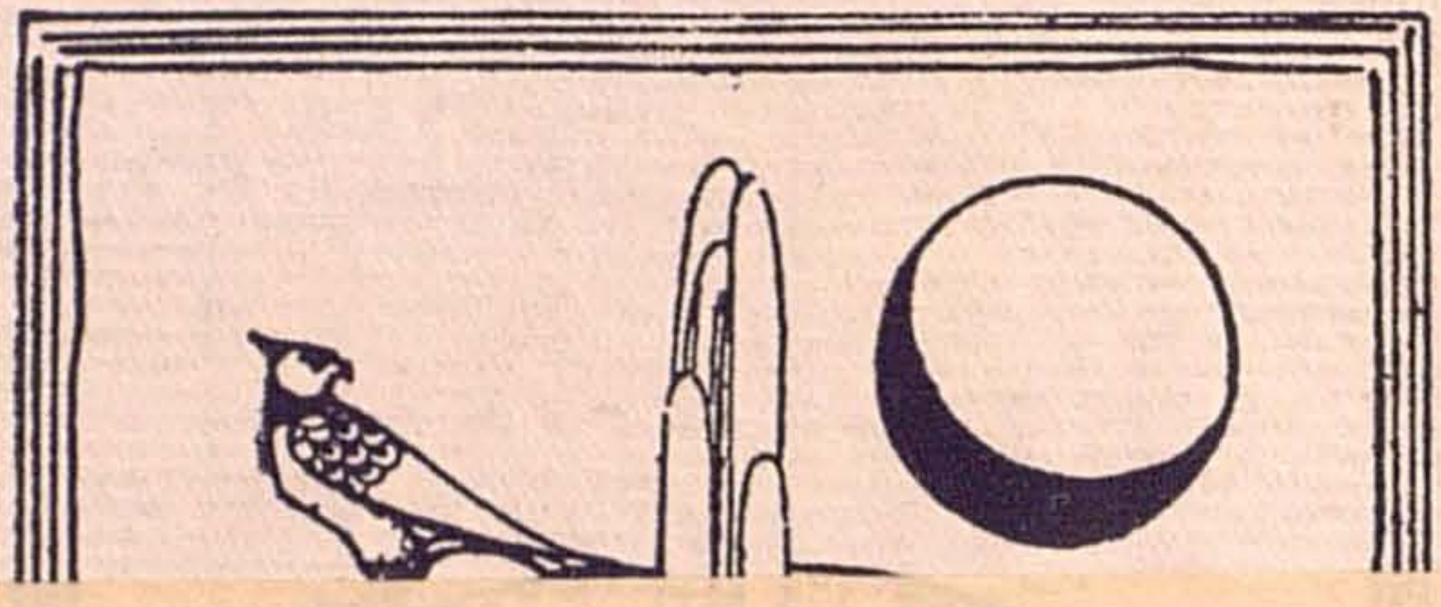

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EARLY POEMS

AND

STORIES

BY

W. B. YEATS

DUBLIN

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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DEDICATION

My dear Ashe King,

A couple of days ago, while correcting the proofs of this book, I remembered a lecture you delivered in the year 1894 to the Dublin National Literary Society; a denunciation of rhetoric, and of Irish rhetoric most of all; and that it was a most vigorous and merry lecture and roused the anger of the newspapers. Thereon I decided to offer the book to you—though I had years ago dedicated various sections to friends, some of whom are long dead—for a distaste for rhetoric was a chief characteristic of my generation, and gave the book its defects and qualities. The Irish form of Victorian rhetoric had declined into a patriotic extravagance that offended all educated minds, but Victor Hugo and Swinburne had so delighted our school days that we distrusted our habitual thoughts. I tried after the publication of "The Wanderings of Oisin" to write of nothing but emotion, and in the simplest language, and now I have had to go through it all, cutting out or altering passages that are sentimental from lack of thought. Are we not always doomed to see our world as

the Stoics foretold, consumed alternately by fire and water. Upon the other hand, I cannot have altogether failed in simplicity, for these poems, written before my seven-and-twentieth year, are still the most popular that I have written. A girl made profound by the first pride of beauty, though all but a child still, once said to me, "Innocence is the highest achievement of the human intellect," and as we are encouraged to believe that our intellects grow with our years I may be permitted the conviction that—grown a little nearer innocence—I have found a more appropriate simplicity.

I published the first edition of "The Celtic Twilight" when we were founding the National Literary Society, and often when it was time for some committee meeting—how modest and practical you were at those meetings—I rose without regret, for it is pleasanter to talk than to write, from some finished or unfinished story of "The Secret Rose". I wrote a good portion of that book while I still shared a lodging with old John O'Leary, the Fenian leader, but "Rosa Alchemica", "The Tables of the Law", and "The Adoration of the Magi" when I had left Dublin in despondency.

W. B. YEATS.

May 1925.

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DUBLIN

THE WANDERINGS OF USHEEN

(1889)

"Give me the world if Thou wilt, but grant me an asylum for my affections."

TULKA.

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THE

TO

EDWIN J. ELLIS

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BOOK I

S. Patric

You who are bent, and bald, and blind,
With a heavy heart and a wandering mind,
Have known three centuries, poets sing,
Of dalliance with a demon thing.

Usheen

Sad to remember, sick with years,
The swift innumerable spears,
The horsemen with their floating hair,
And bowls of barley, honey, and wine,
And feet of maidens dancing in tune,
And the white body that lay by mine;
But the tale, though words be lighter than
air,
Must live to be old like the wandering moon.

Caolte, and Conan, and Finn were there,
When we followed a deer with our baying
hounds,
With Bran, Sgeolan, and Lomair,
And passing the Firbolgs' burial mounds,

Came to the cairn-heaped grassy hill
Where passionate Maive is stony still;
And found on the dove-grey edge of the sea
A pearl-pale, high-born lady, who rode
On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
And like a sunset were her lips,
A stormy sunset on doomed ships;
A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
And with the glimmering crimson glowed
Of many a figured embroidery;
And it was bound with a pearl-pale shell
That wavered like the summer streams,
As her soft bosom rose and fell.

S. Patric

You are still wrecked among heathen dreams.

Usheen

" Why do you wind no horn? " she said.
" And every hero droop his head?
The hornless deer is not more sad
That many a peaceful moment had,
More sleek than any granary mouse,
In his own leafy forest house
Among the waving fields of fern:
The hunting of heroes should be glad."

" O pleasant woman," answered Finn,
" We think on Oscar's pencilled urn,

And on the heroes lying slain,
On Gavra's raven-covered plain;
But where are your noble kith and kin,
And from what country do you ride? "

" My father and my mother are
Aengus and Adene, my own name
Niam, and my country far
Beyond the tumbling of this tide."

" What dream came with you that you came
Through bitter tide on foam wet feet?
Did your companion wander away
From where the birds of Aengus wing? "

She said, with laughter tender and sweet:
" I have not yet, war-weary king,
Been spoken of with any one;
Yet now I choose, for these four feet
Ran through the foam and ran to this
That I might have your son to kiss."

" Were there no better than my son
That you through all that foam should run?"

" I loved no man, though kings besought,
Until the Danaan poets brought
Rhyme, that rhymed to Usheen's name,
And now I am dizzy with the thought
Of all that wisdom and the fame

Of battles broken by his hands,
Of stories builded by his words
That are like coloured Asian birds
At evening in their rainless lands."

O Patric, by your brazen bell,
There was no limb of mine but fell
Into a desperate gulph of love!
" You only will I wed," I cried,
" And I will make a thousand songs,
And set your name all names above,
And captives bound with leathern thongs
Shall kneel and praise you, one by one,
At evening in my western dun."

" O Usheen, mount by me and ride
To shores by the wash of the tremulous tide,
Where men have heaped no burial mounds,
And the days pass by like a wayward tune,
Where broken faith has never been known,
And the blushes of first love never have flown;
And there I will give you a hundred hounds;
No mightier creatures bay at the moon;
And a hundred robes of murmuring silk,
And a hundred calves and a hundred sheep
Whose long wool whiter than sea froth flows,
And a hundred spears and a hundred bows,
And oil and wine and honey and milk,
And always never-anxious sleep;
While a hundred youths, mighty of limb,
But knowing nor tumult nor hate nor strife,

And a hundred maidens, merry as birds,
Who when they dance to a fitful measure
Have a speed like the speed of the salmon
herds,
Shall follow your horn and obey your whim,
And you shall know the Danaan leisure:
And Niam be with you for a wife."
Then she sighed gently, " It grows late,
Music and love and sleep await,
Where I would be when the white moon
climbs
The red sun falls and the world grows dim."

And then I mounted and she bound me
With her triumphing arms around me,
And whispering to herself enwound me;
But when the horse had felt my weight,
He shook himself and neighed three times:
Caolte, Conan, and Finn came near,
And wept, and raised their lamenting hands,
And bid me stay, with many a tear;
But we rode out from the human lands.

In what far kingdom do you go,
Ah, Fenians, with the shield and bow?
Or are you phantoms white as snow,
Whose lips had life's most prosperous glow?
O you, with whom in sloping valleys,
Or down the dewy forest alleys,
I chased at morn the flying deer,
With whom I hurled the hurrying spear,

And heard the foemen's bucklers rattle,
And broke the heaving ranks of battle!
And Bran, Sgeolan, and Lomair,
Where are you with your long rough hair?
You go not where the red deer feeds,
Nor tear the foemen from their steeds.

S. Patric

Boast not, nor mourn with drooping head
Companions long accurst and dead,
And hounds for centuries dust and air.

Usheen

We galloped over the glossy sea:
I know not if days passed or hours,
And Niam sang continually
Danaan songs, and their dewy showers
Of pensive laughter, unhuman sound,
Lulled weariness, and softly round
My human sorrow her white arms wound.

We galloped; now a hornless deer
Passed by us, chased by a phantom hound
All pearly white, save one red ear;
And now a maiden rode like the wind
With an apple of gold in her tossing hand;
And a beautiful young man followed behind
With quenchless gaze and fluttering hair.

" Were these two born in the Danaan land,
Or have they breathed the mortal air? "

" Vex them no longer," Niam said,
And sighing bowed her gentle head,
And sighing laid the pearly tip
Of one long finger on my lip.

But now the moon like a white rose shone
In the pale west, and the sun's rim sank,
And clouds arrayed their rank on rank
About his fading crimson ball:
The floor of Allen's hosting hall
Was not more level than the sea,
As full of loving phantasy,
And with low murmurs we rode on,
Where many a trumpet-twisted shell
That in immortal silence sleeps
Dreaming of her own melting hues,
Her golds, her ambers, and her blues,
Pierced with soft light the shallowing deeps.
But now a wandering land breeze came
And a far sound of feathery quires;
It seemed to blow from the dying flame,
They seemed to sing in the smouldering fires.
The horse towards the music raced,
Neighing along the lifeless waste;
Like sooty fingers, many a tree
Rose ever out of the warm sea;
And they were trembling ceaselessly,
As though they all were beating time,
Upon the centre of the sun,
To that low laughing woodland rhyme.
And, now our wandering hours were done,

We cantered to the shore, and knew
The reason of the trembling trees:
Round every branch the song-birds flew,
Or clung thereon like swarming bees;
While round the shore a million stood
Like drops of frozen rainbow light,
And pondered in a soft vain mood
Upon their shadows in the tide,
And told the purple deeps their pride,
And murmured snatches of delight;
And on the shores were many boats
With bending sterns and bending bows.
And carven figures on their prows
Of bitterns, and fish-eating stoats,
And swans with their exultant throats:
And where the wood and waters meet
We tied the horse in a leafy clump,
And Niam blew three merry notes
Out of a little silver trump;
And then an answering whispering flew
Over the bare and woody land,
A whisper of impetuous feet,
And ever nearer, nearer grew;
And from the woods rushed out a band
Of men and maidens, hand in hand,
And singing, singing altogether;
Their brows were white as fragrant milk,
Their cloaks made out of yellow silk,
And trimmed with many a crimson feather;
And when they saw the cloak I wore
Was dim with mire of a mortal shore,

They fingered it and gazed on me
And laughed like murmurs of the sea;
But Niam with a swift distress
Bid them away and hold their peace;
And when they heard her voice they ran
And knelt them, every maid and man
And kissed, as they would never cease,
Her pearl-pale hand and the hem of her dress.
She bade them bring us to the hall
Where Aengus dreams, from sun to sun,
A Druid dream of the end of days
When the stars are to wane and the world be
done.

They led us by long and shadowy ways
Where drops of dew in myriads fall,
And tangled creepers every hour
Blossom in some new crimson flower,
And once a sudden laughter sprang
From all their lips, and once they sang
Together, while the dark woods rang,
And made in all their distant parts,
With boom of bees in honey marts,
A rumour of delighted hearts.
And once a maiden by my side
Gave me a harp, and bid me sing,
And touch the laughing silver string;
But when I sang of human joy
A sorrow wrapped each merry face,
And, Patric! by your beard, they wept,
Until one came, a tearful boy;

" A sadder creature never stept
Than this strange human bard," he cried;
And caught the silver harp away,
And, weeping over the white strings, hurled
It down in a leaf-hid, hollow place
That kept dim waters from the sky;
And each one said, with a long, long sigh,
" O saddest harp in all the world,
Sleep there till the moon and the stars die! "

And now still sad we came to where
A beautiful young man dreamed within
A house of wattles, clay, and skin;
One hand upheld his beardless chin,
And one a sceptre flashing out
Wild flames of red and gold and blue,
Like to a merry wandering rout
Of dancers leaping in the air;
And men and maidens knelt them there
And showed their eyes with teardrops dim,
And with low murmurs prayed to him,
And kissed the sceptre with red lips,
And touched it with their finger-tips.

He held that flashing sceptre up.
" Joy drowns the twilight in the dew,
And fills with stars night's purple cup,
And wakes the sluggard seeds of corn,
And stirs the young kid's budding horn
And makes the infant ferns unwrap,
And for the peewit paints his cap,

And rolls along the unwieldy sun,
And makes the little planets run:
And if joy were not on the earth,
There were an end of change and birth,
And earth and heaven and hell would die,
And in some gloomy barrow lie
Folded like a frozen fly;
Then mock at Death and Time with glances
And wavering arms and wandering dances.

"Men's hearts of old were drops of flame
That from the saffron morning came,
Or drops of silver joy that fell
Out of the moon's pale twisted shell;
But now hearts cry that hearts are slaves,
And toss and turn in narrow caves;
But here there is nor law nor rule,
Nor have hands held a weary tool;
And here there is nor Change nor Death,
But only kind and merry breath,
For joy is God and God is joy."
With one long glance on maid and boy
And the pale blossom of the moon,
He fell into a Druid swoon.

And in a wild and sudden dance
We mocked at Time and Fate and Chance
And swept out of the wattled hall
And came to where the dewdrops fall
Among the foamdrops of the sea,
And there we hushed the revelry;

And, gathering on our brows a frown,
Bent all our swaying bodies down,
And to the waves that glimmer by
That sloping green De Danaan sod
Sang " God is joy and joy is God.
And things that have grown sad are wicked,
And things that fear the dawn of the morrow
Or the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

We danced to where in the winding thicket
The damask roses, bloom on bloom,
Like crimson meteors hang in the gloom,
And bending over them softly said,
Bending over them in the dance,
With a swift and friendly glance
From dewy eyes: " Upon the dead
Fall the leaves of other roses,
On the dead dim earth encloses:
But never, never on our graves,
Heaped beside the glimmering waves,
Shall fall the leaves of damask roses.
For neither Death nor Change comes near us,
And all listless hours fear us,
And we fear no dawning morrow,
Nor the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

The dance wound through the windless
woods;
The ever-summered solitudes;
Until the tossing arms grew still
Upon the woody central hill;

And, gathered in a panting band,
We flung on high each waving hand,
And sang unto the starry broods.
In our raised eyes there flashed a glow
Of milky brightness to and fro
As thus our song arose: "You stars,
Across your wandering ruby cars
Shake the loose reins: you slaves of God,
He rules you with an iron rod,
He holds you with an iron bond,
Each one woven to the other,
Each one woven to his brother
Like bubbles in a frozen pond;
But we in a lonely land abide
Unchainable as the dim tide,
With hearts that know nor law nor rule,
And hands that hold no wearisome tool,
Folded in love that fears no morrow,
Nor the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

O Patric! for a hundred years
I chased upon that woody shore
The deer, the badger, and the boar.
O Patric! for a hundred years
At evening on the glimmering sands,
Beside the piled-up hunting spears,
These now outworn and withered hands
Wrestled among the island bands.
O Patric! for a hundred years
We went a-fishing in long boats
With bending sterns and bending bows,

And carven figures on their prows
Of bitterns and fish-eating stoats.
O Patric! for a hundred years
The gentle Niam was my wife;
But now two things devour my life;
The things that most of all I hate;
Fasting and prayers.

S. PATRIC

Tell on.

USHEEN

Yes, yes,
For these were ancient Usheen's fate
Loosed long ago from heaven's gate,
For his last days to lie in wait.

When one day by the tide I stood,
I found in that forgetfulness
Of dreamy foam a staff of wood
From some dead warrior's broken lance:
I turned it in my hands; the stains
Of war were on it, and I wept,
Remembering how the Fenians stept
Along the blood-bedabbled plains,
Equal to good or grievous chance:
Thereon young Niam softly came
And caught my hands, but spake no word
Save only many times my name,
In murmurs, like a frighted bird.

We passed by woods, and lawns of clover,
And found the horse and bridled him,
For we knew well the old was over.
I heard one say, " His eyes grow dim
With all the ancient sorrow of men ";
And wrapped in dreams rode out again
With hoofs of the pale findrinny
Over the glimmering purple sea:
Under the golden evening light.
The immortals moved among the fountains
By rivers and the woods' old night;
Some danced like shadows on the mountains,
Some wandered ever hand in hand;
Or sat in dreams on the pale strand,
Each forehead like an obscure star
Bent down above each hooked knee,
And sang, and with a dreamy gaze
Watched where the sun in a saffron blaze
Was slumbering half in the sea ways;
And, as they sang, the painted birds
Kept time with their bright wings and feet;
Like drops of honey came their words,
But fainter than a young lamb's bleat.

" An old man stirs the fire to a blaze,
In the house of a child, of a friend, of a
brother
He has over-lingered his welcome; the
days,
Grown desolate, whisper and sigh to each
other;

He hears the storm in the chimney above,
And bends to the fire and shakes with the cold,
While his heart still dreams of battle and love,
And the cry of the hounds on the hills of old.

" But we are apart in the grassy places,
Where care cannot trouble the least of our days,
Or the softness of youth be gone from our faces,
Or love's first tenderness die in our gaze.
The hare grows old as she plays in the sun
And gazes around her with eyes of brightness;
Before the swift things that she dreamed of were done
She limps along in an aged whiteness;
A storm of birds in the Asian trees
Like tulips in the air a-winging,
And the gentle waves of the summer seas,
That raise their heads and wander singing,
Must murmur at last ' Unjust, unjust ';
And 'My speed is a weariness,' falters the mouse
And the kingfisher turns to a ball of dust,
And the roof falls in of his tunnelled house.
But the love-dew dims our eyes till the day

When God shall come from the sea with a
sigh
And bid the stars drop down from the
sky,
And the moon like a pale rose wither
away."

12489

BOOK II

Now, man of croziers, shadows called our
names
And then away, away, like whirling flames;
And now fled by, mist-covered, without
sound,
The youth and lady and the deer and hound;
"Gaze no more on the phantoms," Niam
said,
And kissed my eyes, and, swaying her bright
head
And her bright body, sang of faery and man
Before God was or my old line began;
Wars shadowy, vast, exultant; faeries of old
Who wedded men with rings of Druid gold;
And how those lovers never turn their eyes
Upon the life that fades and flickers and
dies,
But love and kiss on dim shores far away
Rolled round with music of the sighing
spray:
But sang no more, as when, like a brown bee
That has drunk full, she crossed the misty
sea

With me in her white arms a hundred years
Before this day; for now the fall of tears
Troubled her song.

I do not know if days
Or hours passed by, yet hold the morning rays
Shone many times among the glimmering flowers
Woven into her hair, before dark towers
Rose in the darkness, and the white surf gleamed
About them; and the horse of faery screamed
And shivered, knowing the Isle of Many Fears,
Nor ceased until white Niam stroked his ears
And named him by sweet names.

A foaming tide
Whitened afar with surge, fan-formed and wide,
Burst from a great door marred by many a blow
From mace and sword and pole-axe, long ago
When gods and giants warred. We rode between
The seaweed-covered pillars; and the green
And surging phosphorus alone gave light
On our dark pathway, till a countless flight
Of moonlit steps glimmered; and left and right
Dark statues glimmered over the pale tide

Upon dark thrones. Between the lids of one
The imaged meteors had flashed and run
And had disported in the stilly jet,
And the fixed stars had dawned and shone
and set,
Since God made Time and Death and Sleep: the other
Stretched his long arm to where, a misty smother,
The stream churned, churned, and churned —his lips apart,
As though he told his never slumbering heart
Of every foamdrop on its misty way.
Tying the horse to his vast foot that lay
Half in the unvesselled sea, we climbed the stairs
And climbed so long, I thought the last steps were
Hung from the morning star; when these mild words
Fanned the delighted air like wings of birds:
"My brothers spring out of their beds at morn,
A-murmur like young partridge: with loud horn
They chase the noontide deer;
And when the dew-drowned stars hang in the air
Look to long fishing-lines, or point and pare
An ashen hunting spear.

" O sigh, O fluttering sigh, be kind to me;
Flutter along the froth lips of the sea,
And shores, the froth lips wet:
And stay a little while, and bid them weep:
Ah, touch their blue-veined eyelids if they
sleep,
And shake their coverlet.
When you have told how I weep endlessly,
Flutter along the froth lips of the sea
And home to me again,
And in the shadow of my hair lie hid,
And tell me that you found a man unbid,
The saddest of all men."

A lady with soft eyes like funeral tapers,
And face that seemed wrought out of moonlit
vapours,
And a sad mouth, that fear made tremulous
As any ruddy moth, looked down on us;
And she with a wave-rusted chain was tied
To two old eagles, full of ancient pride,
That with dim eyeballs stood on either side.
Few feathers were on their dishevelled wings,
For their dim minds were with the ancient
things.

" I bring deliverance," pearl-pale Niam said.

" Neither the living, nor the unlabouring
dead,
Nor the high gods who never lived, may
fight

My enemy and hope; demons for fright
Jabber and scream about him in the night;
For he is strong and crafty as the seas
That sprang under the Seven Hazel Trees,
And I must needs endure and hate and weep,
Until the gods and demons drop asleep,
Hearing Aed touch the mournful strings of
gold."

" Is he so dreadful? "

" Be not over bold,
But fly while still you may."

And thereon I:
" This demon shall be battered till he die,
And his loose bulk be thrown in the loud
tide."

" Flee from him," pearl-pale Niam weeping
cried,
" For all men flee the demons "; but moved
not
My angry king-remembering soul one jot.
There was no mightier soul of Heber's line;
Now it is old and mouse-like. For a sign
I burst the chain: still earless, nerveless,
blind,
Wrapped in the things of the unhuman mind,
In some dim memory or ancient mood
Still earless, nerveless, blind, the eagles
stood.

And then we climbed the stair to a high door;
A hundred horsemen on the basalt floor
Beneath had paced content: we held our way
And stood within: clothed in a misty ray
I saw a foam-white seagull drift and float
Under the roof, and with a straining throat
Shouted, and hailed him: he hung there a
star,
For no man's cry shall ever mount so far;
Not even your God could have thrown down
that hall;
Stabling His unloosed lightnings in their
stall,
He had sat down and sighed with cumbered
heart,
As though His hour were come.

We sought the part
That was most distant from the door; green
slime
Made the way slippery, and time on time
Showed prints of sea-born scales, while down
through it
The captive's journeys to and fro were writ
Like a small river, and where feet touched,
came
A momentary gleam of phosphorus flame.
Under the deepest shadows of the hall
That maiden found a ring hung on the wall,
And in the ring a torch, and with its flare
Making a world about her in the air,

Passed under the dim doorway, out of sight
And came again, holding a second light
Burning between her fingers, and in mine
Laid it and sighed: I held a sword whose
shine
No centuries could dim, and a word ran
Thereon in Ogham letters, " Mananan ";
That sea-god's name, who in a deep content
Sprang dripping, and, with captive demons
sent
Out of the seven-fold seas, built the dark
hall
Rooted in foam and clouds, and cried to all
The mightier masters of a mightier race;
And at his cry there came no milk-pale face
Under a crown of thorns and dark with
blood,
But only exultant faces.

Niam stood
With bowed head, trembling when the white
blade shone,
But she whose hours of tenderness were gone
Had neither hope nor fear. I bade them
hide
Under the shadows till the tumults died
Of the loud crashing and earth shaking fight,
Lest they should look upon some dreadful
sight;
And thrust the torch between the slimy flags.
A dome made out of endless carven jags,

Where shadowy face flowed into shadowy face,
Looked down on me; and in the self-same place
I waited hour by hour, and the high dome,
Windowless, pillarless, multitudinous home
Of faces, waited; and the leisured gaze
Was loaded with the memory of days
Buried and mighty. When through the great door
The dawn came in, and glimmered on the floor
With a pale light, I journeyed round the hall
And found a door deep sunken in the wall,
The least of doors; beyond on a dim plain
A little runnel made a bubbling strain,
And on the runnel's stony and bare edge
A dusky demon dry as a withered sedge
Swayed, crooning to himself an unknown tongue:
In a sad revelry he sang and swung
Bacchant and mournful, passing to and fro
His hand along the runnel's side, as though
The flowers still grew there: far on the sea's waste
Shaking and waving, vapour vapour chased,
While high frail cloudlets, fed with a green light,
Like drifts of leaves, immovable and bright,
Hung in the passionate dawn. He slowly turned:

A demon's leisure: eyes, first white, now
burned
Like wings of kingfishers; and he arose
Barking. We trampled up and down with
blows
Of sword and brazen battle-axe, while day
Gave to high noon and noon to night gave
way;
And when he knew the sword of Mananan
Amid the shades of night, he changed and ran
Through many shapes; I lunged at the smooth
throat
Of a great eel; it changed, and I but smote
A fir-tree roaring in its leafless top;
And thereupon I drew the livid chop
Of a drowned dripping body to my breast;
Horror from horror grew; but when the west
Had surged up in a plumy fire, I drave
Through heart and spine; and cast him in the
wave
Lest Niam shudder.

Full of hope and dread
Those two came carrying wine and meat and
bread,
And healed my wounds with unguents out of
flowers
That feed white moths by some De Danaan
shrine;
Then in that hall, lit by the dim sea shine,
We lay on skins of otters, and drank wine,

Brewed by the sea-gods, from huge cups that
lay
Upon the lips of sea-gods in their day;
And then on heaped-up skins of otters slept.
And when the sun once more in saffron stept,
Rolling his flagrant wheel out of the deep,
We sang the loves and angers without sleep,
And all the exultant labours of the strong.

But now the lying clerics murder song
With barren words and flatteries of the weak.
In what land do the powerless turn the beak
Of ravening Sorrow, or the hand of Wrath?
For all your croziers, they have left the path
And wander in the storms and clinging
snows,
Hopeless for ever: ancient Usheen knows,
For he is weak and poor and blind, and lies
On the anvil of the world.

