the world by the labor of many scholars and poets. These sagaromances, "the finest flower of early Irish literature" and the real "key which opens the Celtic world", are divided by chronology and subject-matter into three perfectly distinct and independent groups or cycles: the Mythological, the Heroic, and the Fenian. Of these a brief account must now be given. 7

The tales of the Mythological Cycle treat of the old gods of the Irish pantheon, "of peoples, races, dynasties, the struggle between good and evil principles. The whole of their creations are thrown back, even by the Irish annalists themselves, into the dim cloud-land of an unplumbed past, ages before the dawn of the first Olympiad, or the birth of the wolf-suckled twins who founded Rome. There is over all a shadowy sense of vagueness, vastness, uncertainty." 8

The Tuatha De Danann, as they are called --- that is, "the Tribes Divine of Dana" --- were the fifth great body of invaders to land in Ireland. They made their appearance ^{there} about seventeen centuries before Christ, overcame the inhabitants of the island, the Firbolgs, in the great Battle of North Moytura, and

gained control of the entire country. "This sovereignty they maintained for about two hundred years," writes Dr. Hyde, "until the ancestors of the present Irish, the Scots, or Gaels, or Milesians, as they are variously called, landed and beat the Tuatha De Danann, and reigned in their stead until they, too, in their turn were conquered by the English." ⁹ It will suffice here to name a few of the chief divinities of this pantheon:--- Dana, the mother of the gods, who gave the race their name; the Dagda Mór, the Good God, or Creator, "the Lord of All Knowledge", greatest of the line; Ogmios or Ogma, whom Lucian described in the second century as "an old, bald man who drew behind him a willing crowd of people fastened to him by slender golden chains, the ends of which passed through his tongue" --- obviously the god of eloquence and wit, for whom is named ogam or ogham, the oldest kind of writing known to the Celts; Brigit, the Irish Minerva, goddess of wisdom and knowledge, the presiding genius of industry and the arts, and the namesake of Ireland's most famous woman saint; the savage furies of battle, Badb (bive), Macha, and the Morrighu (Morrigan), who fluttered in the shape of crows over the lances of warring armies; Nuada of the Silver Hand, called Nodens by the Romans and worshipped by some of them; Lugh the Long-Handed,

a brilliant youthful god, who has given his name to the towns of Laon, Leyden, and Lyons (all = Lugu-dunum, the dún of Lugh); Midir, the "Very Proud One", whose wife was Etain, one of the mournful dream-figures of Celtic myth; Angus Óg, the Young, the god of beauty and love, a sort of Irish Adonis; and the great Manannán Mac Lir, the son of the Sea, "whose changing moods and dwelling¹-places well represent the moving, unstable ocean." ¹⁰ These misty beings, after their short period of supremacy, sank rapidly to a more and more obscure position. "They appear to have for the most part retired off the surface of the country", says Dr. Hyde, "into the green hills and mounds, and lived in these, often appearing among the Milesian population, and sometimes giving their daughters in marriage to them. From this out they are confused with the Sidhe (Shee), or spirits, now called fairies, and to this day I have heard old men, when speaking of the fairies who inhabit ~~the~~ ancient raths and interfere occasionally in mortal concerns either for good or evil, call them by the name of the Tuatha De Danann." ¹¹

The second ¹² of the three great saga-cycles is variously known as the Heroic, the Ultonian, or the Red Branch. The central figure of the group is Conor

Mac Nessa, High-King of Ulster at the beginning of the Christian era. Certain historians record that his birth-night was the same as that of Jesus; others make the birth of Christ fall into the twenty-seventh year of his reign. Tigernach, one of the Irish annalists of the Middle Ages, states that Conor became king in the year of Antony and Cleopatra's death (30 B.C.) and ruled until the eighth year of Tiberius (A.D. 22); while a more recent "synchronism" in the Book of Ballymote sets the beginning of Conor's reign at the fifteenth year of Octavian (48 B.C.). 13

The Ulster of these tales was not co-extensive with the modern province of that name: it was rather the extreme eastern portion of old Uladh, east of Lough Neagh and the River Bann --- roughly equivalent, that is, to the present county of Antrim. "It is curious to us," remarks Eleanor Hull, "to whom this particular district, the neighborhood of Belfast, Lurgan and Newry, with their surrounding manufacturing towns, represents the most commercial and industrial, we may even say, the most prosaic centre of Ireland, to reflect that it was from this very area that the finest of our old romances and the most splendid Gaelic conceptions of chivalry,

valour and honour emerged and took shape." ¹⁴ The capital of Ulster and Conor's royal residence was Emain, or Emain Macha (Latinized Emania). It was destroyed in 332 A.D., but traces of it --- the great earthworks of Navan Fort --- may be still seen a few miles south of Armagh. Here the king held his court, and assembled about him a company of the bravest and noblest warriors in Ulster, who are known, from the name of their chief banqueting-hall (Craeb ruad), as the Heroes of the Red Branch. ¹⁵ The parallel furnished in Welsh literature by the stories of Arthur and his Round Table is obvious; but the Red Branch sagas "hail to us from an earlier age, and represent a more archaic system of life and thought. Some of them, like the Arthurian tales, have gone through successive changes and developments in the course of centuries of repetition; but the larger number bear the impress of a ~~b~~ very early stage of society and primitive thought." ¹⁶

The twelve chief heroes of the Red Branch, most of whom will appear more or less prominently in later parts of this paper, were these: Fergus, the son of Rogh, before Conor's accession the king of Ulster; Conall Cearnach, "the Victorious"; Laegaire Buadach, "the Battle-Winner"; Cuchulain, the son of Sualtaim; Eogan, the son of Durthacht,

chief of Fernmaige or Ferney; Celthair, son of Uthecar; Dubthach Doel Uládh, "the Beetle of Ulster"; Muinremar, son of Geirgind; Cethern, son of Findtain; and the three sons of Usnach, Naisi, Ainnle, and Ardan. The greatest of these, the Irish Achilles as he has been called, was Cuchulain. His real name was Setanta, but in consequence of one of his feats at the age of seven, he was known generally as the Hound (Cu) of Culann the Smith. He is the supreme figure, rather than Conor, of the Ultonian cycle, and his deeds fill many of its pages. His greatest exploit, in which he fought single-handed against the combined armies of four provinces and kept them from advancing into Ulster, is recounted in the central tale of the cycle, the most important and the one out of which almost all the other tales developed: the Táin bó Cualgne (tawn bo hoo-ll-n'ya) or Cooley Cattle Raid, in which Queen Maeve of Connaught invaded the district of Cualgne, in Ulster, for the purpose of driving off a great bull, the largest and strongest in the country. 17

On the authenticity of the characters appear-

ing in this cycle, the following note by Zimmer, quoted by Dr. Hyde in his Literary History of Ireland, will be enough here: "Nothing," he writes, "except a spurious criticism which takes for original and primitive the most palpable nonsense of which Middle-Irish writers from the twelfth to the sixteenth century are guilty with regard to their own antiquity, which is in many respects strange and foreign to them: nothing but such a criticism can, on the other hand, make the attempt to doubt of the historical character of the chief persons of the Saga cycles. For we believe that Mève, Conor mac Nessa, Cuchulain, and Finn mac Cúmhail, are exactly as much historical personalities as Arminius, or Dietrich of Bern, or Etzel, and their date just as well determined as that of the above-mentioned heroes and kings, who are glorified in song by the Germans, even though, in the case of Irish heroes and kings, external witnesses are wanting." 18

The third of the saga-cycles, the Fenian or Ossianic, needs to be just mentioned here, as it bears no relation whatever to the subject of this paper. Its central figure is nominally King Cormac mac Art, a figure of unquestioned historical reality;

but actually it deals with the adventures of Finn mac Cúmhail (cool), the leader of a band of militia, a sort of standing army for the protection of Ireland, called the Fena (Fianna). "The cycle is quite distinct from the Red Branch group of tales and is more popular in its appeal, touching the common life of the people, as the more aristocratic Red Branch stories do not. The Fenian tales have little of the epic sweep, elevation, and mystery to be found in the earlier cycle. They present a curious spectacle of a continued growth --- the earliest stories/^{going}back probably to the seventh and eighth centuries, and the later material consisting not merely of copies, expansions, and elaborations but actually of new tales built up on minor incidents or suggestions contained in the earlier ones." 19

The events of which these sagas treat are of the third century A.D.; but an obviously Christian addition makes Ossian, the son of Finn, after a sojourn of more than a century in Tir na'n-Og (the Land of the Young), return to Ireland in the fifth century and hold converse with Saint Patrick.

On the whole, the three cycles are altogether independent of each other; especially free is the

Fenian group from any contact with the others. But the Red Branch tales contain a very considerable admixture from the older cycle: many of the Tuatha De Danann, either in their original form as gods and goddesses, or in the reduced form of the sidhe, make their appearance in these later sagas; and although these contain little enough which can be called religious, the pagan divinities of Ireland now and then play a part in the concerns of Conor and his warriors very much like that of the Greek deities in the epics of the Trojan war. In the *Táin bó Cúalgne*, for example, the war-goddess Morrigan, assuming successively the shape of a cow, an eel, a wolf and a crow, seeks (unsuccessfully, of course) to kill Cuchulain; "Badb's wild daughter", another fury of battle, is introduced in a speech by Fergus; and "Cuchulain himself, the incarnation of Irish ἀπιστεία, is according to certain authorities the son of the god Lugh the Long-handed." 20

Among Irish saga-romances are three of especial beauty, "ancient tragedies founded respectively on love, jealousy, and murder," ²¹ and known since the earliest times as the Three Sorrows of Story-Telling. Two of these tales belong to the Mythological Cycle: "The Fate of the Children of Lir", which tells of the sufferings of Finnuala and her brothers, transformed by an evil stepmother into swans and condemned to wander homeless and friendless for nine hundred years on the waters of Lake Darvra, the Moyle, and the Western Sea, until the sound of a Christian bell should liberate them; and "The Fate of the Children of Tuireann", who killed the father of the god Lugh, and were obliged to endure the most fearful hardships, achieve the most formidable tasks and finally suffer death, in order to pay his eric or blood-fine.

The third and finest of the Three Sorrows is "The Fate of the Children of Usnach," whose unforgettable heroine is Deirdre. It belongs to the Red Branch Cycle, and is an organic part of it, being one of the incidents preparing the way for the Táin; yet the tale of Deirdre is ^a completely rounded piece of narrative, embracing the entire life-span of its central figure. It is beyond question the most

famous and most tragic of all Irish romances. "In all the regions of the Gael throughout Scotland," writes Fiona Macleod, "and in every isle, from Arran and Islay in the south to Iona in the west and Tiree in mid-sea and the Outer Hebrides, there is ~~not~~ no story of the old far-off days so well known as the story of Deirdrê. . . ; and in Ireland to this day there is not a cowherd who has not heard of that queenly name." ²² She was indeed

the morning star of loveliness,
Unhappy Helen of a western land,

of whom almost every poet of modern Ireland has written his best work. ²³

"Her beauty filled the old world of the Gael with a sweet, wonderful, and abiding rumour. The name of Deirdrê has been as a lamp to a thousand poets. In a land of heroes and brave and beautiful women, how shall one name survive? Yet to this day and for ever, men will remember Deirdrê, the torch of men's thoughts For beauty is the most unforgettable thing in the world, ~~and~~ and though of it a few perish, and the myriad dies unknowing and uncaring, beneath it the nations of men move as beneath their pilgrim star." ²⁴

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOURCE MATERIAL

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Chapter Two
THE SOURCE MATERIAL

"A Tale of the times of old!"
---Ossian

The romances of King Conor and his Red Branch warriors must have been familiar to the people of Ireland at a very early time: before the advent of Saint Patrick, it may be. But for centuries these tales were preserved only in the memory ~~and~~ and on the lips of professional story-tellers; ¹ and even when scribes at last began to put them into the great vellum books that are the pride of ancient Irish literature, not all the stories were written down at once. The oldest collection, for example, the "Book of the Dun Cow" (finished about 1100), lacks many parts of the cycle that are included in later anthologies. Of the Fate of the Children of Usnach, the first record is a fragmentary poem of eight lines, written in the tenth century by Cinaed hua Artacain: a lyrical commentary, it seems, on certain events in the story.

Although it is possible that a manuscript version as old as this poem once existed, but has been lost,² the oldest actually surviving form of the romance of Deirdre appears in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster (abbreviated L.L.³), a collection of histories, romances, and poems made by Finn mac Gorman, a Bishop of Kildare who died in 1160, "in the reign of Dermot mac Morrough, King of Leinster".⁴

The story is found next recorded in a similar but far larger collection, the Yellow Book of Lecan,⁵ compiled about the year 1391 by the Mac Firbis family (chiefly by Gilla Iosa, son of Donnchadh Mór mac Firbis), hereditary scribes and genealogists to the line of O'Dowd, in what is now County Sligo.⁶ This version of the Deirdre-saga is practically identical with that contained in L.L., and the two are known together as the First Redaction. They have been edited by the Celtologues Eugene O'Curry and M. E. Windisch, and appear in French translation in M. H. d'Arbois de Jubainville's L'épopée celtique, volume V of his Cours de la littérature celtique.

A manuscript^{was} recently discovered by Dr. Douglas Hyde in the museum in Belfast, copied at the end of

the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century by a northern scribe from an original which must have been fairly old: Eleanor Hull is doubtless correct in placing it in the seventeenth century. This manuscript (abbreviated Belf.) contains a more elaborate rendering of the First Redaction --- "the amplest and most graphic version of them all", says Dr. Hyde. ⁷ Of his translation of this manuscript an abstract is given below in Chapter Three for purposes of comparison with L.L.

Among the manuscripts in the Library of the Advocates in Edinburgh are two (numbers LIII and LVI) dating respectively from the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, which contain a version of the story in many important features utterly unlike the First Redaction. Even allowing for the comparative lateness of this Second Redaction (abbreviated Edb.), the differences are so great and so fundamental that one must assume them to have arisen in the earliest oral renderings of the romance, before these had been given a definite form by the scribe's quill.

The most modern version of the Fate of the

Children of Usnach (not including, of course, the adaptations or retellings of the story by writers of the Celtic Renaissance) is that which Alexander Carmichael copied in 1867 from oral tradition in the Scottish Highlands (abbreviated O.T. = "Oral Tradition"). Carmichael's book, Deirdre and the Lay of the Children of Uisne (Dublin 1905), is based on the recital of an old man ^{of} eighty-three years ~~old~~, John Mac Neill, of the Island of Barra; and its many modern touches illustrate the effect of changing times upon long oral tradition. M. de Jubainville, who includes in his work a reprint of M. G. Dottin's French translation of Carmichael's Gaelic text, names it the Third Redaction. Strictly speaking, however, it follows not only the two mentioned already, but numerous others of less importance: for example, those contained in Geoffrey Keating's History of Ireland (17th century) and in the Transactions of the Dublin Gaelic Society for the year 1808. ⁸

Although there is no organic connection between the Second and Third Redactions ⁹ except, of course, in their ultimate common origin, M. de Jubainville prints only half of each, making the first part of O.T. and the second part of Edb. complements. Whether O.T. is complete in itself he does not indicate; but

Edb., according to his note on page 252, exists as a fragment only. The version resulting from the combination of these two redactions, though it follows in general outline or idea the plot of L.L., yet differs from it not only in countless details, but in its whole structure and plan as well. These basic similarities and basic differences, besides many differences and similarities less important, may be observed in the synopses in Chapter Three.

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Summary of Chief Source Material

12th century: First Redaction, in the Book of Leinster (L.L.), 1140.

14th century: First Redaction, in the Yellow Book of Lecan, 1391.

15th century: Second Redaction, in MS. LIII, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

17th century: Version contained in Geoffrey Keating's History of Ireland.

17th century: Modernized form of First Redaction, in a MS. from the museum in Belfast (Belf.).

18th century: Second Redaction, in MS. LVI, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

18th century: Version published in the "Transactions" of the Dublin Gaelic Society, 1808.

19th century: Third Redaction, collected from Oral Tradition in the Scottish Highlands by Alexander Carmichael in 1867. (O.T.)

CHAPTER THREE

PLOT

Chapter Three

PLOT

"There's a tale about it--...
Some wild old sorrowful tale."
---Yeats

For the discussion of the old saga-romance of Deirdre which will occupy the later chapters of this study, a fairly complete, if elementary, knowledge of the chief [three redactions is essential. The synopses here given are enough to indicate the general movement of the plot in each story, the more obvious traits of character in the figures who move through it, and perhaps even something of the style of the original versions. Many details, however, --- some to be later spoken of --- are necessarily omitted.

M. de Jubainville recognizes two major divisions of the Deirdre-saga: the first from Deirdre's birth to her escape with Naisi to Alban (Scotland), the second thence to her death and the beginnings of the aftermath. For the sake of convenience, the whole story has been here

further divided into twenty-one episodes, based on the "ideal version": the form of the plot, that is, most frequently appearing in modern adaptations of the story, and consisting in general of a combination of the first part of L.L. and the second part of Edb. These episodes are:---

Part One

1. Deirdre's birth and the druid's phrophecy
2. Secret rearing of Deirdre
3. Dawn of love in Deirdre
4. Her meeting with Naisi
5. Their flight to Alban
6. Their life in Alban
7. Unrest in Emain

(The last episode is closely connected with the eighth, but M. de Jubainville puts the division between them.)

Part Two

8. Conor's plot
9. Fergus' arrival in Alban; his message
10. Departure from Alban

11. Arrival in Ireland; Borach's feast
12. Journey to Emain; arrival there
13. Conor's espionage
14. Attack on the Red Branch house
15. Buinne's desertion
16. Illann's combat with Fiachra
17. Combats of the sons of Usnach
18. The enchantments
19. Death of the sons of Usnach
20. Lamentations and death of Deirdre
21. The aftermath: Fergus' revenge

Note 1: Reference to these twenty-one episodes will hereafter be made only by number, as: # 14 ("Attack on the Red Branch house").

Note 2: In order to avoid the complications that would certainly otherwise result, a single name for each character has been chosen from among the variant forms found in different versions. The spelling used in the following synopses and throughout this paper ~~ans~~ is either the most common, or the simplest, or the most easily pronounced. In quotations, however, (except in translations from the French of M. de Jubainville's work) the form used in the particular passage quoted has been retained.

THE FIRST REDACTION

in the Book of Leinster (twelfth century) and the Yellow Book of Lecan (fourteenth century). After H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, L'épopée celtique en Irlande, pages 220 - 236.

Part One

1. The Ultonians were assembled at the house of Felim, harper to King Conor. It chanced that Felim's wife was pregnant at the time, and as the warriors were sitting at the feast, the infant within her womb cried out in a loud voice. Sencha, the son of Ailill, one of the king's judges, ordered silence that the prodigy might be explained, and Felim in a short lyric outburst expressed his wonder and dread. Sencha delivered the woman over to the druid Cathba, who prophesied the birth of a girl, described her beauty, and predicted the terrible disasters she was to bring upon Ulster. Laying his hands upon the woman's waist, he felt the child in the womb struggling, and therefore named her Deirdre ("celle-qui-se-débat"). The child was born soon after, and once more Cathba foretold the doom that was to come through her. The Ultonians,

terrified by these predictions, clamored for the girl's death; but Conor claimed her for his bride-to-be, and so saved her life.

2. The king took Deirdre from her parents and reared her in his own city, but in a house apart from the royal palace, where none might enter save her tutor, her nurse, and a sorceress named Lavarcham: "aucun homme ne devait la voir avant qu'elle devint l'épouse de Conchobar." In time she became "la plus jolie fille d'Irlande".

3. One winter day, ¹ Deirdre's tutor had killed a young calf before the door of her dwelling. She saw the blood run out over the snow, and a raven come to drink of it. She said thereupon to Lavarcham: "Le seul homme que j'aimerais serait celui qui aurait ces trois couleurs-là: les cheveux noirs comme le corbeau, les joues rouges comme le sang, le corps blanc comme le neige." ² The old sorceress replied that she might have her desire with ease; for Naisi, one of the sons of Usnach, was near-by in the palace.

4. At this moment, Naisi himself was walking on the rampart of the palace at Emain, his tenor voice raised in song. Deirdre saw him, stole out

from her dwelling, and confronted him. He did not know her, yet he was stricken by her great beauty. Deirdre, with perfect frankness, revealed at once her identity and the passion she had conceived for him, and implored him to elope with her then and there. Naisi hesitated at first, fearing to incur the doom foretold by Cathba, but finally yielded to the girl's fierce pleading. Once more, then, he burst out into song; and his two brothers Ainnle and Ardan, attracted by the sound of his voice, joined him. When they had been told of the planned elopement, they expressed a vague fear of the result; but both eventually resolved to accompany their brother and Deirdre to another province, where they might be safe from Conor's vengeance.

5. That same night they left Ulster, taking with them thrice fifty warriors and as many women, dogs, and pages. For a long time they lived in Southern Ireland, under the protection of various kings; but Conor's repeated attempts to kill them in ambuscades and by treachery forced them continually to change their place of concealment. Driven from the cataracts of the Erne in Donegal, they made a circuit of the west, south and east coasts of Ireland [thus avoiding the north, where Ulster lay],

and finally took refuge in Alban,³ where they built themselves a dwelling in the wilderness.

6. In Alban they lived on the fruits of their hunting, and, when they had exhausted the supply of game, preyed on the live-stock of the native inhabitants. Aroused by the three brothers' repeated acts of depredation, the natives finally attempted to kill them; but the sons of Usnach obtained the aid of the king of Alban and took service with him as warriors. They set up their dwelling now within the royal enclosure, and in order that Deirdre might remain concealed from all eyes kept her day and night in her hut; for they feared that if she were discovered they would be slain because of her. One day, however, the king's steward entered the place where Naisi and Deirdre lay sleeping, and at once informed the king of his discovery. He advised the king to kill the sons of Usnach and take the woman for himself, but this the king would not do; he did, however, send back the steward to ask Deirdre to meet him each night by stealth. Unfortunately for the king's plan, Deirdre told to Naisi each night whatever message the steward had brought her during the day; so that the king, unable to achieve his

desire, satisfied his jealousy by sending the sons of Usnach into all his most dangerous battles, hoping to see them killed; but every time they returned victorious. Finally, on the advice of his steward, the king assembled the men of Alban to murder the three brothers and to seize Deirdre. Somehow gaining wind of the plot [though no indication is given of how she discovered it], she counselled them to flee, warning them that another night spent in the royal enclosure would mean death. They accepted her advice, left the king's palace at once, and fled to an island in the sea.

7. Meanwhile, the Ultonians were complaining to Conor of the long absence of the sons of Usnach, saying, "Il est malheureux, ô Conchobar, que les fils d'Usnech périssent en pays ennemi par la faute d'une mauvaise femme." The king, complying with their wishes, sent a messenger to Alban to offer the brothers safe-conduct. They replied that if a good reception were guaranteed them at Emain, and if Fergus, Dubthach and Conor's own son Cormac [Conlingas] would act as securities for the king's honor, they would return. The three warriors mentioned, accordingly, set sail for Alban and brought back Naisi and his brothers to their native land.

Part Two

8, 9, 10. Omitted.

11. [Borach] invited Fergus to a feast, as Conor had bidden him. [Consequently Fergus and the sons of Usnach were separated, for the latter would not enter Borach's house.] They refused to take either food or drink in Ireland until they should take it in the company of Conor. However, Fiacha, the son of Fergus, accompanied them [on their journey to Emain]. Fergus, Dubthach, [and Cormac] remained [with Borach]. (The portions in brackets are added by the editor, M. de Jubainville.)

12. As the sons of Usnach entered the royal enclosure of Emain, Eogan, the king of Ferney, approached them from the palace. He had just concluded a treaty of peace with Conor after long hostilities, and had been commissioned by his new ally to murder the sons of Usnach. Conor's own soldiers went with him as a body-guard in case Naisi or his brothers should resist him. As the two parties, Naisi's and Eogan's, approached each other in the enclosure, the women [of the palace?]

were seated on the parapet of Emain, watching. Apparently sensing the danger, Fiacha the son of Fergus placed himself close to Naisi's side.

13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. Omitted.

19. By way of greeting, Eogan transfixed Naisi with his lance: "la lance sortit par le dos"! Fiacha caught the falling hero in his arms and fell with him: "il était dessus et Noïsé dessous; ce fut ainsi que Noïsé mourut entre les bras du fils de Fergus et sous lui." The brothers of Naisi, together with their companions and their women, were likewise killed. Only Deirdre was spared, to be turned over, with hands bound behind her, to the king.

21. (N.B.: The aftermath --- that is, the consequence of the murder of Naisi --- is related in this version before Deirdre's death. Hence the transposition of # 20 and # 21.) When Fergus, Dubthach, and Cormac learned of these murders, they performed great feats of vengeance: Dubthach killed at a single blow Mane and Fiachna, respectively the son and the grandson of Conor; and Fergus killed Traigthreoin ("Strong-foot") and his brother, the sons of Traiglethan ("Broad-foot"). Conor, who looked

upon these four killings as a great insult to him, offered battle to Fergus and his party, but lost three hundred warriors on the first day of fighting. That night, while Fergus set fire to Emain, Dubthach entered the Ultonian camp and murdered all the women; then the two fled from Ulster to the court of Queen Maeve and King Ailill of Connaught at Cruachan, where they found a good welcome, and whence they continued for sixteen years to wage war upon Conor, bringing fearful destruction upon the Ultonians.

20. After Naisi's death, Deirdre lived a whole year with Conor, remaining all the while melancholy and brooding: "elle ne mangea pas à sa faim, ne dormit pas, ne leva pas la tête de dessus ses genoux." To the efforts of minstrels and musicians to alleviate her sadness, she replied only with laments for Naisi; and when Conor himself sought to calm her, she flung taunts and reproaches at him and resumed her praise of the dead sons of Usnach. Finally the king asked her what man she most hated in all the world. With her old frank directness unchanged, she replied: "Toi, certes, puis Eogan, fils de Durthacht" --- and forthwith Conor turned her over to the man who had murdered Naisi. It happened that Eogan was leaving

Emain the following day to go to the feast of Macha. He took Deirdre with him on his chariot, accordingly, [and Conor mounted behind her. As she stood thus between the two,] the king laughed and said to her: "Eh bien, entre Eogan et moi, ton regard se partage comme celui d'une brebis entre deux bœufs." . . . Shortly after, as they were passing a great rock, Deirdre leaped from the chariot and shattered her skull against it: ". . . et elle mourut."

*

SUPPLEMENT

from a manuscript in the museum in Belfast, copied in the late 18th or early 19th century from an original of the 17th century. "The amplest and most graphic version of them all", discovered by Dr. Douglas Hyde. After his translation in A Literary History of Ireland, pages 304 ff. (Part One only is here given.)

