



THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL

WHITELY STOKES

Global Grey ebooks

**THE DESTRUCTION OF
DÁ DERGA'S HOSTEL**

**TRANSLATED
BY
WHITELY STOKES**

1910

The Destruction Of Dá Derga's Hostel Translated By Whitely Stokes.

This edition was created and published by Global Grey

©GlobalGrey 2018



globalgreyebooks.com

CONTENTS

Introductory Note

The Destruction Of Dá Derga's Hostel

"'Tis harder for me," says Ingcél: "'tis my destruction that has been . . . there.

"Truly then," says Ingcél, "maybe I shall be the corpse that is frailest there," etc.

"And afterwards whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF CONAIRE'S THREE SONS, OBALL AND OBLIN AND CORPRE

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it, to wit, three tender striplings, wearing three silken mantles. In their mantles were three golden brooches. Three golden-yellow manes were on them. When they undergo head-cleansing their golden-yellow mane reaches the edge of their haunches. When they raise their eye it raises the hair so that it is not lower than the tips of their ears, and it is as curly as a ram's head. A . . . of gold and a palace-flambeau above each of them. Every one who is in the house spares them, voice and deed and word. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain," says Ingcél.

Fer rogain wept, so that his mantle in front of him became moist. And no voice was gotten out of his head till a third of the night had passed.

"O little ones," says Fer rogain, "I have good reason for what I do! Those are three sons of the king of Erin: Oball and Oblíne and Corpre Findmor."

"It grieves us if the tale be true," say the sons of Donn Désa. "Good is the trio in that room. Manners of ripe maidens have they, and hearts of brothers, and valours of bears, and furies of lions. Whosoever is in their company and in their couch, and parts from them, he sleeps not and eats not at ease till the end of nine days, from lack of their companionship. Good are the youths for their age! Thrice ten will fall by each of them in their first encounter, and a man for each weapon, and three men for themselves. And one of the three will fall there. Because of that trio, woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél: "clouds of weakness are coming to you, etc. And whom sawest thou afterwards?"

THE ROOM OF THE FOMORIANS

I beheld there a room with a trio in it, to wit, a trio horrible, unheard-of, a triad of champions, etc.

.

Liken thou that, O Fer rogain?

"'Tis hard for me to liken that trio. Neither of the men of Erin nor of the men of the world do I know it, unless it be the trio that Mac cecht brought out of the land of the Fomorians by dint of duels. Not one of the Fomorians was found to fight him, so he brought away those three, and they are in Conaire's house as sureties that, while Conaire is reigning, the Fomorians destroy neither corn nor milk in Erin beyond their fair tribute. Well may their aspect be loathy! Three rows of teeth in their heads from one ear to another. An ox with a bacon-pig, this is the ration of each of them, and that ration which they put into their mouths is visible till it comes down past their navels. Bodies of bone (i.e. without a joint in them) all those three have. I swear what my tribe swears, more will be killed by them at the Destruction than those they leave alive. Six hundred warriors will fall by them in their first conflict, and a man for each of their weapons, and one for each of the three themselves. And they will boast a triumph over a king or chief of the reavers. It will not be more than with a bite or a blow or a kick that each of those men will kill, for no arms are allowed them in the house, since they are in 'hostageship at the wall' lest they do a misdeed therein. I swear what my tribe swears, if they had armour on them, they would slay us all but a third. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, because it is not a combat against sluggards."

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél, etc. "And whom sawest thou there after that?"

THE ROOM OF MUNREMAR SON OF GERRCHENN, BIRDERG SON OF RUAN, MÁL SON OF TELBAND

"I beheld a room there, with a trio in it. Three brown, big men, with three brown heads of short hair. Thick calf-bottoms (ankles?) they had. As

thick as a man's waist was each of their limbs. Three brown and curled masses of hair upon them, with a thick head: three cloaks, red and speckled, they wore: three black shields with clasps of gold, and three five-barbed javelins; and each had in hand an ivory-hilted sword. This is the feat they perform with their swords: they throw them high up, and they throw the scabbards after them, and the swords, before reaching the ground, place themselves in the scabbards. Then they throw the scabbards first, and the swords after them, and the scabbards meet the swords and place themselves round them before they reach the ground. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me to liken them! Mál son of Telband, and Munremar son of Gerrchenn, and Birderg son of Rúan. Three crown-princes, three champions of valour, three heroes the best behind weapons in Erin! A hundred heroes will fall by them in their first conflict, and they will share prowess with every man in the Hostel, and they will boast of the victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and afterwards they will chance to escape. The Destruction should not be wrought even because of those three."

"Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna. "Better were the victory of saving them than the victory of slaying them! Happy he who should save them! Woe to him that shall slay them!"

"It is not feasible," says Ingcél, etc. "And afterwards whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF CONALL CERNACH

"There I beheld in a decorated room the fairest man of Erin's heroes. He wore a tufted purple cloak. White as snow was one of his cheeks, the other was red and speckled like foxglove. Blue as hyacinth was one of his eyes, dark as a stag-beetle's back was the other. The bushy head of fair golden hair upon him was as large as a reaping-basket, and it touches the edge of his haunches. It is as curly as a ram's head. If a sackful of red-shelled nuts were spilt on the crown of his head, not one of them would fall on the floor, but remain on the hooks and plaits and swordlets of their hair. A gold hilted sword in his hand; a blood-red shield which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze between plates of gold. A long,

heavy, three-ridged spear: as thick as an outer yoke is the shaft that is in it. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me to liken him, for the men of Erin know that scion. That is Conall Cernach, son of Amorgen. He has chanced to be along with Conaire at this time. 'Tis he whom Conaire loves beyond every one, because of his resemblance to him in goodness of form and shape. Goodly is the hero that is there, Conall Cernach! To that blood-red shield on his fist, which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze, the Ulaid have given a famous name, to wit, the Bricriu of Conall Cernach.

"I swear what my tribe swears, plenteous will be the rain of red blood over it to-night before the Hostel! That ridged spear above him, many will there be unto whom to-night, before the Hostel, it will deal drinks of death. Seven doorways there are out of the house, and Conall Cernach will contrive to be each of them, and from no doorway will he be absent. Three hundred will fall by Conall in his first conflict, besides a man for each (of his) weapons and one for himself. He will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and when he shall happen to sally upon you from the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on green and stars of heaven will be your half-heads and cloven skulls, and your bones under the point of his sword. He will succeed in escaping though wounded. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, were it but for this man only!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél. "Clouds," etc.

"And after that whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF CONAIRE HIMSELF

"There I beheld a room, more beautifully decorated than the other rooms of the house. A silvery curtain around it, and there were ornaments in the room. I beheld a trio in it. The outer two of them were, both of them, fair, with their hair and eyelashes; and they are as bright as snow. A very lovely blush on the cheek of each of the twain. A tender lad in the midst between them. The ardour and energy of a king has he and the counsel of a sage. The mantle I saw around him is even as the mist of Mayday. Diverse are the hue and semblance each moment shewn upon it. Lovelier

it which the man would prepare for him from the Wave of Clidna⁷ and the Wave of Assaroe⁸ while ye are at the Hostel.

"Nine doors there are to the house, and at each door a hundred warriors will fall by his hand. And when every one in the house has ceased to ply his weapon, 'tis then he will resort to a deed of arms. And if he chance to come upon you out of the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on a green will be your halves of heads and your cloven skulls and your bones under the edge of his sword.

"'Tis my opinion that he will not chance to get out of the house. Dear to him are the two that are with him in the room, his two fosterers, Dris and Snithe. Thrice fifty warriors will fall before each of them in front of the Hostel, and not farther than a foot from him, on this side and that, will they too fall."

"Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that pair and the prince that is between them, the over-king of Erin, Conaire son of Eterscél! Sad were the quenching of that reign!" says Lomna Drúth, son of Donn Désa.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél. "Clouds of weakness are coming to you," etc.

"Good cause hast thou, O Ingcél," says Lomna son of Donn Désa. "Not unto thee is the loss caused by the Destruction: for thou wilt carry off the head of the king of another country, and thyself will escape. Howbeit 'tis hard for me, for I shall be the first to be slain at the Hostel."

"Alas for me!" says Ingcél, "peradventure I shall be the frailest corpse," etc.

"And whom sawest thou afterwards?"

THE ROOM OF THE REARGUARDS

"There I saw twelve men on silvery hurdles all around that room of the king. Light yellow hair was on them. Blue kilts they wore. Equally beautiful were they, equally hardy, equally shapely. An ivory-hilted

⁷ In the bay of Glandore, co. Cork.--W. S.

⁸ At Ballyshannon, co. Donegal.--W. S.

and nine silvern shields, and nine apples of gold. He throws each of them upwards, and none of them falls on the ground, and there is only one of them on his palm; each of them rising and falling past another is just like the movement to and fro of bees on a day of beauty. When he was swiftest, I beheld him at the feat, and as I looked, they uttered a cry about him and they were all on the house-floor. Then the Prince who is in the house said to the juggler: 'We have come together since thou wast a little boy, and till to-night thy juggling never failed thee.'