S. PATRIC

Be still: the skies
Are choked with thunder, lightning, and
fierce wind,
For God has heard, and speaks His angry
mind;
Go cast your body on the stones and pray,
For He has wrought midnight and dawn and
day.

USHEEN

Saint, do you weep? I hear amid the thunder
The Fenian horses; armour torn asunder;
Laughter and cries. The armies clash and shock.
And now the daylight-darkening ravens flock.
Cease, cease, oh mournful, laughing Fenian horn!

We feasted for three days. On the fourth morn
I found, dropping sea foam on the wide stair,
And hung with slime, and whispering in his hair,
That demon dull and unsubduable;
And once more to a day-long battle fell,
And at the sundown threw him in the surge,
To lie until the fourth morn saw emerge
His new healed shape; and for a hundred years
So warred, so feasted, with nor dreams nor fears,
Nor languor nor fatigue: and endless feast,
An endless war.

The hundred years had ceased;
I stood upon the stair: the surges bore
A beech bough to me, and my heart grew sore,

Remembering how I had stood by white-
haired Finn
Under a beech at Allen and heard the thin
Outcry of bats.

And then young Niam came
Holding that horse, and sadly called my
name;
I mounted, and we passed over the lone
And drifting greyness, while this monotone,
Surly and distant, mixed inseparably
Into the clangour of the wind and sea.

" I hear my soul drop down into decay,
And Mananan's dark tower, stone after stone,
Gather sea slime and fall the seaward way,
And the moon goad the waters night and
day,
That all be overthrown.

" But till the moon has taken all, I wage
War on the mightiest men under the skies,
And they have fallen or fled, age after age.
Light is man's love, and lighter is man's
rage;
His purpose drifts and dies."

And then lost Niam murmured, " Love, we
go
To the Island of Forgetfulness, for lo!

The Islands of Dancing and of Victories
Are empty of all power."

"And which of these
Is the Island of Content?"

"None know," she said;
And on my bosom laid her weeping head.

BOOK III

Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a
wandering and milky smoke,
High as the saddle girth, covering away
from our glances the tide;
And those that fled, and that followed, from
the foam-pale distance broke;
The immortal desire of immortals we saw
in their faces, and sighed.

I mused on the chase with the Fenians, and
Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair,
And never a song sang Niam, and over my
finger-tips
Came now the sliding of tears and sweeping
of mist-cold hair,
And now the warmth of sighs, and after the
quiver of lips.

Were we days long or hours long in riding,
when rolled in a grisly peace,
An isle lay level before us, with dripping
hazel and oak?

And we stood on a sea's edge we saw not;
for whiter than new-washed fleece
Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a
wandering and milky smoke.

And we rode on the plains of the sea's edge;
the sea's edge barren and grey,
Grey sand on the green of the grasses and
over the dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though
they would hasten away
Like an army of old men longing for rest
from the moan of the seas.

But the trees grew taller and closer, immense
in their wrinkling bark;
Dropping; a murmurous dropping; old
silence and that one sound;
For no live creatures lived there, no weasels
moved in the dark:
Long sighs arose in our spirits, beneath us
bubbled the ground.

And the ears of the horse went sinking away
in the hollow night,
For, as drift from a sailor slow drowning the
gleams of the world and the sun,
Ceased on our hands and our faces, on hazel
and oak leaf, the light,
And the stars were blotted above us, and
the whole of the world was one.

Till the horse gave a whinny; for, cumbrous
with stems of the hazel and oak,
A valley flowed down from his hoofs, and
there in the long grass lay,
Under the starlight and shadow, a monstrous
slumbering folk,
Their naked and gleaming bodies poured out
and heaped in the way.

And by them were arrow and war-axe, arrow
and shield and blade;
And dew-blanched horns, in whose hollow a
child of three years old
Could sleep on a couch of rushes, and all
inwrought and inlaid,
And more comely than man can make them
with bronze and silver and gold.

And each of the huge white creatures was
huger than fourscore men;
The tops of their ears were feathered, their
hands were the claws of birds,
And, shaking the plumes of the grasses and
the leaves of the mural glen,
The breathing came from those bodies, long-
warless, grown whiter than curds.

The wood was so spacious above them, that
He who had stars for His flocks
Could fondle the leaves with His fingers,
nor go from His dew-cumbered skies;

So long were they sleeping, the owls had
builded their nests in their locks,
Filling the fibrous dimness with long genera-
tions of eyes.

And over the limbs and the valley the slow
owls wandered and came,
Now in a place of star-fire, and now in a
shadow place wide;
And the chief of the huge white creatures,
his knees in the soft star-flame,
Lay loose in a place of shadow: we drew the
reins by his side.

Golden the nails of his bird-claws, flung
loosely along the dim ground;
In one was a branch soft-shining with bells
more many than sighs
In midst of an old man's bosom; owls
ruffling and pacing around,
Sidled their bodies against him, filling the
shade with their eyes.

And my gaze was thronged with the sleepers;
no, not since the world began,
In realms where the handsome were many,
nor in glamours by demons flung,
Have faces alive with such beauty been
known to the salt eye of man,
Yet weary with passions that faded when the
sevenfold seas were young.

And I gazed on the bell-branch, sleep's
forebear, far sung by the Sennachies.
I saw how those slumberers, grown weary,
there camping in grasses deep,
Of wars with the wide world and pacing
the shores of the wandering seas,
Laid hands on the bell-branch and swayed
it, and fed of unhuman sleep.

Snatching the horn of Niam, I blew a long
lingering note.
Came sound from those monstrous sleepers,
a sound like the stirring of flies.
He, shaking the fold of his lips, and heaving
the pillar of his throat,
Watched me with mournful wonder out of
the wells of his eyes.

I cried, " Come out of the shadow, king of
the nails of gold!
And tell of your goodly household and the
goodly works of your hands,
That we may muse in the starlight and talk
of the battles of old;
Your questioner, Usheen, is worthy, he
comes from the Fenian lands."

Half open his eyes were, and held me, dull
with the smoke of their dreams;
His lips moved slowly in answer, no answer
out of them came;

Then he swayed in his fingers the bell-branch,
slow dropping a sound in faint streams
Softer than snow-flakes in April and piercing
the marrow like flame.

Wrapt in the wave of that music, with weari-
ness more than of earth,
The moil of my centuries filled me; and
gone like a sea-covered stone
Were the memories of the whole of my
sorrow and the memories of the whole
of my mirth,
And a softness came from the starlight and
filled me full to the bone.

In the roots of the grasses, the sorrels, I laid
my body as low;
And the pearl-pale Niam lay by me, her
brow on the midst of my breast;
And the horse was gone in the distance, and
years after years 'gan flow;
Square leaves of the ivy moved over us,
binding us down to our rest.

And, man of the many white croziers, a
century there I forgot;
How the fetlocks drip blood in the battle,
when the fallen on fallen lie rolled;
How the falconer follows the falcon in the
weeds of the heron's plot,
And the names of the demons whose hammers
made armour for Conhor of old.

And, man of the many white croziers, a
century there I forgot;
That the spear-shaft is made out of ashwood,
the shield out of ozier and hide;
How the hammers spring on the anvil, on
the spearhead's burning spot;
How the slow, blue-eyed oxen of Finn low
sadly at evening tide.

But in dreams, mild man of the croziers,
driving the dust with their throngs,
Moved round me, of seamen or landsmen,
all who are winter tales;
Came by me the kings of the Red Branch,
with roaring of laughter and songs,
Or moved as they moved once, love-making
or piercing the tempest with sails.

Came Blanid, Mac Nessa, tall Fergus who
feastward of old time slunk,
Cook Barach, the traitor; and warward, the
spittle on his beard never dry,
Dark Balor, as old as a forest, car borne,
his mighty head sunk
Helpless, men lifting the lids of his weary
and death-making eye.

And by me, in soft red raiment, the Fenians
moved in loud streams,
And Grania, walking and smiling, sewed
with her needle of bone.

So lived I and lived not, so wrought I and
wrought not, with creatures of dreams,
In a long iron sleep, as a fish in the water
goes dumb as a stone.

At times our slumber was lightened. When
the sun was on silver or gold;
When brushed with the wings of the owls,
in the dimness they love going by;
When a glow-worm was green on a grass
leaf, lured from his lair in the mould;
Half wakening, we lifted our eyelids, and
gazed on the grass with a sigh.

So watched I when, man of the croziers, at
the heel of a century fell,
Weak, in the midst of the meadow, from his
miles in the midst of the air,
A starling like them that forgathered 'neath
a moon waking white as a shell
When the Fenians made foray at morning
with Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair.

I awoke: the strange horse without summons
out of the distance ran,
Thrusting his nose to my shoulder; he knew
in his bosom deep
That once more moved in my bosom the
ancient sadness of man,
And that I would leave the immortals, their
dimness, their dews dropping sleep.

O, had you seen beautiful Niam grow white
as the waters are white,
Lord of the croziers, you even had lifted
your hands and wept:
But, the bird in my fingers, I mounted,
remembering alone that delight
Of twilight and slumber were gone, and that
hoofs impatiently stept.

I cried, " O Niam! O white one! if only a
twelve-houred day,
I must gaze on the beard of Finn, and move
where the old men and young
In the Fenians' dwellings of wattle lean on
the chessboards and play,
Ah, sweet to me now were even bald Conan's
slanderous tongue!

" Like me were some galley forsaken far off
in Meridian isle.
Remembering its long-oared companions,
sails turning to thread-bare rags;
No more to crawl on the seas with long oars
mile after mile,
But to be amid shooting of flies and flowering
of rushes and flags."

Their motionless eyeballs of spirits grown
mild with mysterious thought
Watched her those seamless faces from the
valley's glimmering girth;

As she murmured, " O wandering Usheen,
the strength of the bell-branch is naught,
For there moves alive in your fingers the
fluttering sadness of earth.

" Then go through the lands in the saddle,
and see what the mortals do,
And softly come to your Niam over the tops
of the tide;
But weep for your Niam, O Usheen, weep;
for if only your shoe
Brush lightly as haymouse earth's pebbles,
you will come no more to my side.

" O flaming lion of the world, O when will
you turn to your rest? "
I saw from a distant saddle; from the earth
she made her moan;
" I would die like a small withered leaf in the
autumn, for breast unto breast
We shall mingle no more, nor our gazes
empty their sweetness lone

" In the isles of the farthest seas where only
the spirits come.
Were the winds less soft than the breath of a
pigeon who sleeps on her nest,
Nor lost in the star-fires and odours the
sound of the sea's vague drum?
O flaming lion of the world, O when will you
turn to your rest? "

The wailing grew distant; I rode by the
woods of the wrinkling bark,
Where ever is murmurous dropping, old
silence and that one sound;
For no live creatures live there, no weasels
move in the dark;
In a reverie forgetful of all things, over the
bubbling ground.

And I rode by the plains of the sea's edge,
where all is barren and grey,
Grey sands on the green of the grasses and
over the dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though
they would hasten away,
Like an army of old men longing for rest
from the moan of the seas.

And the winds made the sands on the sea's
edge turning and turning go,
As my mind made the names of the Fenians.
Far from the hazel and oak,
I rode away on the surges, where, high as
the saddle bow,
Fled foam underneath me, and round me, a
wandering and milky smoke.

Long fled the foam-flakes around me, the
winds fled out of the vast,
Snatching the bird in secret; nor knew I,
embosomed apart,

When they froze the cloth on my body like armour riveted fast,
For Remembrance, lifting her leanness, keened in the gates of my heart.

Till fattening the winds of the morning, an odour of new-mown hay
Came, and my forehead fell low, and my tears like berries fell down;
Later a sound came, half lost in the sound of a shore far away,
From the great grass-barnacle calling, and later the shore-weeds brown.

If I were as I once was, the strong hoofs crushing the sand and the shells,
Coming out of the sea as the dawn comes, a chaunt of love on my lips,
Not coughing, my head on my knees, and praying, and wroth with the bells,
I would leave no saint's head on his body from Rachlin to Bera of ships.

Making way from the kindling surges, I rode on a bridle-path
Much wondering to see upon all hands, of wattles and woodwork made,
Your bell-mounted churches, and guardless the sacred cairn and the rath,
And a small and a feeble populace stooping with mattock and spade.

Or weeding or ploughing with faces a-
shining with much-toil wet;
While in this place and that place, with
bodies unglorious, their chieftains stood,
Awaiting in patience the straw-death,
croziered one, caught in your net:
Went the laughter of scorn from my mouth
like the roaring of wind in a wood.

And because I went by them so huge and so
speedy with eyes so bright,
Came after the hard gaze of youth, or an
old man lifted his head:
And I rode and I rode, and I cried out, "The
Fenians hunt wolves in the night,
So sleep thee by daytime." A voice cried,
"The Fenians a long time are dead."

A whitebeard stood hushed on the pathway,
the flesh of his face as dried grass,
And in folds round his eyes and his mouth,
he sad as a child without milk;
And the dreams of the islands were gone, and
I knew how men sorrow and pass,
And their hound, and their horse, and their
love, and their eyes that glimmer like silk.

And wrapping my face in my hair, I mur-
mured, "In old age they ceased";
And my tears were larger than berries, and I
murmured, "Where white clouds lie
spread

On Crevroe or broad Knockfefin, with many
of old they feast
On the floors of the gods." He cried,
"No, the gods a long time are dead."

And lonely and longing for Niam, I shivered
and turned me about,
The heart in me longing to leap like a
grasshopper into her heart;
I turned and rode to the westward, and
followed the sea's old shout
Till I saw where Maive lies sleeping till star-
light and midnight part.

And there at the foot of the mountain, two
carried a sack full of sand,
They bore it with staggering and sweating,
but fell with their burden at length.
Leaning down from the gem-studded saddle,
I flung it five yards with my hand,
With a sob for men waxing so weakly, a sob
for the Fenian's old strength.

The rest you have heard of, O croziered man;
how, when divided the girth,
I fell on the path, and the horse went away
like a summer fly;
And my years three hundred fell on me, and
I rose, and walked on the earth,
A creeping old man, full of sleep, with the
spittle on his beard never dry.

How the men of the sand-sack showed me a
church with its belfry in air;
Sorry place, where for swing of the war-axe
in my dim eyes the crozier gleams;
What place have Caolte and Conan, and
Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair?
Speak, you too are old with your memories,
an old man surrounded with dreams.

S. PATRIC

Where the flesh of the footsole clingeth on
the burning stones is their place;
Where the demons whip them with wires on
the burning stones of wide hell,
Watching the blessed ones move far off, and
the smile on God's face,
Between them a gateway of brass, and the
howl of the angels who fell.

USHEEN

Put the staff in my hands; for I go to the
Fenians, O cleric, to chaunt
The war-songs that roused them of old;
they will rise, making clouds with their
breath
Innumerable, singing, exultant; the clay
underneath them shall pant,
And demons be broken in pieces, and
trampled beneath them in death.

And demons afraid in their darkness; deep
horror of eyes and of wings,
Afraid their ears on the earth laid, shall listen
and rise up and weep;
Hearing the shaking of shields and the
quiver of stretched bowstrings,
Hearing hell loud with a murmur, as shout-
ing and mocking we sweep.

We will tear out the flaming stones, and
batter the gateway of brass
And enter, and none sayeth "No" when
there enters the strongly armed guest;
Make clean as a broom cleans, and march on
as oxen move over young grass;
Then feast, making converse of wars, and of
old wounds, and turn to our rest.

S. PATRIC

On the flaming stones, without refuge, the
limbs of the Fenians are tost;
None war on the masters of Hell, who could
break up the world in their rage;
But kneel and wear out the flags and pray
for your soul that is lost
Through the demon love of its youth and its
godless and passionate age.

Usheen

Ah, me! to be shaken with coughing and
broken with old age and pain,
Without laughter, a show unto children, alone
with remembrance and fear;
All emptied of purple hours as a beggar's
cloak in the rain,
As a hay-cock out on the flood, or a wolf
sucked under a weir.

It were sad to gaze on the blessed and no man
I loved of old there;
I throw down the chain of small stones! when
life in my body has ceased,
I will go to Caolte, and Conan, and Bran,
Sgeolan, Lomair,
And dwell in the house of the Fenians, be
they in flames or at feast.

CROSSWAYS

(1889)

"The stars are threshed, and the souls are threshed from their husks."

WILLIAM BLAKE.

TO

A. E.

THE SONG OF THE HAPPY SHEPHERD

The woods of Arcady are dead,
And over is their antique joy;
Of old the world on dreaming fed;
Grey Truth is now her painted toy;
Yet still she turns her restless head:
But O, sick children of the world,
Of all the many changing things
In dreary dancing past us whirled,
To the cracked tune that Chronos sings,
Words alone are certain good.
Where are now the warring kings,
Word be-mockers?—By the Rood
Where are now the warring kings?
An idle word is now their glory,
By the stammering schoolboy said,
Reading some entangled story:
The kings of the old time are fled,
The wandering earth herself may be
Only a sudden flaming word,
In clanging space a moment heard,
Troubling the endless reverie.

Then nowise worship dusty deeds,
Nor seek; for this is also sooth;
To hunger fiercely after truth,
Lest all thy toiling only breeds
New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth
Saving in thine own heart. Seek, then,
No learning from the starry men,
Who follow with the optic glass
The whirling ways of stars that pass—
Seek, then, for this is also sooth,
No word of theirs—the cold star-bane
Has cloven and rent their hearts in twain,
And dead is all their human truth.
Go gather by the humming-sea
Some twisted, echo-harbouring shell,
And to its lips thy story tell,
And they thy comforters will be,
Rewarding in melodious guile,
Thy fretful words a little while,
Till they shall singing fade in ruth,
And die a pearly brotherhood;
For words alone are certain good:
Sing, then, for this is also sooth.

I must be gone: there is a grave
Where daffodil and lily wave,
And I would please the hapless faun,
Buried under the sleepy ground,
With mirthful songs before the dawn.
His shouting days with mirth were crowned;
And still I dream he treads the lawn,

Walking ghostly in the dew,
Pierced by my glad singing through,
My songs of old earth's dreamy youth:
But ah! she dreams not now; dream thou!
For fair are poppies on the brow:
Dream, dream, for this is also sooth.

THE SAD SHEPHERD

There was a man whom Sorrow named his
friend,
And he, of his high comrade Sorrow
dreaming,
Went walking with slow steps along the
gleaming
And humming sands, where windy surges
wend:
And he called loudly to the stars to bend
From their pale thrones and comfort him,
but they
Among themselves laugh on and sing alway:
And then the man whom Sorrow named his
friend
Cried out, *Dim sea, hear my most piteous*
story!
The sea swept on and cried her old cry still,
Rolling along in dreams from hill to hill;
He fled the persecution of her glory
And, in a far-off, gentle valley stopping,
Cried all his story to the dewdrops glistening,
But naught they heard, for they are always
listening,

The dewdrops, for the sound of their own
dropping.
And then the man whom Sorrow named his
friend
Sought once again the shore, and found a
shell,
And thought, *I will my heavy story tell*
Till my own words, re-echoing, shall send
Their sadness through a hollow, pearly heart;
And my own tale again for me shall sing,
And my own whispering words be comforting,
And lo! my ancient burden may depart.
Then he sang softly nigh the pearly rim;
But the sad dweller by the sea-ways lone
Changed all he sang to inarticulate moan
Among her wildering whirls, forgetting him.

THE CLOAK, THE BOAT, AND THE SHOES

"WHAT do you make so fair and bright?"

"I make the cloak of Sorrow:
O, lovely to see in all men's sight
Shall be the cloak of Sorrow,
In all men's sight."

"What do you build with sails for flight?"

"I build a boat for Sorrow,
O, swift on the seas all day and night
Saileth the rover Sorrow,
All day and night."

"What do you weave with wool so white?"

"I weave the shoes of Sorrow,
Soundless shall be the footfall light
In all men's ears of Sorrow,
Sudden and light."

ANASHUYA AND VIJAYA

A little Indian temple in the Golden Age.
Around it a garden; around that the forest.
ANASHUYA, *the young priestess, kneeling within the temple.*

ANASHUYA

SEND peace on all the lands and flickering
corn.—
O, may tranquillity walk by his elbow
When wandering in the forest, if he love
No other.—Hear, and may the indolent
flocks
Be plentiful.—And if he love another,
May panthers end him.—Hear, and load our
king
With wisdom hour by hour.—May we two
stand,
When we are dead, beyond the setting suns,
A little from the other shades apart,
With mingling hair, and play upon one
lute.

VIJAYA

[*Entering and throwing a lily at her*]

Hail! hail, my Anashuya.

ANASHUYA

No: be still.

I, priestess of this temple, offer up
Prayers for the land.

VIJAYA

I will wait here, Amrita.

ANASHUYA

By mighty Brahma's ever-rustling robe,
Who is Amrita? Sorrow of all sorrows!
Another fills your mind.

VIJAYA

My mother's name.

ANASHUYA

[*Sings, coming out of the temple*]

A sad, sad thought went by me slowly:
Sigh, O you little stars! O, sigh and shake
your blue apparel!
The sad, sad thought has gone from me now
wholly:
Sing, O you little stars! O, sing and raise
your rapturous carol

To mighty Brahma, he who made you many as
the sands,
And laid you on the gates of evening with his
quiet hands.

[*Sits down on the steps of the temple.*

Vijaya, I have brought my evening rice;
The sun has laid his chin on the grey wood,
Weary, with all his poppies gathered round
him.

VIJAYA

The hour when Kama, full of sleepy laughter,
Rises, and showers abroad his fragrant
arrows,
Piercing the twilight with their murmuring
barbs.

ANASHUYA

See how the sacred old flamingoes come,
Painting with shadow all the marble steps:
Aged and wise, they seek their wonted
perches
Within the temple, devious walking, made
To wander by their melancholy minds.
Yon tall one eyes my supper; chase him
away,
Far, far away. I named him after you.
He is a famous fisher; hour by hour
He ruffles with his bill the minnowed streams.
Ah! there he snaps my rice. I told you so.

Now cuff him off. He's off! A kiss for you,
Because you saved my rice. Have you no
thanks?

VIJAYA [*sings*]

Sing you of her, O first few stars,
Whom Brahma, touching with his finger,
praises, for you hold
The van of wandering quiet; ere you be too
calm and old,
Sing, turning in your cars,
Sing, till you raise your hands and sigh, and
from your car heads peer,
With all your whirling hair, and drop many an
azure tear.

ANASHUYA

What know the pilots of the stars of tears?

VIJAYA

Their faces are all worn, and in their eyes
Flashes the fire of sadness, for they see
The icicles that famish all the north,
Where men lie frozen in the glimmering
snow;
And in the flaming forests cower the lion
And lioness, with all their whimpering cubs;
And, ever pacing on the verge of things,
The phantom, Beauty, in a mist of tears;

While we alone have round us woven woods,
And feel the softness of each other's hand,
Amrita, while——

ANASHUYA

[*Going away from him*]

Ah me, you love another,
[*Bursting into tears.*
And may some dreadful ill befall her quick!

VIJAYA

I loved another; now I love no other.
Among the mouldering of ancient woods
You live, and on the village border she,
With her old father the blind wood-cutter;
I saw her standing in her door but now.

ANASHUYA

Vijaya, swear to love her never more,

VIJAYA

Ay, ay.

ANASHUYA

Swear by the parents of the gods,
Dread oath, who dwell on sacred Himalay,
On the far Golden Peak; enormous shapes,
Who still were old when the great sea was young;

On their vast faces mystery and dreams;
Their hair along the mountains rolled and
filled
From year to year by the unnumbered nests
Of aweless birds, and round their stirless feet
The joyous flocks of deer and antelope,
Who never hear the unforgiving hound.
Swear!

VIJAYA

By the parents of the gods, I swear.

ANASHUYA [*sings*]

I have forgiven, O new star!
Maybe you have not heard of us, you have come
forth so newly,
You hunter of the fields afar!
Ah, you will know my loved one by his hunter's
arrows truly,
Shoot on him shafts of quietness, and order him
to keep
A lonely laughter, that he may kiss hands to me
in sleep.

Farewell, Vijaya. Nay, no word, no word;
I, priestess of this temple, offer up
Prayers for the land.

[VIJAYA *goes.*

O Brahma, guard in sleep
The merry lambs and the complacent kine,

The flies below the leaves, and the young
mice
In the tree roots, and all the sacred flocks
Of red flamingo; and my love, Vijaya;
And may no restless fay with fidget finger
Trouble his sleeping: give him dreams of me.

THE INDIAN UPON GOD

I PASSED along the water's edge below the
humid trees,
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes
round my knees,
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs; and
saw the moorfowl pace
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw
them cease to chase
Each other round in circles, and heard the
eldest speak:
Who holds the world between His bill and
made us strong or weak
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond
the sky.
The rains are from His dripping wing, the
moonbeams from His eye.
I passed a little further on and heard a lotus
talk:
Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth
on a stalk,
For I am in His image made, and all this
tinkling tide

Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals
wide.
A little way within the gloom a roebuck
raised his eyes
Brimful of starlight, and he said: *The*
Stamper of the Skies,
He is a gentle roebuck; for how else, I pray,
could He
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing
like me?
I passed a little further on and heard a
peacock say:
Who made the grass and made the worms and
made my feathers gay,
He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all
the night
His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots
of light.

THE INDIAN TO HIS LOVE

The island dreams under the dawn
And great boughs drop tranquillity;
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,
A parrot sways upon a tree,
Raging at his own image in the enamelled
sea.

Here we will moor our lonely ship
And wander ever with woven hands,
Murmuring softly lip to lip,
Along the grass, along the sands,
Murmuring how far away are the unquiet
lands:

How we alone of mortals are
Hid under quiet bows apart,
While our love grows an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings
that gleam and dart,

The heavy boughs, the burnished dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days:
How when we die our shades may rove,
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,
With vapoury footsole among the water's
drowsy blaze.

THE FALLING OF THE LEAVES

AUTUMN is over the long leaves that love us,
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.

The hour of the waning of love has beset us,
And weary and worn are our sad souls now;
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,
With a kiss and a tear on thy drooping brow.

EPHEMERA

"Your eyes that once were never weary of
mine
Are bowed in sorrow under pendulous lids,
Because our love is waning."

And then she:

"Although our love is waning, let us stand
By the lone border of the lake once more,
Together in that hour of gentleness
When the poor tired child, Passion, falls
asleep:
How far away the stars seem, and how far
Is our first kiss, and ah, how old my
heart!"

Pensive they paced along the faded leaves,
While slowly he whose hand held hers
replied:
"Passion has often worn our wandering
hearts."
The woods were round them, and the yellow
leaves

Fell like faint meteors in the gloom, and once
A rabbit old and lame limped down the path;
Autumn was over him: and now they stood
On the lone border of the lake once more:
Turning, he saw that she had thrust dead
leaves
Gathered in silence, dewy as her eyes,
In bosom and hair.
" Ah, do not mourn," he said,
"That we are tired, for other loves await us;
Hate on and love through unrepining hours.
Before us lies eternity; our souls
Are love, and a continual farewell."