Part One

1. During a feast at the house of Felim, the king's principal story-teller, at which were assembled King Conor, the son of Fachtna, and the

nobles of the Red Branch, Felim's wife gave birth to a beautiful girl. At once Cathba, the Head-Druid of Erin, with his ancient fairy books in his left hand, went out upon the borders of the rath to cast the child's horoscope, and announced, upon his return, that "many hurts should come to the province of Ulster" through the new-born girl. The Red Branch warriors demanded that she be killed; but Conor forbade the destruction of an innocent life, and determined to take the infant under his own protection, that she might one day be his wife. Conall Cearnach, Fergus mac Roigh and the other heroes of the Red Branch submitted their will to the king's.

2. The child, whom Cathba had named Deirdre, was taken from ~~the~~^{her} parents by Conor, and placed in a fortress of the Red Branch, in a moat apart, to be brought up by the king's own nurse Lavarcham. The dwelling had but a single window, giving on the rear; and a high wall, guarded by four "man-dogs", enclosed the entire grounds. Here Deirdre was generously nurtured, but kept always close-hidden from the sight of all men except her tutor Cailcin and the king; until, at the age of fourteen, she was found marriageable, and Conor thought the time had come to wed her. His sway was prosperous, and the Red Branch

had grown famous for its valour; and of all the Red Branch heroes, the most valorous were the three sons of Usnach: Naisi, Ainnle, and Ardan.

4 a. [Two meetings with Naisi are recounted: one before and one after the third episode. Although in Belf. the first meeting is not told in its proper chronological order, but only revealed later indirectly, it is here separated from the other meetings by the events which did actually intervene.] One day Deirdre pierced the windowless front of her dwelling with a spear, and through the aperture saw the heroes of the Red Branch at play on the lawn of Emain. Naisi was among them, and she was immediately fired with love for him. She stole out and joined the maidens watching the sport; ⁴ and when Naisi made a mis-cast with the ball, she picked it up and gave it to him. Their hands met, and he~~s~~ pressed hers lovingly; at the same time telling her his name and predicting that he would see her again.

3. One day in the winter season [the day following Deirdre's secret meeting with Naisi, as it appears later], Deirdre's tutor had killed a calf to make ready her meal. She watched the blood

flowing out over the snow, and saw a raven come to drink of it. At the sight of the three colors, the white, the red, and the black, she was overcome by a profound melancholy. To her tutor, who inquired the cause of her sadness, she replied that she was desirous of "yon thing as I see it". He interpreted her meaning literally; but when he cut off the raven's leg with a throw of his knife and gave her the wounded bird, she fainted. Lavarcham's ministrations helped her soon to recover, and she told the nurse that a great longing had come upon her for the three colors she had seen: "the blackness of the raven, the redness of the blood, and the whiteness of the snow." Lavarcham also took her saying in its literal sense, and gave her a vessel filled with snow, a cup half full of the calf's blood, and three feathers from the wing of the raven. Then, at the girl's request, she withdrew. Shortly thereafter, however, when she returned, Lavarcham found Deirdre shaping the likeness of a man's head from the snow, mottling it with the blood, and putting the small black plumage of the raven's feathers on it for hair. The old woman exclaimed at the image; but when she asked whose it was, Deirdre answered that she had

seen the face in a dream the night before, and that it was a brighter face than Conor's or the tutor's. --- And if she could not have her desire, she added, she would perish. Lavarcham was sympathetic; and although she feared that getting the girl her wish would prove a difficult task, because of the high walls about the fortress and the fierce man-dogs, she resolved to help Deirdre as much as it lay in her power: "Take courage, daughter," she said, "and be patient, for I am certain that thou shalt get thy desire, for according to human age and life, Conor's time beside thee is not [to be] long or lasting." Lavarcham now discovered the aperture which Deirdre had made in the front wall of the dwelling, and knew that the story of the dream was false; but her only feeling was one of fear lest the king or the tutor Cailcin also should see the broken wall: it did not occur to her to scold the girl. Later, when the nurse had gone, Deirdre took some of the flesh of the calf with her, concealed in her mantle, and asked Cailcin's permission to leave the house. He allowed her to walk for a short while under the shelter of the walls; for the day was cold and the snow darkening in the air. Deirdre went out, therefore, but made no stop till she had

reached the den of the man-dogs, to each of whom she gave a bit of the flesh. When they had eaten it, she returned home; and later in the day Lavarcham came upon her weeping on a couch. She spoke to the girl gently and questioned her about the face she pretended to have seen in her dream; and when Deirdre learned that Lavarcham had seen the broken wall, she no longer concealed from her the truth. [It is at this point that episode # 4 a, though chronologically anterior, is first related.] Though still willing to aid her, Lavarcham once more voiced her fear of the tutor and the king; --- as for the man-dogs, Deirdre said there was nothing more to be feared from them. While they were speaking of Naisi, Lavarcham happened to mention the name of his father Usnach, and Deirdre was reminded of the territories he possessed in western Alban, beyond Conor's sway, whither it might be possible for them to fly. She thereupon sent Lavarcham in search of Naisi, to tell him of her love and bring him back with her secretly to the dwelling. The second part of this commission Lavarcham undertook; but as for delivering Deirdre's declaration of love, --- "Tell him that yourself if you can," she said.

4 b. At the beginning of the night, Lavarcham returned with Naisi and contrived to bring him into Deirdre's presence without the knowledge of the tutor. At sight of the girl, Naisi was "filled with a flood of love"; but when she besought him to fly with her to Alban, the fear of Conor's wrath at first deterred him. In the course of the night, however, she won him over, and they appointed the following midnight as the time of their elopement.

5. At the hour set, Naisi came again, this time accompanied by his two brothers, and stole Deirdre from the fortress without the knowledge of either Cailcin or Lavarcham. Having bored a hole through the back of the man-dogs' den ("for the dogs were dead already through poison from Déirdre"), and having lifted the girl over the walls and other impediments, to the great damage of her dress, they set her on a steed and rode away without a stop to Sliabh Fuaid and Finn-charn of the Watch, and thence to the harbor, where they took ship and sailed across the sea to Loch n-Eathaigh in the west of Alban. Thrice fifty warriors sailed with them: fifty for each of the three brothers.

THE THIRD REDACTION

collected by Alexander Carmichael from Oral Tradition in the Scottish Highlands in 1867. After de Jubainville, L'épopée celtique en Irlande, pages 236 - 252: a reprint of M. G. Dottin's French translation of the Gaelic text.

Part One

1. Colum the Harper and his wife, still childless in their old age, had lost all hope of leaving an heir behind them at their death, when one day a soothsayer, either at Colum's invitation or of his own accord, entered the harper's house and received entertainment there. Colum asked the wise man to cast his horoscope, and was told that a daughter of his was to plunge Ireland into calamity and war: "'As-tu des enfants?' dit le devin.--- 'En vérité non,' dit Colum le Harpiste. 'Je n'en ai pas eu, ma femme n'en avait pas non plus, et nous n'espérons pas en avoir jamais. Je n'ai que moi et ma femme.'--- 'Eh bien,' dit le devin, 'voilà qui m'étonne, moi. Car je vois dans mon dailgneachd que c'est à cause d'une fille à toi que sera versé le plus abondant flot de sang qui ait

jamais coulé en Irlande depuis le commencement des temps. Et les trois héros les plus fameux qu'il y ait jamais eu perdront la vie à cause de cette fille." Colum, supposing these words to be spoken in mockery, flew into a rage and called the soothsayer a fraud; and when the old man reaffirmed the truth of his prediction, Colum, after replying that he had no daughter and that the prophecy was therefore impossible of fulfillment, sent him roughly away. Scarcely had the soothsayer left the harper's house, however, when Colum's wife began to show signs of pregnancy. Colum, realizing with remorse and terror that the wizard's words ~~and~~ ^{had} been true, planned now how he might best avert the calamity foretold. He resolved, at length, to shut the child away where no one should ever see her. . . . In due time his wife was delivered of a girl, none but Colum himself and a midwife being present at the birth. When Colum asked this woman whether she would undertake to rear the child alone, in a place apart --- "là où aucun œil ne pourrait la voir, et où aucune oreille ne pourrait entendre parler d'elle" ---, she accepted the task.

2. Colum went with three men far up into a high mountain, and there, beyond the uttermost reach

of human habitations, ordered them to dig a hollow in a rounded hillock and to supply it with all the furnishings of a house. Thither, then, he brought the midwife and the infant Deirdre, set the dwelling in order for them, and left them, at his departure, with provisions enough for a year and a day, to be replenished after that time from year to year as long as the girl should live. Deirdre and her nurse dwelt there among the lonely hills, seeing no one and seen of none, till the girl was fourteen years old. "Deirdre grandit comme l'aubépine, droite, élancée comme un jonc de marais. Elle était audessus de toute comparaison terrestre, par l'élégance de sa taille, par l'éclat de sa beauté; sa couleur était celle du cygne glissant sur l'eau; ses mouvements, ceux du chevreau bondissant sur la colline. Elle était la créature" (literally "the drop of blood") "la mieux faite, la plus charmante à voir et la plus douce de caractère qui ait ~~jamais~~ existé jamais entre la terre et le ciel en Irlande; quels que fussent sa couleur et son teint, aucun œil ne la regardait en face sans qu'elle devînt aussitôt rouge comme le feu." ⁵ In addition to these physical charms, she possessed knowledge of all that the nurse

could teach her, except for one thing only: of human creatures other than herself and the young girl, the nurse said nothing.

3. One dark winter night, a huntsman, worn out with wandering and nearly starved, happened by chance to come to the hillock where Deirdre's cave was. He had lost his way, and in his great exhaustion fell asleep in the snow just outside her dwelling. He dreamed, and thought that he lay before a fairy palace, whence came the sound of musical instruments sweetly played. In his sleep he cried out, "If there is anyone in the palace, for God's love let me enter." Deirdre heard him, but the nurse took pains to divert her attention: "Ce n'est rien d'extraordinaire: des oiseaux en bande qui errent se cherchent les uns les autres, laissons-les gagner le bosquet." . . . Again the huntsman cried out in the name of the Creator; again Deirdre heard him, but again the nurse deceived her with an explanation very much like the first. At the man's third and most agonizing cry, however, Deirdre would be no longer put off: she reproached the nurse for paying so little heed to her own religious precepts, and forthwith opened

the door of their dwelling to the starved and frozen hunter. At the sight of Deirdre's great beauty, all need for mere physical restoratives left him: he was warmed and fed, he told her, by her aspect alone. The nurse grew uneasy at these words, and warned him to keep a silent tongue in his head, then and thereafter. He promised not to reveal the secret of the cave to any living soul; but, he added, if certain other men should see this lovely girl, they would not let her stay long secluded there. Deirdre questioned him eagerly concerning these other men, and he told her that he spoke of the three sons of Usnach --- of Naisi, Ainnle, and Ardan. He described their appearance also: their hair black as a raven, their skin white as a swan, their cheeks red as a calf's blood. In the end the nurse, fearing the possible consequences of this talk upon Deirdre, once more warned the huntsman to remain silent, and sent him away.

3 a. [An episode found in this version only intervenes between # 3 and # 4. It is here designated as # 3 a.] When the huntsman had left the cave in the lonely hillock, it occurred to him that Conor, the king of Ulster, would find in this unknown girl

a very suitable wife: the land would so have a queen without her match for beauty, and, as the man who had discovered her, he himself would be sure to get the king's favor. Accordingly he fared to Emain, and there revealed the secret of Deirdre's cave to Conor, described her appearance, and offered to lead him to her dwelling. Next morning they set out, accompanied by the three sons of Conor's uncle, Fergus, and by a body of warriors. Fresh and lusty as they were in starting, they were weary and footsore when they reached the little hidden hillock on the mountain, so far was it removed from human habitations, and so difficult was the way. They finally came within sight of the cave, however; and the huntsman, though he refused to approach any further for fear of the old nurse, pointed out the entrance to the king. Conor boldly demanded entrance; but not until he had revealed his identity would the nurse admit him. When he saw Deirdre for the first time, he was consumed with love. Without more ado, therefore, his men lifted her on their shoulders and carried her off, the old woman following behind them. [From this point on, neither the nurse nor the huntsman appears again.] Conor wished to marry Deirdre at once, but

she refused, and persuaded the king, after frantic pleading, to postpone the ceremony for one year. At the end of that time, she promised, she would marry him. Conor therefore engaged a governess for his bride-to-be, and a company "de belles filles joyeuses, modestes, douces, discrètés" to attend her and play with her. Deirdre became rapidly proficient in all the arts of which it was fitting that she have knowledge, "et Conachar pensa qu'il n'avait jamais vu avec les yeux du corps une créature qui lui plût davantage."

4. One day, as Deirdre and her companions were sporting behind the king's residence on a little hill, they saw three strangers approaching, whom Deirdre at once recognized, from the huntsman's description, as the sons of Usnach. They passed without casting a glance at the women; but Deirdre's heart had been instantly inflamed with love for the tallest of the three: she left her playmates, tucked up her skirt, and ran after the brothers. . . . Ainnle and Ardan, who had heard of Deirdre, were fearful lest Naisi should see her and carry her off, incurring by the act the anger of the king. Catching sight now of the woman following them, and

divining who she was, they urged Naisi to press on more swiftly, as they had still a long journey to go before night. Deirdre called out his name, but when he asked whose voice that was, the two younger brothers replied that he had heard only the cry of Conor's wild ducks. She called a second time, and again they diverted Naisi's attention by the same device and bade him walk faster. But at Deirdre's third shout ⁶ Naisi was no longer to be deceived: he retraced his steps, and some distance behind came face to face with Deirdre. She kissed him, and kissed his brothers also when these had joined them. In her excitement she flushed red as fire; then, swiftly as the trembling of the poplar is calmed, the flush left her cheeks. The brothers were stricken dumb at the sight of such overwhelming loveliness; "et Naois donna à Deirdire l'amour qu'il ne donna jamais à une chose, à une rêve, à une autre personne; cet amour, il ne le donna qu'à elle seule."

5. Naisi then placed Deirdre upon his shoulder, and the three brothers continued their journey. Knowing that their cousin Conor would give them no rest as long as they remained in Ireland,

they crossed the sea to Alban, and there, near Loch-Naois (the lake of Naisi), they established their abode.

6. In Alban the three brothers dwelt with Deirdre in perfect peace and happiness, living on the fruits of their hunting and fishing, and requiring no other society than each other's. From the door of their fort ("tour") they could kill the salmon in the stream; from the window, the speckled deer of the rocks. "Et ils furent heureux tout le temps qu'ils restèrent là."

7. Meanwhile, the day appointed for Conor's marriage was drawing near, and the king set about devising means to recover his bride. Having resolved to wrest her from Naisi, at the sword's point if need were, and even though she were already married to him, he prepared a great feast, to which he invited all the nobles of Ireland; for he intended there to challenge Naisi to single combat. But considering that Naisi might easily refuse the challenge and so remain beyond his reach, Conor instead sent his uncle, Fergus mac Rogh, with kindly words and a message of peace, to invite the sons of Usnach to his feast.

THE SECOND REDACTION

in MSS. LIII and LVI in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. (LIII, 15th century, # 8 to # 16 middle; LVI, 18th century, # 16 middle to end.) After de Jubainville, L'épopée celtique en Irlande, pages 252 - 286.

Part Two

8. Conor, the son of Fachtna Fathach, prepared a great and elaborate feast in his palace at Emain Macha, at which were assembled all the great men of Ulster, together with many musicians, minstrels, and story-tellers, "pour réciter devant eux leur vers, leurs poèmes, leurs chansons, les généalogies des familles." One night, when all the three hundred and sixty-five guests were assembled in the great banqueting-hall, Conor asked them if they knew of anything they lacked. Nothing, they answered; but when the king himself reminded them that the Three Lights of Valor of the Gael --- the three sons of Usnach --- were missing from the board, parted from them over a woman, they confessed that only through fear of the king's anger had they not earlier voiced their desire to see these three heroes once more

among them. With feigned friendliness, Conor now told them of his purpose to send the sons of Usnach a message of peace and good will, and an invitation to the feast; and knowing that Naisi was bound by geas ("défendu par une défense magique") to return to Ireland only under the protection of Cuchulain the son of Sualtam, or of Conall (Cearnach) the son of Aimirgin, or of Fergus the son of Rogh, the king summoned each of these three warriors to him privately. Each of them he asked in turn, what he would do if Naisi and his brothers should be slain while under his protection. Conall and Cuchulain both replied that if their guaranty were so betrayed, they would be revenged upon every man of the Ultonians. Conor therefore dismissed them in dudgeon, rebuking them for their lack of loyalty to him, and called for Fergus. Fergus, although he swore that he would exact vengeance to the full, said he would never touch the person of his king. It was Fergus, accordingly, whom Conor chose to bring back the sons of Usnach from Alban. Just before he left upon this mission, however, and as the guests of the king were preparing to return to their several homes, Conor called one of them aside --- Borach, the son of Cainte --- and instructed him to make ready a feast in his own

castle [in the north of Ulster], and to invite Fergus to partake of it immediately upon his return from Alban; for Conor knew that it was geas to Fergus, ^{never} to refuse a feast. . . . Next morning Fergus departed. His two sons, Illann the Fair and Buinne the Ruddy (or the Roughly Red), went with him, as well as Iubrach and his servant Fullend. [These two are mentioned only here.]

9. When Fergus arrived at the fortress of the sons of Usnach on Loch Etive, they were established in three huts: one for cooking in, one for eating in, one for sleeping in. Upon reaching the harbor, Fergus gave a great shout --- so loud that it could be heard to the ends of the neighboring provinces. Naisi and Deirdre at that moment were playing on the king's chessboard, "Fairhead". Naisi heard the shout, and recognized in it the voice of a man of Ireland; but Deirdre, though she knew it instantly for the voice of Fergus himself, said nothing. Again he cried out, and again Naisi remarked on its Irish quality; yet still Deirdre would not admit that it was different from the cry of a man of Alban. At Fergus' third shout, however, Naisi finally recognized him, and sent Ardan to the

harbor to receive him. Deirdre now explained her behavior: she had had a dream, she said, in which three birds came to them from Emain bearing three drops of honey in their beaks, but flew back with three sips of blood. This she interpreted as meaning that Fergus would bring messages of peace from Conor, that he would persuade the sons of Usnach to return with him, and that in consequence they would lose their lives. Although they were much saddened by this omen, the sons of Usnach welcomed Fergus none the less; and after an affectionate exchange of kisses, Fergus delivered the king's message of good will and his invitation to the brothers to return to Ireland. When Deirdre objected that Naisi ruled over a greater territory in Alban than did Conor in Ulster, Fergus replied that one's native land was after all dear beyond any other, beloved as the other might be: "la puissance et la grandeur ne sont point agréables à qui ne voit ^{point} ~~pas~~ sa terre natale." Naisi admitted the truth of Fergus' words, and without more parley accepted his safe-conduct to Emain. Deirdre, however, would not be satisfied by anything less than Fergus' personal oath to protect them, or, failing that, to avenge them upon all Ireland. This promise given, the two parties separated for the night.

10. Early the next morning they set sail for Ireland. As the coast of Alban faded out of sight behind them, Deirdre [stood mournfully in the prow and] sang a farewell to the land where she had so long been happy.

11. They arrived at the dún (fortress) of Borach, and there, after a friendly welcome, they learned of the feast prepared for Fergus, in accordance with Conor's command. At this news, a fit of rage seized Fergus: "le rouge lui monta de la plante des pieds au sommet de la tête"; but he could not break his geas, and in spite of Deirdre's bitter reproaches he was obliged to remain with Borach. However, though Naisi scorned a mere physical guard, ~~he~~^{Fergus} sent his two sons, Illann and Buinne, to accompany them.

12. The sons of Usnach and their party left the dún of Borach and set out confidently for Emain; for in reply to Deirdre's fears, Fergus had told them that not all the five provinces of Ireland ⁷ united in council would break through the guaranty of his mere word and name. . . . As they proceeded on their way, Deirdre, still fearful despite all the assurances

of Fergus, besought Naisi to go that night to the isle of Cuilenni, between Ireland and Alban, and to wait there until Fergus should have fulfilled his obligation to Borach; but this suggestion the sons of Fergus looked upon as an insult to them: even were the sons of Usnach utterly powerless, they said, their protection and their father's word would be enough to assure their safety. Deirdre's advice, therefore, was not considered, and she followed sorrowfully along after Naisi, reproaching Fergus, in a song, for deserting them: as she thought, for the pleasure of a feast. They went on, thus, to Finn-charn of the Watch on the mountain of Fuat (Sliabh Fuaid).⁸ Here Deirdre dropped behind them and in a little vale was overcome by sleep. Shortly after, when Naisi perceived that she was no longer among them, he turned back, and came upon her as she was just waking. She excused herself on the grounds of weariness, and recounted to him then a dream and a vision that had come to her in her sleep: she had seen the sons of Usnach and Illann the Fair each without his head, and only Buinne the Ruddy with his head remaining on his shoulders. In a metrical dialogue with Naisi she explained the import of her dream: that Buinne would desert them and keep his

life, but that Illann and the sons of Usnach would lose theirs shortly; and once more she voiced her grief. . . . The little band had not gone much farther after this, when Deirdre beheld another and more dreadful omen, in the form of a red cloud hovering over Naisi. "It is a sorrowful thing I am seeing now", she cried; "it is your cloud, Naisi, is in the sky, and it is a cloud of blood." Once more, then, she prayed them to turn aside, and take refuge with Cuchulain in Dundéalgan, there to await Fergus' arrival, or to go on to Emain under the protection of the great hero himself. But Naisi replied only, "Nous n'avons besoin de suivre ce conseil." And although she reiterated, in another song,⁹ her warning and her advice, the sons of Usnach hastened by the shortest road towards Emain. However, just before they arrived there, Deirdre gave them a final warning, and a sign by which they might tell whether Conor's intentions were friendly or hostile: if the king received them in his own residence, she said, all would be well; but if he sent them to the Red Branch hostelry while he himself remained in his palace, their share would be treason and dishonor. . . . At last they stood before the gates of Emain. When their arrival was announced to Conor, he inquired

whether a supply of food and drink was ready in the Red Branch house. The servants told him that enough was there to accommodate the five battalions of Ulster; and the king therefore commanded Naisi's party to be led thither. When this order was brought to them, Deirdre made one last appeal to the sons of Usnach, telling them that even yet escape was possible, and beseeching them to fly before Conor should have them finally in his power. Buinne and Illann, however, accused her of cowardice, and Naisi himself paid no heed whatever to her words. They went straight to the Red Branch house, as the king had bidden them, and there found a troop of servitors appointed to wait upon them with all manner of food and drink; but being too weary from their long journey on foot to partake of either, they lay down to rest, and Deirdre played chess with Naisi on the king's chess-board, "Fairhead".

13. Conor desired now to learn whether Deirdre had kept the great beauty and charm that she had once possessed: "If she has kept them," he said, "there is not one among the daughters of Adam whose graces would be superior to hers." Lavarcham offered to go to the Red Branch house

as a spy; but as she loved Naisi more than any other man in the world, she took advantage of her expedition to warn him of his danger. She found Naisi and Deirdre still at chess, and having affectionately kissed them, burst into a flood of tears, "tels que son teint et sa gorge en furent mouillés." She reproached them for having so rashly put themselves into the king's power, and revealed the ostensible purpose of her coming to the Red Branch house. "Et je m'attriste de l'œuvre qu'on fait cette nuit à Emain, car c'est une œuvre de trahison, de déshonneur et de déloyauté à votre égard, ô chers amis ...; mais jusqu'à la fin du monde il n'y aura plus pour Emain une nuit meilleure que celle-ci." ¹⁰ In a passionate song she expressed her dark premonitions *nád* her grief; then, having bidden the sons of Usnach to fasten the doors and windows of the Red Branch fortress, she gave them all her blessing and returned to Conor. To him she reported that although the three brothers were still the greatest heroes in the world for beauty, attainments, valor and strength, the woman with them had lost the loveliness she had once possessed. This news dispelled Conor's jealousy; but a little later, as he sat drinking in his own palace, he once more called for a spy to bring him an account of

Deirdre's appearance. Receiving no answer, he summoned Trendorn Dolann, and bade him execute the mission --- reminding him, before he went, that Naisi had killed his father. When Trendorn arrived at the Red Branch house, he found all the entrances barricaded. Fear seized him then, for he knew that he would be unable to gain access; but his fear of Conor was even stronger, and he found at last one window which had been left open. Through this he peered into the house, and saw Deirdre and Naisi at the chessboard. Deirdre happened to turn her head suddenly, and caught sight of him; she quietly told Naisi that a man was watching them, whereupon Naisi, picking up a pawn from the board, flung it with a swift movement straight at Trendorn's eye: "l'œil tombe sur la joue. . . ." Trendorn dropped from the window and fled back to Conor, to whom he reported all that had taken place. Then he added: "Là-bas [à la maison du Rameau-Rouge], est une femme qui est la première du monde pour la beauté, et Nolsé sera roi du monde si on la lui laisse."

14. Now did Conor and the Ultonians arise. Clamoring they surrounded the Red Branch and hurled burning fire-brands against it. Illann called to

the king, reminding him of Fergus' guaranty and word of safe-conduct; but Conor replied only that his rightful wife was there in the company of Fergus' sons, and that he was resolved to take her from them. As for Deirdre, now that her long forboding fear was finally justified, she burst anew into rage against the absent Fergus, who, she still believed, had willfully betrayed them; Buinne, however, fiercely maintained his father's honor: "Non, mon père n'a point trahi et nous ne trahirons point." He seized his arms, and rushed forth from the building against the besiegers.

15. In his sally, Buinne killed thrice fifty of the king's men, extinguished the firebrands, and threw the attacking army into confusion "par des cris de jugement dernier." When Conor learned who it was who had wrought such destruction upon his forces, he offered Buinne one of the provinces of his kingdom, together with the honor of his royal friendship, if he would desert the sons of Usnach. Buinne accepted the bribe on the spot; but by a miracle of God it came to pass that on that very night the province in question was changed into a mountain of waste land, which to this day is called "la Montagne du Partage de Buinné."