"Alas, alas, fair master Conaire, good cause have I. A keen, angry eye looked at me: a man with the third of a pupil which sees the going of the nine bands. Not much to him is that keen, wrathful sight! Battles are fought with it,' saith he. 'It should be known till doomsday that there is evil in front of the Hostel.'

"Then he took the swords in his hand, and the silvern shields and the apples of gold; and again they uttered a cry and were all on the floor of the house. That amazed him, and he gave over his play and said:

'O Fer caille, arise! Do not . . . its slaughter. Sacrifice thy pig! Find out who is in front of the house to injure the men of the Hostel.'

'There,' said he, 'are Fer Cualngi, Fer lé, Fer gar, Fer rogel, Fer rogain. They have announced a deed which is not feeble, the annihilation of Conaire by Donn Désa's five sons, by Conaire's five loving foster-brothers.'

"Liken thou that, O Fer rogain! Who has chanted that lay?"

"Easy for me to liken him," says Fer rogain. "Taulchinne the chief juggler of the King of Tara; he is Conaire's conjurer. A man of great might is that man. Thrice nine will fall by him in his first encounter, and he will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and he will chance to escape therefrom though wounded. What then? Even on account of this man only the Destruction should not be wrought."

"Long live he who should spare him!" says Lomna Drúth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél, etc.

THE ROOM OF THE SWINEHERDS

"I beheld a trio in the front of the house: three dark crowntufts on them: three green frocks around them: three dark mantles over them: three forked . . . (?) above them on the side of the wall. Six black greaves they had on the mast. Who are yon, O Fer rogain?"

"Easy to say," answers Fer rogain: "the three swineherds of the king, Dub and Donn and Dorcha: three brothers are they, three sons of Mapher of Tara. Long live he who should protect them! woe to him who shall slay them! for greater would be the triumph of protecting them than the triumph of slaying them!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél, etc.

THE ROOM OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARIOTEERS

"I beheld another trio in front of them: three plates of gold on their foreheads: three short aprons they wore, of grey linen embroidered with gold: three crimson capes about them: three goads of bronze in their hands. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"I know them," he answered. "Cul and Frecul and Forcul, the three charioteers of the King: three of the same age: three sons of Pole and Yoke. A man will perish by each of their weapons, and they will share the triumph of slaughter."

THE ROOM OF CUSCRAD SON OF CONCHOBAR

"I beheld another room. Therein were eight swordsmen, and among them a stripling. Black hair is on him, and very stammering speech has he. All the folk of the Hostel listen to his counsel. Handsomest of men he is: he wears a shirt and a bright-red mantle, with a brooch of silver therein."

"I know him," says Fer rogain: "'tis Cuscraid Menn of Armagh, Conchobar's son, who is in hostageship with the king. And his guards are those eight swordsmen around him, namely, two Flanns, two Cummainns,

two Aeds, two Crimthans. They will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and they will chance to escape from it with their fosterling."

THE ROOM OF THE UNDER-CHARIOTEERS

"I beheld nine men: on the mast were they. Nine capes they wore, with a purple loop. A plate of gold on the head of each of them. Nine goads in their hands. Liken thou."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain: "Riado, Riamcobur, Riade, Buadon, Búadchar, Buadgnad, Eirr, Ineirr, Argatlam--nine charioteers in apprenticeship with the three chief charioteers of the king. A man will perish at the hands of each of them," etc.

THE ROOM OF THE ENGLISHMEN

"On the northern side of the house I beheld nine men. Nine very yellow manes were on them. Nine linen frocks somewhat short were round them: nine purple plaids over them without brooches therein. Nine broad spears, nine red curved shields above them."

"We know them," quoth he. "Oswald and his two foster-brothers, Osbrit Longhand and his two foster-brothers, Lindas and his two foster-brothers. Three crown-princes of England who are with the king. That set will share victorious prowess," etc.

THE ROOM OF THE EQUERRIES

"I beheld another trio. Three cropt heads of hair on them, three frocks they wore, and three mantles wrapt around them. A whip in the hand of each."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain. "Echdruim, Echriud, Echrúathar, the three horsemen of the king, that is, his three equerries. Three brothers are they, three sons of Argatron. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio."

THE ROOM OF THE JUDGES

"I beheld another trio in the room by them. A handsome man who had got his baldness newly. By him were two young men with manes upon them. Three mixed plaids they wore. A pin of silver in the mantle of each of them. Three suits of armour above them on the wall. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"I know those," quoth he. "Fergus Ferde, Fergus Fordae and Domáine Mossud, those are the king's three judges. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of that trio! A man will perish by each of them."