THE MADNESS OF KING GOLL

I SAT on cushioned otter skin:
My word was law from Ith to Emen,
And shook at Invar Amargin
The hearts of the world-troubling seamen.
And drove tumult and war away
From girl and boy and man and beast;
The fields grew fatter day by day,
The wild fowl of the air increased;
And every ancient Ollave said,
While he bent down his fading head,
" He drives away the Northern cold."
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

I sat and mused and drank sweet wine;
A herdsman came from inland valleys,
Crying, the pirates drove his swine
To fill their dark-beaked hollow galleys.
I called my battle-breaking men,
And my loud brazen battle-cars
From rolling vale and rivery glen;
And under the blinking of the stars
Fell on the pirates by the deep,
And hurled them in the gulph of sleep:

These hands won many a torque of gold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

But slowly, as I shouting slew
And trampled in the bubbling mire,
In my most secret spirit grew
A whirling and a wandering fire:
I stood: keen stars above me shone,
Around me shone keen eyes of men:
I laughed aloud and hurried on
By rocky shore and rushy fen;
I laughed because birds fluttered by,
And starlight gleamed, and clouds flew high,
And rushes waved and waters rolled.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

And now I wander in the woods
When summer gluts the golden bees,
Or in autumnal solitudes
Arise the leopard-coloured trees;
Or when along the wintry strands
The cormorants shiver on their rocks;
I wander on, and wave my hands,
And sing, and shake my heavy locks.
The grey wolf knows me; by one ear
I lead along the woodland deer;
The hares run by me growing bold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

I came upon a little town,
That slumbered in the harvest moon,
And passed a-tiptoe up and down,
Murmuring, to a fitful tune,
How I have followed, night and day,
A tramping of tremendous feet,
And saw where this old tympan lay,
Deserted on a doorway seat,
And bore it to the woods with me;
Of some unhuman misery
Our married voice wildly trolled.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

I sang how, when day's toil is done,
Orchil shakes out her long dark hair
That hides away the dying sun
And sheds faint odours through the air:
When my hand passed from wire to wire
It quenched, with sound like falling dew,
The whirling and the wandering fire;
But lift a mournful ulalu,
For the kind wires are torn and still,
And I must wander wood and hill
Through summer's heat and winter's cold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

THE STOLEN CHILD

WHERE dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood in the lake,
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water rats;
There we've hid our faery vats,
Full of berries,
And of reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you
can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap

And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you
can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,
We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams,
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you
can understand.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,

Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can
understand.

TO AN ISLE IN THE WATER

SHY one, shy one,
Shy one of my heart,
She moves in the firelight
Pensively apart.

She carries in the dishes,
And lays them in a row.
To an isle in the water
With her would I go.

She carries in the candles,
And lights the curtained room,
Shy in the doorway
And shy in the gloom;

And shy as a rabbit,
Helpful and shy.
To an isle in the water
With her would I fly.

THE BALLAD OF FATHER O'HART

Good Father John O'Hart
In penal days rode out
To a shoneen who had free lands
And his own snipe and trout.

In trust took he John's lands;
Sleiveens were all his race;
And he gave them as dowers to his daughters,
And they married beyond their place.

But Father John went up,
And Father John went down;
And he wore small holes in his shoes,
And he wore large holes in his gown.

All loved him, only the shoneen,
Whom the devils have by the hair,
From the wives, and the cats, and the children,
To the birds in the white of the air.

The birds, for he opened their cages
As he went up and down;
And he said with a smile, "Have peace now";
And he went his way with a frown.

But if when any one died
Came keeners hoarser than rooks,
He bade them give over their keening;
For he was a man of books.

And these were the works of John,
When weeping score by score,
People came into Coloony;
For he'd died at ninety-four.

There was no human keening;
The birds from Knocknarea
And the world round Knocknashee
Came keening in that day.

The young birds and old birds
Came flying, heavy and sad;
Keening in from Tiraragh,
Keening from Ballinafad;

Keening from Inishmurray,
Nor stayed for bite or sup;
This way were all reproved
Who dig old customs up.

THE BALLAD OF MOLL MAGEE

Come round me, little childer;
There, don't fling stones at me
Because I mutter as I go;
But pity Moll Magee.

My man was a poor fisher
With shore lines in the say;
My work was saltin' herrings
The whole of the long day.

And sometimes from the saltin' shed,
I scarce could drag my feet
Under the blessed moonlight,
Along the pebbly street.

I'd always been but weakly,
And my baby was just born;
A neighbour minded her by day
I minded her till morn.

I lay upon my baby;
Ye little childer dear,

I looked on my cold baby
When the morn grew frosty and clear.

A weary woman sleeps so hard!
My man grew red and pale,
And gave me money, and bade me go
To my own place, Kinsale.

He drove me out and shut the door,
And gave his curse to me;
I went away in silence,
No neighbour could I see.

The windows and the doors were shut,
One star shone faint and green,
The little straws were turnin' round
Across the bare boreen.

I went away in silence:
Beyond old Martin's byre
I saw a kindly neighbour
Blowin' her mornin' fire.

She drew from me my story—
My money's all used up,
And still, with pityin', scornin' eye,
She gives me bite and sup.

She says my man will surely come,
And fetch me home agin;

But always, as I'm movin' round,
Without doors or within,

Pilin' the wood or pilin' the turf,
Or goin' to the well,
I'm thinkin' of my baby
And keenin' to mysel'.

And sometimes I am sure she knows
When, openin' wide His door,
God lights the stars, His candles,
And looks upon the poor.

So now, ye little childer,
Ye won't fling stones at me;
But gather with your shinin' looks
And pity Moll Magee.

THE BALLAD OF THE FOXHUNTER

" Now lay me in a cushioned chair
And carry me, you four,
With cushions here and cushions there,
To see the world once more.

" And some one from the stables bring
My Dermot dear and brown,
And lead him gently in a ring,
And gently up and down.

" Now leave the chair upon the grass:
Bring hound and huntsman here,
And I on this strange road will pass,
Filled full of ancient cheer."

His eyelids droop, his head falls low,
His old eyes cloud with dreams;
The sun upon all things that grow
Pours round in sleepy streams.

Brown Dermot treads upon the lawn,
And to the armchair goes,
And now the old man's dreams are gone,
He smooths the long brown nose.

And now moves many a pleasant tongue
Upon his wasted hands,
For leading aged hounds and young
The huntsman near him stands.

" My huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,
And make the hills reply."
The huntsman loosens on the morn
A gay and wandering cry.

A fire is in the old man's eyes,
His fingers move and sway,
And when the wandering music dies
They hear him feebly say,

" My huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,
And make the hills reply."
" I cannot blow upon my horn,
I can but weep and sigh."

The servants round his cushioned place
Are with new sorrow wrung;
And hounds are gazing on his face,
Both aged hounds and young.

One blind hound only lies apart
On the sun-smitten grass;
He holds deep commune with his heart:
The moments pass and pass;

The blind hound with a mournful din
Lifts slow his wintry head;
The servants bear the body in;
The hounds wail for the dead.

THE ROSE

(1893)

"Sero te amavi, Pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova! Sero te amavi."

S. AUGUSTINE.

TO

LIONEL JOHNSON

TO THE ROSE UPON THE ROOD OF TIME

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;
And thine own sadness, whereof stars, grown old
In dancing silver sandalled on the sea,
Sing in their high and lonely melody.
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
I find under the boughs of love and hate,
In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.

Come near, come near, come near—Ah, leave me still
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
The field mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;

But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

FERGUS AND THE DRUID

FERGUS

THE whole day have I followed in the rocks,
And you have changed and flowed from
shape to shape.
First as a raven on whose ancient wings
Scarcely a feather lingered, then you seemed
A weasel moving on from stone to stone,
And now at last you wear a human shape,
A thin grey man half lost in gathering night.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red
Branch kings?

FERGUS

This would I say, most wise of living souls:
Young subtle Concobar sat close by me
When I gave judgment, and his words were
wise,
And what to me was burden without end,
To him seemed easy, so I laid the crown
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

FERGUS

A king and proud! and that is my despair.
I feast amid my people on the hill,
And pace the woods, and drive my chariot wheels
In the white border of the murmuring sea;
And still I feel the crown upon my head.

DRUID

What would you, Fergus?

FERGUS

Be no more a king
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours.

DRUID

Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks
And on these hands that may not lift the sword,
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

FERGUS

A king is but a foolish labourer
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream.

DRUID

Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

FERGUS

I see my life go drifting like a river
From change to change; I have been many things,
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,
An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,
A king sitting upon a chair of gold,
And all these things were wonderful and great;
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all,
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow
Lay hidden in the small slate-coloured thing!

CUCHULAIN'S FIGHT WITH THE SEA

A MAN came slowly from the setting sun,
To Emer, raddling raiment in her dun,
And said, " I am that swineherd, whom you
bid
Go dwell upon the cliffs and watch the tide;
But now I have no need to watch it more."

Then Emer cast the web upon the floor,
And raising arms all raddled with the dye;
Parted her lips with a loud sudden cry.

That swineherd stared upon her face and said:
" Not any god alive, nor mortal dead,
Has slain so mighty armies, so great kings,
Nor won the gold that now Cuchulain
brings."

" Why do you tremble thus from feet to
crown? "

He caught his breath and cast him weeping
down

Upon the web-heaped floor, and thus his
word:
"With him is one sweet-throated like a bird."

" You dare me to my face," and thereupon
She smote with raddled fist, and where her
son
Herded the cattle came with stumbling feet,
And cried with angry voice, " It is not meet
To idle life away with flocks and herds."

" I have long waited, mother, for those
words:
But wherefore now? "

" There is a man to die;
You have the heaviest arm under the sky."

" No, somewhere under daylight or the stars
My father stands amid his battle cars."

" But you have grown to be the taller man."

" Yet somewhere under starlight or the sun
My father stands amid his battle cars."

" But he is old and sad with many wars."

" I only ask what way my journey lies.
For He who made you bitter, made you
wise."

" The Red Branch gather a great company
Between the game and the horses of the
sea.
Go there, and camp upon the forest's rim;
But tell your name and lineage to him
Whose blade compels, and bid them send you
one
Who has a like vow from their triple dun."

Among those feasting kings Cuchulain
dwelt,
And his young dear one close beside him
knelt;
Stared like the Spring upon the ancient
skies,
Upon the mournful wonder of his eyes,
And pondered on the glory of his days;
And all around the harp-string told his
praise,
And Concobar, the Red Branch king of
kings,
With his own fingers touched the brazen
strings.

At last Cuchulain spake, " Some man has made
His evening fire amid the leafy shade.
I have often heard him singing to and fro,
I have often heard the sweet sound of his
bow,
Seek out what man he is."

One went and came.
" He bade me let all know he gives his name
At the sword point, and bade me bring him
one
Who had a like vow from our triple dun."

" I only of the Red Branch hosted now,"
Cuchulain cried, " have made and keep that
vow."

After short fighting in the leafy shade,
He spake to the young man, " Is there no
maid
Who loves you, no white arms to wrap you
round,
Or do you long for the dim sleepy ground,
That you have come and dared me to my
face?"

" The dooms of men are in God's hidden
place."

" Your head a while seemed like a woman's
head
That I loved once."

Again the fighting sped,
But now the war rage in Cuchulain woke,
And through that new blade's guard the old
blade broke,
And pierced him.

" Speak before your breath is done."

" Cuchulain I, mighty Cuchulain's son."

" I put you from your pain. I can no more."

While day its burden on to evening bore,
With head bowed on his knees Cuchulain
stayed;
Then Concobar sent that sweet-throated
maid,
And she, to win him, his grey hair caressed;
In vain her arms, in vain her soft white
breast.
Then Concobar, the subtlest of all men,
Ranking his Druids round him ten by ten,
Spake thus, " Cuchulain will dwell there and
brood,
For three days more in dreadful quietude,
And then arise, and raving slay us all.
Chaunt in his ear delusions magical,
That he may fight the horses of the sea."
The Druids took them to their mystery,
And chanted for three days.

Cuchulain stirred,
Stared on the horses of the sea, and heard
The cars of battle and his own name cried;
And fought with the invulnerable tide.

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a
dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful
pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

We and the labouring world are passing by:
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place,
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

THE ROSE OF PEACE

If Michael, leader of God's host
When Heaven and Hell are met,
Looked down on you from Heaven's door-
post
He would his deeds forget.

Brooding no more upon God's wars
In his Divine homestead,
He would go weave out of the stars
A chaplet for your head.

And all folk seeing him bow down,
And white stars tell your praise,
Would come at last to God's great town,
Led on by gentle ways;

And God would bid His warfare cease.
Saying all things were well;
And softly make a rosy peace,
A peace of Heaven with Hell.

THE ROSE OF BATTLE

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
The tall thought-woven sails, that flap unfurled
Above the tide of hours, trouble the air,
And God's bell buoyed to be the water's care;
While hushed from fear, or loud with hope, a band
With blown, spray-dabbled hair gather at hand.
Turn if you may from battles never done,
I call, as they go by me one by one,
Danger no refuge holds, and war no peace,
For him who hears love sing and never cease,
Beside her clean-swept hearth, her quiet shade:
But gather all for whom no love hath made
A woven silence, or but came to cast
A song into the air, and singing past
To smile on the pale dawn; and gather you
Who have sought more than is in rain or dew
Or in the sun and moon, or on the earth,
Or sighs amid the wandering, starry mirth,
Or comes in laughter from the sea's sad lips,
And wage God's battles in the long grey ships.

The sad, the lonely, the insatiable,
To these Old Night shall all her mystery tell;
God's bell has claimed them by the little cry
Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
You, too, have come where the dim tides
are hurled
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.
Beauty grown sad with its eternity
Made you of us, and of the dim grey sea.
Our long ships loose thought-woven sails and
wait,
For God has bid them share an equal fate;
And when at last defeated in His wars,
They have gone down under the same white
stars,
We shall no longer hear the little cry
Of our sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

A FAERY SONG

Sung by the people of faery over Diarmuid and Grania, in their bridal sleep under a Cromlech.

We who are old, old and gay,
O so old!
Thousands of years, thousands of years,
If all were told:

Give to these children, new from the world,
Silence and love;
And the long dew-dropping hours of the night,
And the stars above:

Give to these children, new from the world,
Rest far from men.
Is anything better, anything better?
Tell us it then:

Us who are old, old and gay,
O so old!
Thousands of years, thousands of years,
If all were told.

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and
wattles made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for
the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace
comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to
where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a
purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and
day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds
by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the
pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

A CRADLE SONG

The angels are stooping
Above your bed;
They weary of trooping
With the whimpering dead.

God's laughing in heaven
To see you so good;
The Sailing Seven
Are gay with His mood.

I sigh that kiss you,
For I must own
That I shall miss you
When you have grown.

THE PITY OF LOVE

A PITY beyond all telling
Is hid in the heart of love:
The folk who are buying and selling,
The clouds on their journey above,
The cold wet winds ever blowing,
And the shadowy hazel grove
Where mouse-grey waters are flowing,
Threaten the head that I love.

THE SORROW OF LOVE

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty will love false or true;
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

And bending down beside the glowing bars
Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

THE WHITE BIRDS

I WOULD that we were, my beloved, white
birds on the foam of the sea!
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before
it can fade and flee;
And the flame of the blue star of twilight,
hung low on the rim of the sky,
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a
sadness that may not die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers,
dew dabbled, the lily and rose;
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the
flame of the meteor that goes,
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers
hung low in the fall of the dew:
For I would we were changed to white birds
on the wandering foam: I and you!

I am haunted by numberless islands, and
many a Danaan shore,
Where Time would surely forget us, and
Sorrow come near us no more;
Soon far from the rose and the lily, and fret
of the flames would we be,
Were we only white birds, my beloved,
buoyed out on the foam of the sea!

A DREAM OF DEATH

I DREAMED that one had died in a strange
place
Near no accustomed hand;
And they had nailed the boards above her
face
The peasants of that land,
Wondering to lay her in that solitude,
And raised above her mound
A cross they had made out of two bits of
wood,
And planted cypress round;
And left her to the indifferent stars above
Until I carved these words:
She was more beautiful than thy first love,
But now lies under boards.

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A DREAM OF A BLESSED SPIRIT

All the heavy days are over;
Leave the body's coloured pride
Underneath the grass and clover,
With the feet laid side by side.

One with her are mirth and duty;
Bear the gold embroidered dress,
For she needs not her sad beauty,
To the scented oaken press.

Hers the kiss of Mother Mary,
The long hair is on her face;
Still she goes with footsteps wary,
Full of earth's old timid grace.

With white feet of angels seven
Her white feet go glimmering
And above the deep of heaven,
Flame on flame and wing on wing.

WHO GOES WITH FERGUS?

Who will go drive with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
And brood on hopes and fears no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon Love's bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all dishevelled wandering stars.

THE MAN WHO DREAMED OF FAERYLAND

He stood among a crowd at Drumahair;
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,
And he had known at last some tenderness,
Before earth made of him her sleepy care;
But when a man poured fish into a pile,
It seemed they raised their little silver heads,
And sang how day a Druid twilight sheds
Upon a dim, green, well-beloved isle,
Where people love beside star-laden seas;
How Time may never mar their faery vows
Under the woven roofs of quicken boughs:
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

He wandered by the sands of Lisadill;
His mind ran all on money cares and fears,
And he had known at last some prudent years
Before they heaped his grave under the hill;
But while he passed before a plashy place,
A lug-worm with its grey and muddy mouth
Sang how somewhere to north or west or south
There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race;

And how beneath those three times blessed
skies
A Danaan fruitage makes a shower of moons,
And as it falls awakens leafy tunes:
And at that singing he was no more wise.

He mused beside the well of Scanavin,
He mused upon his mockers: without fail
His sudden vengeance were a country tale,
Now that deep earth has drunk his body in;
But one small knot-grass growing by the pool
Told where, ah, little, all-unneeded voice!
Old Silence bids a lonely folk rejoice,
And chaplet their calm brows with leafage
cool,
And how, when fades the sea-strewn rose of
day,
A gentle feeling wraps them like a fleece,
And all their trouble dies into its peace:
The tale drove his fine angry mood away.

He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;
And might have known at last unhaunted
sleep
Under that cold and vapour-turbaned steep,
Now that old earth had taken man and all:
Were not the worms that spired about his
bones
Proclaiming with a low and reedy cry,
That God had leaned His hands out of the sky,
To bless that isle with honey in His tones;

That none may feel the power of squall and
wave
And no one any leaf-crowned dancer miss
Until He burn up Nature with a kiss:
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

THE DEDICATION TO A BOOK OF STORIES SELECTED FROM THE IRISH NOVELISTS

There was a green branch hung with many
a bell
When her own people ruled this tragic
Eire;
And from its murmuring greenness, calm of
faery,
A Druid kindness, on all hearers fell.

It charmed away the merchant from his guile,
And turned the farmer's memory from his
cattle,
And hushed in sleep the roaring ranks of
battle;
And all grew friendly for a little while.

Ah, Exiles wandering over lands and seas,
And planning, plotting always that some
morrow
May set a stone upon ancestral Sorrow!
I also bear a bell branch full of ease.

I tore it from green boughs winds tore and
tossed
Until the sap of summer had grown weary!
I tore it from the barren boughs of Eire,
That country where a man can be so crossed;

Can be so battered, badgered and destroyed
That he's a loveless man: gay bells bring
laughter,
That shakes a mouldering cobweb from the
rafter;
And yet the saddest chimes are best enjoyed.

Gay bells or sad, they bring you memories
Of half-forgotten innocent old places:
We and our bitterness have left no traces
On Munster grass and Connemara skies.

THE LAMENTATION OF THE OLD PENSIONER

Although I shelter from the rain
Under a broken tree,
My chair was nearest to the fire
In every company,
That talked of love or politics
Ere time transfigured me.

Though lads are making pikes again
For some conspiracy,
And crazy rascals rage their fill
At human tyranny;
My contemplations are of time
That has transfigured me.

There's not a woman turns her face
Upon a broken tree,
And yet the beauties that I loved
Are in my memory;
I spit into the face of Time
That has transfigured me.

THE BALLAD OF FATHER GILLIGAN

The old priest Peter Gilligan
Was weary night and day;
For half his flock were in their beds,
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,
At the moth-hour of eve,
Another poor man sent for him,
And he began to grieve.

"I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,
For people die and die";
And after cried he, "God forgive!
My body spake, not I!"

He knelt, and leaning on the chair
He prayed and fell asleep;
And the moth-hour went from the fields,
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,
And leaves shook in the wind;
And God covered the world with shade,
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow chirp
When the moths came once more,
The old priest Peter Gilligan
Stood upright on the floor.

" Mavrone, mavrone! the man has died,
While I slept on the chair ";
He roused his horse out of its sleep,
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,
By rocky lane and fen;
The sick man's wife opened the door:
" Father! you come again! "

" And is the poor man dead? " he cried.
" He died an hour ago,"
The old priest Peter Gilligan
In grief swayed to and fro.

" When you were gone, he turned and died
As merry as a bird."
The old priest Peter Gilligan
He knelt him at that word.

" He who hath made the night of stars
For souls, who tire and bleed,
Sent one of His great angels down
To help me in my need.

" He who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things
Asleep upon a chair."

THE TWO TREES

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,
The holy tree is growing there;
From joy the holy branches start,
And all the trembling flowers they bear.
The changing colours of its fruit
Have dowered the stars with merry light;
The surety of its hidden root
Has planted quiet in the night;
The shaking of its leafy head
Has given the waves their melody,
And made my lips and music wed,
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.
There, through bewildered branches, go
Winged Loves borne on in gentle strife,
Tossing and tossing to and fro
The flaming circle of our life.
When looking on their shaken hair,
And dreaming how they dance and dart,
Thine eyes grow full of tender care:
Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.

Gaze no more in the bitter glass
The demons, with their subtle guile,
Lift up before us when they pass,
Or only gaze a little while;

For there a fatal image grows,
With broken boughs, and blackened leaves,
And roots half hidden under snows
Driven by a storm that ever grieves.
For all things turn to barrenness
In the dim glass the demons hold,
The glass of outer weariness,
Made when God slept in times of old.
There, through the broken branches, go
The ravens of unresting thought;
Peering and flying to and fro
To see men's souls bartered and bought.
When they are heard upon the wind,
And when they shake their wings; alas!
Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:
Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

TO IRELAND IN THE COMING TIMES

Know, that I would accounted be
True brother of that company,
Who sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong,
Ballad and story, rann and song;
Nor be I any less of them,
Because the red-rose-bordered hem
Of her, whose history began
Before God made the angelic clan,
Trails all about the written page.
When Time began to rant and rage
The measure of her flying feet
Made Ireland's heart begin to beat;
And Time bade all his candles flare
To light a measure here and there;
And may the thoughts of Ireland brood
Upon a measured quietude.

Nor may I less be counted one
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,
Because to him, who ponders well,
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell

Of things discovered in the deep,
Where only body's laid asleep.
For the elemental creatures go
About my table to and fro,
That hurry from unmeasured mind
To rant and rage in flood and wind;
Yet he who treads in measured ways
May surely barter gaze for gaze.
Man ever journeys on with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.
Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon,
A Druid land, a Druid tune!

While still I may, I write for you
The love I lived, the dream I knew.
From our birthday, until we die,
Is but the winking of an eye;
And we, our singing and our love,
What measurer Time has lit above,
And all benighted things that go
About my table to and fro,
Are passing on to where may be,
In truth's consuming ecstasy
No place for love and dream at all;
For God goes by with white foot-fall.
I cast my heart into my rhymes,
That you, in the dim coming times,
May know how my heart went with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.

THE CELTIC TWILIGHT

(1893)

A TELLER OF TALES

MANY of the tales in this book were told me by one Paddy Flynn, a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare, which is, he was wont to say, "the most gentle"—whereby he meant faery—"place in the whole of County Sligo". Others hold it, however, but second to Drumcliff and Drumahair. The first time I saw him he was bent above the fire with a can of mushrooms at his side; the next time he was asleep under a hedge, smiling in his sleep. He was indeed always cheerful, though I thought I could see in his eyes (swift as the eyes of a rabbit, when they peered out of their wrinkled holes) a melancholy which was wellnigh a portion of their joy; the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals.

And yet there was much in his life to depress him, for in the triple solitude of age, eccentricity, and deafness, he went about much pestered by children. It was for this

very reason perhaps that he ever recommended mirth and hopefulness. He was fond, for instance, of telling how Collumcille cheered up his mother. "How are you to-day, mother?" said the saint. "Worse," replied the mother. "May you be worse to-morrow," said the saint. The next day Collumcille came again, and exactly the same conversation took place, but the third day the mother said, "Better, thank God." And the saint replied, "May you be better to-morrow." He was fond too of telling how the Judge smiles at the last day alike when he rewards the good and condemns the lost to unceasing flames. He had many strange sights to keep him cheerful or to make him sad. I asked him had he ever seen the faeries, and got the reply, "Am I not annoyed with them?" I asked too if he had ever seen the banshee. "I have seen it," he said, "down there by the water, batting the river with its hands."

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

THERE are some doubters even in the western villages. One woman told me last Christmas that she did not believe either in hell or in ghosts. Hell was an invention got up by the priest to keep people good; and ghosts would not be permitted, she held, to go "trapsin about the earth" at their own free will; "but there are faeries and little leprechauns, and water-horses, and fallen angels." I have met also a man with a Mohawk Indian tattooed upon his arm, who held exactly similar beliefs and unbeliefs. No matter what one doubts, one never doubts the faeries, for, as the man with the Mohawk Indian on his arm said, "they stand to reason".

A little girl who was at service in the village of Grange, close under the seaward slopes of Ben Bulben, suddenly disappeared one night about three years ago. There was at once great excitement in the neighbourhood, because it was rumoured that the faeries had taken her. A villager was said to have long struggled to hold her from them,

but at last they prevailed, and he found nothing in his hands but a broom-stick. The local constable was applied to, and he at once instituted a house-to-house search, and at the same time advised the people to burn all the *bucalauns* (ragweed) on the field she vanished from, because *bucalauns* are sacred to the faeries. They spent the whole night burning them, the constable repeating spells the while. In the morning the little girl was found wandering in the field. She said the faeries had taken her away a great distance, riding on a faery horse. At last she saw a big river, and the man who had tried to keep her from being carried off was drifting down it—such are the topsy-turvy-doms of faery glamour—in a cockle-shell. On the way her companions had mentioned the names of several people who were to die shortly in the village.

MORTAL HELP

One hears in the old poems of men taken away to help the gods in a battle, and Cuchullan won the goddess Fand for a while, by helping her married sister and her sister's husband to overthrow another nation of the Land of Promise. I have been told, too, that the people of faery cannot even play at hurley unless they have on either side some mortal, whose body—or whatever has been put in its place, as the story-teller would say—is asleep at home. Without mortal help they are shadowy and cannot even strike the balls. One day I was walking over some marshy land in Galway with a friend when we found an old, hard-featured man digging a ditch. My friend had heard that this man had seen a wonderful sight of some kind, and at last we got the story out of him. When he was a boy he was working one day with about thirty men and women and boys. They were beyond Tuam and not far from Knock-na-gur. Presently they saw, all thirty of them, and at a distance of

about half a mile, some hundred and fifty of the people of faery. There were two of them, he said, in dark clothes like people of our own time, who stood about a hundred yards from one another, but the others wore clothes of all colours," bracket "or chequered, and some had red waistcoats.

He could not see what they were doing, but all might have been playing hurley, for " they looked as if it was that ". Sometimes they would vanish, and then he "would almost swear " they came back out of the bodies of the two men in dark clothes. These two men were of the size of living men, but the others were small. He saw them for about half an hour, and then the old man he and those about him were working for took up a whip and said, " Get on, get on, or we will have no work done! " I asked if he saw the faeries too. " Oh yes, but he did not want work he was paying wages for to be neglected." He made everybody work so hard that nobody saw what happened to the faeries.

1902.