16. Deirdre, inside the Red Branch fortress, heard the bribe offered and accepted. "'Par moi foi,' s'écria Derdriu, 'Buinné vous a abandonnés, ô fils d'Usnech; ce fils-là est bien digne de Fergus, son père.'" Stung by this taunt, the other son of Fergus, Illann, swore that he at least would never desert them so long as he had power to hold a sword. He sallied forth and made three circuits round the building, killing three hundred Ultonians, and then returned to the hall where Naisi sat playing chess with Ainnle the Violent. Here he paused only long enough to drink a draught, then out he rushed once more, carrying a torch,¹¹ and once more set upon the Ultonians, who no longer dared to approach the Red Branch house. . . . Conor now called to him his son Fiachra, and bade him challenge Illann to single combat. He reminded him that he and Illann had been born in the same night; and as Illann was now armed with his father's weapons, Conor gave Fiachra his shield "le Beau-Doré", his lance "la Victorieuse", and his javelin "le Fendu". After a short preliminary exchange of words, Illann and ^{Fiachra}~~Ullann~~ began their fight, "et se livrèrent un combat violent, héroïque, hardi, audacieux, rapide." Fiachra was hard pressed, and finally was forced to crouch be-

neath his father's shield, which now, because of the greatness of Fiachra's danger, uttered a magical cry and was answered by the three principal waves of Erin: the Wave of Clidna, the Wave of Tuad, and the Wave of Rugraide. Conall Cearnach, who at this moment was in his dun at Dunsverick, heard the roaring of the Wave of ~~Rugraide~~^{Rugraide} like the rumbling of thunder; and believing that his king was in danger, he straightway caught up his arms, hastened to Emain, and came upon the scene of the combat while Fiachra was still cowering under the roaring shield. Running at Illann from the rear, Conall pierced him through with his sword "Culghlas"; but when he discovered whom he had slain, and that Illann had been defending the sons of Usnach, he was overcome with remorse and rage. To make reparation for his mistake, he struck off the head of Fiachra the son of Conor, and left the field of battle. Illann, knowing that he must shortly die, reentered the Red Branch house, where he warned Naisi to be vigilant, and reported the manner of his own death. 12

17. Again the Ultonians set fire to the Red Branch. It was Ardan's turn now to make a sortie: he put out the fire, slew three hundred men of the attacking army, and reentered the fortress. At a later hour of the night, Ainnle sallied forth, and soon returned again, having killed numberless Ultonians. When the besiegers were fain to withdraw, because of the great losses they had suffered, Conor ~~himself~~ renewed their courage; but now finally Naisi himself issued from the Red Branch house, "et l'on ne peut énumérer ceux qui tombèrent sous ses coups." He continued his slaughter three hours, until Deirdre came to him rejoicing over his victory; but even then she did not cease to rebuke him for having put his faith in Conor instead of her. The three sons of Usnach together then set their shields end to end, and with Deirdre in their midst marched straight against the enemy, slaying three hundred more of them in their advance. 13

18. Conor went now to the dwelling of the druid Cathba, and besought him to put enchant-

ments on the sons of Usnach; for if they escaped, he feared, they would lay waste his entire province. The king pledged his word, moreover, that if Cathba would render them powerless he would allow no bodily harm whatever to come to them. The old druid put faith in the king's word, and proceeded to work a spell against the sons of Usnach. As he recited his magical incantations, a great sea of high waves rose up on the plain where the three brothers stood with Deirdre; but where the Ultonians were, only two feet distant, the ground remained as dry as before. "Il était bien triste de voir les enfants d'Usnech vaincus par la grande mer." As the waters rose higher and higher, Naisi lifted Deirdre upon his shoulders to save her from drowning; and thus they awaited their doom.

19. The king then, seeing the sons of Usnach fast caught in the magic flood, called for a man to kill them where they stood; but the Ultonians refused, having been all at one time or another in Naisi's pay. However, there was a young man at Conor's court, called Maine of the Red Hand, a son of the king of Norway, whose father and two brothers had been slain by Naisi. This man now came forward

and offered to serve as executioner. Realizing that the hour of their death had come, the brothers contended among themselves for the honor of being killed first: Ardan claimed it as the youngest of them, but Ainnle replied, "Ce n'est pas cela qu'il faut faire, mais c'est moi qu'il faut tuer le premier." ¹⁴ Naisi finally settled the dispute by giving Maine his own sword, a gift of the god Manannán mac Lir (son of the Sea), which always finished its work in a single stroke. Together, then, the sons of Usnach stretched their necks on one block; the sword of Manannán swung through the air in Maine's hand, and as three long cries of sorrow rose from the ranks of the Ultonians, three heads fell together to the ground.

20. Deirdre meanwhile had run through the park of Emain, from one man to another, till she had found Cuchulain. She placed herself under his protection, and told him swiftly the entire story of her life with the sons of Usnach and their betrayal by Conor. Cuchulain went with her to the place where she had left the three brothers. When she found them lying dead, she unloosened her hair and sipped Naisi's blood;

then, with her cheeks the color of glowing coals, she chanted her first song of grief and rage. Again she embraced the body of her husband, again drank of his blood, and in a softer voice keened over him a long dirge of lamentation. Finally, having kissed him thrice, she lay down in the grave beside him.... [Her death, like Illann's, is not explicitly recounted, but must be inferred.] In deep sorrow Cuchulain returned to his fortress at Dundéalgan; and the druid Cathba laid a curse upon the city of Emain Macha and upon the lineage of Conor for the crime done there that day, and foretold that nevermore thenceforth should the traitor be enthroned there, neither Conor nor any of his line.

("A traditional addition says that King Conor was so incensed that even in death Deirdre and Naisi should dwell together in the mansion of the dead that he ordered them to be laid far apart in the burial-ground. Every morning the graves would be found open and the lovers be discovered lying side by side in one of them. Then he ordered stakes to be thrust through their bodies to keep them asunder, but two yew-trees sprang from these stakes and they grew to such a height that they finally embraced each other over the Cathedral of Armagh." 15)

21. On the day next after the murder of the sons of Usnach, Fergus arrived in Emain and learned how his guaranty had been violated. With Cormac Conlingas, the king's own son, and Dubthach Daelultach ("the Beetle of Ulster"), he made ready his troops and offered battle to the Ultonians. In the fighting there fell Mane, another son of Conor, and three hundred of his men; Emain Macha, the capital of Ulster and the residence of the king, was destroyed and burned, and Conor's women were slain. Then Fergus and his companions went with their army of three thousand warriors into Connaught to the court of King Ailill and Queen Maeve at Cruachan, and found a good welcome there; and each night they made raids with their fighters into the neighboring province of Ulster, burning and pillaging and subjugating the entire district of Cualgne: deeds which were to be eventually the cause of a great war between the two provinces, lasting seven years, or ten years according to other authorities, without a single hour of peace. Queen Maeve, meanwhile, bore three sons to Fergus: Ciar, Corc, and Cormac, "comme dit le poète dans une strophe".

[Here follows some genealogical material, tracing the line of each son.] And for a long time Fergus

continued to harrass the Ultonians with his troops, the "Black exiles", and in return the Ultonians wrought great damage upon the people of Connaught. 16

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It may be of interest to note how these variant versions of the old story have been utilized by the writers of the Celtic Revival. The following brief analyses of a number of modern works, listed in chronological order, are intended to be neither exhaustive nor even wholly true: they are only indicative, suggesting in large outline the foundations upon which these works rest. It should be remembered, in the first place, that each modern writer has drawn for details and minor incidents upon all the material at his command; also, that some of these works are based not so much on the actual "sources" themselves as on other contemporary adaptations --- for example, Fiona Macleod's prose romance upon Douglas Hyde's narrative poem; also, that even where the "sources" have been used, these contemporary works may have supplied hints here and there; and finally, that quite possibly a writer's knowledge of an old story may be gleaned

neither from its original versions nor from late retellings of it, but rather from vague, ununified references to it by his acquaintance or by the people: the Greek myths are the common property of all men, yet how many have read either Ovid or the "Tanglewood Tales"?

Douglas Hyde: Déirdre (one of The Three Sorrows of Story-Telling, written 1887, pub'd 1895): Narrative poem in blank verse. Part One as in L.L., Part Two as in Edb.

Joseph Jacobs: The Story of Deirdre (in Celtic Fairy Tales, 1892): Fairy tale. Part One as in O.T., Part Two as in Edb.

Fiona Macleod (i.e. William Sharp): The House of Usna (1900): Prose drama in three scenes. Not found in these sources. Presents a portrait of Conor after Deirdre's death.

Herbert Trench: Deirdre Wedded (1901): Narrative poem in five parts. Some suggestions from O.T., but in general a purely original treatment of the story.

Lady Gregory: Fate of the Children of Usnach
 (seventh chapter in Cuchulain of Muirthemne,
 1902): prose retelling of the sources.
 Chiefly as in O.T. and Edb.; but as Mr.
 Yeats remarks in his preface to this work
 (p. vii), ". . . in Lady Gregory's version
 of Deirdre, a dozen manuscripts have to give
 their best before the beads are ready for
 the necklace." These MSS. are:

Text and Translation published by the
 Society for the Preservation of
 the Irish Language.

Hyde, "Literary History of Ireland".

Hyde, "Zeitschrift Celt. Philologie".

O'Curry, "Manners and Customs of
 Ancient Ireland".

O'Curry, "MS. Materials for Ancient
 Irish History".

Whitley Stokes, "Irische Texte".

M. E. Windisch, "Irische Texte".

Cameron, "Reliquae Celticae".

O'Flanagan, "Transactions of the
 Gaelic Society".

O'Flanagan, "Reliquae Celticae".

Carmichael, "Transactions of the
 Gaelic Society".

DeJubainville, "Epopée Celtique".

Dottin, "Revue Celtique".

"Ultonian Ballads".

William Butler Yeats: Deirdre (1906): One-
 act drama in blank verse. For the events
 preceding the opening of the play, chiefly
 as in O.T.; for the events of the play proper
 (## 12, 13, 19, 20), as in Edb., but much
 modified.

George William Russell ("AE"): Deirdre (1907):
 Prose drama in three acts. Act I, contain-
 ing episodes 1 to 5, as in L.L.; Acts II and
 III, containing the rest, as in Edb.

Fiona Macleod: Deirdre and the Sons of Usna
 (1907?): Prose romance. Part One as in
L.L., Part Two as in Edb.

Fiona Macleod: Honey of the Wild Bees (?):
 Short-story. Not in these sources. Deals
 with the children of Deirdre and Naisi,
 mentioned in Lady Gregory's version, # 6.

John Millington Synge: Deirdre of the Sorrows
 (1909): Prose drama in three acts. In
 general, as in Edb., but # 19 as in L.L.

Michael Field (i.e. Katherine Harris Bradley
 and Edith Emma Cooper): Deirdre (1918):
 five-act drama in blank verse. Prologue
 and Act I, chiefly as in L.L.; Acts II
 to IV, chiefly as in Edb.; Act V, as in
L.L. Throughout, suggestions from Belf.
 and O.T.

James Stephens: Deirdre (1923): Novel.
 Part One as in L.L., Part Two as in Edb.
 Many hints from other sources.

CHAPTER FOUR

STYLE

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Chapter Four

STYLE

"A verse
Of some old time not worth remembering,
And all the lovelier because a bubble."
---Yeats

"The tales of the Red Branch cycle", says Eleanor Hull, "are less courtly and sophisticated, simpler in style and conception, and totally deficient in the mystical religious flavour which gives a semi-ecclesiastical tone to much of the mediaeval Arthurian romance. Though they differ greatly in character and literary finish among themselves, they have rarely undergone the late thirteenth to fifteenth century polishing which transformed the rude warriors of Arthur's court into knights of the age of chivalry. The artificial tone and highly-wrought manners and moralities of the Arthurian Knights of the Round Table as we find them depicted in Mallory's [sic] 'Morte d'Arthur' have not intruded themselves into the old Irish romance. We see the champions as we can actually conceive them to have lived in

an early pre-Christian age; their barbarities are described without a shade of disgust; their chivalries are the outcome of a natural fairness and fineness of mind, and are not the product of a courtly attention to an exterior code of morals.

"The tales are, moreover, purely and frankly pagan; the Christian touches, where they do occur, are often later additions intended to convey a moral or a Christian termination to a story built up in an earlier age; and they seldom interfere with the general tone of the romance." ¹ These observations apply to the literary value of the Red Branch Cycle as a whole. In this chapter, some aspects of the literary value of the Deirdre-saga will be touched upon.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the older and the newer versions of the story --- between the First Redaction and the combined Second and Third ---, apart from purely structural variations, lies in their style. The old version, swift, vigorous, full of action, tersely told and with every word significant; the medieval and modern versions long and circumstantial, without the other's force, but

compensating for this want by incomparable superiority in richness of detail. There is hardly a sentence of mere description in L.L.: the characters are drawn, when they are drawn at all, by a brief, revealing snatch of narrative, as when the singing of the sons of Usnach, and of Naisi in particular, is thus described:

Combien était douce la voix de ténor des fils d'Usnech. Toute vache, toute femelle qui l'entendait donnait deux tiers de lait de plus; tout homme qui l'entendait en éprouvait un agrément et un plaisir que rien ne pouvait dépasser... Quand les Ulates entendirent sa voix de ténor, ils se levèrent et commencèrent à combattre les uns contre les autres. ²

Here is all that the audience of the old Irish story-tellers wished to know: not so much what Naisi's voice sounded like, as what happened when he used it. The First Redaction, indeed, is full of "what happens", containing scarcely anything else; so that the modern reader may not infrequently feel the lack of those transitional paragraphs, themselves empty of action but useful in preparing his mind for a change of scene or tone. With only negligible exceptions, the oldest version does not trouble to indicate transitions at all. In a still earlier stage, it may be, the story contained passages

here and there to connect or separate; but these passages, if they ever existed, have been worn away by the desire of story-tellers and scribes to attain the greatest possible economy of words, so that the structure of the First Redaction, as we have it now, is almost entirely paratactical.

The synopses of the plot in Chapter Three show this lack of transitional matter clearly in a few of the more obvious instances. For example, Deirdre is born, and Conor takes her from her parents that she may be reared in secret. A single sentence --- "elle devint la plus jolie fille d'Irlande" --- sums up her growth from infancy to maidenhood, and the story plunges at once into the next episode: "Un jour d'hiver. . . ." Later on, when Conor sends Fergus on his errand to the sons of Usnach, it is again a single sentence that contains the account of their departure, arrival, and return. ³

What the First Redaction lacks in ease, it makes up, however, in power and swiftness. Of the twenty-one episodes which constitute the fullest form of the story, it contains only twelve, and these in a smaller space than is occupied by any twelve

episodes in either Q.T. or Edb.; ⁴ yet for all this ~~simplicity~~^{terse}ness and absence of embellishment, the earliest version cannot precisely be called bare. There is even at least one bit of supremely skilful stage-setting to be found in it. As Eogan approaches the sons of Usnach across the royal enclosure at Emain (# 12), the scene is drawn in two vivid sentences: "Les fils d'Usnech étaient debout dans le clos et les femmes assises sur le rempart d'Emain. Eogan, cherchant Noisé, traversa le clos; Fiacha, fils de Fergus, se plaça à côté de Noisé." --- No more; yet the theatre is set and ready for the catastrophe which immediately follows. ⁵

The language of this recension (as nearly as may be judged from the French translation) is robust and forceful; the scenes are vivid in spite of meagre description; the characters, where they are not vast and shadowy like the Tuatha De Danann of the oldest saga-cycle, die as tragically as they do in modern adaptations, and live more passionately. Of the ruggedly expressive diction of L.L. one illustration must be quoted: the lyric outburst --- it is hardly a song --- wherein Felim vents the astonishment he feels upon hearing the child cry out in his wife's womb (# 1):

Quel est le bruit rapide qui s'est fait
 violemment entendre,
 Comme un cri de colère jeté par tes en-
 traîlles rugissantes?
 Tel qu'un aiguillon qui frapperait nos
 oreilles,
 Un grand bruit est sorti de tes côtés enflés
 par la grosseesse.
 Combien sont grands la peur et l'effroi
 Dont mon cœur ressent la rude blessure! 6

Certain critics have said that the ending of
 the First Redaction is less "artistic" than the
 ending of the Second, --- that our aesthetic
 sensibilities are shocked to see Deirdre falling,
 after her splendid self-willed life and her deep
 suffering, at last into the hands of her enemy
 the king. To the modern reader, the only fitting
 close to the story is that of Edb., where Deirdre
 dies melodramatically on the dead body of her
 lover. That she should live after him ---
 especially that she should become the wife of
 Conor --- seems to him not only an anticlimax but
 a violation of good taste and the laws of poetic
 fitness. And yet, as Eleanor Hull has remarked,
 the ending in L.L. is perfectly "in keeping with
 its general rude and primitive character". 7

Besides, though it may not so perfectly satisfy
 the modern reader's taste for the dramatic as do
 later and more "artistic" versions, Deirdre's fate

in the First Redaction is actually far more tragic. In Edb. her sorrow is comparatively short-lived, and she dies the death of a great heroine, united in the grave with Naisi. In the older form of the tale she lingers on a whole year in grief and suffering, and dies at last ignominiously, the intended concubine of Naisi's murderer.

The seventeenth-century version in Belf., though it is fundamentally the same as that in L.L., is immeasurably richer in detail --- richer even than O.T. and Edb. Either it is an older form of which our First Redaction is the many-times filtered essence, or, more likely, it is an elaboration of the old romance by a medieval scribe or story-teller. One need only compare the two versions to see at once the superiority of the older. Though Belf. is garnished with every possible ornament of style, though Dr. Hyde calls it truly "the amplest and most graphic version of them all", its movement is slow and halting, its emphases frequently misplaced or overdone, its words too many. The episode of the three colors (# 3) will serve as an example. In the First Redaction Deirdre sees the snow, the blood, and the raven's plumage, and creates in her fancy an ideal youth whose body, cheeks, and hair shall mirror these tints: the whole account is concise and vigorous,

and is a perfect illustration of what Matthew Arnold has called the "natural magic" of the Celt. In Belf. the episode is padded with half a dozen inessential amplifications: the wounding of the raven, the modelling of the man's head from the snow, the previous meeting with Naisi, and the involved business of the broken wall. Above all, the true poetry of the incident, the awakening of love in Deirdre by the abstract beauty and suggestion of the three colors, here is altogether lost.

What has been said of the superior degree of condensation of the First Redaction would not imply that the Second is a less interesting story. It is enriched with passages of lyrical description, made real by many substantial details; but one does not feel of it, as one may of Belf., that the richness overflows into mere display and ornamentation, or the detail into verbosity. Where L.L. briefly recounts the outline of an action at third hand, the Second Redaction takes pains to make the characters live and breathe, and relates therefore not only what they do but what they say as well; and the dialogue is always perfectly credible in its passionate reality, and never at variance with the character of the speaker. One of the best of such passages

occurs shortly after the return of the sons of Usnach from Alban, when Borach invites Fergus to partake of his unlucky feast (# 11). Fergus' impotent rage, the calm insistence of Borach, Deirdre's unreasonable yet maddening taunts, and the gruff cocksureness of Naisi are all here perfectly conveyed. The passage is worth quoting in full:

They went then to visit the dún of Borach in company with Deirdre. Borach gave three kisses to the children of Usnach and a welcome to Fergus and his sons. Then he spoke thus: "I have a feast for you, Fergus," he said, "and one of the geasa (literally, magic prohibitions) that have been put upon you is firstly that you may never refuse an invitation, and then that you may never leave a feast before it is finished."

When Fergus heard Borach, the red mounted from the soles of his feet to the top of his head: "You have done ill, O Borach," said Fergus, "to put me under the obligation of my geasa, and Conor has done ill to make me give my word to send the sons of Usnach to Emain on the very day they should arrive in Ireland."

"I place you under the obligation of your geasa," replied Borach; "you are bound by these geasa, which true heroes cannot break. You cannot avoid partaking of my feast."

"What shall I do after this invitation?" Fergus asked Naisi.

"You will do what Borach desires," Deirdre answered, "if you care to abandon the sons of Usnach for a feast; yet a feast is dearly bought indeed, which is bought by desertion of the sons of Usnach."

"I am not deserting them," replied Fergus, "for I shall send with them to Emain my two sons, Illann the Fair and

Buinne the Ruddy ('the Roughly Red'). Besides," added Fergus, "the sons of Usnach have the guaranty of my word."

"Fergus' good intention is enough for us," answered Naisi, "for in case of a battle or a combat, no one has ever defended us but ~~we~~ ourselves." 8

The First Redaction is entirely devoid of the religious element, either pagan or Christian; but at least three passages in Edb. show definitely the influence of Christianity. In the thirteenth episode, Conor says of Deirdre that if she has kept her beauty "il n'y a point des filles d'Adam dont les charmes soient supérieurs aux siens." In the fifteenth, Buinne throws the besieging army into confusion "par des cris de jugement dernier." And at the end of the same episode, when Buinne has accepted the king's bribe of a fertile province of land, "il arriva par un miracle de Dieu, que cette nuit-là, même la province devint une montagne [insultel...." 9 This Christianizing of pagan tales finds its parallel in the practice, among Irish genealogists after the introduction of Christianity, of tracing back the lineage of the chiefs of the land not only to Milesius (Miledh), the traditional founder of Celtic Ireland, but even back to Biblical times and ultimately to Adam.

One of the chief beauties of this version lies in the many lyrics that are scattered through it. In L.L. there are six poems, most of them short, of one hundred and sixty-two lines in all; in Edb., eight poems totalling two hundred and forty lines. There can be no question that the artistic value of the latter is far superior: the best piece in the older version, Deirdre's long lament for the sons of Usnach (# 20), cannot compare with the corresponding passage in Edb. ¹⁰ One famous lyric from the Second Redaction must be quoted here, both for its intrinsic beauty and for the importance that has been given to it in modern adaptations of the story by writers of the Celtic Revival. This is Deirdre's farewell to the land of Alban:

Most dear to my heart is the land of
the sunrise there, Alban, with its wonders.
I would not ever have come from it hither
but only to be coming with Naisi....

Woods of Cuan! where Ainnle would be
coming, ochone! It is short we found the
time there, myself and Naisi, in the land
of Alban.

Valley of Laidh! It was under a great
rock I used to be sleeping there; fish,
venison and the badger's fat were my share
in the valley of Laidh.

Valley of Masan! High was the harts-tongue,¹¹ white the fruits of it. We slept a light sleep there on the grass by the firth of Masan.

Valley of Eiti! It was there I built my first own house. Fair were the woods the time the day would be rising. A garden of the sun is the valley of Eiti.

Valley of Urchan! O narrow valley, valley of the little bright hills! No man of this time has been more proud than Naisi was in the valley of Urchan.

Glendarua! my love to every man that loves thee! Sweet was the cuckoo's voice on the bending branch on the cliff above the valley of Da-Rua.

Dear is the strong-shored river Droighin, dear its waters over the stainless sand! I would not ever have come from it, but only to be coming with my love. ¹²

One more feature differentiates Edb. from L.L.: the intrusion into the narrative of the storyteller's own sentiments. In the oldest version, the tale is presented entirely on its own merits, without a single comment; ¹³ in the Second Redaction, commentary forms an important element. For purposes of illustration one may compare the accounts given in the two versions of the death of the sons of Usnach. L.L., after a brief statement of the manner in which Naisi was killed, adds even more briefly that Naisi's brothers, their companions, and their women, were also put to death, and then rushes on

breathlessly to the next episode; whereas in Edb., after minutely describing how the three brothers met their death at the hands of Maine of the Red Hand, the narrator pauses long enough, at least, to remark, "Il était bien triste de voir les enfants d'Usnech vaincus par la grande mer." . . . In a word, then, the Second Redaction may be characterized as having a partially subjective point of view entirely wanting in the First.

The version recently taken down by Alexander Carmichael from Oral Tradition in the Scottish Highlands, having until the late nineteenth century received no definitive form, but having changed from one generation to the next with the people in whose mouth only it had life, shows many signs of modernity. The complete absence of the lyric may be due either to the long period of oral transmission, in the course of which the metrical portions dropped out or were changed to prose, or to the comparatively recent convention of limiting a tale to a single form, either prose or verse. Features more clearly the effect of changing times are the several unmistakably Christian touches occurring in the story, certain exquisite turns of phrase breathing ~~and~~ rather

the romantic fragrance of modern poetry than the ruggedness of the old pagan world, and a pervading tone of homeliness and familiarity utterly unlike the shadowy vastness or the "strangeness added to beauty" that filled the earlier versions.

The influence of Christianity appears in O.T. nowhere more obviously than in the dialogue between Deirdre and the nurse (# 3) while the wretched huntsman outside their dwelling was freezing in the snow and calling for admittance. Twice the nurse was successful in diverting Deirdre's attention. When the huntsman cried out a third time "for the love of God", she had recourse to the same device: "Ce n'est pas la peine de penser qu'il y a là-bas quelque chose qui puisse t'intéresser, mon enfant," she said, "il n'y a là-bas que les oiseaux du ciel qui se sont perdus et qui cherchent les uns les autres; laissons-les gagner le bosquet. Il n'y a ni abri, ni demeure pour eux ici." But the girl would no longer be put off. "Oh! nourrice," she cried, "l'oiseau a demandé à entrer pour l'amour du Dieu des créatures, et tu m'as dit que nous devons faire ce qu'on nous demande au nom de Dieu. Si tu ne laisses pas entrer l'oiseau

qui est transi de froid et mourant de faim, je n'aurai guère d'estime pour tes paroles et pour ta foi. Mais comme je crois à tes paroles et à la foi que tu m'as enseignée, je vais moi-même faire entrer l'oiseau." 14

Among the expressions which have a modern romantic ring is this description of the love which Naisi felt for Deirdre at their first meeting (# 4): "Naois pensa qu'il n'avait jamais vu sur terre une créature aussi belle que celle qui était là; et Naois donna à Deirdre l'amour qu'il ne donna jamais à une chose, à un rêve, à une autre personne; cet amour, il ne le donna qu'à elle seule." 15

And a touch of what may be called modern humor is the huntsman's fear, when he comes the second time to the little cave in the mountains, of risking himself within the reach of the old nurse whose admonitions he had disregarded. Possibly the incident has no humorous intent whatever, and in that case there would be nothing about it particularly modern. 16

The charming homeliness of O.T. has been re-

marked. Whereas the earlier recensions are full

Of kings and queens and heroes old,
 this version, so long the peculiar property of High-
 land peasants, treats primarily of meaner, more fa-
 miliar things. Its characters are such people as
 one might meet in any Irish village: Colum the
 harper, for all his dealings with the soothsayer,
 would be as comfortable a householder today as two
 thousand years ago; the nurse is distinguished
 from countless other women only by her sharp tongue,
 a willingness to spend her life in solitude, and
 a love of truth subservient, when occasion requires,
 to an even greater love of caution. The scenes of
 the story are chiefly rustic, the trappings home-
 spun; and the atmosphere is rather the intimate
 dusk of the fairy tale than the mysterious twilight
 of the saga, as in the First Redaction, or the gay
 noon of the romance, as in the Second. It will be
 readily understood why Joseph Jacobs, in compiling
 a book of "Celtic Fairy Tales", chose this version
 to represent the story of Deirdre.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HEROINE

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Chapter Five

THE HEROINE

"The poets have sung of her,
and no man has sung but out
of his deep desire."