THE ROOM OF THE HARPERS

"To the east of them I beheld another ennead. Nine branchy, curly manes upon them. Nine grey, floating mantles about them: nine pins of gold in their mantles. Nine rings of crystal round their arms. A thumb-ring of gold round each man's thumb: an ear-tie of gold round each man's ear: a torque of silver round each man's throat. Nine bags with golden faces above them on the wall. Nine rods of white silver in their hands. Liken thou them."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain. "They are the king's nine harpers, with their nine harps above them: Side and Dide, Dulothe and Deichrinne, Caumul and Cellgen, Ol and Olene and Olchói. A man will perish by each of them."

THE ROOM OF THE CONJURERS

"I saw another trio on the dais. Three bedgowns girt around them. Four cornered shields in their hands, with bosses of gold upon them. Apples of silver they had, and small inlaid spears."

"I know them," says Fer rogain. "Cless and Clissine and Clessamun, the king's three conjurers. Three of the same age are they: three brothers, three sons of Naffer Rochless. A man will perish by each of them."

THE ROOM OF THE THREE LAMPOONERS

"I beheld another trio hard by the room of the King himself. Three blue mantles around them, and three bedgowns with red insertion over them. Their arms had been hung above them on the wall."

"I know those," quoth he. "Dris and Draigen and Aittít ('Thorn and Bramble and Furze'), the king's three lampooners, three sons of Sciath foilt. A man will perish by each of their weapons."

THE ROOM OF THE BADBS

"I beheld a trio, naked, on the roof-tree of the house: their jets of blood coming through them, and the ropes of their slaughter on their necks."

"Those I know," saith he, three . . . of awful boding. Those are the three that are slaughtered at every time."

THE ROOM OF THE KITCHENERS

"I beheld a trio cooking, in short inlaid aprons: a fair grey man, and two youths in his company."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain: "they are the King's three chief kitcheners, namely, the Dagdae and his two fosterlings, Séig and Segdae, the two sons of Rofer Singlespit. A man will perish by each of them," etc.

"I beheld another trio there. Three plates of gold over their heads. Three speckled mantles about them: three linen shirts with red insertion: three golden brooches in their mantles: three wooden darts above them on the wall."

"Those I know," says Fer rogain: "the three poets of that king: Sui and Rodui and Fordui: three of the same age, three brothers: three sons of Maphar of the Mighty Song. A man will perish for each of them, and every pair will keep between them one man's victory. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction! etc.

THE ROOM OF THE SERVANT-GUARDS

"There I beheld two warriors standing over the king. Two curved shields they had, and two great pointed swords. Red kilts they wore, and in the mantles pins of white silver."

"Bole and Root are those," quoth he, "the king's two guards, two sons of Maffer Toll."

THE ROOM OF THE KING'S GUARDSMEN

"I beheld nine men in a room there in front of the same room, Fair yellow manes upon them: short aprons they wore and spotted capes: they carried smiting shields. An ivory-hilted sword in the hand of each of them, and whoever enters the house they essay to smite him with the swords. No one dares to go to the room of the King without their consent. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me is that. Three Mochmatnechs of Meath, three Buageltachs of Bregia, three Sostachs of Sliab Fuait, the nine guardsmen of that King. Nine decads will fall by them in their first conflict, etc. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction because of them only!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél. "Clouds of weakness," etc. "And whom sawest thou then?"

THE ROOM OF NIA AND BRUTHNE, CONAIRE'S TWO WAITERS

"There I beheld another room, and a pair was in it, and they are 'oxtubs,' stout and thick. Aprons they wore, and the men were dark and brown. They had short back-hair on them, but high upon their foreheads. They are as swift as a waterwheel, each of them past another, one of them to the King's room, the other to the fire. Liken thou those, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy to me. They are Nia and Bruthne, Conaire's two table-servants. They are the pair that is best in Erin for their lord's advantage. What causes brownness to them and height to their hair is their frequent haunting of the fire. In the world is no pair better in their art than they.