A VISIONARY

A YOUNG man came to see me at my lodgings the other night, and began to talk of the making of the earth and the heavens and much else. I questioned him about his life and his doings. He had written many poems and painted many mystical designs since we met last, but latterly had neither written nor painted, for his whole heart was set upon making his character vigorous and calm, and the emotional life of the artist was bad for him, he feared. He recited his poems readily, however. He had them all in his memory. Some indeed had never been written down. Suddenly it seemed to me that he was peering about him a little eagerly. "Do you see anything, X——?" I said. "A shining, winged woman, covered by her long hair, is standing near the doorway," he answered, or some such words. "Is it the influence of some living person who thinks of us, and whose thoughts appear to us in that symbolic form?" I said; for I am well instructed in the ways of the

visionaries and in the fashion of their speech. "No," he replied; "for if it were the thoughts of a person who is alive I should feel the living influence in my living body, and my heart would beat and my breath would fail. It is a spirit. It is some one who is dead or who has never lived."

I asked what he was doing, and found he was clerk in a large shop. His pleasure, however, was to wander about upon the hills, talking to half-mad and visionary peasants, or to persuade queer and conscience-stricken persons to deliver up the keeping of their troubles into his care. Another night, when I was with him in his own lodging, more than one turned up to talk over their beliefs and disbeliefs, and sun them as it were in the subtle light of his mind. Sometimes visions come to him as he talks with them, and he is rumoured to have told divers people true matters of their past days and distant friends, and left them hushed with dread of their strange teacher, who seems scarce more than a boy, and is so much more subtle than the oldest among them.

The poetry he recited me was full of his nature and his visions. Sometimes it told of other lives he believes himself to have lived in other centuries, sometimes of people he had talked to, revealing them to their own minds. I told him I would write an article

upon him and it, and was told in turn that I might do so if I did not mention his name, for he wished to be always "unknown, obscure, impersonal". Next day a bundle of his poems arrived, and with them a note in these words: "Here are copies of verses you said you liked. I do not think I could ever write or paint any more. I prepare myself for a cycle of other activities in some other life. I will make rigid my roots and branches. It is not now my turn to burst into leaves and flowers."

The poems were all endeavours to capture some high, impalpable mood in a net of obscure images. There were fine passages in all, but these were often embedded in thoughts which have evidently a special value to his mind, but are to other men the counters of an unknown coinage. At other times the beauty of the thought was obscured by careless writing as though he had suddenly doubted if writing was not a foolish labour. He had frequently illustrated his verses with drawings, in which an imperfect anatomy did not altogether smother a beauty of feeling. The faeries in whom he believes have given him many subjects, notably Thomas of Ercildoune sitting motionless in the twilight while a young and beautiful creature leans softly out of the shadow and whispers in his ear. He had delighted above all in

strong effects of colour: spirits who have upon their heads instead of hair the feathers of peacocks; a phantom reaching from a swirl of flame towards a star; a spirit passing with a globe of iridescent crystal—symbol of the soul—half shut within his hand. But always under this largess of colour lay some appeal to human sympathy. This appeal draws to him all those who, like himself, seek for illumination or else mourn for a joy that has gone. One of these especially comes to mind. A winter or two ago he spent much of the night walking up and down upon the mountain talking to an old peasant who, dumb to most men, poured out his cares for him. Both were unhappy: X—— because he had then first decided that art and poetry were not for him, and the old peasant because his life was ebbing out with no achievement remaining and no hope left him. The peasant was wandering in his mind with prolonged sorrow. Once he burst out with "God possesses the heavens —God possesses the heavens—but He covets the world"; and once he lamented that his old neighbours were gone, and that all had forgotten him: they used to draw a chair to the fire for him in every cabin, and now they said, "Who is that old fellow there?" "The fret" [Irish for doom] "is over me," he repeated, and then went on to talk once more

of God and heaven. More than once also he said, waving his arm towards the mountain, "Only myself knows what happened under the thorn-tree forty years ago"; and as he said it the tears upon his face glistened in the moonlight.

VILLAGE GHOSTS

THE ancient map-makers wrote across unexplored regions, "Here are lions". Across the villages of fishermen and turners of the earth, so different are these from us, we can write but one line that is certain, "Here are ghosts".

My ghosts inhabit the village of H——, in Leinster. History has in no manner been burdened by this ancient village, with its crooked lanes, its old abbey churchyard full of long grass, its green background of small fir-trees, and its quay, where lie a few tarry fishing-luggers. In the annals of entomology it is well known. For a small bay lies westward a little, where he who watches night after night may see a certain rare moth fluttering along the edge of the tide, just at the end of evening or the beginning of dawn. A hundred years ago it was carried here from Italy by smugglers in a cargo of silks and laces. If the moth-hunter would throw down his net, and go hunting for ghost tales or tales of those children of Lillith we call

faeries, he would have need for far less patience.

To approach the village at night a timid man requires great strategy. A man was once heard complaining, "By the cross of Jesus! how shall I go? If I pass by the hill of Dunboy old Captain Burney may look out on me. If I go round by the water, and up by the steps, there is the headless one and another on the quays, and a new one under the old churchyard wall. If I go right round the other way, Mrs. Stewart is appearing at Hillside Gate, and the devil himself is in the Hospital Lane."

I never heard which spirit he braved, but feel sure it was not the one in the Hospital Lane. In cholera times a shed had been there set up to receive patients. When the need had gone by, it was pulled down, but ever since the ground where it stood has broken out in ghosts and demons and faeries. There is a farmer at H——, Paddy B—— by name—a man of great strength, and a tee-totaller. His wife and sister-in-law, musing on his great strength, often wonder what he would do if he drank. One night when passing through the Hospital Lane, he saw what he supposed at first to be a tame rabbit; after a little he found that it was a white cat. When he came near, the creature slowly began to swell larger and larger, and

as it grew he felt his own strength ebbing away, as though it were sucked out of him. He turned and ran.

By the Hospital Lane goes the "Faeries' Path". Every evening they travel from the hill to the sea, from the sea to the hill. At the sea end of their path stands a cottage. One night Mrs. Arbunathy, who lived there, left her door open, as she was expecting her son. Her husband was asleep by the fire; a tall man came in and sat beside him. After he had been sitting there for a while, the woman said, "In the name of God, who are you?" He got up and went out, saying, "Never leave the door open at this hour, or evil may come to you." She woke her husband and told him. "One of the good people has been with us," said he.

Probably the man braved Mrs. Stewart at Hillside Gate. When she lived she was the wife of the Protestant clergyman. "Her ghost was never known to harm any one," say the village people; "it is only doing penance upon the earth." Not far from Hillside Gate, where she haunted, appeared for a short time a much more remarkable spirit. Its haunt was the bogeen, a green lane leading from the western end of the village. In a cottage at the village end of the bogeen lived a house-painter, Jim Montgomery, and his wife. They had several

children. He was a little dandy, and came of a higher class than his neighbours. His wife was a very big woman; but he, who had been expelled from the village choir for drink, gave her a beating one day. Her sister heard of it, and came and took down one of the window shutters—Montgomery was neat about everything, and had shutters on the outside of every window—and beat him with it, being big and strong like her sister. He threatened to prosecute her; she answered that she would break every bone in his body if he did. She never spoke to her sister again, because she had allowed herself to be beaten by so small a man. Jim Montgomery grew worse and worse: his wife before long had not enough to eat, but she would tell no one, for she was very proud. Often, too, she would have no fire on a cold night. If any neighbours came in she would say she had let the fire out because she was just going to bed. The people often heard her husband beating her, but she never told any one. She got very thin. At last one Saturday there was no food in the house for herself and the children. She could bear it no longer, and went to the priest and asked him for some money. He gave her thirty shillings. Her husband met her, and took the money, and beat her. On the following Monday she got very ill, and sent for a Mrs. Kelly. Mrs.

Kelly, as soon as she saw her, said, "My woman, you are dying," and sent for the priest and the doctor. She died in an hour. After her death, as Montgomery neglected the children, the landlord had them taken to the workhouse. A few nights after they had gone, Mrs. Kelly was going home through the bogeen when the ghost of Mrs. Montgomery appeared and followed her. It did not leave her until she reached her own house. She told the priest, Father S——, a noted antiquarian, and could not get him to believe her. A few nights afterwards Mrs. Kelly again met the spirit in the same place. She was in too great terror to go the whole way, but stopped at a neighbour's cottage midway, and asked them to let her in. They answered they were going to bed. She cried out, "In the name of God let me in, or I will break open the door." They opened, and so she escaped from the ghost. Next day she told the priest again. This time he believed, and said it would follow her until she spoke to it.

She met the spirit a third time in the bogeen. She asked what kept it from its rest. The spirit said that its children must be taken from the workhouse, for none of its relations were ever there before, and that three masses were to be said for the repose of its soul. "If my husband does not

believe you," she said, "show him that," and touched Mrs. Kelly's wrist with three fingers. The places where they touched swelled up and blackened. She then vanished. For a time Montgomery would not believe that his wife had appeared: "She would not show herself to Mrs. Kelly," he said—"she with respectable people to appear to." He was convinced by the three marks, and the children were taken from the workhouse. The priest said the masses, and the shade must have been at rest, for it has not since appeared. Some time afterwards Jim Montgomery died in the workhouse, having come to great poverty through drink.

I know some who believe they have seen the headless ghost upon the quay, and one who, when he passes the old cemetery wall at night, sees a woman with white borders to her cap [1] creep out and follow him. The apparition only leaves him at his own door. The villagers imagine that she follows him to avenge some wrong. "I will haunt you when I die" is a favourite threat. His wife was once half-scared to death by what she considers a demon in the shape of a dog.

These are a few of the open-air spirits;

[1] I wonder why she had white borders to her cap. The old Mayo woman, who has told me so many tales, has told me that her brother-in-law saw "a woman with white borders to her cap going round the stacks in a field, and soon after he got a hurt, and he died in six months".

the more domestic of their tribe gather within-doors, plentiful as swallows under southern eaves.

One night a Mrs. Nolan was watching by her dying child in Fluddy's Lane. Suddenly there was a sound of knocking heard at the door. She did not open, fearing it was some unhuman thing that knocked. The knocking ceased. After a little the front-door and then the back-door were burst open, and closed again. Her husband went to see what was wrong. He found both doors bolted. The child died. The doors were again opened and closed as before. Then Mrs. Nolan remembered that she had forgotten to leave window or door open, as the custom is, for the departure of the soul. These strange openings and closings and knockings were warnings and reminders from the spirits who attend the dying.

The house ghost is usually a harmless and well-meaning creature. It is put up with as long as possible. It brings good luck to those who live with it. I remember two children who slept with their mother and sisters and brothers in one small room. In the room was also a ghost. They sold herrings in the Dublin streets, and did not mind the ghost much, because they knew they would always sell their fish easily while they slept in the " ha'nted " room.

I have some acquaintance among the ghost-seers of western villages. The Connaught tales are very different from those of Leinster. These H—— spirits have a gloomy, matter-of-fact way with them. They come to announce a death, to fulfil some obligation, to revenge a wrong, to pay their bills even—as did a fisherman's daughter the other day—and then hasten to their rest. All things they do decently and in order. It is demons, and not ghosts, that transform themselves into white cats or black dogs. The people who tell the tales are poor, serious-minded fishing people, who find in the doings of the ghosts the fascination of fear. In the western tales is a whimsical grace, a curious extravagance. The people who recount them live in the most wild and beautiful scenery, under a sky ever loaded and fantastic with flying clouds. They are farmers and labourers, who do a little fishing now and then. They do not fear the spirits too much to feel an artistic and humorous pleasure in their doings. The ghosts themselves share their hilarity. In one western town, on whose deserted wharf the grass grows, these spirits have so much vigour, I have been told, that, when a misbeliever ventured to sleep in a haunted house, they flung him through the window, and his bed after him. In the surrounding villages they adopt strange

disguises. A dead old gentleman robs the cabbages of his own garden in the shape of a large rabbit. A wicked sea-captain stayed for years inside the plaster of a cottage wall, in the shape of a snipe, making the most horrible noises. He was only dislodged when the wall was broken down; then out of the solid plaster the snipe rushed away whistling.

"DUST HATH CLOSED HELEN'S EYE"

I

I HAVE been lately to a little group of houses, not many enough to be called a village, in the barony of Kiltartan in County Galway, whose name, Ballylee, is known through all the west of Ireland. There is the old square castle,[1] Ballylee, inhabited by a farmer and his wife, and a cottage where their daughter and their son-in-law live, and a little mill with an old miller, and old ash-trees throwing green shadows upon a little river and great stepping-stones. I went there two or three times last year to talk to the miller about Biddy Early, a wise woman that lived in Clare some years ago, and about her saying, "There is a cure for all evil between the two mill-wheels of Ballylee", and to find out from him

[1] Ballylee Castle, or Thoor-Ballylee, as I have named it to escape from the too magnificent word "castle", is now my property, and I spend my summers or some part of them there. (1924.)

or another whether she meant the moss between the running waters or some other herb. I have been there this summer, and I shall be there again before it is autumn, because Mary Hynes, a beautiful woman whose name is still a wonder by turf fires, died there sixty years ago; for our feet would linger where beauty has lived its life of sorrow to make us understand that it is not of the world. An old man brought me a little way from the mill and the castle, and down a long, narrow boreen that was nearly lost in brambles and sloe bushes, and he said, "That is the little old foundation of the house, but the most of it is taken for building walls, and the goats have ate those bushes that are growing over it till they've got cranky, and they won't grow any more. They say she was the handsomest girl in Ireland, her skin was like dribbled snow"—he meant driven snow, perhaps,—" and she had blushes in her cheeks. She had five handsome brothers, but all are gone now!" I talked to him about a poem in Irish, Raftery, a famous poet, made about her, and how it said, " there is a strong cellar in Ballylee". He said the strong cellar was the great hole where the river sank underground, and he brought me to a deep pool, where an otter hurried away under a grey boulder, and told me that many fish came up out of the dark water at early

morning " to taste the fresh water coming down from the hills ".

I first heard of the poem from an old woman who lives about two miles farther up the river, and who remembers Raftery and Mary Hynes. She says, " I never saw anybody so handsome as she was, and I never will till I die," and that he was nearly blind, and had " no way of living but to go round and to mark some house to go to, and then all the neighbours would gather to hear. If you treated him well he'd praise you, but if you did not, he'd fault you in Irish. He was the greatest poet in Ireland, and he'd make a song about that bush if he chanced to stand under it. There was a bush he stood under from the rain, and he made verses praising it, and then when the water came through he made verses dispraising it." She sang the poem to a friend and to myself in Irish, and every word was audible and expressive, as the words in a song were always, as I think, before music grew too proud to be the garment of words, flowing and changing with the flowing and changing of their energies. The poem is not as natural as the best Irish poetry of the last century, for the thoughts are arranged in a too obviously traditional form, so the old poor half-blind man who made it has to speak as if he were a rich farmer offering the best of

everything to the woman he loves, but it has naïve and tender phrases. The friend that was with me has made some of the translation, but some of it has been made by the country people themselves. I think it has more of the simplicity of the Irish verses than one finds in most translations.

Going to Mass by the will of God,
The day came wet and the wind rose;
I met Mary Hynes at the cross of Kiltartan,
And I fell in love with her then and there.

I spoke to her kind and mannerly,
As by report was her own way;
And she said, "Raftery, my mind is easy,
You may come to-day to Ballylee."

When I heard her offer I did not linger,
When her talk went to my heart my heart rose.
We had only to go across the three fields,
We had daylight with us to Ballylee.

The table was laid with glasses and a quart measure,
She had fair hair, and she sitting beside me;
And she said, "Drink, Raftery, and a hundred welcomes,
There is a strong cellar in Ballylee."

O star of light and O sun in harvest,
O amber hair, O my share of the world,
Will you come with me upon Sunday
Till we agree together before all the people?

I would not grudge you a song every Sunday
evening,
Punch on the table, or wine if you would drink it,
But, O King of Glory, dry the roads before me,
Till I find the way to Ballylee.

There is sweet air on the side of the hill
When you are looking down upon Ballylee;
When you are walking in the valley picking nuts
and blackberries,
There is music of the birds in it and music of the
Sidhe.

What is the worth of greatness till you have the
light
Of the flower of the branch that is by your side?
There is no god to deny it or to try and hide it,
She is the sun in the heavens who wounded my heart.

There was no part of Ireland I did not travel,
From the rivers to the tops of the mountains,
To the edge of Lough Greine whose mouth is
hidden,
And I saw no beauty but was behind hers.

Her hair was shining, and her brows were shining
too;
Her face was like herself, her mouth pleasant and
sweet.
She is the pride, and I give her the branch,
She is the shining flower of Ballylee.

It is Mary Hynes, the calm and easy woman,
Has beauty in her mind and in her face.
If a hundred clerks were gathered together,
They could not write down a half of her ways.

An old weaver, whose son is supposed to go away among the Sidhe (the faeries) at night, says, "Mary Hynes was the most beautiful thing ever made. My mother used to tell me about her, for she'd be at every hurling, and wherever she was she was dressed in white. As many as eleven men asked her in marriage in one day, but she wouldn't have any of them. There was a lot of men up beyond Kilbecanty one night sitting together drinking, and talking of her, and one of them got up and set out to go to Ballylee and see her; but Cloon Bog was open then, and when he came to it he fell into the water, and they found him dead there in the morning. She died of the fever that was before the famine." Another old man says he was only a child when he saw her, but he remembered that "the strongest man that was among us, one John Madden, got his death of the head of her, cold he got crossing rivers in the night-time to get to Ballylee". This is perhaps the man the other remembered, for tradition gives the one thing many shapes. There is an old woman who remembers her, at Derrybrien among the Echtge hills, a vast desolate place, which has changed little since the old poem said, "the stag upon the cold summit of Echtge hears the cry of the wolves", but still mindful of many poems and of the dignity of ancient

speech. She says, "The sun and the moon never shone on anybody so handsome, and her skin was so white that it looked blue, and she had two little blushes on her cheeks." And an old wrinkled woman who lives close by Ballylee, and has told me many tales of the Sidhe, says, "I often saw Mary Hynes, she was handsome indeed. She had two bunches of curls beside her cheeks, and they were the colour of silver. I saw Mary Molloy that was drowned in the river beyond, and Mary Guthrie that was in Ardrahan, but she took the sway of them both, a very comely creature. I was at her wake too—she had seen too much of the world. She was a kind creature. One day I was coming home through that field beyond, and I was tired, and who should come out but the Poisin Glegeal (the shining flower), and she gave me a glass of new milk." This old woman meant no more than some beautiful bright colour by the colour of silver, for though I knew an old man—he is dead now—who thought she might know "the cure for all the evils in the world", that the Sidhe knew, she has seen too little gold to know its colour. But a man by the shore at Kinvara, who is too young to remember Mary Hynes, says, "Everybody says there is no one at all to be seen now so handsome; it is said she had beautiful hair, the colour of gold. She was

poor, but her clothes every day were the same as Sunday, she had such neatness. And if she went to any kind of a meeting, they would all be killing one another for a sight of her, and there was a great many in love with her, but she died young. It is said that no one that has a song made about them will ever live long."

Those who are much admired are, it is held, taken by the Sidhe, who can use ungoverned feeling for their own ends, so that a father, as an old herb doctor told me once, may give his child into their hands, or a husband his wife. The admired and desired are only safe if one says "God bless them" when one's eyes are upon them. The old woman that sang the song thinks, too, that Mary Hynes was "taken", as the phrase is, "for they have taken many that are not handsome, and why would they not take her? And people came from all parts to look at her, and maybe there were some that did not say 'God bless her.'" An old man who lives by the sea at Duras has as little doubt that she was taken, "for there are some living yet can remember her coming to the pattern[1] there beyond, and she was said to be the handsomest girl in Ireland". She died young because the gods loved her, for the Sidhe are

[1] A "pattern", or "patron", is a festival in honour of a saint.

the gods, and it may be that the old saying, which we forget to understand literally, meant her manner of death in old times. These poor countrymen and countrywomen in their beliefs, and in their emotions, are many years nearer to that old Greek world, that set beauty beside the fountain of things, than are our men of learning. She "had seen too much of the world"; but these old men and women, when they tell of her, blame another and not her, and though they can be hard, they grow gentle as the old men of Troy grew gentle when Helen passed by on the walls.

The poet who helped her to so much fame has himself a great fame throughout the West of Ireland. Some think that Raftery was half blind, and say, "I saw Raftery, a dark man, but he had sight enough to see her," or the like, but some think he was wholly blind, as he may have been at the end of his life. Fable makes all things perfect in their kind, and her blind people must never look on the world and the sun. I asked a man I met one day, when I was looking for a pool *na mna Sidhe* where women of faery have been seen, how Raftery could have admired Mary Hynes so much if he had been altogether blind? He said, "I think Raftery was altogether blind, but those that are blind have a way of seeing things, and have the

power to know more, and to feel more, and to do more, and to guess more than those that have their sight, and a certain wit and a certain wisdom is given to them." Every-body, indeed, will tell you that he was very wise, for was he not only blind but a poet? The weaver, whose words about Mary Hynes I have already given, says, "His poetry was the gift of the Almighty, for there are three things that are the gift of the Almighty—poetry and dancing and principles. That is why in the old times an ignorant man coming down from the hillside would be better behaved and have better learning than a man with education you'd meet now, for they got it from God"; and a man at Coole says, "When he put his finger to one part of his head, everything would come to him as if it was written in a book"; and an old pensioner at Kiltartan says, "He was standing under a bush one time, and he talked to it, and it answered him back in Irish. Some say it was the bush that spoke, but it must have been an enchanted voice in it, and it gave him the knowledge of all the things of the world. The bush withered up afterwards, and it is to be seen on the roadside now between this and Rahasine." There is a poem of his about a bush, which I have never seen, and it may have come out of the cauldron of fable in this shape.

A friend of mine met a man once who had been with him when he died, but the people say that he died alone, and one Maurteen Gillane told Dr. Hyde that all night long a light was seen streaming up to heaven from the roof of the house where he lay, and "that was the angels who were with him"; and all night long there was a great light in the hovel, "and that was the angels who were waking him. They gave that honour to him because he was so good a poet, and sang such religious songs." It may be that in a few years Fable, who changes mortalities to immortalities in her cauldron, will have changed Mary Hynes and Raftery to perfect symbols of the sorrow of beauty and of the magnificence and penury of dreams.

1900.

II

When I was in a northern town a while ago I had a long talk with a man who had lived in a neighbouring country district when he was a boy. He told me that when a very beautiful girl was born in a family that had not been noted for good looks, her beauty was thought to have come from the Sidhe, and to bring misfortune with it. He went over the names of several beautiful girls that

he had known, and said that beauty had never brought happiness to anybody. It was a thing, he said, to be proud of and afraid of. I wish I had written out his words at the time, for they were more picturesque than my memory of them.

1902.

A KNIGHT OF THE SHEEP

AWAY to the north of Ben Bulben and Cope's mountain lives "a strong farmer", a knight of the sheep they would have called him in the Gaelic days. Proud of his descent from one of the most fighting clans of the Middle Ages, he is a man of force alike in his words and in his deeds. There is but one man that swears like him, and this man lives far away upon the mountain. "Father in heaven, what have I done to deserve this?" he says when he has lost his pipe; and no man but he who lives on the mountain can rival his language on a fair-day over a bargain.

One day I was dining with him when the servant-maid announced a certain Mr. O'Donnell. A sudden silence fell upon the old man and upon his two daughters. At last the eldest daughter said somewhat severely to her father, "Go and ask him to come in and dine." The old man went out, and then came in looking greatly relieved, and said, "He says he will not dine with us."

"Go out," said the daughter, "and ask him

into the back parlour, and give him some whisky." Her father, who had just finished his dinner, obeyed sullenly, and I heard the door of the back parlour—a little room where the daughters sat and sewed during the evening—shut to behind the men. The daughter then turned to me and said, " Mr. O'Donnell is the tax-gatherer, and last year he raised our taxes, and my father was very angry, and when he came, brought him into the dairy, and sent the dairy-woman away on a message, and then swore at him a great deal. 'I will teach you, sir,' O'Donnell replied, 'that the law can protect its officers'; but my father reminded him that he had no witness. At last my father got tired, and sorry too, and said he would show him a short way home. When they were half-way to the main road they came on a man of my father's who was ploughing, and this somehow brought back remembrance of the wrong. He sent the man away on a message, and began to swear at the tax-gatherer again. When I heard of it I was disgusted that he should have made such a fuss over a miserable creature like O'Donnell; and when I heard a few weeks ago that O'Donnell's only son had died and left him heart-broken, I resolved to make my father be kind to him next time he came."

She then went out to see a neighbour,

and I sauntered towards the back parlour. When I came to the door I heard angry voices inside. The two men were evidently getting on to the tax again, for I could hear them bandying figures to and fro. I opened the door; at sight of my face the farmer was reminded of his peaceful intentions, and asked me if I knew where the whisky was. I had seen him put it into the cupboard, and was able therefore to find it and get it out, looking at the thin, grief-struck face of the tax-gatherer. He was rather older than my friend, and very much more feeble and worn, and of a very different type. He was not like him, a robust, successful man, but rather one of those whose feet find no resting-place upon the earth. "You are doubtless of the stock of the old O'Donnells," I said. "I know well the hole in the river where their treasure lies buried under the guard of a serpent with many heads." "Yes, sir," he replied, "I am the last of a line of princes."

We then fell to talking of many commonplace things, and when at last the gaunt old tax-gatherer got up to go, my friend said, "I hope we will have a glass together next year." "No, no," was the answer, "I shall be dead next year." "I too have lost sons," said the other, in quite a gentle voice. "But your sons were not like my son." And then

the two men parted, with an angry flush and bitter hearts, and had I not cast between them some common words or other, might not have parted, but have fallen rather into an angry discussion of the value of their dead sons.

The knight of the sheep would have had the victory. He was indeed but once beaten; and this is his tale of how it was. He and some farm hands were playing at cards in a small cabin that stood against the end of a big barn. A wicked woman had once lived in this cabin. Suddenly one of the players threw down an ace and began to swear without any cause. His swearing was so dreadful that the others stood up, and my friend said, "All is not right here; there is a spirit in him." They ran to the door that led into the barn to get away as quickly as possible. The wooden bolt would not move, so the knight of the sheep took a saw which stood against the wall near at hand, and sawed through the bolt, and at once the door flew open with a bang, as though some one had been holding it, and they fled through.

AN ENDURING HEART

One day a friend of mine was making a sketch of my Knight of the Sheep. The old man's daughter was sitting by, and, when the conversation drifted to love and love-making, she said, "Oh, father, tell him about your love affair." The old man took his pipe out of his mouth, and said, "Nobody ever marries the woman he loves," and then, with a chuckle, "There were fifteen of them I liked better than the woman I married," and he repeated many women's names. He went on to tell how when he was a lad he had worked for his grandfather, his mother's father, and was called (my friend has forgotten why) by his grandfather's name, which we will say was Doran. He had a great friend, whom I shall call John Byrne; and one day he and his friend went to Queenstown to await an emigrant ship, that was to take John Byrne to America. When they were walking along the quay, they saw a girl sitting on a seat, crying miserably, and two men standing up in front of her quarrelling

with one another. Doran said, "I think I know what is wrong. *That* man will be her brother, and *that* man will be her lover, and the brother is sending her to America to get her away from the lover. How she is crying! but I think I could console her myself." Presently the lover and brother went away, and Doran began to walk up and down before her, saying, "Mild weather, Miss," or the like. She answered him in a little while, and the three began to talk together. The emigrant ship did not arrive for some days; and the three drove about on outside cars very innocently and happily, seeing everything that was to be seen. When at last the ship came, and Doran had to break it to her that he was not going to America, she cried more after him than after the first lover. Doran whispered to Byrne as he went aboard ship, "Now, Byrne, I don't grudge her to you, but don't marry young."