---Fiona Macleod

Being happily unaware not only of the name but of the devastating concept also, the tellers of these ancient sagas made no attempts at psychoanalysis. Of the figures that appear in the old versions of the story of Deirdre, most have no real character at all, or only so much as may be glimpsed in their actions; and those who are exceptionally endowed with personal traits remain quite stationary from the beginning of the story to its end. Elaborate or painstaking characterization is nowhere to be found, nor any indications of spiritual or mental development. There is development of a sort in Deirdre's growth from infancy to womanhood, but only in the later stages of her unfolding may she be said to possess a character; and this, through all the changes of her swift life thenceforward, remains immutable.

In spite of their want of subtlety or of modern clinical minuteness in the delineation of character, however, the old versions are peopled with vigorous, unforgettable men and women, who live not because an author has learnedly dissected the organs that give them life, but simply because he has shown them living.

As might be expected, the character most fully realized is that of the chief figure. Of her beauty and grace, even of her spiritual and intellectual nature, there is enough said in every version to lay more than a slight foundation for the elaborate studies of Deirdre to be found in the works of present-day writers.

"In the earliest version in the Book of Leinster", says Eleanor Hull, "Deirdre is a barbarian woman, rude and passionate of speech, savage in her actions." ¹ Yet even here one may find softening touches. Her beauty, for example, as described in Cathba's first prophecy, is barbaric but scarcely barbarian, and a cloak of tragic dignity enfolds it. The following is a rather free translation from the French metrical version:

It is a girl cried out from the depth of your womb, a girl with golden hair it will be, with ringlets of fine gold, with a queenly face, and cheeks crimson as the fox-glove.

To the color of the snow it is we will be comparing the incomparable whiteness of her teeth, and her gleaming lips to the redness of the crayfish.

For the sake of her, murders enough will be done in the ranks of the chariot-fighting warriors of Ulster.

It is a girl cries out from the depth of your womb, a girl will have long lovely locks.

For the sake of her, warriors will contend with each other.--- To possess you, O lovely child, will be the longing of great kings.

Great armies from the South will invade the northern lands, the realm of Conor itself.

Lips red as the crayfish will be over the pearl-white of your teeth; and great queens will be jealous of the faultless and perfect beauty you will have. ²

In O.T. the wonder of Deirdre's beauty, which is after all her chief greatness and the most memorable thing about her, finds even fuller and for the modern reader perhaps more satisfying expression. It is here conveyed not in the primitive symbolism of druidical chants, but directly by the narrator, and in words as easily understandable as

if the woman described were some gentle gracious queen of our own day:

Deirdre grew up straight ~~and tall~~ as a hawthorne, tall as a rush on the moor. She was beyond all earthly comparison for the daintiness of her form and the splendor of her beauty; her complexion was the color of a swan gliding over the water, her movements those of a kid capering on a grassy knoll. She was of all creatures in Ireland, between the earth and the sky, the most graceful, the most exquisite to see and the sweetest in character; and whatever the color of her cheek might be at any time, no eye could look on her face but she would grow all at once red as fire. 3

Her voice, it will be noted, is not mentioned in this catalogue of her charms, although recent writers, Fiona Macleod especially, have made much of it. Indeed, the only hint that can be gathered on this point from O.T. is not a compliment: when Deirdre pursued the sons of Usnach (# 4) and cried out after them, Naisi twice allowed himself to be deceived by his brothers, who told him he had heard only the cry of the king's wild fowl. This incident speaks little for the sweetness of Deirdre's voice, if taken au pied de la lettre; yet no slur, surely, is intended by the Scottish Highlanders who tell the story. In a present-day novel, so patent a breach of verisimilitude might be counted a grave lapse; here, where the plot is first in importance

and all other elements of the story subservient to its demands, the slip is negligible.

Deirdre appears to us now as an ideal of beauty and love; but in her own day, as the First Redaction shows, it was rather as a curse and a bane that men looked upon her. Throughout the story in L.L., the reader is never allowed to forget what the druid had prophesied at her birth, the woes and wrongs she was to bring upon Ireland, the fatal spell of her beauty: shining not as the star of loveliness that modern poets think her, but as a baleful comet of strife and jealousy and murder. "The portents of her birth are insisted upon," writes Miss Hull, "and the whole tale has a vigorous but ominous tone." ⁴ Yet the chant of the druid Cathba over the new-born infant is a remarkably tender one, despite its vision of slaughter and violence:

O Deirdre, it is a cause of great shedding of blood you will be; and for the sake of the fair face of high-born women you have, woe and grief will be upon the men of Ulster in your time, O Felim's Virgin Daughter!

One day will be a man destroyed with jealousy for you, O flame-bright woman! It is in your day will come to pass that which men shall call the Exile of the Sons of Usnach.

It is in your day also will be done a deed of great violence in Ulster, and sorrow will come on the man is guilty, to see three sons of a grand king and they dead before him.

Through yourself, O queen, will come the banishment to drive Fergus out of Ulster, and a thing will cause groans and grieving surely, the son of Conor to be killed.

Through yourself, O queen, will come to pass the murder of Gerce the son of Illadan, and a crime will not have its retribution ever, the killing of Eogan the son of Durthacht.

It is a fearful deed you will do, and a savage one itself, when anger is on you because of the king of the brave Ultonians. It is a little grave you will have somewhere apart, O Deirdre, and a story will be famous for ever. 5

The clearest indication of how Deirdre must have been regarded by those upon whom she brought bloodshed and destruction is found in the complaint of the Ultonians to Conor (# 7) in the First Redaction: "It is a woeful thing, O Conor, that the sons of Usnach should perish in a hostile land through the fault of an evil woman." --- And one must remember that the fault is really hers: in all the old versions it is Deirdre who plays the rôle of wooer, Naisi of the wooed; and hence all the bloody consequences of their elopement may be said --- were said by the Ultonians --- to rest on Deirdre's shoulders. Yet whatever she may have

appeared to them, the modern reader will scarcely admit her to have been "an evil woman".

Perhaps Deirdre's most easily distinguished trait in the First Redaction is her forthright frankness. In the "barbarian woman, rude and passionate", of whom Miss Hull writes, this characteristic is entirely fitting; yet surely it is not the characteristic of an evil woman. The directness of her speech and of her demeanor, though it may seem to men of a softer and more largely artificial age almost the mark of a savage, springs in Deirdre from the unspoiled basic honesty of her nature, from her obedience to a genuine though sometimes wrong-headed impulse: that is, from the complete naïveté of a child. When she knows that she loves Naisi and that they could be safe only in Alban, she reveals her passion to him without circumlocution or preliminaries and urges him to fly with her (# 4). A woman less honest might have led Naisi skilfully into making the proposal himself; Deirdre is above such wiles. In Edb., when Fergus unwillingly deserts the sons of Usnach for the feast (# 11), she overwhelms him with unreasoning and unreasonable but quite honest reproaches, and thenceforth never allows an occasion to pass of

hurling imprecations upon what she imagines to be his unfaithfulness --- to her the greatest crime conceivable. A woman of greater cunning might have persuaded Fergus by flattery and soft words; to Deirdre such methods do not even occur. ⁶ And in L.L., at the very end of her life, after a year of intense grief and suffering, her old directness and pointblank honesty ~~is~~^{are} unchanged: when Conor asks her tauntingly what man she hates most of all the men in Ireland, --- "Thee!" she answers, without a moment's hesitation. (# 20.)

Despite this perennial childlike naïveté, or more likely because of it, Deirdre is to some extent a poet, not only in her perfect unity with nature, but in a trait rather surprising in Miss Hull's "barbarian": a fine aesthetic sensitiveness. This the old versions do not specifically mention, it is true; but surely it must be assumed from the episode of the three colors (# 3). It has been already remarked that in Belf. the poetic significance of the incident is buried in a mass of irrelevant ornamentation. The corollary, then, must be that in the First Redaction proper, where the incident is told plainly and simply, the full import is re-

vealed. Deirdre sees white snow, red blood, a black raven; but her spirit, which is the spirit of a poet or a mystic, sees in these colors the symbol of manly valor and beauty, and knows on the instant the consuming passion of a love so fierce that nothing may stand in its way: not all Conor's precautions, not the doom foretold by Cathba the druid at her birth, not even the fact that as yet she knows nothing of Naisi. The symbol, the abstract suggestion of beauty acts upon her spirit as powerfully as the transcending reality it foreshadows.

In L.L. there is not a word of reference to the mental or spiritual aspects of Deirdre's character. That depth of intellectual power in her which has caused Mr. Yeats to say that she "alone among women who have set men mad had equal loveliness and wisdom" ⁷ is a later development in Ireland's conception of her. The First Redaction shows her simply as a beautiful face and a passionate breast. Once --- when the king of Alban, at the advice of his evil steward, has planned to murder the sons of Usnach, so as to possess Deirdre for himself (# 6) --- once, indeed, she reveals a

part of that gift of prescience that is among her chief characteristics in later versions; but nowhere else in the First Redaction is there any indication that she has a mind.

Three centuries later, in Edb., her intellect is fully developed. She is not yet, however, as in some of the modern retellings of the old story, a creature of reason only: there still clings about her much of the mystery of ancient Celtic druidism. Her foreknowledge is more than mere "female intuition", less (or is this also more?) than the clear understanding of human character with which Synge, for example, endows her: it is clairvoyance, as we commonly understand that much-abused word; or, more accurately, the power to interpret visions. Whence those visions come, or who sends them, the old story-tellers either did not know or thought it superfluous to mention. Perhaps it never occurred to them that even visions must have a cause, in the seer himself or in the one who gives him sight. Homer took pains always to relate which god or goddess had sent a particular dream to one of his heroes; ⁸ but the Irish bards thought it enough to recount the dream itself.

This difference between the Deirdre of the old sagas and the Deirdre of the modern versions which has been just remarked is of the utmost significance, and serves to characterize and contrast the two composition-groups better than might a long discussion. Here it is by means of supernatural omens that Deirdre is enabled to plumb the deceit of her enemies and foresee the dangers in her path; in recent adaptations it is almost exclusively by her power to gauge the character of others --- that is, by her "psychological" insight, reflecting the insight of the modern poets.

A few illustrations of Deirdre's clairvoyance, as shown in the Second Redaction, will suffice: her dream of the three birds coming from Ireland with three drops of honey in their beaks and returning with three sips of blood, shortly before the arrival of Fergus in Alban (# 9); the bloody cloud she sees hovering over Naisi on their way back to Emain (# 12); and her vision of the sons of Usnach headless and of Buinne with his head in place (# 12). On the other hand, not all her wisdom, even in this early version, is of a supernatural kind. That she exacts from Fergus,

before leaving Alban, his personal promise to protect the sons of Usnach or to avenge them if they should be betrayed, may be due as well to mere womanly timidity as to some "psychic" prescience of danger: either explanation will serve. But her acuteness of perception, demonstrated when she knows Fergus' voice at his first shout whereas Naisi does not recognize it until his third (# 9), is a clearly natural endowment. And proof that she is not always guided by magic signs and omens lies in her gross misjudgment of Fergus after the unhappy incident of Borach's feast (# 11).

Eleanor Hull, having commented as we have seen upon the rudeness of the earlier conception of Deirdre and Lavarcham, continues: "As time goes on these savage features are softened down, and Deirdre and her nurse become gradually transformed into modern women of less formidable character." ⁹ In the Third Redaction, which bears many other marks of modernization (some already remarked), the wisdom of Deirdre --- or rather (for in the events told here she has no opportunity of displaying any wisdom) her intellect --- is such as any girl might possess; or, if not any girl (for

even in the most modern versions Deirdre remains a paragon), certainly such as Deirdre herself might actually possess if her time were ours. Her education is primitive and rustic, but there is nothing druidical in it:

The woman whose care it was to raise Deirdre had given her all the talents she had herself. There was not a blade of living green, nor a bird singing in the wood, nor a star shining in heaven but Deirdre knew the name of it. In one thing, however, the nurse made an exception: she did not want Deirdre to have intercourse or conversation itself with any human creature in the rest of the world. 10

Beyond this the reader learns nothing of her intellectual development, although he discovers in the episode of the unfortunate huntsman that Deirdre is as kind and as gentle as she is beautiful, as compassionate as she is versed in the lore of nature. If she appears in the Third Redaction as a less heroic woman than in the older versions, she is far more intelligible to us and even more enchanting.

Two points must yet be touched upon before this cursory discussion of Deirdre's character may come to an end. We are told in Belf. (# 3) that when Cailcin the tutor wounds the raven with

his knife and gives it to Deirdre, she faints; later (## 3 and 5), that she poisons the man-dogs without a moment's hesitation. If her fainting is to be understood as caused by the sight of the maimed raven, and not merely by her tense nervous condition, or, as Miss Hull believes, ¹¹ by the effect of the three colors upon the weak and sentimental girl into whom she has been here transformed, we are faced by the problem of these contradictory elements in Deirdre's nature: her tenderness of heart and her callous cruelty. Pity at the sight of the wounded bird (or horror, it may be) side by side with her complete want of compunction in feeding the man-dogs poisoned meat seems to be an insoluble paradox; yet at least two explanations may be given. Deirdre's supreme desire, to escape with Naisi, may be sufficiently strong to overpower all other emotions; or else --- and this is the likelier assumption --- there is really no paradox here at all: whatever the cause of Deirdre's fainting, her act of cruelty was probably not considered cruel by those who first told the story or listened to it. This is borne out by the casual and quite matter-of-fact way in ~~the~~ which the incident is related:-- Deirdre

conceals a bit of the calf's flesh in her mantle and obtains the tutor's permission to go for a stroll; she goes to the cave where the man-dogs lie, and having given each of them some of the flesh, returns home. The result of her secret expedition transpires later and, as it were, incidentally: Naisi and his brothers "bored a gap at the back of the hounds' den, for the dogs were dead already through poison from Déirdre." 12

If, as it appears from this treatment of the episode, the old story-tellers attached no particular significance to the act so far as Deirdre's character is concerned, the problem of reconciling her cruelty with her earlier exhibition of tender-heartedness no longer exists.

The other point still to be mentioned is important here only because of its development by later authors --- particularly by Michael Field: namely, Deirdre's ingratitude to Lavarcham. In the First Redaction Deirdre goes off with Naisi without a single thought of the old sorceress who has had her in charge; in the Third, the nurse is mentioned for the last time when we are told that she followed the king's warriors as they bore

Deirdre away on their shoulders; and in Belf. it is explicitly mentioned that "Déirdre* escaped in the middle of the night without the knowledge of her tutor or her nurse". In L.L. and O.T. Deirdre's forgetfulness need not be too severely held against her: L.L. gives no indication that Lavarcham was on terms of any great intimacy with her; and in O.T. the girl's ungratefulness is after all a mere matter of conjecture. But in Belf., where more than anywhere else Lavarcham is Deirdre's ally and sympathetic friend, where it is entirely through Lavarcham's efforts that she succeeds in escaping with her lover, and where alone her ill requital of the old woman's aid is thought worthy of mention, the fault is inexcusable. This --- her ingratitude to Lavarcham --- and her misjudgment of the noble Fergus are the only two blemishes on her character.

CHAPTER SIX

OTHER CHARACTERS

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Chapter Six
OTHER CHARACTERS

"The hands that fought, the hearts that broke
In old immortal tragedies...."
---Joseph Plunkett

The limited scope of this paper, even more than the comparative meagreness of the material, renders it impossible to treat the other figures appearing in the sources of the Deirdre-saga as fully as the heroine. Some of the fundamental traits of the more important ones will be considered briefly, and the complete appreciation of their characters left, as it was left by the story-tellers themselves, to be gained from their actions.

As Deirdre embodies the ideal of womanly beauty, so Naisi is the corresponding pattern of the perfect warrior. The essential virtues, as they appeared to the bards of ancient Ireland, are his: excellence of form and aspect, proficiency in some of the milder but none the less manly arts, such as singing and playing chess,

and, above all, military prowess. Except for his skill ~~in~~^{at} chess, which is not recorded until the Second Redaction, a fairly complete picture of him may be found in the First. The extraordinary manner in which his "voix de ténor" is described has been already remarked. ¹ The chief aspects of his appearance --- the color of his body, his cheeks, and his hair --- are impressed upon the reader by the incident of the snow, the blood, and the raven. And in one of its rare passages of pure description, L.L. thus tells of the greatness in fighting and hunting of Naisi and his brothers:

Les fils d'Usnech étaient de grands guerriers: toute la province d'Ulster aurait beau se réunir autour d'eux pour les attaquer, les trois fils d'Usnech, adossés l'un à l'autre [et faisant de trois côtés face à l'ennemi], n'auraient pas été vaincus, tant aurait été grande la supériorité de leur défense et de la mutuelle protection donnée par chaque frère aux deux autres! A la chasse ils étaient aussi agiles que des chiens, et quand ils tuaient une bête, ils l'avaient d'abord atteinte à la course. ²

Contrasted with Naisi's prowess, which is demonstrated in this version only by his feats in the service of the king of Alban (# 6), there is evidence that he sometimes thought caution to

be the better part of valor. To maintain that he was ever guilty of cowardice would be certainly unjust; yet his hesitation to take Deirdre from her intended husband, if it is not purely due to a sense of honor, would seem to be hardly consistent with the fearless character of a great warrior. The struggle of words between him and Deirdre at this point, one of the best passages in L.L. for colorful imagery of style and liveliness of dialogue, is worth quoting at length:

Well, Naisi was alone outside [on the rampart of Emain] when Deirdre swiftly escaped [from her dwelling] and approached him. At first, he did not know who she was.

"She is fair," he said, "the heifer that is passing near us." 3

"When heifers are grown," she replied, "they must go where the bulls are."

"You have near you", answered Naisi, "the bull of the whole province, the king of the Ultonians."

"I wish to make my own choice between two," Deirdre returned, "and what I mean to take is a little bull the like of you."

"No", said Naisi. (He had heard of the prophecy of Cathba.)

"Do you refuse me?" she demanded.

"Yes, indeed", he replied.

At that she sprang toward him and seized him by his two ears: "It is shame and ridicule", she cried, "will be fastened upon these two ears if you do not take me with you."

"Go away from me, woman!" answered Naisi.

"I shall be yours", she said. [He had not the courage to resist her.] With his tenor voice he sang. . . . 4

In this fine passage appears not only Naisi's rather contemptible gingerly prudence (implied in the parenthetical explanation that his refusal to take Deirdre was due to his knowledge of the druid's prophecy), but even more clearly the fact already observed (see above, page 97), that in this version it is not Naisi who does the wooing, but Deirdre. The same is true, in a lower degree, in the Third Redaction; but here, although the initial step in their brief courtship is taken by Deirdre, Naisi certainly shows himself more gallant than in the dialogue just quoted.

In O.T., as might be supposed, the portrayal of Naisi is in every way less barbaric than in the First Redaction. The incident of the three colors, which for all its beauty and "natural magic" is of a primitive character, ceases to be ⁱncident at all in the later version, and becomes only a string of conventional similes in the huntsman's description:

. . . voici l'aspect et la figure que ces hommes offrent à la vue; leurs cheveux sont de la couleur du corbeau; leur peau blanche comme le cygne sur les eaux, leur joue rouge comme le sang d'un veau rouge tacheté; leurs bonds sont rapides comme ceux du saumon dans le torrent et du daim sur le roc tacheté. De plus, Naoise dépasse de la tête et des épaules le reste des hommes d'Irlande. 5

In Edb. the character of Naisi, like that of the other figures, is most fully realized. A few aspects of it will be discussed here. Throughout this version he is preëminently the warrior, as in the Third Redaction he is preëminently the lover. When Lavarcham returns from her spying-expedition (# 13), she reports to Conor that the sons of Usnach are "Les trois hommes, les meilleurs par la beauté et le talent, par la force et la hardiesse, par les exploits, les hauts faits et la valeur en Irlande, en Écosse, dans le vaste monde tout entier. . . ." ⁶ Aside from the typical Celtic exaggeration to be observed in nearly all the stories of the Red Branch Cycle, it is possible that here the crafty old woman speaks purposely in superlatives, in order to frighten the king out of his intention to attack the sons of Usnach and recapture Deirdre.

Another of Naisi's traits, common in Celtic hero-tales, as in the hero-tales of all fairly primitive peoples, is his pride and boastfulness. When Fergus offers to send his two sons with Naisi to protect his party against the king (# 11), Naisi replies with a mixture of chivalrous courtesy and

ungracious haughtiness, "La bonne intention de Fergus nous suffit, . . . car en case de bataille ou de duel, personne ne nous a jamais défendus que nous-mêmes." 7 The same pride, strengthening his natural incredulity, deter^r's Naisi from heeding Deirdre's advice on the several occasions of her offering it. Although he reproaches what he thinks her fearfulness and assures her that her visions are of no significance, it may very well be that he at least partially believes in them but is unwilling to imperil his honor by a display of cowardice.

More attractive to the modern reader than his greatness in battle is Naisi's genuinely tender love for Deirdre. Even when he rebukes her for giving credence to dreams, his words are gentle and eloquent of his affection, as in this quatrain from one of their metrical dialogues (# 12):

---Ne parle pas, ô prompte Derdriu!
 O femme plus belle que le soleil!
 Fergus viendra, --- retour de courage! ---
 Vers nous, et nous ne serons pas tués. 8

On one or two occasions, however, his words are less kind than usual, and his actions betray, if not

a growing coldness towards Deirdre, at least some diminution of the reverence in which he held her earlier. His refusal to remain with her in Alban despite her dread of the inexorable king is an example of this; another is his brusque "Nous n'avons pas besoin de suivre ce conseil" in reply to one of her suggestions; and another is the curious fact that when she is overcome by sleep on the way to Emain, he does not observe her absence from his party until she has been left some distance in the rear. This apparent indication of neglect, however, may be explained by the various thoughts that no doubt occupy his attention at the time: memories of his youth, it may be, re-awakened by familiar scenes, or broodings upon Fergus' desertion, or speculation as to the reception the king will accord them. Indeed, these evidences of Naisi's occasional unkindness to Deirdre would be scarcely worth mentioning except for their development, in the modern versions by Synge and Michael Field, into proofs that his love did actually cool or show signs of cooling.

Naisi's dulness of perception has already been commented upon. In O.T., when Deirdre pursues him and cries out his name (# 4), both Ainnle and Ardan catch sight of her long before Naisi, and are able twice to prevent him from heeding her cry by the transparent device of telling him that it is only the cry of wild birds. And in Edb. (# 9), Fergus must shout thrice before Naisi can recognize him, although Deirdre knows him at the very first.

Perhaps it is not altogether unjust to Naisi to close this survey of his character with an adverse reflection; for although he is admirable in many ways, the total impression of his individual traits, together with certain vaguer impressions not based on any tangible foundation, falls short of the esteem in which this paragon of all manly virtues undoubtedly was held by the story-tellers and audiences of ancient Ireland. The reason is not easily found. It was Maurice Morgann who showed Falstaff to be greater than the sum of his parts; ⁹ Naisi, somehow, is less.

Ainnle and Ardan are scarcely characterized at all in the old versions of the story; and when some description of them does occur, they are usually spoken of together or in company with their more important brother. Several of the passages quoted to illustrate some trait of Naisi's include these two as well; but even when they are mentioned in their own right, no effort is made to distinguish one from the other. Ardan's demand that he be killed first, in Edb. (# 19), on the grounds that he is the youngest of the three, indicates their respective ages; but their character, except for a few lines in Deirdre's lament (# 20) and one or two other lyric passages, must be inferred from the meagre part they play in the story. This reveals clearly enough their loyalty, their resourcefulness, and their long unselfish devotion to their brother and to Deirdre.

*

Conor, the High-King of Ulster, is among those figures in the story of whose character the reader may gain a fairly complete impression without having

anything explicitly told him of it. Indeed, there is in the old recensions of the Deirdre-saga not a single word of pure description or characterization relating to the king; ¹⁰ yet his actions assign to him several sharply individual traits, as unmistakably as if they had been specifically enumerated by the ancient bards.

In the opening scene of the story, Conor appears as a brave and merciful man, a noble spirit in every way. When Cathba the druid has prophesied the woes that are to come upon Ireland because of the new-born child, and all the Ultonian warriors are clamoring for her death, it is Conor who quiets their unmanly terror and averts the cold-blooded destruction of the infant. He appears to best advantage in Belf., where his words are imbued with high courage, humanity, and purity of purpose:

"Let it not so be done," says the King;
 "it is not laudable to fight against fate,
 and woe to him who would destroy an innocent
 infant, for agreeable is the appearance and
 the laugh of the child; alas! it were a pity
 to quench her (life). Observe, O ye Nobles
 of Ulster, and listen to me, O ye valiant
 heroes of the Red Branch, and understand that
 I still submit to the omen of the prophecies
 and foretellings of the seers, but yet I do
 not submit to, nor do I praise, the committing
 of a base deed, or a deed of treachery, in the

hope of quenching the anger of the power of the elements. If it be a fate which it is not possible to avoid, give ye, each of you, death to himself, but do not shed the blood of the innocent infant, for it were not (our) due (to have) prosperity thereafter. I proclaim to you, moreover, O ye nobles of Emania, that I take the girl under my own protection from henceforth, and if I and she live and last, it may be that I may have her as my one-wife and gentle consort. Therefore, I assure the men of Erin by the securities of the moon and sun, that anyone who would venture to destroy her either now or again, shall neither live nor last, if I survive her." 11

In the First Redaction, in place of this long and lofty speech (whose piled-up synonyms remind the reader of Shakespeare's Fluellen or Sir Hugh Evans, and seem to be a Celtic trait universally known), there are only a few bare words, terse and to the point, and empty of the ennobling sentiments found in the much later version of Belf. In L.L. Conor gives no indication that his interference is actuated by mercy or unselfishness; --- indeed, his one motive in sparing the child appears to be his desire (roused by the druid's prophecy of her future beauty) to make her his wife:

"Qu'elle soit tuée, cette fille," s'écrièrent les guerriers. --- "Non," dit le roi Conchobar; "qu'on me l'apporte demain matin; on l'élèvera comme je le prescrirai; ce sera la femme que j'épouserai." Les Ulates n'osèrent contredire le roi. On fit ce qu'il avait ordonné. 12

These brusque orders are better in keeping, really, with Conor's character as it is later manifested. The noble speech in Belf. does not sound like the speech of a cunning, unscrupulous and treacherous man, and for that reason, though stylistically superior perhaps than the corresponding portion in L.L., falls below it when judged by standards of consistency and appropriateness.