Thrice nine men will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will share prowess with every one, and they will chance to escape. And after that whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF SENCHA, DUBTHACH AND GOBNIU SON OF LURGNECH

"I beheld the room that is next to Conaire. Three chief champions, in their first greyness, are therein. As thick as a man's waist is each of their limbs. They have three black swords, each as long as a weaver's beam. These swords would split a hair on water. A great lance in the hand of the midmost man, with fifty rivets through it. The shaft therein is a good load for the yoke of a plough-team. The midmost man brandishes that lance so that its edge-studs hardly stay therein, and he strikes the half thrice against his palm. There is a great boiler in front of them, as big as a calf's caldron, wherein is a black and horrible liquid. Moreover he plunges the lance into that black fluid. If its quenching be delayed it flames on its shaft and then thou wouldst suppose that there is a fiery dragon in the top of the house. Liken thou, that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy to say. Three heroes who are best at grasping weapons in Erin, namely, Sencha the beautiful son of Ailill, and Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid, and Goibnenn son of Lurgnech. And the Luin of Celtchar son of Uthider which was found in the battle of Mag Tured, this is in the hand of Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid. That feat is usual for it when it is ripe to pour forth of foeman's blood. A caldron full of poison is needed to quench it when a deed of man slaying is expected. Unless this come to the lance, it flames on its haft and will go through its bearer or the master of the palace wherein it is. If it be a blow that is to be given thereby it will kill a man at every blow, when it is at that feat, from one hour to another, though it may not reach him. And if it be a cast, it will kill nine men at every cast, and one of the nine will be a king or crown-prince or chieftain of the reavers.

"I swear what my tribe swears, there will be a multitude unto whom tonight the Luin of Celtchar will deal drinks of death in front of the Hostel. I swear to God what my tribe swears that, in their first encounter, three hundred will fall by that trio, and they will share prowess with

every three in the Hostel tonight. And they will boast of victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and the three will chance to escape."

"Woe," says Lomna Drúth, "to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél, etc. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF THE THREE MANX GIANTS

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three men mighty, manly, overbearing, which see no one abiding at their three hideous crooked aspects. A fearful view because of the terror of them. A . . . dress of rough hair covers them . . . of cow's hair, without garments enwrapping down to the right heels. With three manes, equine, awful, majestic, down to their sides. Fierce heroes who wield against foeman hard-smiting swords. A blow, they give with three iron flails having seven chains triple-twisted, three-edged, with seven iron knobs at the end of every chain: each of them as heavy as an ingot of ten smeltings. Three big brown men. Dark equine backmanes on them, which reach their two heels. Two good thirds of an oxhide in the girdle round each one's waist, and each quadrangular clasp that closes it as thick as a man's thigh. The raiment that is round them is the dress that grows through them. Tresses of their back-manes were spread, and a long staff of iron, as long and thick as an outer yoke was in each man's hand, and an iron chain out of the end of every club, and at the end of every chain an iron pestle as long and thick as a middle yoke. They stand in their sadness in the house, and enough is the horror of their aspect. There is no one in the house that would not be avoiding them. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

Fer rogain was silent. "Hard for me to liken them. I know none such of the world's men unless they be yon trio of giants to whom Cúchulainn gave quarter at the beleaguerment of the Men of Falga, and when they were getting quarter they killed fifty warriors. But Cúchulainn would not let them be slain, because of their wondrousness. These are the names of the three: Srubdaire son of Dordbruige, and Conchenn of Cenn maige, and Fiad sceme son of Scípe. Conaire bought them from Cúchulainn for . . . so they are along with him. Three hundred will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will surpass in prowess every three in the

Hostel; and if they come forth upon you, the fragments of you will be fit to go through the sieve of a corn-kiln, from the way in which they will destroy you with the flails of iron. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, though it were only on account of those three! For to combat against them is not a 'paeon round a sluggard.'"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél. "Clouds of weakness are coming to you," etc. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF DÁ DERGA

"There I beheld another room, with one man therein and in front of him two servants with two manes upon them, one of the two dark, the other fair. Red hair on the warrior, and red eyebrows. Two ruddy cheeks he had, and an eye very blue and beautiful. He wore a green cloak and a shirt with a white hood and a red insertion. In his hand was a sword with a hilt of ivory, and he supplies attendance of every room in the house with ale and food, and he is quick-footed in serving the whole host. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"I know those men. That one is Dá Derga. 'Tis by him that the Hostel was built, and since it was built its doors have never been shut save on the side to which the wind comes--the valve is closed against it--and since he began housekeeping his caldron was never taken from the fire, but it has been boiling food for the men of Erin. The pair before him, those two youths, are his fosterlings, two sons of the king of Leinster, namely Muredach and Corpre. Three decads will fall by that trio in front of their house and they will boast of victory over a king or a chief of the reavers. After this they will chance to escape from it."