When the story got to this, the farmer's daughter joined in mockingly with, "I suppose you said that for Byrne's good, father." But the old man insisted that he *had* said it for Byrne's good; and went on to tell how, when he got a letter telling of Byrne's engagement to the girl, he wrote him the same advice. Years passed by, and he heard nothing; and though he was now married,

he could not keep from wondering what she was doing. At last he went to America to find out, and though he asked many people for tidings, he could get none. More years went by, and his wife was dead, and he well on in years, and a rich farmer with not a few great matters on his hands. He found an excuse in some vague business to go out to America again, and to begin his search again. One day he fell into talk with an Irishman in a railway carriage, and asked him, as his way was, about emigrants from this place and that, and at last, "Did you ever hear of the miller's daughter from Innis Rath?" and he named the woman he was looking for. "Oh yes," said the other, "she is married to a friend of mine, John MacEwing. She lives at such-and-such a street in Chicago." Doran went to Chicago and knocked at her door. She opened the door herself, and was "not a bit changed". He gave her his real name, which he had taken again after his grandfather's death, and the name of the man he had met in the train. She did not recognise him, but asked him to stay to dinner, saying that her husband would be glad to meet anybody who knew that old friend of his. They talked of many things, but for all their talk, I do not know why, and perhaps he did not know why, he never told her who he was. At dinner he asked her about Byrne, and she

put her head down on the table and began to cry, and she cried so he was afraid her husband might be angry. He was afraid to ask what had happened to Byrne, and left soon after, never to see her again.

When the old man had finished the story, he said, "Tell that to Mr. Yeats, he will make a poem about it, perhaps." But the daughter said, "Oh no, father. Nobody could make a poem about a woman like that." Alas! I never made the poem, perhaps because my own heart, which has loved Helen and all the lovely and fickle women of the world, would be too sore. There are things it is well not to ponder over too much, things that bare words are the best suited for.

1902.

THE SORCERERS

In Ireland we hear but little of the darker powers,[1] and come across any who have seen them even more rarely, for the imagination of the people dwells rather upon the fantastic and capricious, and fantasy and caprice would lose the freedom which is their breath of life, were they to unite them either with evil or with good. I have indeed come across very few persons in Ireland who try to communicate with evil powers, and the few I have met keep their purpose and practice wholly hidden from those among whom they live. They are mainly small clerks, and meet for the purpose of their art in a room hung with black hangings, but in what town that room is I shall not say. They would not admit me into this room, but finding me not altogether ignorant of the arcane science, showed elsewhere what they could do. "Come to us,"

[1] I know better now. We have the dark powers much more than I thought, but not as much as the Scottish, and yet I think the imagination of the people does dwell chiefly upon the fantastic and capricious.

said their leader, "and we will show you spirits who will talk to you face to face, and in shapes as solid and heavy as our own."

I had been talking of the power of communicating in states of trance with the angelical and faery beings,—the children of the day and of the twilight,—and he had been contending that we should only believe in what we can see and feel when in our ordinary everyday state of mind. "Yes," I said, "I will come to you," or some such words; "but I will not permit myself to become entranced, and will therefore know whether these shapes you talk of are any the more to be touched and felt by the ordinary senses than are those I talk of." I was not denying the power of other beings to take upon themselves a clothing of mortal substance, but only that simple invocations, such as he spoke of, seemed unlikely to do more than cast the mind into trance.

"But," he said, "we have seen them move the furniture hither and thither, and they go at our bidding, and help or harm people who know nothing of them." I am not giving the exact words, but as accurately as I can the substance of our talk.

On the night arranged I turned up about eight, and found the leader sitting alone in almost total darkness in a small back room. He was dressed in a black gown, like an

inquisitor's dress in an old drawing, that left nothing of him visible except his eyes, which peered out through two small round holes. Upon the table in front of him was a brass dish of burning herbs, a large bowl, a skull covered with painted symbols, two crossed daggers, and certain implements, whose use I failed to discover, shaped like quern stones. I also put on a black gown, and remember that it did not fit perfectly, and that it interfered with my movements considerably. The sorcerer then took a black cock out of a basket, and cut its throat with one of the daggers, letting the blood fall into the large bowl. He opened a book and began an invocation, which was neither English nor Irish, and had a deep guttural sound. Before he had finished, another of the sorcerers, a man of about twenty-five, came in, and having put on a black gown also, seated himself at my left hand. I had the invoker directly in front of me, and soon began to find his eyes, which glittered through the small holes in his hood, affecting me in a curious way. I struggled hard against their influence, and my head began to ache. The invocation continued, and nothing happened for the first few minutes. Then the invoker got up and extinguished the light in the hall, so that no glimmer might come through the slit under the door. There was now no light

except from the herbs on the brass dish, and no sound except from the deep guttural murmur of the invocation.

Presently the man at my left swayed himself about, and cried out, "O god! O god!" I asked him what ailed him, but he did not know he had spoken. A moment after he said he could see a great serpent moving about the room, and became considerably excited. I saw nothing with any definite shape, but thought that black clouds were forming about me. I felt I must fall into a trance if I did not struggle against it, and that the influence which was causing this trance was out of harmony with itself, in other words, evil. After a struggle I got rid of the black clouds, and was able to observe with my ordinary senses again. The two sorcerers now began to see black and white columns moving about the room, and finally a man in a monk's habit, and they became greatly puzzled because I did not see these things also, for to them they were as solid as the table before them. The invoker appeared to be gradually increasing in power, and I began to feel as if a tide of darkness was pouring from him and concentrating itself about me; and now too I noticed that the man on my left hand had passed into a death-like trance. With a last great effort I drove off the black clouds; but feeling them

to be the only shapes I should see without passing into a trance, and having no great love for them, I asked for lights, and after the needful exorcism returned to the ordinary world.

I said to the more powerful of the two sorcerers, "What would happen if one of your spirits had overpowered me?" "You would go out of this room", he answered, "with his character added to your own." I asked about the origin of his sorcery, but got little of importance, except that he had learned it from his father, and that one word which he had repeated several times was Arabic. He would not tell me more, for he had, it appeared, taken a vow of secrecy.

THE DEVIL

My old Mayo woman told me one day that something very bad had come down the road and gone into the house opposite, and though she would not say what it was, I knew quite well. Another day she told me of two friends of hers who had been made love to by one whom they believed to be the devil. One of them was standing by the road-side when he came by on horseback, and asked her to mount up behind him, and go riding. When she would not he vanished. The other was out on the road late at night waiting for her young man, when something came flapping and rolling along the road up to her feet. It had the likeness of a newspaper, and presently it flapped up into her face, and she knew by the size of it that it was the *Irish Times*. All of a sudden it changed into a young man, who asked her to go walking with him. She would not, and he vanished.

I know of an old man too, on the slopes of Ben Bulben, who found the devil ringing a bell under his bed, and he went off and stole the chapel bell and rang him out.

HAPPY AND UNHAPPY THEOLOGIANS

I

A Mayo woman once said to me, "I knew a servant girl who hung herself for the love of God. She was lonely for the priest and her society,[1] and hung herself to the banisters with a scarf. She was no sooner dead than she became white as a lily, and if it had been murder or suicide she would have become black as black. They gave her Christian burial, and the priest said she was no sooner dead than she was with the Lord. So nothing matters that you do for the love of God." I do not wonder at the pleasure she has in telling this story, for she herself loves all holy things with an ardour that brings them quickly to her lips. She told me once that she never hears anything described in a sermon that she does not afterwards see with her eyes. She has

[1] The religious society she had belonged to.

described to me the gates of Purgatory as they showed themselves to her eyes, but I remember nothing of the description except that she could not see the souls in trouble but only the gates. Her mind continually dwells on what is pleasant and beautiful. One day she asked me what month and what flower were the most beautiful. When I answered that I did not know, she said, "The month of May, because of the Virgin, and the lily of the valley, because it never sinned, but came pure out of the rocks," and then she asked, "What is the cause of the three cold months of winter?" I did not know even that, and so she said, "The sin of man and the vengeance of God." Christ Himself was not only blessed, but perfect in all manly proportions in her eyes, so much do beauty and holiness go together in her thoughts. He alone of all men was exactly six feet high, all others are a little more or a little less.

Her thoughts and her sights of the people of faery are pleasant and beautiful too, and I have never heard her call them the Fallen Angels. They are people like ourselves, only better-looking, and many and many a time she has gone to the window to watch them drive their waggons through the sky, waggon behind waggon in long line, or to the door to hear them singing and dancing

in the Forth. They sing chiefly, it seems, a song called " The Distant Waterfall ", and though they once knocked her down she never thinks badly of them. She saw them most easily when she was in service in King's County, and one morning a little while ago she said to me, " Last night I was waiting up for the master and it was a quarter-past eleven. I heard a bang right down on the table. ' King's County all over,' says I, and I laughed till I was near dead. It was a warning I was staying too long. They wanted the place to themselves." I told her once of somebody who saw a faery and fainted, and she said, " It could not have been a faery, but some bad thing, nobody could faint at a faery. It was a demon. I was not afraid when they near put me, and the bed under me, out through the roof. I wasn't afraid either when you were at some work and I heard a thing coming flop-flop up the stairs like an eel, and squealing. It went to all the doors. It could not get in where I was. I would have sent it through the universe like a flash of fire. There was a man in my place, a tearing fellow, and he put one of them down. He went out to meet it on the road, but he must have been told the words. But the faeries are the best neighbours. If you do good to them they will do good to you, but they don't like you

to be on their path." Another time she said to me, " They are always good to the poor."

II

There is, however, a man in a Galway village who can see nothing but wickedness. Some think him very holy, and others think him a little crazed, but some of his talk reminds one of those old Irish visions of the Three Worlds, which are supposed to have given Dante the plan of the *Divine Comedy*. But I could not imagine this man seeing Paradise. He is especially angry with the people of faery, and describes the faun-like feet that are so common among them, who are indeed children of Pan, to prove them children of Satan. He will not grant that " they carry away women, though there are many that say so ", but he is certain that they are " as thick as the sands of the sea about us, and they tempt poor mortals ".

He says, " There is a priest I know of was looking along the ground like as if he was hunting for something, and a voice said to him, ' If you want to see them you'll see enough of them,' and his eyes were opened and he saw the ground thick with them. Singing they do be sometimes, and dancing, but all the time they have cloven feet." Yet

he was so scornful of unchristian beings for all their dancing and singing that he thinks that "you have only to bid them begone and they will go. It was one night," he says, "after walking back from Kinvara and down by the wood beyond I felt one coming beside me, and I could feel the horse he was riding on and the way he lifted his legs, but they do not make a sound like the hoofs of a horse. So I stopped and turned around and said, very loud, 'Be off!' and he went and never troubled me after. And I knew a man who was dying, and one came on his bed, and he cried out to it, 'Get out of that, you unnatural animal!' and it left him. Fallen angels they are, and after the fall God said, 'Let there be Hell,' and there it was in a moment." An old woman who was sitting by the fire joined in as he said this with "God save us, it's a pity He said the word, and there might have been no Hell the day," but the seer did not notice her words. He went on, "And then he asked the devil what would he take for the souls of all the people. And the devil said nothing would satisfy him but the blood of a virgin's son, so he got that, and then the gates of Hell were opened." He understood the story, it seems, as if it were some riddling old folk tale.

"I have seen Hell myself. I had a sight

of it one time in a vision. It had a very high wall around it, all of metal, and an archway, and a straight walk into it, just like what 'ud be leading into a gentleman's orchard, but the edges were not trimmed with box, but with red-hot metal. And inside the wall there were cross-walks, and I'm not sure what there was to the right, but to the left there were five great furnaces, and they full of souls kept there with great chains. So I turned short and went away, and in turning I looked again at the wall, and I could see no end to it.

"And another time I saw Purgatory. It seemed to be in a level place, and no walls around it, but it all one bright blaze, and the souls standing in it. And they suffer near as much as in Hell, only there are no devils with them there, and they have the hope of Heaven.

"And I heard a call to me from there, 'Help me to come out o' this!' And when I looked it was a man I used to know in the army, an Irishman, and from this county, and I believe him to be a descendant of King O'Connor of Athenry.

"So I stretched out my hand first, but then I called out, 'I'd be burned in the flames before I could get within three yards of you.' So then he said, 'Well, help me with your prayers,' and so I do.

"And Father Connellan says the same thing, to help the dead with your prayers, and he's a very clever man to make a sermon, and has a great deal of cures made with the Holy Water he brought back from Lourdes."

1902.

THE LAST GLEEMAN

MICHAEL MORAN was born about 1794 off Black Pitts, in the Liberties of Dublin, in Faddle Alley. A fortnight after birth he went stone blind from illness, and became thereby a blessing to his parents, who were soon able to send him to rhyme and beg at street corners and at the bridges over the Liffey. They may well have wished that their quiver were full of such as he, for, free from the interruption of sight, his mind turned every movement of the day and every change of public passion into rhyme or quaint saying. By the time he had grown to manhood he was the admitted rector of all the ballad-mongers of the Liberties, of Madden, the weaver, Kearney, the blind fiddler from Wicklow, Martin from Meath, M'Bride from heaven knows where, and that M'Grane, who in after days, when the true Moran was no more, strutted in borrowed plumes, or rather in borrowed rags, and gave out that there had never been any Moran but himself, and many another. Nor despite his blindness did he

find any difficulty in getting a wife, but rather was able to pick and choose, for he was just that mixture of ragamuffin and of genius which is dear to the heart of woman, who, however conventional in herself, loves the unexpected, the crooked, the bewildering. Nor did he lack, despite his rags, many excellent things, for it is remembered that he ever loved caper sauce, and upon one occasion when his wife had forgotten it, he flung a leg of mutton at her head. He was not, certainly, much to look at, with his coarse frieze coat with its cape and scalloped edge, his old corduroy trousers and great brogues, and his stout stick made fast to his wrist by a thong of leather: and he would have been a woeful shock to the gleeman MacConglinne, could that friend of kings have beheld him in prophetic vision from the pillar stone at Cork. And yet though the short cloak and the leather wallet were no more, he was a true gleeman, being alike poet, jester, and newsman of the people. In the morning when he had finished his breakfast, his wife or some neighbour would read the newspaper to him, and read on and on until he interrupted with, "That'll do—I have me meditations"; and from these meditations would come the day's store of jest and rhyme. He had the whole Middle Ages under his frieze coat.

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He had not, however, MacConglinne's hatred of the Church and clergy, for when the fruit of his meditations did not ripen well, or when the crowd called for something more solid, he would recite or sing a metrical tale or ballad of saint or martyr or some Biblical adventure. He would stand at a street corner, and when a crowd had gathered would begin in some such fashion as follows (I copy the record of one who knew him)—"Gather round me, boys, gather round me. Boys, am I standin' in puddle? am I standin' in wet?" Thereon several boys would cry, "Ah, no! yez not! yer in a nice dry place. Go on with *St. Mary;* go on with *Moses*"—each calling for his favourite tale. Then Moran, with a wriggle of his body and a clutch at his rags, would burst out with "All me buzzim friends are turned backbiters"; and after a final warning to the boys, "If yez don't drop your coddin' and diversion I'll lave some of yez a case," begin his recitation, or perhaps still delay, to ask, "Is there a crowd round me now? Any blackguard heretic around me?" Or he would, it may be, start by singing:

Gather round me, boys, will yez
Gather round me?
And hear what I have to say
Before ould Salley brings me
My bread and jug of tay.

The best-known of his religious tales was *St. Mary of Egypt*, a long poem of exceeding solemnity, condensed from the much longer work of a certain Bishop Coyle. It told how an Egyptian harlot, Mary by name, followed pilgrims to Jerusalem in pursuit of her trade, and then, on finding herself withheld from entering the Temple by supernatural interference, turned penitent, fled to the desert and spent the remainder of her life in solitary penance. When at last she was at the point of death, God sent Bishop Zozimus to hear her confession, give her the last sacrament, and with the help of a lion, whom He sent also, dig her grave. The poem has the intolerable cadence of the eighteenth century at its worst, but was so popular and so often called for that Moran was nicknamed Zozimus, and by that name is he remembered. He had also a poem of his own called *Moses*, which went a little nearer poetry without going very near. But he could ill brook solemnity, and before long parodied his own verses in the following ragamuffin fashion:

In Egypt's land, contagious to the Nile,
King Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in style.
She tuk her dip, then walked unto the land,
To dry her royal pelt she ran along the strand.
A bulrush tripped her, whereupon she saw
A smiling babby in a wad o' straw.
She tuk it up, and said with accents mild,
"'Tare-and-agers, girls, which av yez owns the child?"

His humorous rhymes were, however, more often quips and cranks at the expense of his contemporaries. It was his delight, for instance, to remind a shoemaker, noted alike for display of wealth and for personal uncleanness, of his inconsiderable origin in a song of which but the first stanza has come down to us:

> At the dirty end of Dirty Lane,
> Liv'd a dirty cobbler, Dick Maclane;
> His wife was in the old king's reign
> A stout brave orange-woman.
> On Essex Bridge she strained her throat,
> And six-a-penny was her note.
> But Dickey wore a bran-new coat,
> He got among the yeomen.
> He was a bigot, like his clan,
> And in the streets he wildly sang,
> O Roly, toly, toly raid, with his old jade.

He had troubles of divers kinds, and numerous interlopers to face and put down. Once an officious peeler arrested him as a vagabond, but was triumphantly routed amid the laughter of the court, when Moran reminded his worship of the precedent set by Homer, who was also, he declared, a poet, and a blind man, and a beggarman. He had to face a more serious difficulty as his fame grew. Various imitators started up upon all sides. A certain actor, for instance, made as many guineas as Moran did shillings by mimicking

his sayings and his songs and his get-up upon the stage. One night this actor was at supper with some friends, when dispute arose as to whether his mimicry was overdone or not. It was agreed to settle it by an appeal to the mob. A forty-shilling supper at a famous coffee-house was to be the wager. The actor took up his station at Essex Bridge, a great haunt of Moran's, and soon gathered a small crowd. He had scarce got through "In Egypt's land, contagious to the Nile", when Moran himself came up, followed by another crowd. The crowds met in great excitement and laughter. "Good Christians," cried the pretender, "is it possible that any man would mock the poor dark man like that?"

"Who's that? It's some imposhterer," replied Moran.

"Begone, you wretch! it's you'ze the imposhterer. Don't you fear the light of heaven being struck from your eyes for mocking the poor dark man?"

"Saints and angels, is there no protection against this? You're a most inhuman blaguard to try to deprive me of my honest bread this way," replied poor Moran.

"And you, you wretch, won't let me go on with the beautiful poem. Christian people, in your charity won't you beat this man away? he's taking advantage of my darkness."

The pretender, seeing that he was having the best of it, thanked the people for their sympathy and protection, and went on with the poem, Moran listening for a time in bewildered silence. After a while Moran protested again with:

"Is it possible that none of yez can know me? Don't yez see it's myself; and that's some one else?"

"Before I can proceed any further in this lovely story," interrupted the pretender, "I call on yez to contribute your charitable donations to help me to go on."

"Have you no sowl to be saved, you mocker of heaven?" cried Moran, put completely beside himself by this last injury. "Would you rob the poor as well as desave the world? O, was ever such wickedness known?"

"I leave it to yourselves, my friends," said the pretender, "to give to the real dark man, that you all know so well, and save me from that schemer," and with that he collected some pennies and halfpence. While he was doing so, Moran started his *Mary of Egypt*, but the indignant crowd seizing his stick were about to belabour him, when they fell back bewildered anew by his close resemblance to himself. The pretender now called to them to "just give him a grip of that villain, and he'd soon let him know who the imposhterer

was!" They led him over to Moran, but instead of closing with him he thrust a few shillings into his hand, and turning to the crowd explained to them he was indeed but an actor, and that he had just gained a wager, and so departed amid much enthusiasm, to eat the supper he had won.

In April 1846 word was sent to the priest that Michael Moran was dying. He found him at 15 (now 14½) Patrick Street, on a straw bed, in a room full of ragged ballad-singers come to cheer his last moments. After his death the ballad-singers, with many fiddles and the like, came again and gave him a fine wake, each adding to the merriment whatever he knew in the way of rann, tale, old saw, or quaint rhyme. He had had his day, had said his prayers and made his confession, and why should they not give him a hearty send-off? The funeral took place the next day. A good party of his admirers and friends got into the hearse with the coffin, for the day was wet and nasty. They had not gone far when one of them burst out with "It's cruel cowld, isn't it?" "Garra'," replied another, "we'll all be as stiff as the corpse when we get to the berrin-ground." "Bad cess to him," said a third; "I wish he'd held out another month until the weather got dacent." A man called Carroll thereupon produced a half-pint of whisky,

and they all drank to the soul of the departed. Unhappily, however, the hearse was overweighted, and they had not reached the cemetery before the spring broke, and the bottle with it.

REGINA, REGINA PIGMEORUM, VENI[1]

One night a middle-aged man, who had lived all his life far from the noise of cab-wheels, a young girl, a relation of his, who was reported to be enough of a seer to catch a glimpse of unaccountable lights moving over the fields among the cattle, and myself, were walking along a far western sandy shore. We talked of the Forgetful People, as the faery people are sometimes called, and came in the midst of our talk to a notable haunt of theirs, a shallow cave amidst black rocks, with its reflection under it in the wet sea sand. I asked the young girl if she could see anything, for I had quite a number of things to ask the Forgetful People. She stood still for a few minutes, and I saw that she was passing into a kind of waking trance, in which the cold sea breeze no longer troubled her, nor the dull boom of the sea

[1] These words were used as an evocation in Windsor Forest by Lilly, the astrologer. 1924.

distracted her attention. I then called aloud the names of the great faeries, and in a moment or two she said that she could hear music far inside the rocks, and then a sound of confused talking, and of people stamping their feet as if to applaud some unseen performer. Up to this my other friend had been walking to and fro some yards off, but now he passed close to us, and as he did so said suddenly that we were going to be interrupted, for he heard the laughter of children somewhere beyond the rocks. We were, however, quite alone. The spirits of the place had begun to cast their influence over him also. In a moment he was corroborated by the girl, who said that bursts of laughter had begun to mingle with the music, the confused talking, and the noise of feet. She next saw a bright light streaming out of the cave, which seemed to have grown much deeper, and a quantity of little people,[1] in various coloured dresses, red predominating, dancing to a tune which she did not recognise.

I then bade her call out to the queen of the little people to come and talk with us. There was, however, no answer to her

[1] The people and faeries in Ireland are sometimes as big as we are, sometimes bigger, and sometimes, as I have been told, about three feet high. The old Mayo woman I so often quote, thinks that it is something in our eyes that makes them seem big or little.

command. I therefore repeated the words aloud myself, and in a moment she described a very beautiful tall woman, who came out of the cave. I too had by this time fallen into a kind of trance,[1] in which what we call the unreal had begun to take upon itself a masterful reality, and I had an impression, not anything I could call an actual vision, of gold ornaments and dark hair. I then bade the girl tell this tall queen to marshal her followers according to their natural divisions, that we might see them. I found as before that I had to repeat the command myself. The beings then came out of the cave, and drew themselves up, if I remember rightly, in four bands. One of these bands, according to her description, carried boughs of mountain ash in their hands, and another had necklaces made apparently of serpents' scales, but their dress I cannot remember. I asked their queen to tell the seer whether these caves were the greatest faery haunts in the neighbourhood. Her lips moved, but the answer was inaudible. I bade the seer lay her hand upon the breast

[1] The word "trance" gives a wrong impression. I had learned from Macgregor Mathers and his pupils to so suspend the will that the imagination moved of itself. The girl was, however, fully entranced, and the man so affected by her that he heard the children's voices as if with his physical ears. On two occasions, later on, her trance so affected me that I also heard or saw some part of what she did as if with physical eyes and ears. 1924.

of the queen, and after that she heard every word quite distinctly. No, this was not the greatest faery haunt, for there was a greater one a little farther ahead. I then asked her whether it was true that she and her people carried away mortals, and if so, whether they put another soul in the place of the one they had taken? "We change the bodies," was her answer. "Are any of you ever born into mortal life?" "Yes." "Do I know any who were among your people before birth?" "You do." "Who are they?" "It would not be lawful for you to know." I then asked whether she and her people were not "dramatisations of our moods"? "She does not understand," said my friend, "but says that her people are much like human beings, and do most of the things human beings do." I asked her other questions, as to her nature, and her purpose in the universe, but only seemed to puzzle her. At last she appeared to lose patience, for she wrote this message for me upon the sands—the sands of vision—"Be careful, and do not seek to know too much about us." Seeing that I had offended her, I thanked her for what she had shown and told, and let her depart again into her cave. In a little while the young girl awoke out of her trance, and felt the cold wind from the sea, and began to shiver.

"AND FAIR, FIERCE WOMEN"

One day a woman that I know came face to face with heroic beauty, that highest beauty which Blake says changes least from youth to age, a beauty which has been fading out of the arts, since that decadence we call progress set voluptuous beauty in its place. She was standing at the window, looking over to Knocknarea where Queen Maive is thought to be buried, when she saw, as she has told me, "the finest woman you ever saw travelling right across from the mountain and straight to her". The woman had a sword by her side and a dagger lifted up in her hand, and was dressed in white, with bare arms and feet. She looked "very strong, but not wicked", that is, not cruel. The old woman had seen the Irish giant, and "though he was a fine man", he was nothing to this woman, "for he was round, and could not have stepped out so soldierly"; "she was like Mrs. ——" a stately lady of the neighbourhood, "but she had no stomach

on her, and was slight and broad in the shoulders, and was handsomer than any one you ever saw; she looked about thirty". The old woman covered her eyes with her hands, and when she uncovered them the apparition had vanished. The neighbours were "wild with her", she told me, because she did not wait to find out if there was a message, for they were sure it was Queen Maive, who often shows herself to the pilots. I asked the old woman if she had seen others like Queen Maive, and she said, "Some of them have their hair down, but they look quite different, like the sleepy-looking ladies one sees in the papers. Those with their hair up are like this one. The others have long white dresses, but those with their hair up have short dresses, so that you can see their legs right up to the calf." After some careful questioning I found that they wore what might very well be a kind of buskin; she went on, "They are fine and dashing looking, like the men one sees riding their horses in twos and threes on the slopes of the mountains with their swords swinging." She repeated over and over, "There is no such race living now, none so finely proportioned," or the like, and then said, "The present Queen [1] is a nice, pleasant-looking woman, but she is not like her. What

[1] Queen Victoria.

makes me think so little of the ladies is that I see none as they be," meaning as the spirits. "When I think of her and of the ladies now, they are like little children running about without knowing how to put their clothes on right. Is it the ladies? Why, I would not call them women at all." The other day a friend of mine questioned an old woman in a Galway workhouse about Queen Maive, and was told that "Queen Maive was handsome, and overcame all her enemies with a hazel stick, for the hazel is blessed, and the best weapon that can be got. You might walk the world with it," but she grew "very disagreeable in the end—oh very disagreeable. Best not to be talking about it. Best leave it between the book and the hearer." My friend thought the old woman had got some scandal about Fergus son of Roy and Maive in her head.