Conor's treachery is apparent in the synopses in Chapter ^{Three}~~Two~~: especially in that of the Second Redaction. It is superfluous to recall here his base violation of Naisi's trust in him, his unkingly scheme to separate him from Fergus by the device of Borach's feast, or his glib promise to Cathba, which he has no intention whatever of keeping, to spare the life of the sons of Usnach if the druid will render them powerless by his enchantments. ¹³ In L.L., these manifestations of the king's treacherous disposition are not so clear. Here Conor sends Fergus, with two other warriors of the Red Branch, to bring back the sons of Usnach from Alban; but until the next episode reveals the contemptible manner in which he has taken advantage of Fergus' geas, the reader has no cause to suspect him of

duplicity. The murder of Naisi and his brothers is accomplished with amazing swiftness, and again Conor's hand in the deed is left to be inferred from the action of his subordinates. The incident of the druid's enchantments, and consequently of the king's broken promise to Cathba, does not appear. 14

If Conor's treachery is not so glaringly patent in the First Redaction as in the Second, the earlier version compensates for this amelioration by endowing him with a trait not found elsewhere. In Edp. the king is not essentially cruel; but here he is guilty, at the end of the tale, of an act of cold-blooded inhumanity quite consonant with the semi-barbarous society which he ruled:

"Quel est l'homme dont la vue t'est la plus odieuse?" demanda Conchobar. ---
 "Toi, certes," répliqua-t-elle, "puis Eogan, fils de Durthacht." --- "Tu vivras pendant un an avec Eogan," répondit Conchobar. Et il la livra au meurtrier de Noisé. 15

This piece of brutality, and his sneer later on, when Deirdre is penned in on Eogan's chariot between the two men she hates beyond all others ---
 "Well, between Eogan and me, your glance is divided

like that of a ewe between two rams" --- are clear illustrations of the rude and savage character of the First Redaction which Eleanor Hull has remarked. Certainly nothing approaching it in wanton ferocity appears in any later version.¹⁶

The king's care to rear Deirdre ^hwere no one shall see her until she is full-grown (# 2) may be variously interpreted. In Belf., where we read that "Conor took her under his own protection, and placed her in a moat apart, ... in a fortress of the Red Branch," we may assume (recalling how noble the king has shown himself in the speech already quoted) that he thus hopes to avert the doom that otherwise will fall upon his realm.¹⁷ But in the earliest version his interest, alike in preserving the infant's life and in rearing her secretly, appears to be wholly selfish. When the Ultonians demand that she be killed, "No," says the king, "let her be brought to me tomorrow morning; let her be reared as I shall dictate". He condescends to give no explanation of his command; --- only, "this is the woman I shall marry." Thus, ~~it~~ it is possible to read into the incident two quite opposite meanings: either that the king

in pure unselfishness and solicitude for the welfare of his kingdom seeks rather to suffer the doom of Cathba's foretelling himself than to let it fall on the Ultonians; or that in selfish disregard of his country's fate, and governed only by his will to have a beautiful queen for his own, he prevents the forestallment of those evils of which the druid has given warning, and keeps her hidden from the sight of other men from sheer jealousy. Again, the latter explanation fits better the subsequent manifestations of his character.

It is only in Belf. that the discrepancy between the ages of Deirdre and the king is remarked. Perhaps it was not uncommon in early Irish society for an old man, the grandfather of a full-grown warrior, ¹⁸ to marry a girl of fourteen years; ¹⁹ yet surely, whatever the social conventions of the time may have sanctioned, such an alliance is fundamentally unnatural, and one cannot blame Deirdre for rebelling against it. Conor's love for her, granting it to be love and not simply lust, which it very nearly resembles in the First Redaction, is --- or should be --- that of a great-grandfather, certainly not that of a suitor; for he was ~~at~~ already elderly at her birth,

and throughout her infancy and childhood stood to her in loco parentis. In choosing between duty and the bonds of obligation personified in Conor, and love in the figure of the comely and youthful Naisi, there can be no question that Deirdre chose rightly, and that the instincts guiding her choice were not only more powerful, but sounder and more natural, than all the dictates of social usage that the king might have assembled in his defense.

Whether Conor is sensible of this barrier between him and the woman of his desire, the old versions do not state. From his actions it would appear, however, that he sees nothing wrong in forcing her to marry him, or, seeing it, that he will allow no mere consideration of natural fitness or unfitness to rob him of his pleasure. In O.T., it is true, Conor so far gives way to Deirdre's pleadings as to postpone the marriage-ceremony for one year, during which she may accustom herself to the prospect of becoming his queen. But on the whole, his relations to Deirdre show him to be a man of unshakeable self-will and self-indulgence, of passions ill-

sorted with his age, and of sufficient stubbornness (which he might call firmness) to oppose alike the decrees of fate and the laws of nature. . . . Perhaps a kinder and equally true conclusion is that in spite of his advanced years he retains the spirit of youth unimpaired. The complete portrait of the king of Ulster, however, as it is drawn in the old versions of the saga, is not an engaging one. And if there is a "villain" in the story, other than Destiny, that villain is Conor.

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The Red Branch hero most prominent in this tale, after Naisi himself, is Fergus the son of Rogh. He appears to be a noble and courageous warrior, though not always a wise one; the soul of honor, the true friend of the sons of Usnach, finely patriotic, loyal to his king, and respected throughout the length and breadth of Ireland; but no judge of human character, and therefore the tool of a cunning and evil master, and against his will an agent in the destruction of his best friends. It will here be sufficient to present paucis verbis evidence of each of these traits.

Of his courage, it is true, there is no direct proof in that portion of the Ultonian Cycle dealing with the Fate of the Children of Usnach, though in other parts --- notably in his exploits during the Táin bó Cúálgne ²⁰ --- it is clearly shown; and even here, where he has no chance to display his valor (except by killing the two sons of Traiglethan in revenge for Conor's treachery, and the rather less admirable act which follows it, as described in the First Redaction ²¹), his fearless and warlike nature may be glimpsed.

No higher tribute surely could be paid to his sense of honor than to be chosen by Naisi as the one man under whose protection (a moral, not a physical safeguard) he will return to Ireland; ²² and the trustworthiness of the old warrior, implied in Naisi's choice, is further confirmed by the esteem in which he is held among his countrymen. "Fergus was sure of one thing", says the Second Redaction: "that if all the five provinces of Ireland came together and took counsel with each other, they would not try to violate the guaranty (which he had given to the sons of Usnach)." ²³ Even more strongly, however, is the honorable character of Fergus evidenced in the episode of Borach's feast (# ¹¹ ~~12~~). Whether he understands the full

import of the invitation --- that is, Conor's treacherous plot to separate him from his charges --- does not appear; but one may suppose that he is hardly shrewd enough to see through the device. He is aware, however, that to remain with Borach will constitute a betrayal of Naisi's faith in him, and his noble indignation at being thus forced to abandon his friend is vividly portrayed in Edb.:

"At that Fergus became one purple mass from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and his face swelled so that the by-standers feared he would burst with the excess and violence of his rage." ²⁴ But he is under geas never to refuse a feast, and that mystical obligation he cannot break. Between two evils, he chooses the one less fatal to his honor; for to violate his geas would leave an ineradicable stain upon his character, whereas he fondly believes that the sons of Usnach will be as safe under the protection of his mere word, enforced by the presence of his two stalwart sons, as under his personal care.

The fine natural patriotism of Fergus --- not the mindless crowing of a cock for his own particular barnyard, but a sincere affection for the atmosphere

of home --- is expressed in his debate with Deirdre in Alban, whither he has come with Conor's message of good will. Instinctively she dreads to return; but in order that her instincts may seem to have the support of logic, she argues that since Naisi's territory in Alban is larger than Conor's in Ireland, it would be unbecoming for him to submit to Conor's overlordship. Fergus, however, with a depth of wisdom not usual in him, replies, "One's native land is more sweet than every other possession; and to him that cannot see his native land, there is joy neither in power nor in any greatness."

As may be observed in that curious passage in the Second Redaction, where Conor asks in turn Cuchulain, Conall Cearnach, and Fergus, what course they would take if the sons of Usnach were slain while under their protection, ²⁵ it is Fergus alone of the three whose loyalty would prevent him from wreaking vengeance upon the king himself: "Je ne promets pas d'en venir jusqu'à ton sang et ton chair; mais sauf toi, quel que soit celui des Ulates que je surprenne faisant du mal aux fils d'Usnech, il recevra la mort de ma main." ²⁶ Considering that an earlier tale of the cycle tells how Fergus, the

true king of Ulster, was tricked out of his kingship by the wiles of Conor and his mother Ness, ²⁷ his loyalty to the usurper appears doubly admirable: not a shadow of jealousy is to be found in his generous and noble spirit.

Unfortunately, to these many endearing traits in Fergus must be added at least one fault, which, though it will not lessen our affection for him, cannot but moderate our esteem. His very loyalty to Conor bespeaks ~~the~~ ^{his} poor judgment of other men's characters which is the one flaw in this otherwise flawless nature. That Conor meanly takes advantage of it, and that Fergus never suspects how he is being used as a tool, is altogether consonant with the unscrupulous guile of the one and the other's purity of heart. Certainly Fergus cannot be blamed for this defect (or is it a perfecting want?); yet if he had been a wiser man and a keener judge of others, he had been less easily duped, and the Fate of the Children of Usnach had not been to lose their lives by treachery.

In the oldest versions of the Red Branch Cycle, contained in the Book of Leinster and in the somewhat earlier Book of the Dun Cow (Leabhar na h-Uidhre, ca. 1100), Lavarcham is described as a sorceress: "a terrific and monstrous being," says Eleanor Hull, "with abnormal powers and energies." ²⁸ But even as the character of Deirdre is gradually transformed from the Amazon of L.L. to the charming and simple girl of Q.T., so Lavarcham also, through the intermediate stages to be observed in Edb. and Belf., in the most modern version has lost her grim supernatural aspect and appears only as a wise but thoroughly comfortable midwife. ²⁹ In the artistic versions of the Celtic Revival, she varies from one extreme to the other, according to the preference ^{and purpose} of the writer.

Evidence of the dread in which even Conor himself holds her by reason of her druidic power is found in these words from the First Redaction (// 2): "aussi ne laissait-on entrer, dans la maison [où Deráriu était enfermée], personne sauf son tuteur, sa nourrice, et enfin Leborcham qu'on n'osait chasser, car c'était une magicienne dont on redoutait les incantations." ³⁰ The only other glimpse of her

to be caught from L.L. is her brief dialogue with Deirdre in the next episode, ³¹ in which the girl confides her newly awakened love to Lavarcham, and the old woman informs her of Naisi's presence in the Red Branch fortress;--- the old woman; for although the First Redaction of the Deirdre-saga does not indicate her age, she is sufficiently described elsewhere: for example, in the Táin bó Cúalgne, where she is a loathsome but powerful witch, "her eye restless in her head and her tongue faltering in her jaw." ³²

This monstrous shadowy figure is transformed in Belf. almost beyond recognition. She is no longer a sorceress, but simply Conor's old nurse, into whose charge he gives the infant Deirdre; and the episode of the three colors, as told in this version, shows her to be a gentle, sympathetic soul, somewhat slow perhaps of intuition, but always eager to help and comfort Deirdre as much as lies in her power. In L.L. she is apparently without personal feelings: that by revealing Naisi's near presence she makes it possible for Deirdre to gain her déiðre, is no proof that she

loves the girl or even sympathizes with her, but only the first step in the pre-ordained course of Deirdre's fate. It is not by her own will that Lavarcham sets the tragedy on foot: as Fiona Macleod says, "the power of Destiny moved her." ³³ But the ominous fundamental tone of fatalism that forms the theme and underlies every word of the older version, has become in Belf. only the grand opening chord of the symphony, deafening at first but soon forgotten. Here Lavarcham is no mere powerless agent of destiny, but a woman with a very strong will of her own. She deliberately takes the side of Deirdre in opposition to the king, as appears in these words: "'Take courage, daughter,' said she, 'and be patient, for I am certain that thou shalt get thy desire, for according to human age and life, Conor's time beside thee is not (to be) long or lasting.'" ³⁴ She is right, as we see later on; and the fulfillment of her prediction --- not a supernatural prophecy like the druid's, but only a shrewd guess based on experience and observation --- is due largely to her own efforts in bringing the lovers together.

A sort of transition from the grim sorceress of L.L. to the gentle nurse of Belf., combining the affectionate nature of the one with the heroic proportions of the other, is Lavarcham in the Second Redaction. Her chief rôle now in the action of the story is that of the king's spy, when he desires to know whether Deirdre has kept her beauty after the hardships of life in Alban. But Lavarcham's motive is not to satisfy Conor's curiosity, but wholly to warn the sons of Usnach of their danger; for we read that "Leborcham avait plus d'affection pour Noïsé que pour tout autre homme au monde; elle était allée souvent à travers les provinces de la terre chercher Noïsé pour lui donner des nouvelles (d'Irlande) et en rapporter de lui." ³⁵ This record of her past devotion to Naisi, and the risk she now takes to ensure his safety, tell of her loyal and steadfast woman's heart. Unlike Fergus, she is not the soul of honor: Fergus will not break his bond even to save the sons of Usnach (above, page 127), while in Lavarcham the welfare of the man she loves outweighs all other considerations. And so she unhesitatingly violates Conor's trust by reporting to him, on her return from the Red

Branch house, that the cause of his jealousy and hatred of the sons of Usnach no longer exists: that Deirdre has lost her beauty. Unhappily her noble deceit fails to save Naisi and his brothers; but her single-hearted love, her quick resourcefulness, and her courage are plainly revealed in it.

It is no uncommon thing in modern fiction to see servants hum^oously portrayed; and in the Third Redaction, which is, or has come to be, a fairly modern version, there are indications that Deirdre's nurse ³⁶ is intended as a character at least partly comic. In the older versions she is a personage of some power at court, the king's own confidante or (in Belf.) his nurse. Here in Q.T. she is a fameless, nameless peasant, originally a midwife, ³⁷ later employed by an obscure harper. That she has wide knowledge, however, is implicit in the account of Deirdre's education: "Il n'y avait pas de brin de verdure venu sur racine, pas oiseau chantant dans le bois, pas d'étoile brillant au ciel dont Deirdre ne sût le nom" --- and she learns their names from the nurse. In addition to this fund of natural knowledge, she has a much rarer quality: perfect trustworthiness and discretion. Deirdre's

father evidently knows what he is about when he chooses this woman to rear the girl in secret; and he is not mistaken in his choice. Whether it is quite fair to Deirdre, to keep her from all acquaintance with the world beyond her little out-of-the-way dwelling in the mountains, may be disputed; certainly the nurse thereby carries out the instructions given her.

Her discreetness appears most clearly in her treatment of the huntsman (# 3). She fears to admit him, lest the secret in her keeping be made known to the world; and when he is let in by Deirdre herself, and begins to compliment her upon her beauty, the old nurse does not mince her rebuke: "'Sur ma vie et mes vêtements, ô l'homme qui es entré à la maison, ne peux-tu tenir ta langue,' dit la vieille; 'ce n'est pas pourtant une grande affaire pour toi de t'en tenir ta bouche close, et ta langue muette, alors que tu as trouvé ici une maison, un abri et un foyer, par une triste nuit d'hiver.'" ³⁸ But the glib huntsman will not keep his tongue, although he admits the justice of her reproof; instead, he

proceeds to arouse Deirdre's imagination by speaking of the sons of Usnach and their beauty; so that finally the nurse, in violation of the laws of hospitality but for the good of Deirdre and all Ireland, bids him go: ". . . par le Roi de la lumière et du soleil, en toute vérité et certitude, petite est ma reconnaissance ou mon admiration pour toi ou~~z~~ pour celle qui t'a introduit ici." 39

It will be observed that in the words just quoted, she swears a Christian oath; and in Chapter ~~Three~~^{Four} the same anachronism has been remarked in her discussion with Deirdre concerning the hunter's cries outside their dwelling. If these modernizing touches are to be considered at all in a study of Lavarcham's character, it must be borne in mind that they represent a gradual change in the people's conception of the story and of its meaning. The contrast between the terrific pagan druidess of L.L. and this pious old nurse is not so startling when the intervening steps in the transformation are considered. In the Second Redaction Lavarcham is still a fairly great and puissant figure,

moving congruously among heroes and magicians. In Belf., although she retains her close connection with the king's court, her station is humbler and she has lost all the positive attributes of paganism without yet having acquired those of a newer faith: she is entirely non-religious. In Q.T., finally, she has been further reduced in rank, and has again (as Deirdre's preceptress) assumed a religious function --- Christian, this time, instead of pagan. Just how thorough her conversion has been is doubtful: even Deirdre ⁴⁰ sees that she does not always practice what she preaches. "Oh! nourrice," she says, "l'oiseau a demandé à entrer pour l'amour du Dieu des créatures, et tu m'as dit que nous devons faire ce qu'on nous demande au nom de Dieu. . . . je n'aurai guère d'estime pour tes paroles et pour ta foi." ⁴¹

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The characters so far discussed --- Deirdre, the sons of Usnach, Conor, Fergus, and Lavarcham --- are those of chief importance. ⁴² But many others, although less prominent, are no less vital

to the story. It is impossible, in this cursory survey, to consider more than a few of the two-score persons appearing in the old versions of the saga; ⁴³ but several deserve to be at least remembered here.

Felim, the father of Deirdre in the older recensions, is evidently a man of rank and property: so much may be inferred from his intimacy with the king and from the elaborate banquet he prepares for him (# 1). He is a thorough patriot, but a rather inhuman parent, quite willing --- eager even --- to sacrifice his child for the good of his country. Whether he is to be therefore censured, let sociologists argue. In Q.T., where he appears under the name of Colum, he has lost in rank but gained considerably in humanity: although he still has the welfare of Ulster at heart, he displays at least so much affection for his daughter that he allows her to live. But even in this version he does not seem to care very much whether he ever sees her again. It serves him right that he never does.

Deirdre's mother is a necessary part of the machinery of the plot, and beyond that absolutely nothing. She says nothing, does nothing but give birth to the heroine of the story, and thereafter is not mentioned again. If she feels any grief at losing her child, if she ever thinks of her in later years, we do not learn. Perhaps it is not important. But the poor nameless, wordless, childless mother,

"Glimpsed for a moment,
 then forever gone,
 Leaving no trace behind," 44

is a strangely haunting shadow.

Cathba the druid is a mysterious and ominous figure, as he should be, with no discoverable traits other than those of his profession. He is a little credulous, perhaps, in trusting Conor's word when the false king promises not to injure the sons of Usnach once they are in his power; but his chief qualities are of druids as a class, rather than of himself as a man. His terrible chants of prophecy at Deirdre's birth and his enchantment of the three brothers are among the unforgettable incidents of the story.

The warriors of the Red Branch who take part in the action of this romance are men of high honor, bravery, and virtue. Borach alone is of a questionable character; but his trickery must be laid at the king's door. In all the others one can find no stain. Cuchulain, "the marvellous boy", the protector of Deirdre when she is in sorest need of one; Conall Cearnach, "the second name of men" among the Ultonians, a loyal subject and a loyal friend; Sencha, "the Nestor of the Red Branch"; even Conor's own son, Fiachra the Fair: they are worthy representatives of a body as brave and chivalrous as the Knights of the Round Table: the flower of Irish heroes, superhuman in strength and skill, proof against the warriors of the world, and conquered at last only by Destiny in the ~~guise~~^{guise} of a beautiful woman.

Three sons of Fergus are named in the versions of the Deirdre-saga discussed here:⁴⁵ in the First Redaction is Fiacha, who still lives because Naisi died in his arms; in the Second are those two contrasting brothers, portrayed more clearly and more consistently than almost any other figures whatever:

Buinne, "the Rudely Red" or "the Fiery", sullen of speech, quick-tempered, a valiant warrior but a false friend; and Illann, "the Fair", softer of speech but no less brave, and loyal to his last breath:

C'était un brave garçon que le jeune homme qui était là, Illann le Beau, fils de Fergus. Jamais il n'avait refusé à personne un objet de prix ou même de grands trésors, il n'avait reçu de salaire d'aucun roi, et il n'avait jamais accepté d'objet précieux de personne si ce n'est de son père. 46

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What has been said of these men and women must suffice, inadequate though it is, to suggest the chief greatness of the story of Deirdre: its magnificent array of living creatures, terrible and homely, gentle and cruel, valorous and false. They are not always carefully drawn, not always even credibly; their actions are occasionally without visible motive; their dimensions in the oldest version are more than human, in the latest less than kingly; they are not of our day or of our society. But they live.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ANCIENT IRELAND

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Chapter Seven

ANCIENT IRELAND

"...a day that is past,
and past not for us only,
but for the forgetting
race itself...."

---Fiona Macleod

The following brief account of Ireland in the days of Conor and the Red Branch is based on the description of Dr. Rudolf Thurneysen in his work on the Ultonian Cycle. ¹ For a more detailed if less trustworthy picture the reader may consult Eugene O'Curry's Manners and Customs or P. W. Joyce's Social History of Ancient Ireland.

The country was divided into five provinces (coiced or "fifths"): the four still remaining, and Meath, which is now a county in Leinster. The various tribes or clans (tuatha), though politically allied in each province, were recognized as being more or less independent, and their several districts were clearly defined. Within these

districts, again, were precincts belonging to the smaller branches (fine) of the tribe. And these, finally, were subdivided into portions of approximately three thousand inhabitants (tricha cé or "Thirty hundred"). Giraldus Cambrensis, the twelfth-century Welsh scholar, reports that Ireland contained 176 such "three-thousand-ships" ("Dreitausendschaften").

Government was entirely monarchical. Each tribe had its petty king, an absolute ruler within the limits of his realm. Each province, likewise, had a more powerful king set over the tribal monarch's; and as early as Conor's time or a little later, all Ireland was under the sway of a High-King (ard-ri) with his residence at Tara (Teamhair) in Meath. Each king's word was law to the inhabitants of his particular realm; and their loyalty was ensured by an elaborate system of hostages. The chief function of the king was to lead his troops in battle, as the chief duty of his people was to render military service. In addition, the king had absolute judicial powers, and when he travelled about his kingdom to settle disputes here and there, he was entertained

at the expense of his subjects, much as Queen Elizabeth in her royal "progresses" many centuries later. To aid him in deciding questions of law, the king was privileged, but not required, to enlist the aid of trained judges, who, though powerless themselves to render a decision, often guided the king by their knowledge of legal precedents. The divine right of kings, or more accurately their supernatural power, was firmly believed in: a good king brought prosperity on his land, an evil king brought fallowness, drouth and calamity.

Society was feudal, and the inhabitants were of two classes: the peasants (aithech) who worked the land, and the overlords (flaith) who worked the peasants. The saga-romances treat almost without exception of the ruling caste; when a peasant appears at all he is shown as a personification of boorishness. ² Even in the upper class, however, there were some who made their own ⁱliving, and some who had incurred the temporary overlordship of another by accepting a piece of property from him, for which, until they had reimbursed their

benefactor in full, they were obliged periodically to pay tribute. ³ There was yet another, more comprehensive mode of classifying the inhabitants of Ireland: into free-born or noble (saer) and serf-born or mean (daer). The second class contained, in addition to the peasants already spoken of, all servants and slaves. It was in part the task of male slaves (mug) to care for the livestock of their masters, of female slaves (cumal) to grind meal for their bread. A somewhat higher rank of servant was the gilla ("boy", = gillie), who lived in his master's house and attended him personally.

The son of a king was reared at court, and had as companions the sons of the greatest nobles in the realm, who were kept there for the purpose of providing him with suitable playmates. In other families than the royal one, however, the sons were usually brought up at the home of fosterparents, who were often qualified to teach them a special accomplishment such as poetical or military skill. "Das Verhältnis des Ziehsohns zu den leiblichen Söhnen des Erziehers, den Ziehbrüdern

(comalta) ist das engste, das zum Ziehvater das pietätvollste, welches die Sagen überhaupt kennen." ⁴

The highest possession of a noble in those days was his honor --- often what we should call false honor. The power of poets to rob a man of his honor by their malignant satires put the nobility completely at their mercy: rather than risk the displeasure of a poet, a nobleman was willing to grant his most exorbitant demands, even to his own impoverishment. The satires of Irish poets have always been famous for their bitterness and, what is more significant, for their effectiveness. Sir Philip Sidney, in The Defense of Poesy, speaks of being "rimed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland;" and even today the Irish poet's tongue is a weapon greatly feared by the people. "That is a thing you cannot do," says a peasant woman in one of the stories of William Butler Yeats, The Twisting of the Rope, "for he is a poet of the Gael, and you know well if you would put a poet of the Gael out of the house, he would put a curse on you that would wither the corn in the fields and dry up the milk of the cows, if it had to hang in the air seven years." ⁵ An example of

a modern literary Irish satire is this savage piece by the greatest dramatist of the Celtic Revival, entitled "The Curse: To a sister of an enemy of the author's who disapproved of 'The Playboy.'" "

Lord, confound this surly sister,
 Blight her brow with blotch and blister,
 Cramp her larynx, lung, and liver,
 In her guts a galling give her.

Let her live to earn her dinners
 In Mountjoy with seedy sinners:
 Lord, this judgment quickly bring,
 And I'm your servant, J. M. Synge. 6

A peculiar manifestation of the Ultonians' high and strict sense of honor was the institution of geas (or geis): an inviolable tabu, different for each man, sometimes imposed upon him by another, but usually "einfach als bestehend angenommen, wir würden sagen, als vom Schicksal bestimmt." We have already observed one example of this curious code: it is geas to Fergus to refuse a feast. Here, as often in these tales, a warrior's "défense magique" (as M. de Jubainville calls it) is given tragic significance.

What honor was to the men, modesty was to the women of the old sagas. It is no uncommon thing in

these tales (though in the story of Deirdre there happens to be no instance of it) for a woman to die of shame. "Liebschaften verheirateter Frauen fehlen freilich auch nicht, und die Erotik spielt in der irischen Sage eine ähnliche Rolle wie in der griechischen. Aber abgesehen von mythologischen Gestalten, bringen erst jüngere Erzählungen gern unzüchtige Weiber an. Wenn eine Schwester sich ihren Brüdern, deren baldigen Tod sie voraussieht, hingibt, um ihnen Nachkommen zu erwecken, steht das auf einem anderen Blatt." 7

Among the superstitions of the ancient Irish, but not peculiar to this people, was the symbolic significance attached to the directions left and right: for example, to approach someone from the left side was a sign of hostile intent. A more distinctively Celtic superstition was the belief in the power of fasting. If a man had wronged another, but refused to acknowledge his guilt or appear before a judge, his victim was authorized to distraint his property; but a member of the lower class could not proceed with such effective measures against a noble; instead, he "fasted

against him", and by this means forced him to yield. The meanest peasant thus had a powerful weapon against his master; for if any man starved himself to death in front of a noble's dwelling, he brought upon it endless calamity and irreparable dishonor. Not even the king was able to ward against this method of reproach; and one of the plays of William Butler Yeats, The King's Threshold, tells how a poet whom the king has driven from his table avenges the slight by fasting and perishing at his door. When Ireland was converted to Christianity, this barbarous custom was modified, so that a pious man, by fasting, was almost literally able to force God and the saints to grant his prayers.