"Long live he who should protect them!" says Lomna. "Better were triumph of saving them than triumph of slaying them! They should be spared were it only on account of that man. 'Twere meet to give that man quarter," says Lomna Drúth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél. "Clouds," etc. "And after that whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF THE THREE CHAMPIONS FROM THE ELFMOUNDS

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three red mantles they wore, and three red shirts, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all together with their teeth. Three red shields above them. Three red spears in their hands. Three red horses in their bridles in front of the Hostel. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Three champions who wrought falsehood in the elfmounds. This is the punishment inflicted upon them by the king of the elfmounds, to be destroyed thrice by the King of Tara. Conaire son of Eterscél is the last king by whom they are destroyed. Those men will escape from you. To fulfil their own destruction, they have come. But they will not be slain, nor will they slay anyone. And after that whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF THE DOORWARDS

"There I beheld a trio in the midst of the house at the door. Three holed maces in their hands. Swift as a hare was each of them round the other towards the door. Aprons were on them, and they had gray and speckled mantles. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done: Three doorwardens of Tara's King are those, namely Echur ('Key') and Tochur and Tecmang, three sons of Ersa ('Doorpost') and Comla ('Valve'). Thrice their number will fall by them, and they will share a man's triumph among them. They will chance to escape though wounded."

"Woe to him that shall wreak!" etc., says Lomna Drúth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcél, etc. "And after that whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF FER CAILLE

"There I beheld at the fire in front a man with black cropt hair, having only one eye and one foot and one hand, having on the fire a pig bald, black singed, squealing continually, and in his company a great big-mouthed woman. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done: Fer caille with his pig and his wife Cichuil. They (the wife and the pig) are his proper instruments on the night that ye destroy Conaire King of Erin. Alas for the guest who will run between them! Fer caille with his pig is one of Conaire's tabus."

"Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna.

"Ye cannot," quoth Ingcél. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF THE THREE SONS OF BÁITHIS OF BRITAIN

"There I beheld a room with three enneads in it. Fair yellow manes upon them, and they are equally beautiful. Each of them wore a black cape, and there was a white hood on each mantle, a red tuft on each hood, and an iron brooch at the opening of every mantle, and under each man's cloak a huge black sword, and the swords would split a hair on water. They bore shields with scalloped edges. Liken thou them, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. That is the robber-band of the three sons of Baithis of Britain. Three enneads will fall by them in their first conflict, and among them they will share a man's triumph. And after that whom sawest thou?"

THE ROOM OF THE MIMES

"There I beheld a trio of jesters hard by the fire. Three dun mantles they wore. If the men of Erin were in one place, even though the corpse of his mother or his father were in front of each, not one could refrain from laughing at them. Wheresoever the king of a cantred is in the house, not one of them attains his seat on his bed because of that trio of jesters. Whenever the king's eye visits them it smiles at every glance. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Mael and Mlithe and Admlithe--those are the king of Erin's three jesters. By each of them a man will perish, and among them they will share a man's triumph."

"Woe to him that will wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna, etc. "And after that whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF THE CUPBEARERS

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three grey-floating mantles they wore. There was a cup of water in front of each man, and on each cup a bunch of watercress. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Black and Dun and Dark: they are the King of Tara's three cupbearers, to wit, the sons of Day and Night. And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

THE ROOM OF NÁR THE SQUINTER-WITH-THE-LEFT-EYE

"There I beheld a one-eyed man asquint with a ruinous eye. A swine's head he had on the fire, continually squealing. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me to name the like. He is Nár the Squinter with the left eye, the swineherd of Bodb of the Elfmound on Femen, 'tis he that is over the cooking. Blood hath been split at every feast at which he has ever been present."

"Rise up, then ye champions!" says Ingcél, "and get you on to the house!"

With that the reavers march to the Hostel, and made a murmur about it.

"Silence a while!" says Conaire, "what is this?"

"Champions at the house," says Conall Cernach.

"There are warriors for them here," answers Conaire.

"They will be needed tonight," Conall Cernach rejoins.

Then went Lomna Drúth before the host of reavers into the Hostel. The doorkeepers struck off his head. Then the head was thrice flung into the Hostel, and thrice cast out of it, as he himself had foretold.

Then Conaire himself sallies out of the Hostel together with some of his people, and they fight a combat with the host of reavers, and six hundred

fell by Conaire before he could get to his arms. Then the Hostel is thrice set on fire, and thrice put out from thence: and it was granted that the Destruction would never have been wrought had not work of weapons been taken from Conaire.

Thereafter Conaire went to seek his arms, and he dons his battle-dress, and falls to plying his weapons on the reavers, together with the band that he had. Then, after getting his arms, six hundred fell by him in his first encounter.

After this the reavers were routed. "I have told you," says Fer rogain son of Donn Désa, "that if the champions of the men of Erin and Alba attack Conaire at the house, the Destruction will not be wrought unless Conaire's fury and valour be quelled."