And I myself met once with a young man in the Burren Hills who remembered an old poet who made his poems in Irish and had met when he was young, the young man said, one who called herself Maive, and said she was a queen "among them", and asked him if he would have money or pleasure. He said he would have pleasure, and she gave him her love for a time, and then went from him, and ever after he was very mournful. The young man had often heard

him sing the poem of lamentation that he made, but could only remember that it was "very mournful", and that he called her "beauty of all beauties".

1902.

ENCHANTED WOODS

I

Last summer, whenever I had finished my day's work, I used to go wandering in certain roomy woods, and there I would often meet an old countryman, and talk to him about his work and about the woods, and once or twice a friend came with me to whom he would open his heart more readily than to me. He had spent all his life lopping away the witch elm and the hazel and the privet and the hornbeam from the paths, and had thought much about the natural and supernatural creatures of the wood. He has heard the hedgehog—"grainne oge", he calls him—"grunting like a Christian", and is certain that he steals apples by rolling about under an apple tree until there is an apple sticking to every quill. He is certain too that the cats, of whom there are many in the woods, have a language of their own—some kind of old Irish. He says, "Cats were serpents, and they were made into cats

at the time of some great change in the world. That is why they are hard to kill, and why it is dangerous to meddle with them. If you annoy a cat it might claw or bite you in a way that would put poison in you, and that would be the serpent's tooth." Sometimes he thinks they change into wild cats, and then a nail grows on the end of their tails; but these wild cats are not the same as the marten cats, who have been always in the woods. The foxes were once tame, as the cats are now, but they ran away and became wild. He talks of all wild creatures except squirrels—whom he hates—with what seems an affectionate interest, though at times his eyes will twinkle with pleasure as he remembers how he made hedgehogs unroll themselves when he was a boy, by putting a wisp of burning straw under them.

I am not certain that he distinguishes between the natural and supernatural very clearly. He told me the other day that foxes and cats like, above all, to be in the "forths" and lisses after nightfall; and he will certainly pass from some story about a fox to a story about a spirit with less change of voice than when he is going to speak about a marten cat—a rare beast nowadays. Many years ago he used to work in the garden, and once they put him to sleep in

a garden-house where there was a loft full of apples, and all night he could hear people rattling plates and knives and forks over his head in the loft. Once, at any rate, he has seen an unearthly sight in the woods. He says, "One time I was out cutting timber over in Inchy, and about eight o'clock one morning when I got there I saw a girl picking nuts, with her hair hanging down over her shoulders, brown hair, and she had a good, clean face, and she was tall and nothing on her head, and her dress no way gaudy but simple, and when she felt me coming she gathered herself up and was gone as if the earth had swallowed her up. And I followed her and looked for her, but I never could see her again from that day to this, never again." He used the word clean as we would use words like fresh or comely.

Others too have seen spirits in the Enchanted Woods. A labourer told us of what a friend of his had seen in a part of the woods that is called Shanwalla, from some old village that was before the wood. He said, "One evening I parted from Lawrence Mangan in the yard, and he went away through the path in Shanwalla, an' bid me good-night. And two hours after, there he was back again in the yard, an' bid me light a candle that was in the stable. An' he told me that when he

got into Shanwalla, a little fellow about as high as his knee, but having a head as big as a man's body, came beside him and led him out of the path an' round about, and at last it brought him to the lime-kiln, and then it vanished and left him."

A woman told me of a sight that she and others had seen by a certain deep pool in the river. She said, "I came over the stile from the chapel, and others along with me; and a great blast of wind came and two trees were bent and broken and fell into the river, and the splash of water out of it went up to the skies. And those that were with me saw many figures, but myself I only saw one, sitting there by the bank where the trees fell. Dark clothes he had on, and he was headless."

A man told me that one day, when he was a boy, he and another boy went to catch a horse in a certain field, full of boulders and bushes of hazel and creeping juniper and rock-roses, that is where the lake side is for a little clear of the woods. He said to the boy that was with him, "I bet a button that if I fling a pebble on to that bush it will stay on it," meaning that the bush was so matted the pebble would not be able to go through it. So he took up "a pebble of cow-dung, and as soon as it

hit the bush there came out of it the most beautiful music that ever was heard". They ran away, and when they had gone about two hundred yards they looked back and saw a woman dressed in white, walking round and round the bush. "First it had the form of a woman, and then of a man, and it was going round the bush."

II

I often entangle myself in arguments more complicated than even those paths of Inchy as to what is the true nature of apparitions. But at other times I say as Socrates said when they told him a learned opinion about a nymph of the Ilissus, "The common opinion is enough for me"; and believe that all nature is full of invisible people, and that some of these are ugly or grotesque, some wicked or foolish, many beautiful beyond any one we have ever seen, and that the beautiful are not far away when we are walking in pleasant and quiet places. Even when I was a boy I could never walk in a wood without feeling that at any moment I might find before me somebody or something I had long looked for without knowing what I looked for. And now I will at times explore every little nook of some poor

coppice with almost anxious footsteps, so deep a hold has this imagination upon me. You too meet with a like imagination, doubtless, somewhere, wherever your ruling stars will have it, Saturn driving you to the woods, or the Moon, it may be, to the edges of the sea. I will not of a certainty believe that there is nothing in the sunset, where our forefathers imagined the dead following their shepherd the sun, or nothing but some vague presence as little moving as nothing. If beauty is not a gateway out of the net we were taken in at our birth, it will not long be beauty, and we will find it better to sit at home by the fire and fatten a lazy body or to run hither and thither in some foolish sport than to look at the finest show that light and shadow ever made among green leaves. I say to myself, when I am well out of that thicket of argument, that they are surely there, the divine people, for only we who have neither simplicity nor wisdom have denied them, and the simple of all times and the wise men of ancient times have seen them and even spoken to them. They live out their passionate lives not far off, as I think, and we shall be among them when we die if we but keep our natures simple and passionate. May it not even be that death shall unite us to all romance, and that some day we shall fight

dragons among blue hills, or come to that whereof all romance is but

> Foreshadowings mingled with the images
> Of man's misdeeds in greater days than these,

as the old men thought in *The Earthly Paradise* when they were in good spirits.

1902.

MIRACULOUS CREATURES

THERE are marten cats and badgers and foxes in the Enchanted Woods, but there are, it seems, mightier creatures, and the lake may hide what neither net nor line can take. These creatures are of the race of the white stag that flits in and out of the tales of Arthur, and of the evil pig that slew Diarmuid where Ben Bulben mixes with the sea wind. They are, as I conceive it, the wizard creatures of hope and fear, they are of them that fly and of them that follow among the thickets that are about the Gates of Death. A man I know remembers that his father was one night in the wood of Inchy, "where the lads of Gort used to be stealing rods. He was sitting by the wall, and the dog beside him, and he heard something come running from Owbawn Weir, and he could see nothing, but the sound of its feet on the ground was like the sound of the feet of a deer. And when it passed him, the dog got between him and the wall and scratched at it there as if it was afraid, but

still he could see nothing but only hear the sound of hoofs. So when it was past he turned and came away home." "Another time," the man says, "my father told me he was in a boat out on the lake with two or three men from Gort, and one of them had an eel-spear, and he thrust it into the water, and it hit something, and the man fainted and they had to carry him out of the boat to land, and when he came to himself he said that what he struck was like a calf, but whatever it was, it was not fish!"

1902.

ARISTOTLE OF THE BOOKS

THE friend who can get the wood-cutter to talk more readily than he will to anybody else went lately to see his old wife. She lives in a cottage not far from the edge of the woods, and is as full of old talk as her husband. This time she began to talk of Goban, the legendary mason, and his wisdom, but said presently, "Aristotle of the Books, too, was very wise, and he had a great deal of experience, but did not the bees get the better of him in the end? He wanted to know how they packed the comb, and he wasted the better part of a fortnight watching them, and he could not see them doing it. Then he made a hive with a glass cover on it and put it over them, and he thought to see. But when he went and put his eyes to the glass, they had it all covered with wax so that it was as black as the pot; and he was as blind as before. He said he was never rightly kilt till then. They had him that time surely!"

1902.

THE SWINE OF THE GODS

A FEW years ago a friend of mine told me of something that happened to him when he was a young man and out drilling with some Connaught Fenians. They were but a car-ful, and drove along a hillside until they came to a quiet place. They left the car and went further up the hill with their rifles, and drilled for a while. As they were coming down again they saw a very thin, long-legged pig of the old Irish sort, and the pig began to follow them. One of them cried out as a joke that it was a fairy pig, and they all began to run to keep up the joke. The pig ran too, and presently, how nobody knew, this mock terror became real terror, and they ran as for their lives. When they got to the car they made the horse gallop as fast as possible, but the pig still followed. Then one of them put up his rifle to fire, but when he looked along the barrel he could see nothing. Presently they turned a corner and came to a village. They told the people of the village what had happened, and the people of the

village took pitchforks and spades and the like, and went along the road with them to drive the pig away. When they turned the corner they could not find anything.

1902.

A VOICE

One day I was walking over a bit of marshy ground close to Inchy Wood when I felt, all of a sudden, and only for a second, an emotion which I said to myself was the root of Christian mysticism. There had swept over me a sense of weakness, of dependence on a great personal Being somewhere far off yet near at hand. No thought of mine had prepared me for this emotion, for I had been preoccupied with Ængus and Edain, and with Mannanan, Son of the Sea. That night I awoke lying upon my back and hearing a voice speaking above me and saying, "No human soul is like any other human soul, and therefore the love of God for any human soul is infinite, for no other soul can satisfy the same need in God." A few nights after this I awoke to see the loveliest people I have ever seen. A young man and a young girl dressed in olive-green raiment, cut like old Greek raiment, were standing at my bedside. I looked at the girl and noticed that her dress was gathered about her neck into a kind of

chain, or perhaps into some kind of stiff embroidery which represented ivy-leaves. But what filled me with wonder was the miraculous mildness of her face. There are no such faces now. It was beautiful, as few faces are beautiful, but it had neither, one would think, the light that is in desire or in hope or in fear or in speculation. It was peaceful like the faces of animals, or like mountain pools at evening, so peaceful that it was a little sad. I thought for a moment that she might be the beloved of Ængus, but how could that hunted, alluring, happy, immortal wretch have a face like this?

1902.

KIDNAPPERS

A LITTLE north of the town of Sligo, on the southern side of Ben Bulben, some hundreds of feet above the plain, is a small white square in the limestone. No mortal has ever touched it with his hand; no sheep or goat has ever browsed grass beside it. There is no more inaccessible place upon the earth, and to an anxious consideration few more encircled by terror. It is the door of faery-land. In the middle of night it swings open, and the unearthly troop rushes out. All night the gay rabble sweep to and fro across the land, invisible to all, unless perhaps where, in some more than commonly "gentle" place —Drumcliff or Drum-a-hair — the night-capped heads of "faery-doctors" or "cow-doctors" may be thrust from their doors to see what mischief the "gentry" are doing. To their trained eyes and ears doubtless the fields are covered by red-hatted riders, and the air is full of shrill voices—a sound like whistling, as an ancient Scottish seer has recorded, and wholly different from the talk

of the angels, who " speak much in the throat, like the Irish ", as Lilly, the astrologer, has wisely said. If there be a new-born baby or new-wed bride in the neighbourhood, the " doctors " will peer with more than common care, for the unearthly troop do not always return empty-handed. Sometimes a new-wed bride or a new-born baby goes with them into their mountains; the door swings to behind, and the new-born or the new-wed moves henceforth in the bloodless land of Faery; happy, the story has it, but doomed to melt at the last judgment like bright vapour, for the soul cannot live without sorrow. Through this door of white stone, and the other doors of that land where *geabheadh tu an sonas aer pighin* (" you can buy joy for a penny "), have gone those kings, queens, and princes whose stories are in our old Gaelic literature.

There suddenly appeared at the western corner of Market Street, Sligo, where the butcher's shop now is, as did a palace in Keats's *Lamia*, an apothecary's shop, ruled over by a certain unaccountable Dr. Opendon. Where he came from, none ever knew. There also was in Sligo, in those days, a woman, Ormsby by name, whose husband had fallen mysteriously sick. The doctors could make nothing of him. Nothing seemed wrong with him, yet weaker

and weaker he grew. Away went the wife to Dr. Opendon. She was shown into the shop parlour. A black cat was sitting straight up before the fire. She had just time to see that the sideboard was covered with fruit, and to say to herself, " Fruit must be wholesome when the doctor has so much," before Dr. Opendon came in. He was dressed all in black, the same as the cat, and his wife walked behind him dressed in black likewise. She gave him a guinea, and got a little bottle in return. Her husband recovered that time. Meanwhile the black doctor cured many people; but one day a rich patient died, and cat, wife, and doctor all vanished the night after. In a year the man Ormsby fell sick once more. Now he was a good-looking man, and his wife felt sure the " gentry " were coveting him. She went and called on the " faery-doctor " at Cairnsfoot. As soon as he had heard her tale, he went behind the back door and began muttering spells. Her husband got well this time also. But after a while he sickened again, the fatal third time, and away went she once more to Cairnsfoot, and out went the faery-doctor behind his back door and began muttering, but soon he came in and told her it was no use—her husband would die; and sure enough the man died, and ever after when she spoke of him Mrs. Ormsby shook

her head saying she knew well where he was, and it wasn't in heaven or hell or purgatory either. She probably believed that a log of wood was left behind in his place, but so bewitched that it seemed the dead body of her husband.

She is dead now herself, but many still living remember her. She was, I believe, for a time a servant or else a kind of pensioner of some relations of my own.

Sometimes those who are carried off are allowed after many years—seven usually—a final glimpse of their friends. Many years ago a woman vanished suddenly from a Sligo garden where she was walking with her husband. When her son, who was then a baby, had grown up he received word in some way, not handed down, that his mother was glamoured by faeries, and imprisoned for the time in a house in Glasgow and longing to see him. Glasgow in those days of sailing-ships seemed to the peasant mind almost over the edge of the known world, yet he, being a dutiful son, started away. For a long time he walked the streets of Glasgow; at last down in a cellar he saw his mother working. She was happy, she said, and had the best of good eating, and would he not eat? and therewith laid all kinds of food on the table; but he, knowing well that she was trying to cast on him the glamour by giving him faery

food, that she might keep him with her, refused and came home to his people in Sligo.

Some five miles southward of Sligo is a gloomy and tree-bordered pond, a great gathering-place of waterfowl, called, because of its form, the Heart Lake. Out of this lake, as from the white square stone in Ben Bulben, issues an unearthly troop. Once men began to drain it; suddenly one of them raised a cry that he saw his house in flames. They turned round, and every man there saw his own house burning. They hurried home to find it was but faery glamour. To this hour on the border of the lake is shown a half-dug trench—the signet of their impiety. A little way from this lake I heard a beautiful and mournful history of faery kidnapping. I heard it from a little old woman in a white cap, who sings in Gaelic, and moves from one foot to the other as though she remembered the dancing of her youth.

A young man going at nightfall to the house of his just married bride, met on the way a jolly company, and with them his bride. They were faeries, and had stolen her as a wife for the chief of their band. To him they seemed only a company of merry mortals. His bride, when she saw her old love, bade him welcome, but was most fearful lest he should eat the faery

food, and so be glamoured out of the earth into that bloodless dim nation, wherefore she set him down to play cards with three of the cavalcade; and he played on, realising nothing until he saw the chief of the band carrying his bride away in his arms. Immediately he started up, and knew that they were faeries, for all that jolly company melted into shadow and night. He hurried to his house, and as he drew near heard the cry of the keeners and knew that his wife was dead. Some noteless Gaelic poet had made this into a forgotten ballad, some odd verses of which my white-capped friend remembered and sang for me.[1]

Sometimes one hears of stolen people acting as good genii to the living, as in this tale, heard also close by the haunted pond, of John Kirwan of Castle Hacket. The Kirwans[2] are a family much rumoured of in peasant stories, and believed to be the descendants of a man and a spirit. They have ever been famous for beauty, and I

[1] There is a ballad in my *Wind among the Reeds*, now a section of *Later Poems*, on this theme. 1924.

[2] I have since heard that it was not the Kirwans, but their predecessors at Castle Hacket, the Hackets themselves, I think, who were descended from a man and a spirit, and were notable for beauty. I imagine that the mother of Lord Cloncurry was descended from the Hackets. It may well be that all through these stories the name of Kirwan has taken the place of the older name. 1902. Castle Hacket was burned by incendiaries during our civil war. 1924.

have read that the mother of the present Lord Cloncurry was of their tribe.

John Kirwan was a great horse-racing man, and once landed in Liverpool with a fine horse, going racing somewhere in middle England. That evening, as he walked by the docks, a slip of a boy came up and asked where he was stabling his horse. In such and such a place, he answered. "Don't put him there," said the slip of a boy; "that stable will be burnt to-night." He took his horse elsewhere, and sure enough the stable was burnt down. Next day the boy came and asked as reward to ride as his jockey in the coming race, and then was gone. The race-time came round. At the last moment the boy ran forward and mounted, saying, "If I strike him with the whip in my left hand I will lose, but if in my right hand bet all you are worth." For, said Paddy Flynn, who told me the tale, "the left arm is good for nothing. I might go on making the sign of the cross with it, and all that, come Christmas, and a Banshee would no more mind than if it was that broom." Well, the slip of a boy struck the horse with his right hand, and John Kirwan cleared the field out. When the race was over, "What can I do for you now?" said he. "Nothing but this," said the boy: "my mother has a cottage on your

land—they stole me from the cradle. Be good to her, John Kirwan, and wherever your horses go I will watch that no ill follows them; but you will never see me more." With that he made himself air, and vanished.

Sometimes animals are carried off—apparently drowned animals more than others. In Claremorris, Galway, Paddy Flynn told me, lived a poor widow with one cow and its calf. The cow fell into the river and was washed away. There was a man thereabouts who went to a red-haired woman—for such are supposed to be wise in these things—and she told him to take the calf down to the edge of the river, and hide himself and watch. He did as she had told him, and as evening came on the calf began to low, and after a while the cow came along the edge of the river and commenced suckling it. Then, as he had been told, he caught the cow's tail. Away they went at a great pace, across hedges and ditches, till they came to a royalty—Paddy Flynn's name for a rath. Therein he saw walking or sitting all the people who had died out of his village in his time. A woman was sitting on the edge with a child on her knees, and she called out to him to mind what the red-haired woman had told him, and he remembered she had said, "Bleed the

cow." So he stuck his knife into the cow and drew blood. That broke the spell, and he was able to turn her homeward. "Do not forget the spancel," said the woman with the child on her knees; "take the inside one." There were three spancels on a bush; he took one, and the cow was driven safely home to the widow.

There is hardly a valley or mountain-side where they cannot tell you of some one pillaged from amongst them. Two or three miles from the Heart Lake lives an old woman who was stolen away in her youth. After seven years she was brought home again for some reason or other, but she had no toes left. She had danced them off.

THE UNTIRING ONES

It is one of the great troubles of life that we cannot have any unmixed emotions. There is always something in our enemy that we like, and something in our sweetheart that we dislike. It is this entanglement of moods which makes us old, and puckers our brows and deepens the furrows about our eyes. If we could love and hate with as good heart as the Sidhe do, we might grow to be long-lived like them. But until that day their untiring joys and sorrows must ever be one-half of their fascination. Love with them never grows weary, nor can the circles of the stars tire out their dancing feet. The Donegal peasants remember this when they bend over the spade, or sit full of the heaviness of the fields beside the griddle at nightfall, and they tell stories about it that it may not be forgotten. A short while ago, they say, two little creatures, one like a young man, one like a young woman, came to a farmer's house, and spent the night sweeping the hearth and setting all tidy. The next

night they came again, and while the farmer was away, brought all the furniture up-stairs into one room, and having arranged it round the walls, for the greater grandeur, it seems, they began to dance. They danced on and on, and days and days went by, and all the country-side came to look at them, but still their feet never tired. The farmer did not dare to live at home the while; and after three months he made up his mind to stand it no more, and went and told them that the priest was coming. The little creatures when they heard this went back to their own country, and there their joy shall last as long as the points of the rushes are brown, the people say, and this is until God shall burn up the world with a kiss.

But it is not merely the Sidhe who know untiring days, for there have been men and women who, falling under their enchantment, have attained, perhaps by the right of their God-given spirits, an even more than faery abundance of life and feeling. Such a mortal was born long ago at a village in the south of Ireland. She lay asleep in a cradle, and her mother sat by rocking her, when a woman of the Sidhe came in, and said that the child was chosen to be the bride of the prince of the dim kingdom, but that as it would never do for his wife to grow old and die while he was

still in the first ardour of his love, she would be gifted with a faery life. The mother was to take the glowing log out of the fire and bury it in the garden, and her child would live as long as it remained unconsumed. The mother buried the log, and the child grew up, became a beauty, and married the prince, who came to her at nightfall. After seven hundred years the prince died, and another prince ruled in his stead and married the beautiful peasant girl in his turn; and after another seven hundred years he died also, and another prince and another husband came in his stead, and so on until she had had seven husbands. At last one day the priest of the parish called upon her, and told her that she was a scandal to the whole neighbourhood with her seven husbands and her long life. She was very sorry, she said, but she was not to blame, and then she told him about the log, and he went straight out and dug until he found it, and then they burned it, and she died, and was buried like a Christian, and everybody was pleased. Such a mortal too was Clooth-na-bare,[1] who

[1] Doubtless Clooth-na-bare should be Cailleac Bare, which would mean the old Woman Bare. Bare or Bere or Verah or Dera or Dhera was a very famous person, perhaps the mother of the Gods herself. Standish O'Grady found her, as he thinks, frequenting Lough Leath, or the Grey Lake on a mountain of the Fews. Perhaps Lough Ia is my mishearing, or the story-teller's mispronunciation of Lough Leath, for there are many Lough Leaths.

went all over the world seeking a lake deep enough to drown her faery life, of which she had grown weary, leaping from hill to lake and lake to hill, and setting up a cairn of stones wherever her feet lighted, until at last she found the deepest water in the world in little Lough Ia, on the top of the Bird's Mountain at Sligo.

The two little creatures may well dance on, and the woman of the log and Clooth-na-bare sleep in peace, for they have known untrammelled hate and unmixed love, and have never wearied themselves with "yes" and "no", or entangled their feet with the sorry net of "maybe" and "perhaps". The great winds came and took them up into themselves.

EARTH, FIRE AND WATER

Some French writer that I read when I was a boy, said that the desert went into the heart of the Jews in their wanderings and made them what they are. I cannot remember by what argument he proved them to be even yet the indestructible children of earth, but it may well be that the elements have their children. If we knew the Fire Worshippers better we might find that their centuries of pious observance have been rewarded, and that the fire has given them a little of its nature; and I am certain that the water, the water of the seas and of lakes and of mist and rain, has all but made the Irish after its image. Images form themselves in our minds perpetually as if they were reflected in some pool. We gave ourselves up in old times to mythology, and saw the Gods everywhere. We talked to them face to face, and the stories of that communion are so many that I think they outnumber all the like stories of all the rest of Europe. Even to-day our country people speak with the

dead and with some who perhaps have never died as we understand death; and even our educated people pass without great difficulty into the condition of quiet that is the condition of vision. We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet. Did not the wise Porphyry think that all souls come to be born because of water, and that "even the generation of images in the mind is from water"?

1902.

THE OLD TOWN

I FELL, one night some fifteen years ago, into what seemed the power of faery.

I had gone with a young man and his sister—friends and relations of my own—to pick stories out of an old countryman; and we were coming home talking over what he had told us. It was dark, and our imaginations were excited by his stories of apparitions, and this may have brought us, unknown to us, to the threshold, between sleeping and waking, where Sphinxes and Chimæras sit open-eyed and where there are always murmurings and whisperings. We had come under some trees that made the road very dark, when the girl saw a bright light moving slowly across the road. Her brother and myself saw nothing, and did not see anything until we had walked for about half-an-hour along the edge of the river and down a narrow lane to some fields where there were a ruined church covered with ivy, and the foundations of what was called "the Old Town", which

had been burned down, it was said, in Cromwell's day. We had stood for some few minutes, so far as I can recollect, looking over the fields full of stones and brambles and elder-bushes, when I saw a small bright light on the horizon, as it seemed, mounting up slowly towards the sky; then we saw other faint lights for a minute or two, and at last a bright flame like the flame of a torch moving rapidly over the river. We saw it all in such a dream, and it seems all so unreal, that I have never written of it until now, and hardly ever spoken of it, and even when thinking, because of some unreasonable impulse, I have avoided giving it weight in the argument. Perhaps I have felt that my recollections of things seen when the sense of reality was weakened must be untrustworthy. A few months ago, however, I talked it over with my two friends, and compared their somewhat meagre recollections with my own. That sense of unreality was all the more wonderful because the next day I heard sounds as unaccountable as were those lights, and without any emotion of unreality, and I remember them with perfect distinctness and confidence. The girl was sitting reading under a large old-fashioned mirror, and I was reading and writing a couple of yards away, when I heard a sound as if a shower of peas had been thrown against the mirror, and

while I was looking at it I heard the sound again, and presently, while I was alone in the room, I heard a sound as if something much bigger than a pea had struck the wainscoting beside my head. And after that for some days came other sights and sounds, not to me but to the girl, her brother, and the servants. Now it was a bright light, now it was letters of fire that vanished before they could be read, now it was a heavy foot moving about in the seemingly empty house. One wonders whether creatures who live, the country people believe, wherever men and women have lived in earlier times, followed us from the ruins of the old town? or did they come from the banks of the river by the trees where the first light had shone for a moment?

1902.

THE MAN AND HIS BOOTS

THERE was a doubter in Donegal, and he would not hear of ghosts or faeries, and there was a house in Donegal that had been haunted as long as man could remember, and this is the story of how the house got the better of the man. The man came into the house and lighted a fire in the room under the haunted one, and took off his boots and set them on the hearth, and stretched out his feet and warmed himself. For a time he prospered in his unbelief; but a little while after the night had fallen, and everything had got very dark, one of his boots began to move. It got up off the floor and gave a kind of slow jump towards the door, and then the other boot did the same, and after that the first boot jumped again. And thereupon it occurred to the man that an invisible being had got into his boots, and was now going away in them. When the boots reached the door they went upstairs slowly, and then the man heard them go tramp, tramp round the haunted room over his head. A few minutes

passed, and he could hear them again upon the stairs, and after that in the passage outside, and then one of them came in at the door, and the other gave a jump past it and came in too. They jumped along towards him, and then one got up and hit him, and afterwards the other hit him, and then again the first hit him, and so on, until they drove him out of the room, and finally out of the house. In this way he was kicked out by his own boots, and Donegal was avenged upon its doubter. It is not recorded whether the invisible being was a ghost or one of the Sidhe, but the fantastic nature of the vengeance is like the work of the Sidhe who live in the heart of fantasy.

A COWARD

One day I was at the house of my friend the strong farmer, who lives beyond Ben Bulben and Cope's mountain, and met there a young lad who seemed to be disliked by the two daughters. I asked why they disliked him, and was told he was a coward. This interested me, for some whom robust children of Nature take to be cowards are but men and women with a nervous system too finely made for their life and work. I looked at the lad; but no, that pink-and-white face and strong body had nothing of undue sensibility. After a little he told me his story. He had lived a wild and reckless life, until one day, two years before, he was coming home late at night, and suddenly felt himself sinking in, as it were, upon the ghostly world. For a moment he saw the face of a dead brother rise up before him, and then he turned and ran. He did not stop till he came to a cottage nearly a mile down the road. He flung himself against the door with so much of violence that he broke the thick wooden

bolt and fell upon the floor. From that day he gave up his wild life, but was a hopeless coward. Nothing could ever bring him to look, either by day or night, upon the spot where he had seen the face, and he often went two miles round to avoid it; nor could, he said, "the prettiest girl in the country" persuade him to see her home after a party if he were alone.