The palace of an Irish king (dún, ráith) was a fortified building of wood and woven twigs, surrounded by a wall and moat. The "royal enclosure" thus formed is twice mentioned in the Deirdre-saga. (See above, L.L. ## 6 and 19, pages 31 and 33.) Always there was a large lawn attached to the dwelling, for the grazing of horses or (as in Belf. # 4a) for the warriors to sport in. The chief apartment of the royal

building was usually the banqueting-hall, minutely described in many of the old sagas, and, according to some of them, frequently of gigantic proportions. 8

For food, the Irish were dependent principally upon their cows, who furnished them with milk, butter, cheese, curds, and whey. Cattle therefore were the most valuable form of property, and the standard by which all other property was measured; slave-girls, a higher unit of value, were reckoned at ten cows usually, but sometimes as low as three. Another manifestation of the people's regard for their live-stock is the marvellous cow often mentioned in the sagas, a sort of ideal or day-dream of the dairyman, which is able to nourish an entire household. . . . Less important as a source of food than cattle-raising was agriculture; and bread, together with a sort of porridge (litiu, lite) made of milk, meal, and fat, was a common article of diet. Meat, as a rule, was a luxury reserved for special banquets. Beef and salt pork were almost the only varieties eaten, except for the "hero's portion", so frequently the cause of bloody rivalry in the sagas,⁹ which was the crown of

the feast and consisted of a fat, newly-slaughtered pig, roasted whole. The Irish, like their Scandinavian foes, were excessively heavy drinkers. ¹⁰ Beer was their usual means of inebriation, but they knew also of mead (mid), a sweet beverage made with honey. Wine, on the other hand, was rare and costly, for it had to be imported all the way from the south of France. For delicacies they had apples and hazel-nuts; and these, with various kinds of berries, complete the list of their comestibles. The chief meal of the day, and almost the only one referred to in the sagas, was the prainn (= Latin prandium), which came toward evening. Just before this meal the men were bathed in warm water: in the morning (which invariably began at sunrise) even the daughters of kings washed no more than their hands and faces.

In their clothing, the men of Ireland --- at least the nobles, for we are told little of the dress of the common people --- gave way without restraint to their fondness for splendor and gay colors. The chief garment (léne) was a frock, ordinarily of linen but for state occasions of

silk with embroideries in gold thread, gathered at the waist by a belt and worn usually next the skin. (Underwear is mentioned in the sagas, but was not often used.) Over their frocks the men wore a square cloak of wool (brat, whence our word brat, literally a child in rags), which served them during the night as a blanket. Commoners wore this cloak also, and fastened it (normally at the throat, rarely at the shoulder) with a thorn; but the nobility for this purpose used a brooch of precious metal, frequently set with gems --- their most conspicuous and most highly prized piece of jewelry, never omitted in the description of a warrior. ll

An Irish warrior carried a shield (sciath) or buckler (bocóit), commonly of wood, and a sword (claideb, colg) hung at his side in a scabbard. He might also have a spear (gae) to hurl at his enemy (rarely to strike him with) and a pair of darts (sleg) for use principally in hunting. Cuchulain alone of the Red Branch heroes used a sling, and he used it only to bring down birds. Helmets are mentioned, but in the

older sagas the warriors almost always fought bare-headed, their long hair gathered in a knot or braided, or hanging loose on their shoulders. "Die Zierde und ein fast notwendiger Bestandteil des Kriegers ist der Bart . . . ; der unbärtige Cūchulainn hat daher Mühe, einen Gegner im Zweikampf zu finden." So peculiarly was the beard a badge of the warrior, that men of other professions almost never wore one. The noblest heroes fought from the chariot, a two-wheeled wicker-work and metal carriage drawn by two horses. The warrior himself stood at the left side of the car, the charioteer (ara) at the right, the reins in one hand and a goad in the other.

In this connection it may be of interest to cite the conflicting observations of Dr. Hyde and Eleanor Hull. "Caesar tells us", writes Dr. Hyde, "that when he invaded the Gauls they did not fight any longer in chariots, but it is recorded that they did so fight two hundred years before this time, even as the Persians fought against the Greeks, and as the Greeks themselves

must have fought in a still earlier age commemorated by Homer." ¹² Miss Hull, however, testifies as follows: "It will be remembered that the Roman writers describe with a sort of terror the appearance of the British and Gallic scythed chariots. Alone amongst the weapons of war used against them, this weaponed chariot seems to have inspired a real fear among the Roman soldiery. 'The Gallic cavalry,' says Livy, 'charged the Roman legions by a method of fighting that was new to them, and which threw their ranks into confusion. A number of the enemy, mounted on chariots and cars, made towards them with such a prodigious clatter from the trampling of the horses and rolling of the wheels, as affrighted the horses of the Romans, unaccustomed to such tumultuous operations. Tearing their way through the ranks, the Roman soldiers were trampled and bruised to death.' (Bk. x., ch. 26.)" ¹³ However, whether chariots or not were in actual use among the Celts in the time of Caesar, "in the Irish sagas" (to quote again from Dr. Hyde) "we find this epic mode of warfare in full force." ¹⁴

The commonest form of amusement among the nobles of Ireland, aside from war, the chase, and athletic contests, was chess; or, before the introduction of chess, various games of a similar kind. The importance of the game of chess between Deirdre and Naisi will be recalled; and it is worth noting that in some of the modern adaptations of the story (in those of Mr. Yeats and "A.E.", for example), a special symbolic significance has been attached to it. This dramatic game, moreover, is an example of the not infrequent participation of women in such amusements; but the chief occupation of women of rank appears to have been the making of embroideries, in which they attained a high degree of proficiency. 15

The modern Irish wake had its origin in those early days. "Um den Gestorbenen wird Klage gehalten", says Dr. Thurneysen. "Die Frauen schlagen weinend die Hände zusammen und jammern dann. Die Totenklage (marbnað) von Männern und Frauen in poetischer und rhetorischer Form ist ein beliebter Stoff

für die Sagenerzähler bis in die späte Zeit.
 "Über dem Grab wird ein Stein mit einer Inschrift
 in ogom (ogum, ogam), dem altirischen Alphabet,
 aufrecht hingestellt; auch dies halten noch
 die jüngsten Erzähler fest --- ist doch Irland
 voll von solchen alten Grabpfeilern."

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Dr. Thurneysen's account of ancient Irish society, summarized in the preceding pages, is based almost entirely on the internal evidence of the saga-romances, with only an occasional hint from archaeology or the works of old historians. It considers, in general, the following aspects:

Geography	Modesty of women	Clothing
Government	Superstitions	Military life
Feudalism	Architecture	Amusements
Education	Food and drink	Obsequies
Honor; <u>geas</u>		

Nearly all these thirteen aspects of Irish life in the time of the Red Branch are exemplified in the story of Deirdre. To note some of the more conspicuous illustrations will be the concern of the rest of this chapter.

The action of the story is divided between Ulster and Alban (Scotland); but in the First Redaction, the wanderings of Deirdre and the sons of Usnach after their elopement included all the five provinces of Ireland. They went first to the cataracts of the River Erne in Donegal, just west of the extreme western tip of present-day Ulster; then, driven from their concealment by Conor's pursuing wrath, they made a complete circuit of the Irish coast, through Connaught, Munster, Leinster, and Meath, and finally reached the promontory of Howth, northeast of Dublin, whence they crossed the North Channel (the Moyle, or Sruth na Maoile) to Alban. ¹⁶ The most prominent city of Ulster, in this tale as in all others of the cycle, is Emain, the residence of the king. It will be remembered that in Conor's time Ireland had as yet no real political unity; and Conor was king of Ulster only, not, as he is made to appear in some of the modern versions, High-King of all Ireland as well. The strife among different provinces (which by no means came to an end at the accession of the first High-King) does not appear in the story of Deirdre proper. It is

forecast, however, in the last episode (# 21), and forms the central theme of the Táin bó Cúalgne, in which, partly as a consequence of Conor's treachery to the sons of Usnach, Queen Maeve of Connaught, with an army levied from all the other four provinces of Ireland, invaded Ulster.

Although he was king of a single province only, within that province Conor had absolute power. Almost every phase of a monarch's life mentioned in Dr. Thurneysen's account is illustrated somewhere in the story of Deirdre. In the opening scene he was evidently upon one of his royal "progresses", being entertained at the home of his principal story-teller, Felim. Later he feasted magnificently in his own palace. And in the assault on the Red Branch house, though it seems that he took no actual part in the fighting, he personally directed the movements of his warriors. Of the institution of keeping hostages to ensure the allegiance of subjects or the friendship of another king, there is no indication here, it is true; but elsewhere it is told that Conor's own son, Cormac Conlingas, was for a time one of nine

hostages at the court of Cónairey Mór. 17 The belief that a ruler's nature was reflected in the prosperity of his country is implied, perhaps, in the last episode (# 21), where Conor's treachery is responsible for the devastation of Ulster by Fergus.

Except in Q.T., which presents a very much modernized version of the story, the characters are all of the upper class of society. In the Second Redaction, it is true, an obscure servant is mentioned once by name: when Fergus left to bring back the sons of Usnach from Alban, he took with him his two sons, "plus Fuillend le domestique de Iubrach, et Iubrach lui-même." 18 But neither of these men is referred to thereafter, so that the humble Fuillend's momentary appearance on the page does not impair the aristocratic tone of the story. Trendorn, who in a later episode was sent by Conor to spy upon Deirdre in the Red Branch house, may or may not have been of noble blood: his degree is not given. The rather inglorious rôle he played, however, may perhaps be taken as proof that he was a mere mercenary

attached to the king's court, not an Ultonian hero. In addition to these two commoners, the story contains of course innumerable unnamed men, the soldiers of the royal army. But these form an indivisible whole --- an abstraction almost: a mere foil for the bravery of the sons of Usnach and of Fergus. The curious law, mentioned by Dr. Thurneysen, that in accepting another man's gift one became in a measure his feudal dependent, is recalled in the description of Illann in the Second Redaction: "he had never taken pay from any king, and he had never accepted a precious object from anyone except his father";--- in other words, he was subject to his father only.

The custom of rearing the children of noble families at the king's court or at the home of foster-parents is suggested by a stanza in Deirdre's lament for the sons of Usnach:

Trois hommes élevés par Aiffé
 Qui avait une province sous sa domination!
 Trois pilliers du combat,
 Trois nourrissons de Scathach! 19

Beyond this hint, there is no clear illustration of fosterage in our saga. Deirdre was taken from her

father's house, to be sure, and brought up by Learcham and her tutor; but Deirdre's case is not typical. A better exemplification of the custom appears in the story of Cuchulain's education by Scathach, a Scottish Amazon queen, who trained him in the arts of war. One of the most moving episodes of the Táin bó Cúalgne is Cuchulain's combat with Ferdiad, another pupil of Scathach's and therefore his foster-brother.

The Red Branch heroes' high sense of honor has been already remarked, notably in Fergus. His apparently irrational and arbitrary geas, however, is not the only one in the story: it was geas to Naisi, in the Second Redaction, ^{not} to return from Alban except in the company of certain men. This is a restriction altogether different from Fergus'. Whereas Fergus could never refuse a feast --- any feast --- at any time or place throughout his life, Naisi's geas applied to a single specified act alone. Both these geasa, however, fit the definition of Dr. Hyde: ". . . a word which seems to mean mystical injunction. I am under geasa not to do it, means I am solemnly

bound not to do it, it is taboo'd to me. The word is still in common use." ²⁰ Clearly, a warrior's geas was often no more than a device used by the old story-tellers to motivate some otherwise arbitrary development of their plots: for example, it was necessary to separate Fergus from the sons of Usnach; --- very well, let it be geas to him to refuse a feast, and let Conor take advantage of the fact. ²¹ Aside from these two geasa, the story contains other indications of the Ultonians' strict honor. The king's guaranty of safe-conduct, strengthened by the word of a noble, was enough to satisfy Naisi. It was not enough to satisfy Deirdre, however, because Deirdre was above ~~the~~ the conventions of an artificial code of honor, whereas Naisi, here and elsewhere, was a very slave to it. ²² Conor's great crime, in the eyes of Fergus, was not that he had murdered the sons of Usnach, but that he had broken his word and betrayed the guaranty of a Red Branch warrior. And when, to punish this treachery, Fergus and his companions killed the king's own son and grandson, we are told nothing of Conor's personal grief: only that he considered this deed "une grande insulte." ²³

Between the character of Deirdre and the character of the typical woman of Ireland as described by Dr. Thurneysen, there is an astonishing contrast. Nothing could be more different from Dr. Thurneysen's dutiful, modest and rather prudish lady, to whom shame is fatal, than this bold girl who deserts her intended husband, brazenly woos another man, and compels him practically against his will to run off with her to live in the wilderness. It would be hard to imagine Deirdre dying of shame!

The old belief in the power of fasting has no place in this saga, but other manifestations of the supernatural are not wanting. In general, they are of two kinds: the ancient, centering in the mysteries of druidism, and the relatively modern, concerned with the sidhe, or fairies. The mythology of Irish paganism appears in the story of Deirdre only in a single reference to Manannán Mac Lir, the sea-god: ²⁴ on the whole there is little contamination here by the older saga-cycle of the Tuatha De Danann. By way of compensation, however, in the later versions of

the Fate of the Children of Usnach (in O.T., for example) there is a considerable admixture of Christian elements, ²⁵ which do not, however, properly belong to the story, or to the present discussion of it.

Druidism plays an important rôle, especially in the First Redaction. It is less prominent in the Second, still less in Belf., least of all in O.T. Cathba's prophecy in the opening scene, combined with the strange portents preceding the birth of Deirdre --- the cry from the womb of Felim's wife, the struggling of the unborn child beneath the hands of the druid ---, ²⁶ fill the oldest version with a mist of enchantment and magic, through which the figures of the story move larger and more terrifying than life. In Edb. the mist has cleared somewhat, but echoes of the old-world sorcery still abound: the dreams and visions that gave Deirdre warning of her doom; the incantations of the druid, raising a flood before the sons of Usnach; Conor's magic shield, which roared aloud ~~when~~ in time of danger and was answered by the three great waves of Ireland; and

Naisi's sword, the gift of the sea-god, which never missed a stroke.

The old gods of the Irish pantheon, partly perhaps under the pressure of Christianity, have dwindled gradually to the estate of fairies, now known as the sidhe.²⁷ They are still personages to be propitiated and reverently spoken of when it is thought that they may be listening, for they have not lost their magic power for good or evil; but from their shadowy vastness in pre-Milesian days they have shrunk to the "wee folk" of popular imagination, and have taken refuge in the fairy-mounds with which Ireland is covered, where they live quite as actively as if the Church had not exploded them, and have equal reality with Saint Patrick. In O.T., an essentially popular version of the Deirdre-saga, the old religion has completely given way to Christianity; but the old gods, transformed into fairies, are mentioned with a matter-of-factness that shows how firmly and how naturally they are believed in by the Scottish Highlanders who tell the tale. When the unfortunate huntsman dreamed that he was lying before a fairy-

mound, and that the sidhe inside were making unearthly music, he was not suffering from a crazed, impossible nightmare. He was merely mistaken.

The agreement between Dr. Thurneysen's account of Irish architecture and the sparse hints to be found in the First and Second Redactions has been spoken of already. In addition, there is some indication in Edb. (# 8) of the vast proportions of Conor's banqueting-hall, in the fact that three hundred and sixty-five guests could be assembled there at one time. A more complete description of a typical building of the day appears in Belf.:

This is how Déirdre's abode was (situated, namely) in a fortress of the Red Branch, according to the King's command, every (aperture for) light closed in the front of the dún, and the windows at the back (ordered) to be open. A beautiful orchard full of fruit (lay) at the back of the fort, in which Déirdre might be walking for a while under the eye of her tutor at the beginning and the end of the day; under the shade of the fresh boughs and branches, and by the side of a running, meandering stream that was winding softly through the middle of the walled garden. A high, tremendous difficult wall, not easy to surmount, (was) surrounding that spacious habitation, and four savage man-hounds (sent) from Conor (were) on constant guard there, and his life was in peril for the man who would venture to approach it. 28

The lawn of the king's palace is also mentioned here: Deirdre had her first sight of Naisi when she saw him "on the lawn of Emania, playing games with the boys, and learning feats of valour."²⁶

On at least three occasions in Edb. the matter of eating and drinking is mentioned. Conor's feast, to which he invited all the nobles of Ulster that his scheme to lure Naisi back to his court might have a semblance of sincerity, is described with much gusto:

On leur distribua (de la bière) de telle sorte qu'ils furent gais, joyeux, de bonne humeur. Et les musiciens, les jongleurs, et les conteurs se levèrent pour réciter devant eux leurs vers, leurs poèmes, leurs chansons, les généalogies des familles. ²⁹

In Deirdre's melancholy farewell to the land of Alban, among the many joys she knew there she mentions these in the fourth stanza:

Le poisson, la venaison et la chair grosse
du blaireau
Étaient ma part dans la vallée de Laid. ³⁰

And finally, when the sons of Usnach and their party had arrived in Emain and were lodged at the Red Branch house, we read that

... une troupe de serviteurs et de domestiques y fut envoyée avec eux, et on leur servit des viandes de choix et bien accommodées, des breuvages doux et enivrants, en sorte que toute la troupe des serviteurs était ivre et chantant joyeusement à pleine voix. 31

In description of costume, this particular saga is unaccountably deficient. Only twice, in all the four versions, is there even the slightest mention of clothing: in Belf., where the sons of Usnach, in stealing Deirdre from the place of her concealment, "lifted the girl over the walls, through every rough impediment, so that her mantle and the extremity of her dress were all tattered"; 32 and in O.T., where "she tucked up her skirts" to run after the sons of Usnach. 33 These bare hints, however, do not illustrate the typical minuteness and exaggeration of the sagas in describing the dress of nobles. The following passage from another tale of the Red Branch Cycle, retold by Lady Gregory under the name of "The Championship of Ulster", is a better example. It is a description of Cuchulain as he came riding up in his chariot toward the dún of Queen Maeve at Cruachan in Connaught:

"I see in the chariot a dark, sad man, comeliest of the men of Ireland. A pleated crimson tunic about him, fastened at the breast with a brooch of inlaid gold; a long-sleeved linen cloak on him with a white hood embroidered with flame-red gold.... Across his knees there lies a gold-hilted sword, there is a blood-red spear ready to his hand, a sharp-tempered blade with a shaft of wood. Over his shoulders a crimson shield with a rim of silver, overlaid with shapes of beasts in gold." 34

This quotation serves also to illustrate Dr. Thurneysen's account of the weapons carried by an Ultonian warrior; but these are mentioned with equal explicitness in the story of Deirdre. When Conor instructed his son Fiachra the Fair to engage Illann in single combat (Edb. # 16), he spoke these words to him: "Par ma foi, c'est dans la même nuit que vous êtes nés, toi et Illann le Beau; il a les armes de son père; prends avec toi mes armes: (mon bouclier qu'on appelle) le Beau-Doré, (ma lance dite) la Victorieuse, mon javelot surnommé le Fendu; prends aussi mon épée et uses-en vaillamment." 35

Under the general head of military life may be mentioned one or two points from this tale. The institution of single combat, common to all ancient

literatures, is represented here not only in the duel between Illann and Fiachra, but equally in this passage from the Third Redaction (§ 7):

Il invita au loin, et sur toute l'étendue de l'Irlande, tous ses compagnons à ce festin. Il eut en lui-même l'idée d'offrir à Naisi, fils d'Uisne, un jour de bataille et un combat, et de lui enlever sa femme, qu'elle fût ou non mariée avec lui. 36

The size of the army with which Conor attacked the Red Branch house is not reported; but a little calculation will show that it must have been tremendous. Near the beginning of the siege, Buinne sallied forth and killed one hundred and fifty men before deserting his companions; later Illann made two sorties, killing three hundred of the attackers in the first and an indefinite number in the second. The defense of the fortress then fell in turn upon Ardan, who killed three hundred more, and upon Ainnle, who silenced "une quantité innombrable". As for Naisi, who fought last, "on ne peut énumérer ceux qui tombèrent sous ses coups." After these individual feats, the three sons of Usnach took Deirdre in their midst and left the Red Branch house, killing a final three hundred on the way. 37 This

makes in all one hundred and fifty plus thrice three hundred, besides those who fell during Illann's second sortie and the countless men slain by Ainnle and ^{Naisi} ~~Amis~~. One thousand and fifty men are thus definitely accounted for; and as the number slain by each of the two elder sons of Usnach must have exceeded three hundred (or else it would not have been dignified with the epithet "incalculable"), the total number of soldiers who fell during the siege was at the very least seventeen hundred. The full size of the army, to judge by Conor's continued confidence, must have been many times greater. The massacre of all these common soldiers is related in a most casual and matter-of-fact tone; but the death of the two nobles, Illann and Fiachra, is dwelt upon at some length and is carefully described.

It will be noted that the word "knight" has not been used in this paper in speaking of Irish warriors. "Moore's genius", says Dr. Hyde, "has stereotyped amongst us the term Red Branch knight, which, however, has too much flavour of the mediaeval about it. The Irish is curadh, 'hero.' The Irish for 'Knight'

in the appellations White Knight, Knight of the Glen, etc., is Ridire (pronounced 'Rid-ir-ya,' in Connacht sometimes corruptly 'Rud-ir-ya'), which is evidently the mediaeval 'Ritter,' i.e., Rider." ³⁸ Nevertheless, there did exist among the Ultonians an almost knightly code of chivalry, some aspects of which have been discussed already. In the account of the siege of the Red Branch house in Edb., several more may be observed. Buinne and Illann fought against the king's army not because their own safety was at stake, nor even, for all that appears, because they cared very much about the safety of their companions. But Conor had violated their father's word, and the honor of their family was imperilled. They fought to save this honor; and although Buinne was not proof against the temptation of Conor's bribe, his brother, of all Irish warriors appearing in the story of Deirdre the most courteous and the most lovable, died for it.

When the sons of Usnach had finally been rendered powerless by the druid's magic, Conor called for a volunteer to kill them; but every

man of the Ultonians refused. The explanation of their apparent chivalry is curious: "il n'y avait pas en Ulster un homme qui n'eût été à la solde de Naisé." However, as this consideration had not deterred them from trying to kill Naisi so long as he was able to defend himself, there may be something noble, after all, in their unwillingness to murder an unarmed man. And that even these common soldiers could feel grief at the death of a brave enemy is plainly evidenced: "Chacun des Ulates, voyant cette mort déplorable, poussa trois longs cris de douleur." 39

At least one incident the very opposite of chivalrous, recounted near the end of the Second Redaction, must be charged against the most honorable warrior in the saga, Fergus himself. When he arrived in Emain the day after the murder of the sons of Usnach, he began at once to wreak vengeance upon Conor; and among other feats, he performed one that must be a stain always upon his character: the massacring of the Ultonian women. 40

Four different kinds of recreation, physical and mental, are represented in the story of Deirdre. All have been discussed elsewhere, so that it will be sufficient simply to recall them here. The chase figures in L.L. and O.T., but less as a sport than as a means of livelihood. An athletic contest --- specifically a game of ball --- was the scene of Deirdre's first meeting with Naisi in Belf. At Conor's feast in Edb., the nobles were entertained by story-tellers and musicians. And in the same version, at least three games of chess were played: one in Alban, interrupted by the arrival of Fergus, and two in the Red Branch house at Emain, before and during the siege.

The violent lamentations for the dead mentioned by Dr. Thurneysen as being characteristic of the sagas occupy a large part both of the First and of the Second Redactions. The following passage from the latter may serve as illustration:

Cuchulain and Deirdre came to the place where the sons of Usnach were (lying dead). Deirdre unloosened her hair; she began to drink of Naisi's blood; her cheeks took the color of burning coals, and she sang After that, Deirdre said: "Let me kiss my

husband." Then she drank (again) of his blood and kissed him, and finally chanted this dirge:

"Long is the day without the sons of Usnach; it was never wearisome to be in their company; sons of a king that entertained exiles; three lions of the Hill of the Cave.

"Three darlings of the women of Britain; three hawks of Slieve Cullenn; sons of a king served by valour, to whom warriors did obedience.

"Three heroes not good at homage; their fall is a cause of sorrow; three sons of the the sister of a king; three props of the army of Cuailgne.

"The High King of Ulster, my first betrothed, I forsook for love of Naoise; short my life will be after him; I will make keening at their burial.

"That I would live after Naoise let no one think on the earth; I will not go on living after Ainnle and after Ardan.

"After them I myself will not live; three that would leap through the midst of battle; since my beloved is gone from me I will cry my fill over his grave.

"O, young man, digging the new grave, do not make the grave narrow; I will be along with them in the grave, making lamentations and ochemes!

"Many hardships I met with along with the three heroes; I suffered want of home, want of fire, it is myself that used not to be troubled.

"Their three shields and their spears made a bed for me often. O, young man, put their three swords close over their grave!

"Their three hounds, their three hawks, will be from this time without huntsmen; three aids of every battle; three pupils of Conall Cearnach.

"The three leashes of those three hounds have brought a sigh from my heart; it is I had the care of them, the sight of them is a cause of grief.

"I was never one day alone to the day of the making of this grave, though it is often that myself and yourselves were in loneliness.

"My sight is gone from me with looking at the grave of Naicise; it is short till my life will leave me, and those who would have keened me do not live.

"Since it is through me they were betrayed I will be tired out with sorrow; it is a pity I was not in the earth before the sons of Usnach were killed.

"Sorrowful was my journey with Fergus, betraying me to the Red Branch; we were deceived all together with his sweet, flowery words. I left the delights of Ulster for the three heroes that were bravest; my life will not be long, I myself am alone after them.

"I am Deirdre without gladness, and I at the end of my life; since it is grief to be without them, I myself will not be long after them."

Then Deirdre gave three kisses to Naisi, and lay down in his grave. 41

CHAPTER EIGHT

RELATION TO OTHER TALES

Chapter Eight

RELATION TO OTHER TALES

"It's a long while men have been talking of Deirdre, the child who had all gifts, and the beauty that has no equal...."

---Synge

In the preceding chapters, the story of Deirdre has been considered as an isolated, self-sustaining narrative. Before closing this elementary survey, it might be well to indicate the relation of this saga, first, to the rest of the Ultonian Cycle, and second, to the folk-lore of the world. It will be impossible here to say more than a word on either subject: barely enough to suggest the long chain of which this particular story is a link.