"Short will his time be," say the wizards along with the reavers. This was the quelling they brought, a scantness of drink that seized him.

Thereafter Conaire entered the house, and asked for a drink.

"A drink to me, O master Mac cecht!" says Conaire.

Says Mac cecht: "This is not the order that I have hitherto had from thee, to give thee a drink. There are spencers and cupbearers who bring drink to thee. The order I have hitherto had from thee is to protect thee when the champions of the men of Erin and Alba may be attacking thee around the Hostel. Thou wilt go safe from them, and no spear shall enter thy body. Ask a drink of thy spencers and thy cupbearers."

Then Conaire asked a drink of his spencers and his cupbearers who were in the house.

"In the first place there is none," they say; "all the liquids that had been in the house have been spilt on the fires."

The cupbears found no drink for him in the Dodder (a river), and the Dodder had flowed through the house.

Then Conaire again asked for a drink. "A drink to me, O fosterer, O Mac cecht! 'Tis equal to me what death I shall go to, for anyhow I shall perish."

Then Mac cecht gave a choice to the champions of valour of the men of Erin who were in the house, whether they cared to protect the King or to seek a drink for him.

Conall Cernach answered this in the house--and cruel he deemed the contention, and afterwards he had always a feud with Mac cecht.--"Leave the defense of the King to us," says Conall, "and go thou to seek the drink, for of thee it is demanded."

So then Mac cecht fared forth to seek the drink, and he took Conaire's son, Lé fri flaith, under his armpit, and Conaire's golden cup, in which an ox with a bacon-pig would be boiled; and he bore his shield and his two spears and his sword, and he carried the caldron-spit, a spit of iron.

He burst forth upon them, and in front of the Hostel he dealt nine blows of the iron spit, and at every blow nine reavers fell. Then he makes a sloping feat of the shield and an edge-feat of the sword about his head, and he delivered a hostile attack upon them. Six hundred fell in his first encounter, and after cutting down hundreds he goes through the band outside.

The doings of the folk of the Hostel, this is what is here examined presently.

Conall Cernach arises, and takes his weapons, and wends over the door of the Hostel, and goes round the house. Three hundred fell by him, and he hurls back the reavers over three ridges out from the Hostel, and boasts of triumph over a king, and returns, wounded, into the Hostel.

Cormac Condlongas sallies out, and his nine comrades with him, and they deliver their onsets on the reavers. Nine enneads fall by Cormac and nine enneads by his people, and a man for each weapon and a man for each man. And Cormac boasts of the death of a chief of the reavers. They succeed in escaping though they be wounded.

The trio of Picts sally forth from the Hostel, and take to plying their weapons on the reavers. And nine enneads fall by them, and they chance to escape though they be wounded.

The nine pipers sally forth and dash their warlike work on the reavers; and then they succeed in escaping.

Howbeit then, but it is long to relate, 'tis weariness of mind, 'tis confusion of the senses, 'tis tediousness to hearers, 'tis superfluity of narration to go over the same things twice. But the folk of the Hostel came forth in order, and fought their combats with the reavers, and fell by them, as Fer rogain and Lomna Drúth had said to Ingcél, to wit, that the folk of every room would sally forth still and deliver their combat, and after that escape. So that none were left in the Hostel in Conaire's company save Conall and Sencha and Dubthach.

Now from the vehement ardour and the greatness of the contest which Conaire had fought, his great drouth of thirst attacked him, and he perished of a consuming fever, for he got not his drink, So when the king died those three sally out of the Hostel, and deliver a wily stroke of reaving on the reavers, and fare forth from the Hostel, wounded, to broken and maimed.

Touching Mac cecht, however, he went his way till he reached the Well of Casair, which was near him in Crich Cualann; but of water he found not therein the full of his cup, that is, Conaire's golden cup which he had brought in his hand. Before morning he had gone round the chief rivers of Erin, to wit Bush, Boyne, Bann, Barrow, Neim, Luae, Láigdae, Shannon, Suir, Sligo, Sámail, Find, Ruirthech, Slaney, and in them he found not the full of his cup of water.

Then before morning he had travelled to the chief lakes of Erin, to wit, Lough Derg, Loch Luimnig, Lough Foyle, Lough Mask, Lough Corrib, Loch Láig, Loch Cúan, Lough Neagh, Mórloch, and of water he found not therein the full of his cup.

He went his way till he reached Uaran Garad on Magh Ai. It could not hide itself from him: so he brought thereout the full of his cup, and the boy fell under his covering.

After this he went on and reached Dá Derga's Hostel before morning.