THE THREE O'BYRNES AND THE EVIL FAERIES

In the dim kingdom there is a great abundance of all excellent things. There is more love there than upon the earth; there is more dancing there than upon the earth; and there is more treasure there than upon the earth. In the beginning the earth was perhaps made to fulfil the desire of man, but now it has got old and fallen into decay. What wonder if we try and pilfer the treasures of that other kingdom!

A friend was once at a village near Slieve League. One day he was straying about a rath called "Cashel Nore". A man with a haggard face and unkempt hair, and clothes falling in pieces, came into the rath and began digging. My friend turned to a peasant who was working near and asked who the man was. "That is the third O'Byrne," was the answer. A few days after he learned this story: A great quantity of treasure had been buried in the rath in pagan times, and a number of evil faeries set

to guard it; but some day it was to be found and belong to the family of the O'Byrnes. Before that day three O'Byrnes must find it and die. Two had already done so. The first had dug and dug until at last he got a glimpse of the stone coffin that contained it, but immediately a thing like a huge hairy dog came down the mountain and tore him to pieces. The next morning the treasure had again vanished deep into the earth. The second O'Byrne came and dug and dug until he found the coffin, and lifted the lid and saw the gold shining within. He saw some horrible sight the next moment, and went raving mad and soon died. The treasure again sank out of sight. The third O'Byrne is now digging. He believes that he will die in some terrible way the moment he finds the treasure, but that the spell will be broken, and the O'Byrne family made rich for ever, as they were of old.

A peasant of the neighbourhood once saw the treasure. He found the shin-bone of a hare lying on the grass. He took it up; there was a hole in it; he looked through the hole, and saw the gold heaped up under the ground. He hurried home to bring a spade, but when he got to the rath again he could not find the spot where he had seen it.

DRUMCLIFF AND ROSSES

Drumcliff and Rosses were, are, and ever shall be, please Heaven! places of unearthly resort. I have lived near by them and in them, time after time, and thereby gathered much faery lore. Drumcliff is a wide green valley, lying at the foot of Ben Bulben, whereon the great St. Columba himself, the builder of many of the old ruins in the valley, climbed one day to get near heaven with his prayers. Rosses is a little sea-dividing, sandy plain, covered with short grass, like a green table-cloth, and lying in the foam midway between the round cairn-headed Knocknarea and "Ben Bulben, famous for hawks":

> But for Ben Bulben and Knocknarea
> Many a poor sailor 'd be cast away,

as the rhyme goes.

At the northern corner of Rosses is a little promontory of sand and rocks and grass: a mournful, haunted place. Few countrymen

would fall asleep under its low cliff, for he who sleeps here may wake "silly", the Sidhe having carried off his soul. There is no more ready short-cut to the dim kingdom than this plovery headland, for, covered and smothered now from sight by mounds of sand, a long cave goes thither "full of gold and silver, and the most beautiful parlours and drawing-rooms". Once, before the sand covered it, a dog strayed in, and was heard yelping helplessly deep underground in a fort far inland. These forts or raths, made before modern history had begun, cover all Rosses and all Columkille. The one where the dog yelped has, like most others, an underground beehive chamber in the midst. Once when I was poking about there, an unusually intelligent and "reading" countryman who had come with me, and waited outside, knelt down by the opening, and whispered in a timid voice, "Are you all right, sir?" I had been some little while underground, and he feared I had been carried off like the dog.

This fort or rath is on the ridge of a small hill, on whose northern slope lie a few stray cottages. One night a farmer's young son came from one of them and saw it all flaming, and ran towards it, but the "glamour" fell on him, and he sprang on to a fence, cross-legged, and commenced beating it with a

stick, for he imagined the fence was a horse. In the morning he was still beating his fence, still riding across country as it seemed to him, and they carried him home, where he remained a simpleton for three years before he came to himself again. A little later a farmer tried to level the fort. His cows and horses died, and all manner of trouble overtook him, and finally he himself was led home, and left useless with " his head on his knees by the fire to the day of his death ".

A few hundred yards southwards of the northern angle of Rosses is another angle having also its cave, though this one is not covered with sand. About twenty years ago a brig was wrecked near by, and three or four fishermen were put to watch the deserted hulk through the darkness. At midnight they saw sitting on a stone at the cave's mouth two red-capped fiddlers fiddling with all their might. The men fled. A great crowd of villagers rushed down to the cave to see the fiddlers, but the creatures had gone.

To the wise peasant the green hills and woods round him are full of never-fading mystery. When the aged countrywoman stands at her door in the evening, and, in her own words, " looks at the mountains and thinks of the goodness of God ", God is all the nearer, because the pagan powers are not far: because northward in Ben Bulben,

famous for hawks, the white square door swings open at sundown, and those wild unchristian riders rush forth upon the fields, while southward the White Lady, who is doubtless Maive herself, wanders under the broad cloud nightcap of Knocknarea. How may she doubt these things, even though the priest shakes his head at her? Did not a herd-boy, no long while since, see the White Lady? She passed so close that the skirt of her dress touched him. " He fell down, and was dead three days."

One night as I sat eating Mrs. H——'s soda-bread, her husband told me a longish story, much the best of all I heard in Rosses. Many a poor man from Fin M'Cool to our own days has had some such adventure to tell of, for the " good people " love to repeat themselves. At any rate the story-tellers do. " In the times when we used to travel by the canal," he said, " I was coming down from Dublin. When we came to Mullingar the canal ended, and I began to walk, and stiff and fatigued I was after the slowness. I had some friends with me, and now and then we walked, now and then we rode in a cart. So on till we saw some girls milking cows, and stopped to joke with them. After a while we asked them for a drink of milk. 'We have nothing to put it in here,' they said, 'but come to the house with us.'

We went home with them, and sat round the fire talking. After a while the others went, and left me, loath to stir from the good fire. I asked the girls for something to eat. There was a pot on the fire, and they took the meat out and put it on a plate, and told me to eat only the meat that came off the head. When I had eaten, the girls went out, and I did not see them again. It grew darker and darker, and there I still sat, loath as ever to leave the good fire, and after a while two men came in, carrying between them a corpse. When I saw them coming I hid behind the door. Says one to the other, putting the corpse on the spit, 'Who'll turn the meat?' Says the other, 'Michael H——, come out of that and turn the meat.' I came out all of a tremble, and began turning the corpse. 'Michael H——,' says the one who spoke first, 'if you let it burn we'll have to put you on the spit instead'; and on that they went out. I sat there trembling and turning the corpse till towards midnight. The men came again, and the one said it was burnt, and the other said it was done right. But having fallen out over it, they both said they would do me no harm that time; and, sitting by the fire, one of them cried out: 'Michael H——, can you tell me a story?' 'Divil a one,' said I. On which he caught me by the shoulder, and put me out like a

shot. It was a wild blowing night. Never in all my born days did I see such a night—the darkest night that ever came out of the heavens. I did not know where I was for the life of me. So when one of the men came after me and touched me on the shoulder, with a 'Michael H——, can you tell a story now?' 'I can,' says I. In he brought me; and putting me by the fire, says: 'Begin.' 'I have no story but the one,' says I, 'that I was sitting here, and you two men brought in a corpse and put it on the spit, and set me turning it.' 'That will do,' says he; 'ye may go in there and lie down on the bed.' And I went, nothing loath; and in the morning where was I but in the middle of a green field!"

"Drumcliff" is a great place for omens. Before a prosperous fishing season a herring-barrel appears in the midst of a storm-cloud; and at a place called Columkille's Strand, a place of marsh and mire, an ancient boat, with St. Columba himself, comes floating in from sea on a moonlight night: a portent of a brave harvesting. They have their dread portents too. Some few seasons ago a fisherman saw, far on the horizon, renowned Hy Brazel, where he who touches shall find no more labour or care, nor cynic laughter, but shall go walking about under shadiest boscage, and enjoy the conversation of

Cuchullin and his heroes. A vision of Hy Brazel forebodes national troubles.

Drumcliff and Rosses are choke-full of ghosts. By bog, road, rath, hillside, sea-border they gather in all shapes: headless women, men in armour, shadow hares, fire-tongued hounds, whistling seals, and so on. A whistling seal sank a ship the other day. At Drumcliff there is a very ancient graveyard. *The Annals of the Four Masters* have this verse about a soldier named Denadhach, who died in 871: "A pious soldier of the race of Con lies under hazel crosses at Drumcliff". Not very long ago an old woman, turning to go into the churchyard at night to pray, saw standing before her a man in armour, who asked her where she was going. It was the "pious soldier of the race of Con", says local wisdom, still keeping watch, with his ancient piety, over the graveyard. Again, the custom is still common hereabouts of sprinkling the door-step with the blood of a chicken on the death of a very young child, thus (as belief is) drawing into the blood the evil spirits from the too weak soul. Blood is a great gatherer of evil spirits. To cut your hand on a stone on going into a fort is said to be very dangerous.

There is no more curious ghost in Drumcliff or Rosses than the snipe-ghost. There

is a bush behind a house in a village that I know well: for excellent reasons I do not say whether in Drumcliff or Rosses or on the slope of Ben Bulben, or even on the plain round Knocknarea. There is a history concerning the house and the bush. A man once lived there who found on the quay of Sligo a package containing three hundred pounds in notes. It was dropped by a foreign sea captain. This my man knew, but said nothing. It was money for freight, and the sea captain, not daring to face his owners, committed suicide in mid-ocean. Shortly afterwards my man died. His soul could not rest. At any rate, strange sounds were heard round his house. The wife was often seen by those still alive out in the garden praying at the bush I have spoken of, for the shade of the dead man appeared there at times. The bush remains to this day: once portion of a hedge, it now stands by itself, for no one dare put spade or pruning-knife about it. As to the strange sounds and voices, they did not cease till a few years ago, when, during some repairs, a snipe flew out of the solid plaster and away; the troubled ghost, say the neighbours, of the note-finder was at last dislodged.

My forebears and relations have lived near Rosses and Drumcliff these many years. A few miles northward I am wholly a stranger,

and can find nothing. When I ask for stories of the faeries, my answer is some such as was given me by a woman who lives near a white stone fort—one of the few stone ones in Ireland—under the seaward angle of Ben Bulben: "They always mind their own affairs and I always mind mine": for it is dangerous to talk of them. Only friendship for yourself or knowledge of your forebears will loosen these cautious tongues. One friend of mine (I do not give his name for fear of gaugers) has the science of unpacking the stubbornest heart, but then he supplies the *potheen*-makers with grain from his own fields. Besides, he is descended from a noted Gaelic magician, and he has a kind of prescriptive right to hear tell of all kind of otherworld creatures. They are relations of his, if all people say concerning the parentage of magicians be true.

THE THICK SKULL OF THE FORTUNATE

I

Once a number of Icelandic peasantry found a very thick skull in the cemetery where the poet Egil was buried. Its great thickness made them feel certain it was the skull of a great man, doubtless of Egil himself. To be doubly sure they put it on a wall and hit it hard blows with a hammer. It got white where the blows fell but did not break, and they were convinced that it was in truth the skull of the poet, and worthy of every honour. In Ireland we have much kinship with the Icelanders, or "Danes" as we call them and all other dwellers in the Scandinavian countries. In some of our mountainous and barren places, and in our seaboard villages, we still test each other in much the same way the Icelanders tested the head of Egil. We may have acquired the custom from those ancient Danish pirates, whose descendants the people of Rosses tell me still remember

every field and hillock in Ireland which once belonged to their forebears, and are able to describe Rosses itself as well as any native. There is one seaboard district known as Roughley, where the men are never known to shave or trim their wild red beards, and where there is a fight ever on foot. I have seen them at a boat-race fall foul of each other, and after much loud Gaelic, strike each other with oars. The first boat had gone aground, and by dint of hitting out with the long oars kept the second boat from passing, only to give the victory to the third. One day, the Sligo people say, a man from Roughley was tried in Sligo for breaking a skull in a row, and made the defence, not unknown in Ireland, that some heads are so thin you cannot be responsible for them. Having turned with a look of passionate contempt towards the solicitor who was prosecuting, and cried, "that little fellow's skull if ye were to hit it would go like an egg-shell", he beamed upon the judge, and said in a wheedling voice, "but a man might wallop away at your lordship's for a fortnight".

II

I wrote all this years ago, out of what were even then old memories. I was in Roughley

the other day, and found it much like other desolate places. I may have been thinking of Moughorow, a much wilder place, for the memories of one's childhood are brittle things to lean upon.

1902.

THE RELIGION OF A SAILOR

A SEA captain when he stands upon the bridge, or looks out from his deck-house, thinks much about God and about the world. Away in the valley yonder among the corn and the poppies men may well forget all things except the warmth of the sun upon the face, and the kind shadow under the hedge; but he who journeys through storm and darkness must needs think and think. One July a couple of years ago I took my supper with a Captain Moran on board the s.s. *Margaret*, that had put into a western river from I know not where. I found him a man of many notions all flavoured with his personality, as is the way with sailors.

"Sur," said he, "did you ever hear tell of the sea captain's prayer?"

"No," said I; "what is it?"

"It is," he replied, "'O Lord, give me a stiff upper lip.'"

"And what does that mean?"

"It means," he said, "that when they come to me some night and wake me up, and

say, 'Captain, we're going down,' that I won't make a fool o' meself. Why, sur, we war in mid Atlantic, and I standin' on the bridge, when the third mate comes up to me lookin' mortial bad. Says he, 'Captain, all's up with us.' Says I, 'Didn't you know when you joined that a certain percentage go down every year?' 'Yes, sur,' says he; and says I, 'Aren't you paid to go down?' 'Yes, sur,' says he; and says I, 'Then go down like a man, and be damned to you!'"

CONCERNING THE NEARNESS TOGETHER OF HEAVEN, EARTH, AND PURGATORY

In Ireland this world and the world we go to after death are not far apart. I have heard of a ghost that was many years in a tree and many years in the archway of a bridge, and my old Mayo woman says, "There is a bush up at my own place, and the people do be saying that there are two souls doing their penance under it. When the wind blows one way the one has shelter, and when it blows from the north the other has shelter. It is twisted over with the way they be rooting under it for shelter. I don't believe it, but there is many a one would not pass by it at night." Indeed there are times when the worlds are so near together that it seems as if our earthly chattels were no more than the shadows of things beyond. A lady I knew once saw a village child running about with a long trailing petticoat upon her, and asked why she did not have it cut short. "It was

my grandmother's," said the child; "would you have her going about yonder with her petticoat up to her knees, and she dead but four days?" I have read a story of a woman whose ghost haunted her people because they had made her grave-clothes so short that the fires of purgatory burned her knees. The peasantry expect to have beyond the grave houses much like their earthly houses, only there the thatch will never grow leaky, nor the white walls lose their lustre, nor shall the dairy be at any time empty of good milk and butter. But now and then a landlord or an agent or a gauger will go by begging for bread, to show how God divides the righteous from the unrighteous.

1892 and 1902.

THE EATERS OF PRECIOUS STONES

SOMETIMES when I have been shut off from common interests, and have for a little forgotten to be restless, I get waking dreams, now faint and shadow-like, now vivid and solid-looking, like the material world under my feet. Whether they be faint or vivid, they are ever beyond the power of my will to alter in any way. They have their own will, and sweep hither and thither, and change according to its commands. One day I saw faintly an immense pit of blackness, round which went a circular parapet, and on this parapet sat innumerable apes eating precious stones out of the palms of their hands. The stones glittered green and crimson, and the apes devoured them with an insatiable hunger. I knew that I saw my own Hell there, the Hell of the artist, and that all who sought after beautiful and wonderful things with too avid a thirst, lost peace and form and became shapeless and common. I have seen into other people's hells also, and saw in one

an infernal Peter, who had a black face and white lips, and who weighed on a curious double scales not only the evil deeds committed, but the good deeds left undone, of certain invisible shades. I could see the scales go up and down, but I could not see the shades who were, I knew, crowding about him. I saw on another occasion a quantity of demons of all kinds of shapes—fish-like, serpent-like, ape-like, and dog-like—sitting about a black pit such as that in my own Hell, and looking at the moon-like reflection of the Heavens which shone up from the depths of the pit.

OUR LADY OF THE HILLS

When we were children we did not say at such a distance from the post-office, or so far from the butcher's or the grocer's, but measured things by the covered well in the wood, or by the burrow of the fox in the hill. We belonged then to God and to His works, and to things come down from the ancient days. We would not have been greatly surprised had we met the shining feet of an angel among the white mushrooms upon the mountains, for we knew in those days immense despair, unfathomed love—every eternal mood,—but now the draw-net is about our feet. A few miles eastward of Lough Gill, a young Protestant girl, who was both pretty herself and prettily dressed in blue and white, wandered up among those mountain mushrooms, and I have a letter of hers telling how she met a troop of children, and became a portion of their dream. When they first saw her they threw themselves face down in a bed of rushes, as if in a great fear; but after a little other children came about

them, and they got up and followed her almost bravely. She noticed their fear, and presently stood still and held out her arms. A little girl threw herself into them with the cry, "Ah, you are the Virgin out o' the picture!" "No," said another, coming near also, "she is a sky faery, for she has the colour of the sky." "No," said a third, "she is the faery out of the foxglove grown big." The other children, however, would have it that she was indeed the Virgin, for she wore the Virgin's colours. Her good Protestant heart was greatly troubled, and she got the children to sit down about her, and tried to explain who she was, but they would have none of her explanation. Finding explanation of no avail, she asked had they ever heard of Christ? "Yes," said one; "but we do not like Him, for He would kill us if it were not for the Virgin." "Tell Him to be good to me," whispered another into her ear. "He would not let me near Him, for dad says I am a divil," burst out a third.

She talked to them a long time about Christ and the apostles, but was finally interrupted by an elderly woman with a stick, who, taking her to be some adventurous hunter for converts, drove the children away, despite their explanation that here was the great Queen of Heaven come to walk upon the mountain and be kind to them. When

the children had gone she went on her way, and had walked about half-a-mile, when the child who was called " a divil " jumped down from the high ditch by the lane, and said she would believe her " an ordinary lady " if she had " two skirts ", for " ladies always had two skirts ". The " two skirts " were shown, and the child went away crestfallen, but a few minutes later jumped down again from the ditch, and cried angrily, " Dad's a divil, mum's a divil, and I'm a divil, and you are only an ordinary lady, " and having flung a handful of mud and pebbles ran away sobbing. When my pretty Protestant had come to her own home she found that she had dropped the tassels of her parasol. A year later she was by chance upon the mountain, but wearing now a plain black dress, and met the child who had first called her the Virgin out o' the picture, and saw the tassels hanging about the child's neck, and said, " I am the lady you met last year, who told you about Christ." " No, you are not! no, you are not! no, you are not! " was the passionate reply.

THE GOLDEN AGE

A WHILE ago I was in the train, and getting near Sligo. The last time I had been there something was troubling me, and I had longed for a message from those beings or bodiless moods, or whatever they be, who inhabit the world of spirits. The message came, for one night I saw with blinding distinctness, as I lay between sleeping and waking, a black animal, half weasel, half dog, moving along the top of a stone wall, and presently the black animal vanished, and from the other side came a white weasel-like dog, his pink flesh shining through his white hair and all in a blaze of light; and I remembered a peasant belief about two faery dogs who go about representing day and night, good and evil, and was comforted by the excellent omen. But now I longed for a message of another kind, and chance, if chance there is, brought it, for a man got into the carriage and began to play on a fiddle made apparently of an old blacking-box, and though I am quite unmusical the sounds

filled me with the strangest emotions. I seemed to hear a voice of lamentation out of the Golden Age. It told me that we are imperfect, incomplete, and no more like a beautiful woven web, but like a bundle of cords knotted together and flung into a corner. It said that the world was once all perfect and kindly, and that still the kindly and perfect world existed, but buried like a mass of roses under many spadefuls of earth. The faeries and the more innocent of the spirits dwelt within it, and lamented over our fallen world in the lamentation of the wind-tossed reeds, in the song of the birds, in the moan of the waves, and in the sweet cry of the fiddle. It said that with us the beautiful are not clever and the clever are not beautiful, and that the best of our moments are marred by a little vulgarity, or by a needle-prick out of sad recollection, and that the fiddle must ever lament about it all. It said that if only they who live in the Golden Age could die we might be happy, for the sad voices would be still; but they must sing and we must weep until the Eternal gates swing open.

A REMONSTRANCE WITH SCOTSMEN FOR HAVING SOURED THE DISPOSITION OF THEIR GHOSTS AND FAERIES

Not only in Ireland is faery belief still extant. It was only the other day I heard of a Scottish farmer who believed that the lake in front of his house was haunted by a water-horse. He was afraid of it, and dragged the lake with nets, and then tried to pump it empty. It would have been a bad thing for the water-horse had he found him. An Irish peasant would have long since come to terms with the creature. For in Ireland there is something of timid affection between men and spirits. They only ill-treat each other in reason; each admits the other to have feelings. There are points beyond which neither will go. No Irish peasant would treat a captured faery as did the man Campbell tells of. He caught a kelpie, and tied her behind him on his horse. She was fierce, but he kept her quiet by driving an awl and a needle into her. They came to a river, and she grew very restless,

fearing to cross the water. Again he drove the awl and needle into her. She cried out, "Pierce me with the awl, but keep that slender, hair-like slave (the needle) out of me." They came to an inn. He turned the light of a lantern on her; immediately she dropped down "like a falling star", and changed into a lump of jelly. She was dead. Nor would they treat the faeries as one is treated in an old Highland poem. A faery loved a little child who used to cut turf at the side of a faery hill. Every day the faery put out his hand from the hill with an enchanted knife. The child used to cut the turf with the knife. It did not take long, the knife being charmed. Her brothers wondered why she was done so quickly. At last they resolved to watch, and find out who helped her. They saw the small hand come out of the earth, and the little child take from it the knife. When the turf was all cut, they saw her make three taps on the ground with the handle. The small hand came out of the hill. Snatching the knife from the child, they cut the hand off with a blow. The faery was never again seen. He drew his bleeding arm into the earth, thinking, as it is recorded, he had lost his hand through the treachery of the child.

In Scotland you are too theological, too gloomy. You have made even the Devil

religious. "Where do you live, good-wyf, and how is the minister?" he said to the witch when he met her on the high-road, as it came out in the trial. You have burnt all the witches. In Ireland we have left them alone. To be sure, the "loyal minority" knocked out the eye of one with a cabbage-stump on the 31st of March 1711, in the town of Carrickfergus. But then the "loyal minority" is half Scottish. You have discovered the faeries to be pagan and wicked. You would like to have them all up before the magistrate. In Ireland warlike mortals have gone among them, and helped them in their battles, and they in turn have taught men great skill with herbs, and permitted some few to hear their tunes. Carolan slept upon a faery rath. Ever after their tunes ran in his head, and made him the great musician he was. In Scotland you have denounced them from the pulpit. In Ireland they have been permitted by the priests to consult them on the state of their souls. Unhappily the priests have decided that they have no souls, that they will dry up like so much bright vapour at the last day; but more in sadness than in anger. The Catholic religion likes to keep on good terms with its neighbours.

These two different ways of looking at things have influenced in each country the

whole world of sprites and goblins. For their gay and graceful doings you must go to Ireland; for their deeds of terror to Scotland. Our Irish faery terrors have about them something of make-believe. When a countryman strays into an enchanted hovel, and is made to turn a corpse all night on a spit before the fire, we do not feel anxious; we know he will wake in the midst of a green field, the dew on his old coat. In Scotland it is altogether different. You have soured the naturally excellent disposition of ghosts and goblins. The piper M'Crimmon of the Hebrides shouldered his pipes and marched into a sea cavern, playing loudly, and followed by his dog. For a long time the people could hear the pipes. He must have gone nearly a mile, when they heard the sound of a struggle. Then the piping ceased suddenly. Some time went by, and then his dog came out of the cavern completely flayed, too weak even to howl. Nothing else ever came out of the cavern. Then there is the tale of the man who dived into a lake where treasure was thought to be. He saw a great coffer of iron. Close to the coffer lay a monster, who warned him to return whence he came. He rose to the surface; but the bystanders, when they heard he had seen the treasure, persuaded him to dive again. He dived. In a little while his heart and liver floated

up, reddening the water. No man ever saw the rest of his body.

These water-goblins and water-monsters are common in Scottish folk-lore. We have them too, but take them much less dreadfully. A hole in the Sligo river is haunted by one of these monsters. He is ardently believed in by many, but that does not prevent the country people playing with the subject, and surrounding it with deliberate fantasy. When I was a small boy I fished one day for congers in the monster's hole. Returning home, a great eel on my shoulder, his head flapping down in front, his tail sweeping the ground behind, I met a fisherman of my acquaintance. I began a tale of an immense conger, three times larger than the one I carried, that had broken my line and escaped. "That was him," said the fisherman. "Did you ever hear how he made my brother emigrate? My brother was a diver, as you know, and grubbed stones for the Harbour Board. One day the beast comes up to him, and says, 'What are you after?' 'Stones, sur,' says he. 'Don't you think you had better be going?' 'Yes, sur,' says he. And that's why my brother emigrated."

WAR

When there was a rumour of war with France a while ago, I met a poor Sligo woman, a soldier's widow, that I know, and I read her a sentence out of a letter I had just had from London: "The people here are mad for war, but France seems inclined to take things peacefully", or some like sentence. Her mind ran a good deal on war, which she imagined partly from what she had heard from soldiers, and partly from tradition of the rebellion of '98, but the word London doubled her interest, for she knew there were a great many people in London, and she herself had once lived in "a congested district". "There are too many over one another in London. They are getting tired of the world. It is killed they want to be. It will be no matter; but sure the French want nothing but peace and quietness. The people here don't mind the war coming. They could not be worse than they are. They may as well die soldierly before God. Sure they will get quarters in heaven."

Then she began to say that it would be a hard thing to see children tossed about on bayonets, and I knew her mind was running on traditions of the great rebellion. She said presently, "I never knew a man that was in a battle that liked to speak of it after. They'd sooner be throwing hay down from a hayrick." She told me how she and her neighbours used to be sitting over the fire when she was a girl, talking of the war that was coming, and now she was afraid it was coming again, for she had dreamed that all the bay was "stranded and covered with seaweed". I asked her if it was in the Fenian times that she had been so much afraid of war coming. But she cried out, "Never had I such fun and pleasure as in the Fenian times. I was in a house where some of the officers used to be staying, and in the daytime I would be walking after the soldiers' band, and at night I'd be going down to the end of the garden watching a soldier, with his red coat on him, drilling the Fenians in the field behind the house. One night the boys tied the liver of an old horse, that had been dead three weeks, to the knocker, and I found it when I opened the door in the morning." And presently our talk of war shifted, as it had a way of doing, to the battle of the Black Pig, which seems to her a battle between Ireland and

England, but to me an Armageddon which shall quench all things in the Ancestral Darkness again, and from this to sayings about war and vengeance. "Do you know," she said, "what the curse of the Four Fathers is? They put the man-child on the spear, and somebody said to them, 'You will be cursed in the fourth generation after you,' and that is why disease or anything always comes in the fourth generation."

1902.