The beginning of the Fate of the Children of Usnach is bound up with the preceding portion of the cycle only by the characters who figure in both: Conor, Lavarcham, and the Red Branch heroes,

all of whom appear in the opening scenes of this tale without explanation or introduction, having been introduced or explained in earlier tales. A priori, therefore, the connection between the Deirdre-saga and the rest of the cycle appears to be slight; but a posteriori, in the light of its effect, the relation of this minor story to the great central theme of the cycle, the Táin bó Cúalgne, is clear enough. It was in consequence of the king's treachery to the sons of Usnach that Fergus, under whose protection they had been, left Emain with Dubthach Dael Uladh ("the Beetle of Ulster") and Cormac Conlingas, the king's own son, and took refuge with Maeve in Connaught; and it was Fergus' knowledge of the Ultonian methods of warfare, of Ultonian heroes and of Ultonian geography, that made possible Maeve's great invasion of Ulster.

In 1876, Dr. J. G. von Hahn published his discovery that in a large number of Indo-European folk- and hero-tales there may be found a certain definite sequence of incidents, recurring in the most widely different stories, and pointing to an

ultimate common origin of all Indo-European myth. These incidents, which he called collectively "Die Arische Aussetzungs-und-Rückkehr-Formel",¹ Dr. von Hahn took from a comparative examination of the following fourteen stories: (a) the Hellenic myths of Perseus, Herakles, Oedipus, Amphion and Zethos, Pelias and Neleus, Leukastos and Parrhasius, and Theseus; (b) the Roman mythic history of Romulus and Remus; (c) the Germanic Heldensagen of Wittig-Siegfried and Wölfdietrich; (d) the Iranian mythic histories of Cyrus and of Key Chosrew; and (e) the Hindu myths of Karna and of Krishna. In 1881, there appeared in the Folk-Lore Record an article by Alfred Nutt, on "The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return Formula in the Folk and Hero Tales of the Celts",² in which von Hahn's original scheme was elaborated and applied to five Gaelic and five Kymric stories, including the "Boy-Deeds of Cuchulain".

Dr. von Hahn's original formula consisted of sixteen points, to which Dr. Nutt added two more (IXa and IXb). With these amplifications, the Formula reads as follows:

- I. Hero born out of wedlock, or posthumously, or supernaturally, (or one of twins).
- II. Mother, a princess residing in her own country.
- III. Father, a god or hero from afar.
- IV. Tokens and warnings of the hero's future greatness.
- V. He is in consequence driven from home.
- VI. He is suckled by wild beasts.
- VII. Is brought up by a childless (shepherd) couple, or by a widow.
- VIII. Is of passionate and violent disposition.
- IX. Seeks service in foreign lands.
- IXa. He attacks and slays monsters.
- IXb. He acquires supernatural knowledge through eating a magic fish (or other animal).
- X. He returns to his own country, retreats, and again returns.
- XI. Overcomes his enemies, frees his mother, and seats himself on the throne.
- XII. He founds cities.
- XIII. The manner of his death is extraordinary.
- XIV. He is accused of incest; he dies young.
- XV. He injures an inferior, who takes revenge upon him or upon his children.
- XVI. He slays his younger brother.

Nutt says of the ten Celtic stories which he treats, that they "are all the known examples of

the Formula occurring in the folk and hero tales of the Gael and of the Kymry." It is not proposed here to prove that the Deirdre-saga should be added to these ten: the fundamental difference between these tales of exile and war and the love-romance of the sons of Usnach is obvious; and the very fact that the central figure of this romance is not a man but a woman ³ differentiates it from the others --- from the Gaelic stories of Cuchulain, Finn mac Cúmhail, Labhraidh Maen, Conall, and the Great Fool, and from the Kymric stories of Peredur, Perceval, Arthur, Merlin and Taliesin. However, without maintaining that the Deirdre-saga belongs fundamentally to the same type of narrative as these, it can be clearly shown to contain a good many points of the Formula. At least eight are exemplified in the events of Deirdre's own life, two more in the closely related life of Naisi, and one in the story of their children: ⁴ eleven points in all, which is an exceptionally high number; for of the stories examined by Dr. von Hahn, the two legends most fully illustrating the Formula (Romulus and Remus, and Cyrus) have only thirteen points each.

A bare enumeration of the points of the Aryan Expulsion-and-Return Formula found in the Fate of the Children of Usnach will be enough to establish its connection with the great mass of Indo-European folk-lore.

- I. Deirdre was born neither out of wedlock, nor posthumously, nor one of twins; but her birth may surely be called supernatural, especially in the First Redaction.

- IV. The tokens and warnings of her future greatness --- at least of the great events she was to bring about ---, in the form of Cathba's prophecies, have been more than once remarked in earlier chapters.

- V. Deirdre was taken from her home --- though not "driven", as in the Formula --- in consequence of these predictions.

- VII. The hero's rearing by a childless couple or by a widow is closely paralleled in Deirdre's rearing by Lavarcham, who,

though not a widow, is an old woman and childless.

VIII. Deirdre's "passionate and violent disposition" is one of her most conspicuous traits in the older versions. That she appears in more modern recensions as a softer and more docile creature does not affect the original conception of her character.

IX. Deirdre did not, of course, seek service in foreign lands; but Naisi did, and she accompanied him. In L.L., it will be remembered, Naisi took refuge with the king of Alban and served him as a warrior until the steward discovered the existence of Deirdre.

IXb. In Fiona Macleod's short-story, "Honey of the Wild Bees", the druid-poet Bobaras (here called Bobar[^]án), the foster-father of Deirdre's children Gaer and Aebgreine the Sunlike, having been warned by the god Manannán Mac Lir that three great

perils would beset his charges, ate three rowan-berries and thereby acquired knowledge of the speech of certain animals, who aided him in averting the first two of these dangers, although the third, in the form of Rinn, the Lord of Shadows (that is, Death), was too powerful for his charms. 5 --- This presents a modification of the Formula, but the incident of gaining supernatural knowledge by eating something is plainly present.

- X. The wanderings of the Formula-hero, who "returns to his own country, retreats, and again returns", are partially reproduced in Deirdre's return to Ireland, after her sojourn with Naisi in Alban. She came back only once, however, so that the second half of this incident (the retreat and final return) is omitted.

- XIII. The manner of the hero's death, says the Formula, "is extraordinary". This is

open to wide interpretation; but without straining the connotations of the adjective, Deirdre's death may be so characterized.

XIV. Deirdre was never accused of incest, of course; but that she died young is proved by the following simple chronology: she eloped with Naisi at the age of fourteen (in Q.T., perhaps at fifteen), lived in Alban, according to various versions, from three to six years, and perished almost immediately after coming back to Ireland; that is, between the ages of seventeen and twenty. (In L.L., where she lived for a whole year after Naisi's death, she had left Ireland at fourteen and stayed only three years (?) in Alban, so that the additional year makes no difference really.)

XV. The two men who aided Conor in bringing about Naisi's death had both received injuries from him earlier. Trendorn, who spied upon him through a window of

the Red Branch house (# 13), had lost his father, and Maine, who killed him after the druid's enchantments had rendered him powerless (# 19), had lost his father and two brothers, by Naisi's hand.

4

There is another Irish queen, more famous than even Deirdre, between whose tragic story and the Fate of the Children of Usnach are many close parallels. Iseult the Beautiful appears, it is true, in Cornish legend only, not in Irish; and the tale of her amour with Tristram, as it belongs to the "deputy-wooer" class, is closer formally to other examples of the same type, such as the story of Guinevere and Launcelot, than to the story of Deirdre. ⁶ But the similarity of certain episodes found in both tales is enough to warrant a comparison. As Deirdre was the affianced or intended wife of Conor, Iseult was rightfully the bride of King Mark of Cornwall; as Deirdre gave her love to Naisi, Iseult gave hers to the young

prince of Lyonesse whom Mark had sent to bring her from Ireland; and as Naisi got his death from Conor because of Deirdre's love, Tristram fell a prey to the jealousy of Mark. Both Conor and Mark were wronged, from their own point of view, and both accomplished their revenge by treachery; the heroine of each tale was seconded in her amours by a nurse --- Lavarcham and Brangwaine; and each, finally, died of sorrow at the death of her lover. ⁷ These fundamental likenesses are not impaired by certain differences equally fundamental, as that Iseult and Tristram were united by the influence of a magic potion, whereas the love of Deirdre and Naisi was a quite natural passion. It is interesting to find two stories so closely related, in some respects at least, in two branches of Celtic literature.

Douglas Hyde, with more beauty than truth, called Deirdre the "Unhappy Helen of a western land"; ⁸ and the comparison has ever since been common. Yet only in the most superficial ways are Deirdre and Helen alike. Both were types of loveliness, both gave "duty" second place to ~~happiness~~ ^{happiness,}

and both were the cause of a great war. But in their characters, how vastly different were these two women! Throughout the changeful events of her life, Helen remained unmoved and passive, calm as a Greek temple. Deirdre, with all the fiery passion of the Celt, seized her life in her own hands and shaped it as she desired. Helen was a fair face and a graceful body, and nothing more. Deirdre was beyond this a flashing will and a clear intellect: if any figure in the story of Troy may be compared with her, it is Cassandra, the tragic daughter of Priam, whose doom was to be a prophet among unbelievers. And finally, whereas Deirdre suffered unspeakably and died in the end of grief, Helen's fate was not, to Helen herself, particularly sorrowful. It brought misfortunes enough to others, but to her it brought scarcely so much as a passing inconvenience. And yet, for all the superior strength of her character, Deirdre lacked one thing, and lacking this her name is a name only where Helen's has become a symbol: she had no Homer.

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THE END

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NOTES

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NOTES

(Notes have been numbered consecutively through each chapter.)

Chapter I.

(Pp. 1-16)

1. Eleanor Hull, Text Book, vol. I, p. 1.
2. Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics, Second Series. London: Macmillan and Company, 1902. Notes, p. 263. (1st ed., 1897.)
3. For a very brief but clear account of the contributions of these men to the establishment of the Celtic movement, see Padraic Colum's introduction to his Anthology of Irish Verse (N.Y., 1922), 11-14.
4. Quoted in Dr. Hyde's Literary History, 253.
5. Matthew Arnold, On the Study of Celtic Literature, 22.

6. Ibid., 23.
7. To English readers who desire the acquaintance of these old sagas, and care more for literary charm and narrative interest than for scholarly thoroughness, Lady Gregory's splendid retellings of the three cycles are recommended. They are contained in her Gods and Fighting Men (Mythological and Fenian) and in her Cuchulain of Muirthemne (Ultonian).
8. Douglas Hyde, Literary History, 293.
9. Ibid., 283-4.
10. This account of the individual gods is based on the section in Hull, Text Book, I, 1-20.
11. Literary History, 284.
12. Concerning the chronological order of the Ultonian and Fenian Cycles there has been much controversy. For an account of the arguments presented respectively for the priority of one or the other, see Lady Gregory's notes to Cuchulain of Muirthemne. She has adopted the less usual order: i.e., she has placed

the Fenian Cycle before the Red Branch. The order followed in this paper is that of Dr. Hyde's Literary History.

13. Rudolf Thurneysen, Irische Helden- und König-
sage, 95. --- "The fifteenth year of Octavian" must be taken to mean, "of Octavian's life", not "of his reign": that is, 48 B.C., not 12 B.C.; for the same source places Cuchulain's birth in the sixteenth year of Octavian, and the Táin bó Cúalgne in 18 B.C. Since Cuchulain fought in the Táin, he could not have been born seven years after its completion.
14. Text Book, I. 25.
15. The house of the Red Branch appears to have served variously as banqueting-hall for the king's warriors, as a guest-house to receive visitors, and as a trophy-chamber to store the heads of defeated enemies. Professor Dunn, in his edition of the Táin Bó Cúalgne, takes "Red Branch" to be a mistranslation of the Irish Craeb ruad, "Nobles' Branch"; but the mistake, if it is one, has long since become stereotyped.

16. Hull, Text Book, I. 28-29.
17. Edited by Joseph Dunn, London, 1914.
18. Literary History, 252. Dr. Hyde's translation of Zimmer's German in "Kelt-Studien", II, 189.
19. William L. Richardson and Jesse M. Owen:
Literature of the World: an Introductory Study
(Boston, 1922). Chap. XIV, "Irish Literature", 453.
20. Hyde, Literary History, 294.
21. Douglas Hyde, Three Sorrows of Story-Telling, 149. This little volume contains an excellent translation into English blank verse of all three of these tales.
22. Fiona Macleod, Deirdre and the sons of Usna, 3.
23. Among modern English versions of the story of Deirdre, the following may be mentioned:

Dramas:

George W. Russell ("AE")
 William Butler Yeats
 Eva Gore-Booth
 J. M. Synge
 "Michael Field"
 "Fiona Macleod"

Narrative poems:

Douglas Hyde
 Herbert Trench

Prose romances:
 Lady Gregory
 "Fiona Macleod"

Novel:
 James Stephens

Short-stories:
 "Fiona Macleod"

Cantata:
 T.W.Rolleston

Lyrics:
 Thomas Moore,
 Sir Samuel Ferguson
 William Butler Yeats
 "Fiona Macleod"
 James Stephens
 Seumas O'Sullivan

---and many others

To these may be added the fairy tale by Joseph
 Jacobs. For full details of date, title, publisher,
 and so forth, see the Bibliography.

24. Deirdré and the Sons of Usna, 3-4.

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Chapter II.

(Pp. 17-23)

1. The Folk-lorist Joseph Jacobs has mentioned that the story of Deirdre is "a remarkable instance of the tenacity of oral tradition among the Celts." Celtic Fairy Tales, notes.
2. "It suffices to say that we possess a MS. literature of which Cuchulain and his contemporaries are the subject, the extent of which may be roughly reckoned at 2000 8vo pages. The great bulk of this is contained in MSS. which are older than the twelfth century, or which are demonstrably copied from pre-twelfth-century MSS; where post-twelfth-century versions alone remain, the story itself is nearly always known from earlier sources...." Alfred Nutt, in Cuchulain, the Irish Achilles.
3. L.L. stands for Leabhar Laigneach, the Irish name of the Book of Leinster.
4. Hull, Text Book, I. 246.

5. In Irish, Leabhar Buidhe Lecain. The First Redaction will be hereafter designated simply as L.L., but it should be remembered that the Yellow Book of Lecan is included in the reference.
6. Hull, Text Book, I. 246.
7. Literary History, 304 ff.
8. Jacobs, Celtic Fairy Tales, notes. For other versions, published from time to time by various scholars including Whitley Stokes, M. E. Windisch, and O'Flanagan, see the notes to "Deirdre" in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirthemne.
9. That Edb. is not actually a continuation of O.T. is proved by the manner in which Lavarcham is introduced in the earlier version. She does not appear in O.T. at all, except as a nameless peasant woman, yet her first appearance in Edb. is attended by no preamble or explanation.

Chapter III.

(Pp. 24-73)

1. The lapse of time, and hence Deirdre's age at the beginning of # 3, are not indicated.
2. With this incident of the three colors, and with its much reduced form in O.T., compare the following stanza from the lament of Queen Maeve over the dead body of her lover MacMoghcorb (translated by T. W. Rolleston):

Dazzling white as limes
 Was his body fair,
 Cherry-red his cheeks,
 Raven-black his hair.

But these three colors are not peculiar to Celtic literature: they appear to be well-nigh universal. It may surprise the reader to find them as a link between the Ultonian Cycle and Grimm's Märchen, one of which, the story of "Schneewittchen" (Snow-white), opens thus:

Es war einmal mitten im Winter, und die Schneeflocken fielen wie Federn vom Himmel herab, da sass eine Königin an einem Fenster, das einen Rahmen von schwarzem Ebenholz hatte, und nähte. Und wie sie so nähte und nach dem Schnee aufblickte, stach sie sich in den Finger, und es fielen drei Tropfen Blut in den Schnee. Und weil das Rote im weissen Schnee so schön aussah, dachte sie bei sich: "Hätt' ich ein Kind so weiss wie Schnee, so rot wie Blut, und so schwarz wie das Holz an dem Rahmen!"

3. De Jubainville has Albion: i.e., Scotland.
4. No indication is given of how she managed to escape from her house in spite of the high walls and the fierce dogs.
5. This trait is not simply mentioned and then forgotten. See O.T. # 4, where Deirdre is confronted with Naisi.
6. With this incident of the three shouts (a familiar device in all primitive literature) compare O.T. # 3 and Edb. # 8.
7. Ulster (NE), Connaught (W), Munster (SW), Leinster (SE), and Meath (E). Meath is no longer a separate province.
8. A remarkable example of the old story-teller's accuracy and of the faithfulness with which this tale has been handed from one generation to the next: the route here described is exactly the reverse, as it should be, of the one described in Belf. # 5. (See above, page 42.)
9. This song appears to be not so much an organic part of the story as a repetition, in another

form, of the prose narrative just preceding.

Aucassin and Nicolette is a more familiar example of this prosy-metrical type of fiction.

10. "Ces mots, sorte de malédiction prophétique, annoncent les maux que fera fondre sur Emain la vengeance de Fergus." --- De Jubainville's footnote.
11. The advance of the night is thus subtly implied.
12. Here is an example of the anticlimax frequently found in old Irish tales.
13. It will be observed that three hundred is a favorite number in this connection. Very likely it is to be taken merely as an indefinite expression signifying "many" rather than exactly 300.
14. De Jubainville, Épopée Celtique, 278.
15. Hull, Text Book, I. 89. --- With this tradition cf. the story of Baile and Aillinn which is the theme of a poem by W. B. Yeats. Miss Hull adds as other congeners the old border ballads of "Fair Margaret and Sweet William", and "The Douglas Tragedy".

16. Another example of anticlimax, ending the story on a rather feeble and irrelevant note. Fergus' exaction of vengeance upon the Ultonians would make a fitting close; but the old storyteller must needs add that the Ultonians were not far behind in despoiling Connaught.

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Chapter IV.

(Pp. 74-90)

1. Text Book, I. 90-91.
2. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 225, 226-7.
3. See above, pages 29 and 32.
4. Episodes ## 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 are omitted. In de Jubainville's reprint, L.L. occupies sixteen pages, O.T. and Edb. combined occupy fifty.
5. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 230.
6. Ibid., 221.
7. Text Book, I. 89.
8. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 261-2.
9. Ibid., 269 and 274. See above, pages 59 and 62.
10. Compare the French translations, de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 231-233 and 279-283.
11. Literally, "garlic" (Irish cneamh); but Dr. Hyde substitutes the more poetic "harts-tongue".

12. See de Jubainville, 260-62. This is my own translation, based partly on the French version and partly on Dr. Hyde's adaptation, Literary History, 311-312. The second stanza is omitted.
13. Except, possibly, for the apparently superfluous sentence in # 19, when Fiacha has caught the falling Naisi in his arms and falls with him: "ce fut ainsi que Noisé mourut entre les bras du fils de Fergus et sous lui". This sounds like the fulfillment of some earlier prophecy; but more likely it is simply a repetition or emphasizing of the account immediately preceding. See above, page 34.
14. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 242-43.
15. Ibid., 251.
16. See above, page 48.

Chapter V.

(Pp. 91-107)

1. Text Book, I. 88.
2. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 222.
3. Ibid., 240-41. See above, page 45.

This is my own translation, somewhat free.

Compare the rehandling by Lady Gregory in

Cuchulain of Muirthemne:

And Deirdre grew straight and
clean like a rush on the bog, and
she was comely beyond comparison of
all the women of the world, and her
movements were like the swan on the
wave, or the deer on the hill. She
was the young girl of the greatest
beauty and of the gentlest nature
of all the women of Ireland.

4. Text Book, I. 88.
5. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 223-24.
In this translation and the foregoing, I
have tried, by imitating ^{as well as I could} ~~French~~ the dialect
used by Lady Gregory and Synge, to give these
chants something of an Irish tone. Even in
the French versions before me, various un-
idiomatic turns of phrase suggest this flyor.

6. It should be remembered, of course, that all this applies only to the portrayal of Deirdre in the "sources" of the story: not in the modern artistic versions, where many of her original traits are modified or quite reversed.
7. Essays, "The Celtic Element in Literature", 229.
8. E.g. ⁶ in the Iliad, at the opening of Book II, where Zeus sends Agamemnon a baneful dream to incite him to folly.
9. Text Book, I. 88-89.
10. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 241. This is my own translation. See above # 2, pages 45-46.
11. See her article in Folk-Lore (Vol. XV), "The Story of Deirdre, in its bearing on the Social Development of the Folk-tale".
12. Hyde, Literary History, 310.

Chapter VI.

(Pp. 108-141)

1. See above, page 77.
2. De Jubainville, Epopée celtique , 225-26.
3. Does he say this to himself? --- is Deirdre the heifer, and the plural ^{pro} (noun rhetorical)? Or does he make the remark to Deirdre of some heifer that is actually passing near them? From what follows, and from a somewhat modified form of this dialogue quoted by Miss Hull in her article in Folk-Lore (XV), the former explanation appears to be correct.
4. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 226.
5. Ibid., 244.
6. Ibid., 271.
7. Ibid., 262.
8. Ibid., 264.
9. On the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff, 1777.

10. That is, there is none of it in those portions of the Book of Leinster and the other old MS. collections dealing with the story of Deirdre. But these anthologies contain many other tales of the Ultonian Cycle, in some of which Conor is more fully treated. See the earlier parts of de Jubainville's Épopée celtique.
11. Dr. Hyde's translation. Literary History, 305.
12. De Jubainville, Epopée celtique, 224.
13. See above, pages 53, 61, and 65: ## 8, 14, and 18 in Edb.
14. See above, pages 32 and 33: ## 7, 11, and 12 in L.L.
15. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 235.
16. MS. LIII of the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh (one of the two MSS, here called the Second Redaction) contains an addition to the story under the title, "The Death of Derdriu", almost exactly repeating the account in L.L., and thus contradicting the last part of the Second Redaction just preceding it. See de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 285-86.

17. In Michael Field's drama "Deirdre", Conor explicitly assumes all responsibility for the possible consequences of allowing the girl to live, and calls down upon his own head the woes she is to bring.
18. In L.L. # 21, we are told that Fergus takes vengeance upon the king by killing his grandson Fiachna. See above, page 34.
19. Her age at the time of Conor's proposal of marriage is given as fourteen years in both Belf. and O.T. In L.L., as has been mentioned, the lapse of time between # 1 and #3 is not indicated.
20. The temptation to draw on this great epic tale, as on the other tales of the cycle, must be resisted; for although a knowledge of them is helpful in discussing the Deirdre-saga, the scope of this paper necessarily excludes any consideration of the Red Branch Cycle as a whole.
21. See above, page 35, # 21 in L.L.

22. In Edb. Naisi stipulates that either Fergus, Conall Cearnach, or Cuchulain must be security for him. In L.L., however, he insists upon Fergus.
23. Translated from de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 263. See above, page 56, # 12 in Edb.
24. Adapted and amplified from the wording of Edb. by James Stephens in his novel Deirdre, p. 200.
25. This eminently obvious proceeding of Conor's is modified in the recent adaptations of the story so as to be at least consonant with his usual cunning. Fiona Macleod (in Deirdre and the Sons of Usna) is not entirely successful in veiling the king's purpose; but Stephens so transforms the episode, while following the general outline of it, as to make the king a perfect master of subtlety and guile.
26. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 256.
27. Ness, when a widow, consented to marry Fergus if he would relinquish his kingship for one year to her son Conor. The trusting Fergus readily agreed; but all that year Ness was

working to keep the kingdom for Conor; and at the end of the year the chief men of Ulster, partly because of the bribes they had received from Ness, partly because of her son's wisdom, bravery, and beauty, decided that he should keep the throne. "And let Fergus keep the wife he has got", they added. --- For an account of this piece of statecraft see the early parts of de Jubainville's work, or the first chapter in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirtheanne.

28. Text Book, I. 88.
29. That the nurse in O.T. is nameless does not indicate that she is not to be identified with Lavarcham. In Lady Gregory's version, where O.T. and Edb. (besides many other recensions) are combined, Lavarcham and the nurse are one.
30. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 225.
31. Ibid., 225. See above, page 29: # 3 in L.L.
32. Joseph Dunn, The Ancient Irish Epic Tale, etc., 76.
33. Deirdré and the Sons of Usna. 22.

34. Dr. Hyde's translation. Literary History, 308.
35. De Jubainville, Epopée celtique, 269.
It is to be noted that Lavarcham's affection is primarily for Naisi --- not, as in Belf. and most modern versions, for Deirdre.
36. For the identification of the nurse in O.T., with Lavarcham, see Note 29 above.
37. This profession of hers will not be regarded as evidence that she is an entirely "serious" figure. --- Remember Sairey Gamp!
38. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 243. See above, page 47, # 3 in O.T.
39. Ibid., 244. This is the second occurrence of such a breach of hospitality in O.T. It will be recalled that in # 1, Colum drives the seer from his house when he believes that the old man is mocking him.
40. Even Deirdre! In the older versions, Deirdre was by far the most clear-sighted figure in the story; but here, as we may gather from the episode of the huntsman's dream, she is less quick of perception than even the nurse.

41. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 242-43.
42. As a matter of fact, two of the three sons of Usnach are singularly unimportant; but because of their natural connection with Naisi, they have been given a passing glance (almost all they deserve) in a preceding paragraph.
43. In the four versions discussed in this paper (L.L., Edb., Belf., O.T.), these names occur:

Ailill	Corc	Fuillend
Ainnle	Cormac C.	Illann
Ardan	Cuchulain	Iubrach
Borach	Deirdre	Lavarcham
Buinne	Dubthach	Maeve
Cailcin	Eogan	Maine
Cathba	Fachtna F z	Manannán
Ciar	Felim	Mane
Colum	Fergus	Naisi
Conall C.	Fiacha	Sencha
Conor	Fiachna	Trendorn
Conmac	Fiachra	Usnach

In addition to these named characters (and a few others too insignificant to mention) there are at least three important nameless ones: Felim's wife, the huntsman, and the seer (perhaps = Cathba). For identification and distribution of these characters, see the Appendix.

44. From one of the Tanka in the Manyōshū, a Japanese anthology, translated by Curtis Hidden Page in Japanese Poetry.
45. Besides three others, mentioned in Edb. # 21 as begotten of Maeve, and the three nameless sons

who are mentioned in O.T. as accompanying their cousin Conor to Deirdre's lonely dwelling in the mountains, under the huntsman's guidance. (# 3a, page 48 above.) These may or may not be the same as the sons named in the other versions.

46. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 274.

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Chapter VII.

(Pp.142-177)

1. Rudolf Thurneysen, Irische Helden- und Königsage, erster Teil, 23. Kapitel, 74-85.
2. Cf. the characteristic idealization of the swine-herd in Fiona Macleod's Deirdré and the Sons of Usna.
3. Dr. Thurneysen calls attention to Caesar's remark (Bell.Gall. I,4) that Orgetorix (a Celt) was able to gather about him a company of "clientes obaeratosque" --- dependents and servants.
4. All German quotations in this chapter are taken from Dr. Thurneysen's Irische Helden- und Königsage, Part I, Chapter 23, pp. 74-85.
5. Early Poems and Stories, 420.
6. Synge, Complete Works, vol. II, "Poems", 27. This is the last of the few poems by J. M. Synge. For a choice collection of Irish satires from Swift to Stephens, the reader

may look into the fifth section of Padraic Colum's Anthology of Irish Verse (N.Y., 1922).