When Mac cecht went across the third ridge towards the house, 'tis there were twain striking off Conaire's head. The Mac cecht strikes off the head of one of the two men who were beheading Conaire. The other man then was fleeing forth with the king's head. A pillar-stone chanced to be under Mac cecht's feet on the floor of the Hostel. He hurls it at the man who had Conaire's head and drove it through his spine, so that his back

broke. After this Mac cecht beheads him. Mac cecht then split the cup of water into Conaire's gullet and neck. Then said Conaire's head, after the water had been put into its neck and gullet:

"A good man Mac cecht! an excellent man Mac cecht!
 A good warrior without, good within,
 He gives a drink, he saves a king, he doth a deed.
 Well he ended the champions I found.
 He sent a flagstone on the warriors.
 Well he hewed by the door of the Hostel . . . Fer lé,
 So that a spear is against one hip.
 Good should I be to far-renowned Mac cecht
 If I were alive. A good man!"

After this Mac cecht followed the routed foe.

'Tis this that some books relate, that but a very few fell around Conaire, namely, nine only. And hardly a fugitive escaped to tell the tidings to the champions who had been at the house.

Where there had been five thousand--and in every thousand ten hundred--only one set of five escaped, namely Ingcél, and his two brothers Echell and Tulchinne, the "Yearling of the Reavers"--three great grandsons of Conmac, and the two Reds of Róiriu who had been the first to wound Conaire.

Thereafter Ingcél went into Alba, and received the kingship after his father, since he had taken home triumph over a king of another country.

This, however, is the recension in other books, and it is more probably truer. Of the folk of the Hostel forty or fifty fell, and of the reavers three fourths and one fourth of them only escaped from the Destruction.

Now when Mac cecht was lying wounded on the battlefield, at the end of the third day, he saw a woman passing by.

"Come hither, O woman!" says Mac cecht.

"I dare not go thus," says the woman, "for horror and fear of thee."

"There was a time when I had this, O woman, even horror and fear of me on some one. But now thou shouldst fear nothing. I accept thee on the truth of my honour and my safeguard."

Then the woman goes to him.

"I know not," says he, "whether it is a fly or a gnat, or an ant that nips me in the wound."

It happened that it was a hairy wolf that was there, as far as its two shoulders in the wound!

The woman seized it by the tail, and dragged it out of the wound, and it takes the full of its jaws out of him.

"Truly," says the woman, "this is 'an ant of ancient land.'"

Says Mac cecht "I swear to God what my people swears, I deemed it no bigger than a fly, or a gnat, or an ant."

And Mac cecht took the wolf by the throat, and struck it a blow on the forehead, and killed it with a single blow.

Then Lé fri flaith, son of Conaire, died under Mac cecht's armpit, for the warrior's heat and sweat had dissolved him.

Thereafter Mac cecht, having cleansed the slaughter, at the end of the third day, set forth, and he dragged Conaire with him on his back, and buried him at Tara, as some say. Then Mac cecht departed into Connaught, to his own country, that he might work his cure in Mag Bréngair. Wherefore the name clave to the plain from Mac cecht's misery, that is, Mag Brén-guir.

Now Conall Cernach escaped from the Hostel, and thrice fifty spears had gone through the arm which upheld his shield. He fared forth till he reached his father's house, with half his shield in his hand, and his sword, and the fragments of his two spears. Then he found his father before his garth in Taltiu.

"Swift are the wolves that have hunted thee, my son," saith his father.

"'Tis this that has wounded us, thou old hero, an evil conflict with warriors," Conall Cernach replied.

"Hast thou then news of Dá Derga's Hostel?" asked Amorgin. "Is thy lord alive?"

"He is not alive," says Conall.

"I swear to God what the great tribes of Ulaid swear, it is cowardly for the man who went thereout alive, having left his lord with his foes in death."

"My wounds are not white, thou old hero," says Conall. He shews him his shield-arm, whereon were thrice fifty wounds: this is what was inflicted upon it. The shield that guarded it is what saved it. But the right arm had been played upon, as far as two thirds thereof, since the shield had not been guarding it. That arm was mangled and maimed and wounded and pierced, save that the sinews kept it to the body without separation.

"That arm fought tonight, may son," says Amorgein.

"True is that, thou old hero," says Conall Cernach. "Many there are unto whom it gave drinks of death tonight in front of the Hostel."

Now as to the reavers, every one of them that escaped from the Hostel went to the cairn which they had built on the night before last, and they brought thereout a stone for each man not mortally wounded. So this is what they lost by death at the Hostel, a man for every stone that is (now) in Carn Lecca.

It endeth: Amen: it endeth.