7. As we say, "that is another story." This theme is not peculiar to Irish literature. An exact parallel is the story of Siegfried's parentage in the Germanic cycle; and the account of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19:30-38 furnishes a similar instance from Hebrew legend.
8. See for example the highly elaborate description of Bricriu's hall, in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirthemne.
9. For instance, at the feast of Bricriu (cf. preceding Note), where that cunning trouble-maker, "the Thersites of the Red Branch", stirs up a quarrel by assigning the "herog's bit" privately to each of three warriors.
10. The Táin bó Cúalgne, one of the most sanguinary wars of Ireland, was brought about directly by the insolence of a drunken messenger. "The fate of nations", Dr. Hyde muses, "is said to often hang upon a thread. On this occasion that of Ulster and Connacht depended upon a drop more

or less, absorbed by one of ten men who constituted Meve's embassy." (Literary History, 320.)

11. Dr. Patrick W. Joyce, in his Illustrated History of Ireland, describes the most famous of these ornaments yet surviving: the so-called Tara Brooch, now in the National Museum in Dublin: "The Tara Brooch is ornamented all over with amber, glass, enamel, and with Irish interlaced work in metal. Many old brooches are preserved . . . ; but the Tara Brooch is the most beautiful and perfect of all." On page 15 of this book is a reproduction of the head of the brooch, with the following note: "Diam. (of ornamental ring) $3 \frac{3}{4}$ in.: length of pin 9 in." On the following page is the picture of another brooch, simpler in workmanship but constructed on the same plan as the first. A better illustration (showing front and back) of the Tara Brooch may be found facing page 10 of Ireland: Its Saints and Scholars, by J.M.Flood.
12. Literary History, 255.
13. Text Book, I. 56.

14. The following suggestion of Thurneysen should be noted: "Vielleicht haben die älteren Erzähler diesen Wagen wenigstens noch als Rennwagen wirklich gekannt, bis das Reiten auch bei Wettrennen das Fahren ablöste."
15. In the old Irish versions of the story, there is no specific mention of Deirdre's being engaged in such work. Synge, however, shows her "fancying figures and throwing purple upon crimson, and she edging them all times with her greens and gold." (Deirdre of the Sorrows, Act I.)
16. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 227. See above, page 30: # 5 in L.L.
17. See, for example, Fiona Macleod's short-story, "The Harping of Cravetheen".
18. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 257: --- Apparently, Iubrach is a man: even if the passage here quoted were not enough to prove this, a phrase in the sentence immediately following would be sufficient: Fergus departed "avec ces quatre compagnons". Yet in Dr. Thurneysen's account of the story (op.cit. 330) Iubrach is a boat.

19. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 280.
 Scathach (pronounced ska-ya or sky-ya) was a terrible and savage figure, the leader of a band of female warriors, and skilled in many strange feats of arms. The Isle of Skye, in the Hebrides, is supposed to have been named from her. For a picture of her, see Fiona Macleod's short-story "The Laughter of Scathach the Queen".
20. Hyde, Three Sorrows of Story-Telling, 166.
21. Yet even if this be true here, it certainly does not explain every case of geas found in the sagas. There is no question that the institution was a real one.
22. See above, page 114.
23. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 231. (L.L. # 21.)
24. It will be recalled that Naisi's magic sword was a gift from Manannán. (See below.) In another version of the Deirdre-saga, not available for study here, this god appears as the fosterer of Deirdre's two children. (See the account in Lady Gregory's version.)

25. For modernizing touches even more startling, such as the identification of the Christian God with Angus, the old Irish god of love, see P. W. Joyce, Old Celtic Romances, 101.
26. It is characteristic of Synge that in his drama Deirdre of the Sorrows (Complete Works, vol. II) he minimizes the supernatural aspects of the story as much as possible, reducing them, indeed, to the single phrase, "the troubles were foretold".
27. Sídh (plural sídhe and síodha), pronounced shee: the word properly signifies a grassy knoll or mound such as fairies inhabit. The fairies themselves are hence called daoine sídhe (deena shee), "people of the mounds", or some such name, then simply sidhe. The word is familiar to us in the compound "banshee" (bean-sídh), literally "woman-fairy".
28. Dr. Hyde's translation. Literary History, 306.
29. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 253.
From this passage we may learn, moreover, one form of entertainment not mentioned by Dr.

Thurneyson: the recitation of poetry and family-history by professional singers and genealogists. The popularity of a form of literature familiar to us chiefly from certain parts of the Bible which we always skip, is characteristically Irish.

30. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 260.
31. Ibid., 268.
32. Hyde, Literary History, 310.
33. See de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 249.
34. Adapted from the original by Lady Gregory, in the fifth chapter of Cuchulain of Muirthemne, 66-67.
35. De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 274.
36. Ibid., 251-52.
37. Ibid., 273-77. See above, pages 62-66:
15 to 18 in Edb.
38. Literary History, 363, note.
Cf. the poem of Thomas Moore beginning "Let Erin remember the days of old". To the lines

When her kings, with standard of
green unfurled,
Led the Red Branch Knights to danger,

there is the following note by the poet himself,
quoted from O'Halloran:

Military orders of knights were very early established in Ireland; long before the birth of Christ, we find an hereditary order of chivalry in Ulster, called Curaighe na Craoibhe ruadh, or the Knights of the Red Branch, from their chief seat in Emania, adjoining the palace of the Ulster kings, called Teagh na Craoibhe ruadh, or the Academy of the Red Branch; and contiguous to which was a large hospital, founded for the sick knights and soldiers, called Dron-bhearg, or the house of the Sorrowful Soldier.

The reader will do well to take O'Halloran's chronology, as well as much of his terminology, with an appropriate portion of salt.

39. See De Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 277-78.
40. Ibid., 283. --- "Les femmes de Conchobar":
Conor's wives? concubines? daughters? attendants? Their identity is not clear. In L.L. it was Dubthach who killed the women, while Fergus was busy burning Emain. Even in Edb. it is not certain that Fergus was personally responsible for this outrage, for the various deeds of revenge are assigned col-

lectively, not individually, to Fergus,
Cormac, and Dubthach.

41. The first and last paragraphs are my translations from de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 278-83. Deirdre's lament is quoted from Lady Gregory's version in Cuchulain of Muirthemne. It is fairly close to the original: closer to it, and with more of its flavor, than Sir Samuel Ferguson's better known adaptation, "Deirdre's Lament for the Sons of Usnach", a poem of sixteen quatrains, beginning "The lions of the hills are gone".

Chapter VIII.

(Pp. 178-190)

1. In Sagwissenschaftliche Studien (Jena 1876), 340.

2. The Folk-Lore Record, vol. IV. 1-44.

3. This consideration loses some of its force when we note that for the ancient Irish, the story of Deirdre was in fact much rather the story of Naisi. The general name of the saga was "The Fate of the Children of Usnach" --- not "The Fate of the Daughter of Felim"; and a sort of colophon or rear-title at the end of the First Redaction reads as follows:

This story has three names: "The Exile of the Sons of Usnach", "The Exile of Fergus", (and) "The Murder of the Sons of Usnach and of Deirdre".

(de Jubainville, Épopée celtique, 236.) This would indicate, certainly, that Deirdre was not the figure of chief interest in the story for those who told or listened to it.

4. This is not found in the versions here discussed, but must appear elsewhere, as both Lady Gregory and Fiona Macleod make use of it. See the next Note.

5. In the collection of Fiona Macleod's stories called "Wind and Wave" (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1902), 211-225.
6. The convenient term "deputy-wooer" was applied to this type of story by the late Prof. William Herbert Carruth at Leland Stanford, Jr., University. A familiar American example is The Courtship of Miles Standish.
7. Like the Deirdre-saga, the story of Tristram has various versions. According to one, King Mark discovers Tristram's treachery (as he conceives it) and kills him; according to another, Tristram flees or is banished to Brittany, where he marries a namesake of his love, Iseult of the White Hand. In the latter version he is wounded and sends for Iseult the Beautiful, instructing the messenger to hoist a white sail on his return if he is successful in his mission, a black sail otherwise. The messenger comes back with Iseult; but Tristram's wife, overcome by jealousy, reports to him that the sail is black. Tristram dies of disappointment, and Iseult the Beautiful, when she arrives and finds him dead, perishes on his body.

8. The Three Sorrows of Story-Telling, 2.

It is curious that Dr. Hyde, who objects to the medieval flavor of Moore's "Red Branch Knights", should have given to his own poem the Hellenic flavor of this memorable phrase and of the line that follows it: "First flung the apple of discordance down."

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APPENDIX A

COMPOSITE LIST OF PERSONAL NAMES
IN ANCIENT AND MODERN VERSIONS
OF THE DEIRDRE-SAGA

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APPENDIX A

COMPOSITE LIST OF PERSONAL NAMES IN ANCIENT AND MODERN VERSIONS OF THE DEIRDRE-SAGA

The following list includes all personal names (except for a few appearing as names merely) in the four source-versions discussed in this paper and in twelve modern adaptations of the saga-romance of Deirdre. Where more than one form of a name appears, that form has been chosen as a type which is the commonest, or the simplest, or the one most nearly coinciding with its pronunciation. All variant forms are given, however, with references to the versions in which they are to be found. The notes on pronunciation, significance, etymology, and the like, are taken variously from de Jubainville's Épopée celtique, Thurneysen's Irische Helden- und Königsage, P. W. Joyce's Old Celtic Romances, Dr. Hyde's Three Sorrows of Story-Telling, Joseph Dunn's edition of the Táin bó Cúalgne, Fiona Macleod's Deirdre and the Sons of Usna, and elsewhere.

The following abbreviations, in parentheses, will be used to indicate for each variant form of each name the versions in which it is found:

- LL.....First Redaction, Book of Leinster and
 Yellow Book of Lecan (12th, 14th cent.)
 Edb.....Second Redaction, MSS. in Advocates'
 Library, Edinburgh (15th, 18th cent.)
 Belf....Version recently discovered in MS. from
 Museum in Belfast (17th cent.?)
 OT.....Third Redaction, collected recently
 from Oral Traditions in the Highlands
 Gr.....Lady Gregory's version in Cuchulain
 of Muirthemne
 AE.....Drama by George William Russell (AE).
 Y.....Drama by William Butler Yeats
 Sy.....Drama by J. M. Synge
 M.....Drama by Michael Field
 F.....Drama by Fiona Macleod
 FM.....Prose-romance by Fiona Macleod
 fm.....Short-stories by Fiona Macleod
 Hy.....Narrative poem by Douglas Hyde
 T.....Narrative poem by Herbert Trench
 St.....Novel by James Stephens
 Ja.....Fairy Tale by Joseph Jacobs

AEBGREINE, daughter of Deirdre and Naisi.

Aebgreine of the Sunny Face (Gr), Aebgrein^é
or Aevgrain the Sunlike (fm).
Pronounced aiv-grain.

AEIFA, tutor to Deirdre. Compare Cailcin.

Aeifa (FM).

AILBHE, daughter of Cathba, wife of Usnach.

Ailbhe (M).
Pronounced el-va. (Cf. Elva.)

AILILL, king of Connaught, husband of Maeve.

Ailill (LL, Edb), Ailoll (Gr), Oillioll (Hyde's
Literary History).
Pronounced aye-leel or ull-yull.

AINNLE, the second of the three sons of Usnach.

Andlé (LL), Annlé (Edb), Ainle (Belf, AE),
Ailleán (OT, T), Ainnle (Gr, Sy, M, St),
Ailne (FM), Ainlé (Hy), Allen (Ja).
Pronounced an-la. Signifies "Beauty" or
"Beautiful".

AMERGIN, friend of Cormac Conlingas.

Amergin (Gr). Also spelled Aimirgin, etc.

ANGUS MUDARTHACH, king of Alban.

Angus Mudarthach (FM), nameless (LL).

ARDAN, the third of the three sons of Usnach.

Ardan (LL, Edb, Belf, OT, Gr, AE, Sy, M,
FM, Hy, T, St), Arden (Ja).
Signifies "Pride".

BOBARAS, a poet or druid, fosterer of Deirdre's children Aebgreine and ~~Gras~~ Gaia.

Bobaras (Gr), Bobarân (fm).

BORACH, a noble of the Red Branch, son of Cainte or Annte.

Borrach (LL, Edb, FM), Borach (OT, St),
Barach (Belf, Hy), Baruch (AE).

BRICRIU, a noble of the Red Branch, "the Thersites of the Red Branch".

Bricriu (St, Gr, etc.)

BUINNE, a son of Fergus.

Buinne (Edb, Belf, AE, St), Buine Borbruay (FM),
Buine (Hy).
Called the Rough-Red, the Ruddy, the Fiery, etc.
Pronounced bwin-na.

CAILCIN, tutor to Deirdre.

Cailcin (Belf). Compare Aeifa.
Identified by Eleanor Hull with Cathba.

CAIRBRE, a king of Leinster (?).

Cairbre (T), Cairbre Niafar (St).

CATHBA, a druid, son of Conall, son of Rudraige;
in some versions, the grandfather of Naisi.

Cathba (LL, Edb, F, FM), Cathfaidh (Belf),
Cathbad (Gr), Cathvah (M), Cathva (T),
Cathfa (St), unnamed (OT, Hy).
Pronounced cah-vah.

CIAR, a son of Fergus by Maeve.

Ciar (Edb).

CIR, an ancient Irish bard, one of three supposed to relate the story of Deirdre Wedded to the poet (T). See Fintan and Urmael.

CLOTHRU, the first wife of Conor (St).

COEL, an old blind harper (F).

COLUM, a harper, father to Deirdre. Cf. Felim.

Colum (OT), Malcolm (Ja).

CÓNAIREX MÓR, a king in Ireland. (F, fm).

CONALL CEARNACH, a noble of the Red Branch.

Conall, son of Aimirgin (Edb), Conall Cearnach (Belf, Gr), Conal (AE), Conaill Carna (F), Conall Carnach (Hy), Conall Cearnac (St). His surname signifies "the Victorious" or "the Vanquisher". It is pronounced c'yarnach or c'yarna or carna.

CONOR, king of Ulster, son of Fachtna Fathach and of Nessa, (in OT cousin to the sons of Usnach).

Conchobar (LL, Edb, M), Conor (Belf, Hy), Conachar (OT), Conchubar (Gr, Y), Concobar (AE, F, FM), Conchubor (Sy), Connachar (T, Ja), Conachúr (St).

In the oldest form, the name is Conchubhair, properly pronounced cunn-hoor, but usually corrupted to cnuch-hoor and cruch-hoor or cro-hore. The ancient Irish name is Concobar, and was probably so pronounced. The modern (Scottish-) Gaelic spelling is Conachar (as in OT). The name is now usually pronounced in this manner: i.e., con-a-char.

CONMAC, a son of Fergus by Maeve, (Edb).

CORC, a son of Fergus by Maeve (Edb).

CORMAC CONLINGAS, a hero of the Red Branch, son to King Conor.

Cormac (LL), Cormac Conloinges (Edb), Cormac Conloingeas (Gr), Cormac Conlingas (F).

CORMAC THE RED, son to Felim and grandfather to Maine in F. Hence the brother of Deirdre.

CRAIFTINE, a harper of the kingship of Cónairey Mór.

Craiftine (Gr), Cravetheen (F, fm).

CRUSCRAID the Stammerer, a noble of the Red Branch, (St).

CUCHULAIN or Setanta, son of Sualtaim, a noble of the Red Branch.

Cuchulainn (Edb, T), Cuchulain (Belf, Gr, F, Hy), Cúchulinn (St), CUChulainn (Thurneysen). Pronounced coo-hullin or coo-hoolin.

The older form of the name is Cuchulaind --- that is, the Hound (Cu) of Culann (genitive Chulaind). The hero's real name was Setanta. His mother was Dechtire, sister of Conor; his father was either the god Lugh the Long-handed, or a mortal called variously Sualtaim, Soalte, Subaltam, Subaldam, etc.

CUILLEAN, shield-bearer to Fergus (Gr).

CULANN, a smith.

Culann (T, etc.), Caulann or Culan (Thurneysen). See note to Cuchulain.

DARING DROP, a son of Fergus (Ja). To be identified with either Buinne or Illann. See Hardy Holly.

DEIRDRE, the daughter of Felim.

Derdriu (LL, Edb), Deirdri (Thurneysen), Déirdre (Belf, Hy), Deirdire (OT), Deirdré (F, FM, fm), Deirdre (Gr, AE, Y, Sy, M, T, St, Ja), Darthula (Ossian), Darthool, Dartuil, Darthray, Darrathray (all four cited by Fiona Macleod).

Pronounced dare-dra. Signifies perhaps "Celle-qui-se-débat" (de Jubainville), "Alarm", or "Menace".

The old Irish form of the name was Derdriu, genitive Derdrenn. The modern (Scottish-) Gaelic spelling is Deirdire.

DUACH, a druid (F).

DUANAN GACHA DRUID, a magician (Ja).

DUBTHACH, a noble of the Red Branch.

Dubthach (LL), Dubthach, the Beetle of Ulster (Gr), Dubthach Dael U'adh or Daeltenga or Dael-tengad or Daelthengthach (Thurneysen).

The Irish surnames given by Thurneysen signify "the Beetle of Ulster" or "the Beetle-Tongue".

EILIDH, wife to Craiftine. Cf. Sceamb. (F, fm).
Pronounced ay-li.

ELVA, wife to Felim.

Elva (M, FM), unnamed (LL, OT, Gr, Hy, Ja, St).

EMER, wife of Cuchulain (St). Pronounced ever,
or, by Yeats, eemer.

EOGAN, prince of Ferney, son of Durthacht, (a noble of the Red Branch), slayer of Naisi. (LL, M, St).

ESSA, wife of Cormac Conlingas (F).

FACHTNA FATHACH, king of Ulster before Conor's time; husband to Nessa; Conor's father according to some versions; according to others, in which his real father is Cathba, his adoptive father (Edb, Belf).

FELIM, story-teller and harper to Conor; father of Deirdre; son of Doll, Dall, etc. Cf. Colum.

Fedelmid (LL), Feidhlim (Belf), Fedlimid (Gr, M), Felim (F, FM), Félim (Hy), Felimid (St). More familiar as Phelim: modern Irish Phelimy, old Irish Fedlimid or Fedlimid. Also, as in Belf, Feidhlim, whence Felim. Pronounced fay-lim. De Jubainville says the name signifies "Celui qui supporte l'hydromel, c'est-a-dire, probablement, qui peut en boire beaucoup sans se griser." (Footnote, page 220, Epopée celtique.) The name of Felim's father (Doll, Dall) signifies "the blind man". Dr. Thurneysen remarks that in Ireland, as elsewhere, many professional story-tellers were blind. (Cf. the classic example of Homer.)

FERCEIRTNE, a poet (Gr).

FERGNA, Conor's charioteer (M).

FERGUS, son of Rogh, Ros, Ross, Ro, Roigh, etc.; a noble of the Red Branch; formerly king of Ulster and husband of Conor's mother Nessa.

Fergus (LL, Edb, Belf, Gr, AE, Y, Sy, M, F, FM, Hy, St), Fearachar (OT), Ferchar (Ja). The name signifies "Manly Strength".

FERGUS of the Three Dúns, a Scottish noble (FM).

FIACHA, son of Fergus (LL).

FIACHNA, grandson of Conor (LL). The name signifies "Little Raven".

FIACHRA, called "The Fair", Conor's youngest son.

Fiacha (LL, Edb), Fiachra (Belf, St).

FINTAN, an ancient Irish bard (T). See Cir.

FUILLEND, servant to Iubrach (Edb).

GAIAR, son to Deirdre and Naisi.

Gaiar (Gr), Gaiar, Gaer, or Gaith (fm).

GEANANN BLACK-KNEE, a poet (Gr).

GEANANN of the Bright Face, son to Cathba, a poet (Gr).

GELBAN, son to the king of Lochlann.

Gelban (Gr), Gelban Grednach (Ja).

GERRCE, son of Illadan, mentioned in Cathba's prophecy in LL as a man who would lose his life through Deirdre. See above, page 47.

ILLANN the Fair, a son of Fergus.

Illan Find (Edb), Illan Finn (Hy), Iollann(Gr), Ilann (AE), Illann (FM), Iollann (St), Fiallan (Ja), Illann Ilarchless (Tain).

The same name as Ullin (cf. "Lord Ullin's Daughter"). Originally Iollann.

IUBRACH, companion to Fergus (Edb). But according to Dr. Thurneysen, Iubrach is a boat, and Fuillend the man who cares for it.

HARDY HOLLY, a son of Fergus (Ja). To be identified with either Illann or Buinne (?). See Daring Drop.

LAERI, a noble of the Red Branch (St).

LAVARCHAM, the king's conversation-woman and confidante; in early versions a druidess; Deirdre's nurse. In those versions in which she appears as a sorceress (or "female satirist"), she is the daughter of Adarc ("Horn") and Aue (or Oa, or Aedh = Hugh) ("Ear"), two slaves of Conor's household.

Leborcham (LL, Edb), Lavarcam (Belf, AE, FM, Hy), Levarcham (Gr, T), Lebarcham (M), Lavarcham (Sy, St), unnamed (OT).

Originally Leabharcham, pronounced lavarcham. Probably derived from labhair "to speak", because she was the king's "conversation woman" (bean-chainte) or professional "keener" (lamerter).

MAEVE, the Queen of Connaught, residing at Cruachan.

Medb (LL, Edb), Meve (Belf, Hy), Maeve (Gr), Maeve, Conor's second wife (St), Maeve (Sy), Meave (F), Maev (FM).

Originally Méadhbh. Pronounced mave, to rime with wave.

MAEVE, nurse to Deirdre.

Medv (M), Maev (FM).

MAINE of the Red Hand (or M. Rough-Hand), son to the king of Norway and slayer of Naisi.

Mane (Edb), Maine (Gr, FM, St).

MAINE, a boy (F). Perhaps to be identified with Mane?

MANANNAN MAC LIR, son of the Sea, "a sort of Irish Neptune"; fosterer of Deirdre's children (Gr, fm).

MANE, son to Conor (LL, Edb).

NAISI, the first of the three sons of Usnach.

Noisé (LL, Edb), Naoise (Belf, OT, Gr, St),
 Naois (OT, FM, T, Ja), Naisi (AE, Y, Sy, M),
 Naesi (Hy), Naysha (F), Noisi (Táin), Noisiu
 (Thurneysen). The original form is Naisi.
 Pronounced nee-sha or nay-sha. But Trench
 scans the name as a trisyllable --- probably
 as a nay-oh-iss, with the accent on the
 second syllable.

NESSA, mother of Conor, wife to Fergus and to
 Fachtna Fathach. Formerly Assa. (St.)

OWEN, a spy (Sy). The name is another form of Eogan.

SCEANB, wife of Craiftine, daughter of Scethan the
 druid (Gr). Compare Eilidh.

SENGHA, son of Ailill, a noble of the Red Branch,
 a judge and a poet. Hyde calls him the "Nestor
 of the Red Branch".

Sencha (LL, Gr); the name occurs also as
 Seanchan, pronounced shanahan.

SRŌN, Naisi's horse (T). Signifies "Nose".

TRAIGTHREOIN ("Strong-foot"), son of Traiglethan
 ("Broad-foot"), a man killed by Fergus (LL).

TRENDORN, an attendant upon Conor.

Trén-Dorn Dolann (Edb), Treandhorn (FM),
 Tréndorn (St).

URMAEL, an ancient Irish bard (T). See Cir.

USNACH, a former noble of the Red Branch, father
 of Naisi, Ainnle, and Ardan.

Usnech (LL, Edb), Uisneach (Belf, M, St),
 Uisne (OT), Usnach (Gr, Hy, T), Usna (AE,
 Y, Sy, F, FM), Uisnech (Ja), Uisliu (Thurneysen).
 Pronounced oos-na, oos-nach, or wish-na.

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IMPORTANT UNNAMED CHARACTERS:

Felim's wife (LL, OT, Gr, Hy, St, Ja).

Soothsayer (OT, Hy, Ja).

Nurse (OT, Ja).

Huntsman (OT, Gr, Ja).

Three Musicians (Y).

Dark-Faced Messenger (Y).

Dark-Faced Executioner (Y).

Old Woman (Sy).

Swine-herd and two hillsman (FM).

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NOTE: Many forms referred to Belf. are not those appearing in the actual manuscript, but those used by Dr. Hyde in his translation of it.

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APPENDIX B

CHIEF PLACE NAMES
IN ANCIENT VERSIONS
OF THE DEIRDRE-SAGA

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CHIEF PLACE NAMES IN ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE DEIRDRE-SAGA

The following are only a few of the many place names appearing in the four versions of the Deirdre-saga discussed in this paper. Those not listed here are either too well-known or too unimportant.

ALBAN, the Gaelic name for Scotland.

Properly Albu or Alba. Alban is from the genitive case, whence also English Albyn. (De Jubainville has Albion.) The term was once used to designate all England and Scotland, but was soon restricted to the northern portion, where Gaelic was spoken.

DUNDEALGAN, the residence of Cuchulain.

Now Dundalk, County Louth, in Leinster;
south of Emain, Country Armagh, in Ulster.

EMAIN, the capital of Ulster.

Originally Emhain or Eamhain. Called Emain Macha for an ancient Irish queen. (Thurneysen translates "Emain Macha" as "the Twins of the District Macha", indicating that the hill on

which the royal palace stood had two peaks; but the remains existing at the present time refute this view.) The Latinized form of the name is Emania. The Irish Emain should be pronounced evan, avvin, yewan, yowan, or eman.

ERIN, FOLA, BANBA, poetic names for Ireland.

Erin is the genitive of the better form Eire, pronounced ay-ra, later Eriu. Eire, Fola, and Banba were three great queens of antiquity. There are other poetical names for Ireland, many of them compounded with Inis "island": Inis Fáil (pron. inis fawl), "the Isle of Destiny", Inis Fola or Fodla or Fotla, Inis Banba, and the like.

TARA, the seat of the High-King of Ireland.

In Old Irish, Teamhair or Temair, pronounced tavvir or t'yower (to rhyme with flower). It is in County Meath, near Navan.

ULSTER, the northernmost province of Ireland.

In Irish, Uladh, pronounced ulla. In Latin, Ultonia. The ending -ster in Ulster, Leinster, and Munster is borrowed, being the Old Norse plural suffix stadir "places" --- a trace of the Danish invasion of Ireland.