THE QUEEN AND THE FOOL

I HAVE heard one Hearne, a witch-doctor, who is on the border of Clare and Galway, say that in "every household" of faery "there is a queen and a fool", and that if you are "touched" by either you never recover, though you may from the touch of any other in faery. He said of the fool that he was "maybe the wisest of all", and spoke of him as dressed like one of "the mummers that used to be going about the country". I remember seeing a long, lank, ragged man sitting by the hearth in the cottage of an old miller not far from where I am now writing, and being told that he was a fool; and from the stories that a friend has gathered for me I find that he is believed to go to faery in his sleep; but whether he becomes an *Amadán-na-Breena*, a fool of the forth, and is attached to a household there, I cannot tell. It was an old woman that I know well, and who has been in faery herself, that spoke to my friend about him. She said, "There are fools amongst them, and the

fools we see, like that *Amadán* of Ballylee, go away with them at night, and so do the woman fools that we call *Oinseachs* (apes)." A woman who is related to the witch-doctor on the border of Clare, and who can cure people and cattle by spells, said, " There are some cures I can't do. I can't help any one that has got a stroke from the queen or the fool of the forth. I knew of a woman that saw the queen one time, and she looked like any Christian. I never heard of any that saw the fool but one woman that was walking near Gort, and she said, ' There is the fool of the forth coming after me.' So her friends that were with her called out, though they could see nothing, and I suppose he went away at that, for she got no harm. He was like a big strong man, she said, and half naked, and that is all she said about him. I have never seen any myself, but I am a cousin of Hearne, and my uncle was away twenty-one years." The wife of the old miller said, " It is said they are mostly good neighbours, but the stroke of the fool is what there is no cure for; any one that gets that is gone. The *Amadán-na-Breena* we call him!" And an old woman who lives in the Bog of Kiltartan, and is very poor, said, " It is true enough, there is no cure for the stroke of the *Amadán-na-Breena*. There was an old man I knew

long ago, he had a tape, and he could tell what diseases you had with measuring you; and he knew many things. And he said to me one time, 'What month of the year is the worst?' and I said, 'The month of May, of course.' 'It is not,' he said; 'but the month of June, for that's the month that the *Amadán* gives his stroke!' They say he looks like any other man, but he's leathan (wide), and not smart. I knew a boy one time got a great fright, for a lamb looked over the wall at him with a beard on it, and he knew it was the *Amadán*, for it was the month of June. And they brought him to that man I was telling about, that had the tape, and when he saw him he said, 'Send for the priest, and get a Mass said over him.' And so they did, and what would you say but he's living yet and has a family! A certain Regan said, 'They, the other sort of people, might be passing you close here and they might touch you. But any that gets the touch of the *Amadán-na-Breena* is done for.' It's true enough that it's in the month of June he's most likely to give the touch. I knew one that got it, and he told me about it himself. He was a boy I knew well, and he told me that one night a gentleman came to him, that had been his landlord, and that was dead. And he told him to come along with him, for

he wanted him to fight another man. And when he went he found two great troops of them, and the other troop had a living man with them too, and he was put to fight him. And they had a great fight, and he got the better of the other man, and then the troop on his side gave a great shout, and he was left home again. But about three years after that he was cutting bushes in a wood and he saw the *Amadán* coming at him. He had a big vessel in his arms, and it was shining, so that the boy could see nothing else; but he put it behind his back then and came running, and the boy said he looked wild and wide, like the side of the hill. And the boy ran, and he threw the vessel after him, and it broke with a great noise, and whatever came out of it, his head was gone there and then. He lived for a while after, and used to tell us many things, but his wits were gone. He thought they mightn't have liked him to beat the other man, and he used to be afraid something would come on him." And an old woman in a Galway workhouse, who had some little knowledge of Queen Maive, said the other day, "The *Amadán-na-Breena* changes his shape every two days. Sometimes he comes like a youngster, and then he'll come like the worst of beasts, trying to give the touch he used to be. I heard it said of late he was shot, but

I think myself it would be hard to shoot him."

I knew a man who was trying to bring before his mind's eye an image of Ængus, the old Irish god of love and poetry and ecstasy, who changed four of his kisses into birds, and suddenly the image of a man with a cap and bells rushed before his mind's eye, and grew vivid and spoke and called itself "Ængus' messenger". And I knew another man, a truly great seer, who saw a white fool in a visionary garden, where there was a tree with peacocks' feathers instead of leaves, and flowers that opened to show little human faces when the white fool had touched them with his coxcomb, and he saw at another time a white fool sitting by a pool and smiling and watching images of beautiful women floating up from the pool.

What else can death be but the beginning of wisdom and power and beauty? and foolishness may be a kind of death. I cannot think it wonderful that many should see a fool with a shining vessel of some enchantment or wisdom or dream too powerful for mortal brains in " every household of them ". It is natural, too, that there should be a queen to every household of them, and that one should hear little of their kings, for women come more easily than men to that wisdom which ancient peoples, and all wild peoples

even now, think the only wisdom. The self, which is the foundation of our knowledge, is broken in pieces by foolishness, and is forgotten in the sudden emotions of women, and therefore fools may get, and women do get of a certainty, glimpses of much that sanctity finds at the end of its painful journey. The man who saw the white fool said of a certain woman, not a peasant woman, "If I had her power of vision I would know all the wisdom of the gods, and her visions do not interest her." And I know of another woman, also not a peasant woman, who would pass in sleep into countries of an unearthly beauty, and who never cared for anything but to be busy about her house and her children; and presently an herb doctor cured her, as he called it. Wisdom and beauty and power may sometimes, as I think, come to those who die every day they live, though their dying may not be like the dying Shakespeare spoke of. There is a war between the living and the dead, and the Irish stories keep harping upon it. They will have it that when the potatoes or the wheat or any other of the fruits of the earth decay, they ripen in faery, and that our dreams lose their wisdom when the sap rises in the trees, and that our dreams can make the trees wither, and that one hears the bleating of the lambs of faery in November, and that blind eyes can see

more than other eyes. Because the soul always believes in these, or in like things, the cell and the wilderness shall never be long empty, or lovers come into the world who will not understand the verse—

Heardst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heardst thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
How love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music when one's beloved is singing,
Is death?

1901.

THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE OF FAERY

Those that see the people of faery most often, and so have the most of their wisdom, are often very poor, but often, too, they are thought to have a strength beyond that of man, as though one came, when one has passed the threshold of trance, to those sweet waters where Maeldun saw the dishevelled eagles bathe and become young again.

There was an old Martin Roland, who lived near a bog a little out of Gort, who saw them often from his young days, and always towards the end of his life, though I would hardly call him their friend. He told me a few months before his death that "they" would not let him sleep at night with crying things at him in Irish, and with playing their pipes. He had asked a friend of his what he should do, and the friend had told him to buy a flute, and play on it when they began to shout or to play on their pipes, and maybe they would give up annoying him; and he did, and they always went out into the field

when he began to play. He showed me the pipe, and blew through it, and made a noise, but he did not know how to play; and then he showed me where he had pulled his chimney down, because one of them used to sit up on it and play on the pipes. A friend of his and mine went to see him a little time ago, for she heard that " three of them " had told him he was to die. He said they had gone away after warning him, and that the children (children they had " taken ", I suppose) who used to come with them, and play about the house with them, had " gone to some other place ", because " they found the house too cold for them, maybe "; and he died a week after he had said these things.

His neighbours were not certain that he really saw anything in his old age, but they were all certain that he saw things when he was a young man. His brother said, " Old he is, and it's all in his brain the things he sees. If he was a young man we might believe in him." But he was improvident, and never got on with his brothers. A neighbour said, " The poor man! They say they are mostly in his head now, but sure he was a fine fresh man twenty years ago the night he saw them linked in two lots, like young slips of girls walking together. It was the night they took away Fallon's little girl." And she told how Fallon's little girl

had met a woman "with red hair that was as bright as silver", who took her away. Another neighbour, who was herself "clouted over the ear" by one of them for going into a fort where they were, said, "I believe it's mostly in his head they are; and when he stood in the door last night I said, 'The wind does be always in my ears, and the sound of it never stops,' to make him think it was the same with him; but he says, 'I hear them singing and making music all the time, and one of them is after bringing out a little flute, and it's on it he's playing to them.' And this I know, that when he pulled down the chimney where he said the piper used to be sitting and playing, he lifted up stones, and he an old man, that I could not have lifted when I was young and strong."

A friend has sent me from Ulster an account of one who was on terms of true friendship with the people of faery. It has been taken down accurately, for my friend, who had heard the old woman's story some time before I heard of it, got her to tell it over again, and wrote it out at once. She began by telling the old woman that she did not like being in the house alone because of the ghosts and faeries; and the old woman said, "There's nothing to be frightened about in faeries, miss. Many's the time I talked to a woman myself that was a faery,

or something of the sort, and no less and more than mortal anyhow. She used to come about your grandfather's house—your mother's grandfather, that is—in my young days. But you'll have heard all about her." My friend said that she had heard about her, but a long time before, and she wanted to hear about her again; and the old woman went on, "Well, dear, the very first time ever I heard word of her coming about was when your uncle—that is, your mother's uncle —Joseph married, and was building a house for his wife, for he brought her first to his father's, up at the house by the Lough. My father and us were living nigh hand to where the new house was to be built, to overlook the men at their work. My father was a weaver, and brought his looms and all there into a cottage that was close by. The foundations were marked out, and the building stones lying about, but the masons had not come yet; and one day I was standing with my mother fornent the house, when we sees a smart wee woman coming up the field over the burn to us. I was a bit of a girl at the time, playing about and sporting myself, but I mind her as well as if I saw her there now!" My friend asked how the woman was dressed, and the old woman said, "It was a grey cloak she had on, with a green cashmere skirt and a black silk handkercher

tied round her head, like the countrywomen did use to wear in them times." My friend asked, "How wee was she?" And the old woman said, "Well now, she wasn't wee at all when I think of it, for all we called her the Wee Woman. She was bigger than many a one, and yet not tall as you would say. She was like a woman about thirty, brown-haired and round in the face. She was like Miss Betty, your grandmother's sister, and Betty was like none of the rest, not like your grandmother, nor any of them. She was round and fresh in the face, and she never was married, and she never would take any man; and we used to say that the Wee Woman—her being like Betty—was, maybe, one of their own people that had been took off before she grew to her full height, and for that she was always following us and warning and foretelling. This time she walks straight over to where my mother was standing. 'Go over to the Lough this minute!'—ordering her like that—'Go over to the Lough, and tell Joseph that he must change the foundation of this house to where I'll show you fornent the thorn-bush. That is where it is to be built, if he is to have luck and prosperity, so do what I'm telling ye this minute.' The house was being built on 'the path', I suppose—the path used by the people of faery in their

journeys, and my mother brings Joseph down and shows him, and he changes the foundation, the way he was bid, but didn't bring it exactly to where was pointed, and the end of that was, when he come to the house, his own wife lost her life with an accident that come to a horse that hadn't room to turn right with a harrow between the bush and the wall. The Wee Woman was queer and angry when next she come, and says to us, 'He didn't do as I bid him, but he'll see what he'll see.'" My friend asked where the woman came from this time, and if she was dressed as before, and the woman said, "Always the same way, up the field beyant the burn. It was a thin sort of shawl she had about her in summer, and a cloak about her in winter; and many and many a time she came, and always it was good advice she was giving to my mother, and warning her what not to do if she would have good luck. There was none of the other children of us ever seen her unless me; but I used to be glad when I seen her coming up the burn, and would run out and catch her by the hand and the cloak, and call to my mother, 'Here's the Wee Woman!' No man body ever seen her. My father used to be wanting to, and was angry with my mother and me, thinking we were telling lies and talking foolish like. And so one day when she had come, and was sitting by the

fireside talking to my mother, I slips out to the field where he was digging. 'Come up,' says I, 'if ye want to see her. She's sitting at the fireside now, talking to mother.' So in he comes with me and looks round angry like and sees nothing, and he up with a broom that was near hand and hits me a crig with it. 'Take that now!' says he, 'for making a fool of me!' and away with him as fast as he could, and queer and angry with me. The Wee Woman says to me then, 'Ye got that now for bringing people to see me. No man body ever seen me, and none ever will.'

"There was one day, though, she gave him a queer fright anyway, whether he had seen her or not. He was in among the cattle when it happened, and he comes up to the house all trembling like. 'Don't let me hear you say another word of your Wee Woman. I have got enough of her this time.' Another time, all the same, he was up Gortin to sell horses, and before he went off, in steps the Wee Woman and says she to my mother, holding out a sort of a weed, 'Your man is gone up by Gortin, and there's a bad fright waiting him coming home, but take this and sew it in his coat, and he'll get no harm by it.' My mother takes the herb, but thinks to herself, 'Sure there's nothing in it,' and throws it on the floor, and lo

and behold, and sure enough! coming home from Gortin, my father got as bad a fright as ever he got in his life. What it was I don't right mind, but anyway he was badly damaged by it. My mother was in a queer way, frightened of the Wee Woman, after what she done, and sure enough the next time she was angry. 'Ye didn't believe me,' she said, 'and ye threw the herb I gave ye in the fire, and I went far enough for it.' There was another time she came and told how William Hearne was dead in America. 'Go over,' she says, 'to the Lough, and say that William is dead, and he died happy, and this was the last Bible chapter ever he read,' and with that she gave the verse and chapter. 'Go,' she says, 'and tell them to read them at the next class meeting, and that I held his head while he died.' And sure enough word came after that how William had died on the day she named. And, doing as she bid about the chapter and hymn, they never had such a prayer-meeting as that. One day she and me and my mother was standing talking, and she was warning her about something, when she says of a sudden, 'Here comes Miss Letty in all her finery, and it's time for me to be off.' And with that she gave a swirl round on her feet, and raises up in the air, and round and round

she goes, and up and up, as if it was a winding stairs she went up, only far swifter.[1] She went up and up, till she was no bigger than a bird up against the clouds, singing and singing the whole time the loveliest music I ever heard in my life from that day to this. It wasn't a hymn she was singing, but poetry, lovely poetry, and me and my mother stands gaping up, and all of a tremble. 'What is she at all, mother?' says I. 'Is it an angel she is, or a faery woman, or what?' With that up come Miss Letty, that was your grandmother, dear, but Miss Letty she was then, and no word of her being anything else, and she wondered to see us gaping up that way, till me and my mother told her of it. She went on gay-dressed then, and was lovely looking. She was up the lane where none of us could see her coming forward when the Wee Woman rose up in that queer way, saying, 'Here comes Miss Letty in all her finery.' Who knows to what far country she went, or to see whom dying?

"It was never after dark she came, but daylight always, as far as I mind, but wanst, and that was on a Hallow Eve night. My

[1] A countryman near Coole told me of a spirit so ascending. Swedenborg, in his *Spiritual Diary*, speaks of gyres of spirits, and Blake painted Jacob's Ladder as an ascending gyre. 1924.

THE IRISH CENTRAL LIBRARY FOR STUDENTS * THE DUBLIN

mother was by the fire, making ready the supper; she had a duck down and some apples. In slips the Wee Woman, 'I'm come to pass my Hallow Eve with you,' says she. 'That's right,' says my mother, and thinks to herself, 'I can give her her supper nicely.' Down she sits by the fire a while. 'Now I'll tell you where you'll bring my supper,' says she. 'In the room beyond there beside the loom—set a chair in and a plate.' 'When ye're spending the night, mayn't ye as well sit by the table and eat with the rest of us?' 'Do what you're bid, and set whatever you give me in the room beyant. I'll eat there and nowhere else.' So my mother sets her a plate of duck and some apples, whatever was going, in where she bid, and we got to our supper and she to hers; and when we rose I went in, and there, lo and behold ye, was her supper-plate a bit ate of each portion, and she clean gone!"

1897.

DREAMS THAT HAVE NO MORAL

The friend who heard about Maive and the hazel-stick went to the workhouse another day. She found the old people cold and wretched, "like flies in winter," she said; but they forgot the cold when they began to talk. A man had just left them who had played cards in a rath with the people of faery, who had played "very fair"; and one old man had seen an enchanted black pig one night, and there were two old people my friend had heard quarrelling as to whether Raftery or Callanan was the better poet. One had said of Raftery, "He was a big man, and his songs have gone through the whole world. I remember him well. He had a voice like the wind"; but the other was certain "that you would stand in the snow to listen to Callanan." Presently an old man began to tell my friend a story, and all listened delightedly, bursting into laughter now and then. The story, which I am going to tell just as it was told, was one of those old rambling moralless tales, which are the

delight of the poor and the hard driven, wherever life is left in its natural simplicity. They tell of a time when nothing had consequences, when even if you were killed, if only you had a good heart, somebody would bring you to life again with a touch of a rod, and when if you were a prince and happened to look exactly like your brother, you might go to bed with his queen, and have only a little quarrel afterwards. We too, if we were so weak and poor that everything threatened us with misfortune, might remember every old dream that has been strong enough to fling the weight of the world from its shoulders.

There was a king one time who was very much put out because he had no son, and he went at last to consult his chief adviser. And the chief adviser said, " It's easy enough managed if you do as I tell you. Let you send some one," says he, " to such a place to catch a fish. And when the fish is brought in, give it to the queen, your wife, to eat."

So the king sent as he was told, and the fish was caught and brought in, and he gave it to the cook, and bade her put it before the fire, but to be careful with it, and not to let any blob or blister rise on it. But it is impossible to cook a fish before the fire without the skin of it rising in some place or other, and so there came a blob on the

skin, and the cook put her finger on it to smooth it down, and then she put her finger into her mouth to cool it, and so she got a taste of the fish. And then it was sent up to the queen, and she ate it, and what was left of it was thrown out into the yard, and there were a mare in the yard and a greyhound, and they ate the bits that were thrown out.

And before a year was out, the queen had a young son, and the cook had a young son, and the mare had two foals, and the greyhound had two pups.

And the two young sons were sent out for a while to some place to be cared, and when they came back they were so much like one another no person could know which was the queen's son and which was the cook's. And the queen was vexed at that, and she went to the chief adviser and said, " Tell me some way that I can know which is my own son, for I don't like to be giving the same eating and drinking to the cook's son as to my own." " It is easy to know that," said the chief adviser, " if you will do as I tell you. Go you outside, and stand at the door they will be coming in by, and when they see you, your own son will bow his head, but the cook's son will only laugh."

So she did that, and when her own son bowed his head, her servants put a mark on

him that she would know him again. And when they were all sitting at their dinner after that, she said to Jack, that was the cook's son, "It is time for you to go away out of this, for you are not my son." And her own son, that we will call Bill, said, "Do not send him away, are we not brothers?" But Jack said, "I would have been long ago out of this house if I knew it was not my own father and mother owned it." And for all Bill could say to him, he would not stop. But before he went, they were by the well that was in the garden, and he said to Bill, "If harm ever happens to me, that water on the top of the well will be blood, and the water below will be honey."

Then he took one of the pups, and one of the two horses that were foaled after the mare eating the fish, and the wind that was after him could not catch him, and he caught the wind that was before him. And he went on till he came to a weaver's house, and he asked him for a lodging, and he gave it to him. And then he went on till he came to a king's house, and he sent in at the door to ask, "Did he want a servant?" "All I want," said the king, "is a boy that will drive out the cows to the field every morning, and bring them in at night to be milked." "I will do that for you," said Jack; so the king engaged him.

In the morning Jack was sent out with the four-and-twenty cows, and the place he was told to drive them to had not a blade of grass in it for them, but was full of stones. So Jack looked about for some place where there would be better grass, and after a while he saw a field with good green grass in it, and it belonging to a giant. So he knocked down a bit of the wall and drove them in, and he went up himself into an apple-tree and began to eat the apples. Then the giant came into the field. "Fee-faw-fum," says he, "I smell the blood of an Irishman. I see you where you are, up in the tree," he said; "you are too big for one mouthful, and too small for two mouthfuls, and I don't know what I'll do with you if I don't grind you up and make snuff for my nose." "As you are strong, be merciful," says Jack up in the tree. "Come down out of that, you little dwarf," said the giant, "or I'll tear you and the tree asunder." So Jack came down. "Would you sooner be driving red-hot knives into one another's hearts," said the giant, "or would you sooner be fighting one another on red-hot flags?" "Fighting on red-hot flags is what I'm used to at home," said Jack, "and your dirty feet will be sinking in them and my feet will be rising." So then they began the fight. The ground that was hard they made soft, and

the ground that was soft they made hard, and they made spring wells come up through the green flags. They were like that all through the day, no one getting the upper hand of the other, and at last a little bird came and sat on the bush and said to Jack, "If you don't make an end of him by sunset, he'll make an end of you." Then Jack put out his strength, and he brought the giant down on his knees. "Give me my life," says the giant, "and I'll give you the best gift that I have." "What is that?" said Jack. "A sword that nothing can stand against." "Where is it to be found?" said Jack. "In that red door you see there in the hill." So Jack went and got it out. "Where will I try the sword?" says he. "Try it on that ugly black stump of a tree," says the giant. "I see nothing blacker or uglier than your own head," says Jack. And with that he made one stroke, and cut off the giant's head that it went into the air, and he caught it on the sword as it was coming down, and made two halves of it. "It is well for you I did not join the body again," said the head, "or you would have never been able to strike it off again." "I did not give you the chance of that," said Jack.

So he brought the cows home at evening, and every one wondered at all the milk they

gave that night. And when the king was sitting at dinner with the princess, his daughter, and the rest, he said, "I think I only hear two roars from beyond to-night in place of three."

The next morning Jack went out again with the cows, and he saw another field full of grass, and he knocked down the wall and let the cows in. All happened the same as the day before, but the giant that came this time had two heads, and they fought together, and the little bird came and spoke to Jack as before. And when Jack had brought the giant down, he said, "Give me my life, and I'll give you the best thing I have." "What is that?" says Jack. "It's a suit that you can put on, and you will see every one but no one can see you." "Where is it?" said Jack. "It's inside that little red door at the side of the hill." So Jack went and brought out the suit. And then he cut off the giant's two heads, and caught them coming down and made four halves of them. And they said it was well for him he had not given them time to join the body.

That night when the cows came home they gave so much milk that all the vessels that could be found were filled up.

The next morning Jack went out again, and all happened as before, and the giant this time had four heads, and Jack made

eight halves of them. And the giant had told him to go to a little blue door in the side of the hill, and there he got a pair of shoes that when you put them on would go faster than the wind.

That night the cows gave so much milk that there were not vessels enough to hold it, and it was given to tenants and to poor people passing the road, and the rest was thrown out at the windows. I was passing that way myself, and I got a drink of it.

That night the king said to Jack, "Why is it the cows are giving so much milk these days? Are you bringing them to any other grass?" "I am not," said Jack, "but I have a good stick, and whenever they would stop still or lie down, I give them blows of it, that they jump and leap over walls and stones and ditches; that's the way to make cows give plenty of milk."

And that night at the dinner, the king said, "I hear no roars at all."

The next morning, the king and the princess were watching at the window to see what would Jack do when he got to the field. And Jack knew they were there, and he got a stick, and began to batter the cows, that they went leaping and jumping over stones, and walls, and ditches. "There is no lie in what Jack said," said the king then.

Now there was a great serpent at that time

used to come every seven years, and he had to get a king's daughter to eat, unless she would have some good man to fight for her. And it was the princess at the place Jack was had to be given to it that time, and the king had been feeding a bully underground for seven years, and you may believe he got the best of everything, to be ready to fight it.

And when the time came, the princess went out and the bully with her down to the shore, and when they got there what did he do, but to tie the princess to a tree, the way the serpent would be able to swallow her easy with no delay, and he himself went and hid up in an ivy-tree. And Jack knew what was going on, for the princess had told him about it, and had asked would he help her, but he said he would not. But he came out now, and he put on the sword he had taken from the first giant, and he came by the place the princess was, but she didn't know him. "Is that right for a princess to be tied to a tree?" said Jack. "It is not, indeed," said she, and she told him what had happened, and how the serpent was coming to take her. "If you will let me sleep for awhile with my head in your lap," said Jack, "you could wake me when it is coming." So he did that, and she awakened him when she saw the serpent coming, and

Jack got up and fought with it, and drove it back into the sea. And then he cut the rope that fastened her, and he went away. The bully came down then out of the tree, and he brought the princess to where the king was, and he said, "I got a friend of mine to come and fight the serpent to-day, where I was a little timorous after being so long shut up underground, but I'll do the fighting myself to-morrow."

The next day they went out again, and the same thing happened ; the bully tied up the princess where the serpent could come at her fair and easy, and went up himself to hide in the ivy-tree. Then Jack put on the suit he had taken from the second giant, and he walked out, and the princess did not know him, but she told him all that had happened yesterday, and how some young gentleman she did not know had come and saved her. So Jack asked might he lie down and take a sleep with his head in her lap, the way she could awake him. And all happened the same way as the day before. And the bully gave her up to the king, and said he had brought another of his friends to fight for her that day.

The next day she was brought down to the shore as before, and a great many people gathered to see the serpent that was coming to bring the king's daughter away. And

Jack and the princess had talked as before. But when he was asleep this time, she thought she would make sure of being able to find him again, and she took out her scissors and cut off a piece of his hair, and made a little packet of it and put it away. And she did another thing, she took off one of the shoes that were on his feet.

And when she saw the serpent coming she woke him, and he said, "This time I will put the serpent in a way that he will eat no more king's daughters." So he took out the sword he had got from the giant, and he put it in at the back of the serpent's neck, the way blood and water came spouting out that went for fifty miles inland, and made an end of him. And then he made off, and no one saw what way he went, and the bully brought the princess to the king, and claimed to have saved her, and it is he who was made much of, and was the right-hand man after that.

But when the feast was made ready for the wedding, the princess took out the bit of hair she had, and she said she would marry no one but the man whose hair would match that, and she showed the shoe and said that she would marry no one whose foot would not fit that shoe as well. And the bully tried to put on the shoe, but so much as his toe would not go into it, and as to his hair, it

didn't match at all to the bit of hair she had cut from the man that saved her.

So then the king gave a great ball, to bring all the chief men of the country together to try would the shoe fit any of them. And they were all going to carpenters and joiners getting bits of their feet cut off to try could they wear the shoe, but it was no use, not one of them could get it on.

Then the king went to his chief adviser and asked what could he do. And the chief adviser bade him to give another ball, and this time he said, "Give it to poor as well as rich."

So the ball was given, and many came flocking to it, but the shoe would not fit any one of them. And the chief adviser said, "Is every one here that belongs to the house?" "They are all here," said the king, "except the boy that minds the cows, and I would not like him to be coming up here."

Jack was below in the yard at the time, and he heard what the king said, and he was very angry, and he went and got his sword and came running up the stairs to strike off the king's head, but the man that kept the gate met him on the stairs before he could get to the king, and quieted him down, and when he got to the top of the stairs and the princess saw him, she gave a cry and ran into his arms. And they tried the shoe and it

fitted him, and his hair matched to the piece that had been cut off. So then they were married, and a great feast was given for three days and three nights.

And at the end of that time, one morning there came a deer outside the window, with bells on it, and they ringing. And it called out, "Here is the hunt, where are the huntsmen and the hounds?" So when Jack heard that he got up and took his horse and his hound and went hunting the deer. When it was in the hollow he was on the hill, and when it was on the hill he was in the hollow, and that went on all through the day, and when night fell it went into a wood. And Jack went into the wood after it, and all he could see was a mud-wall cabin, and he went in, and there he saw an old woman, about two hundred years old, and she sitting over the fire. "Did you see a deer pass this way?" says Jack. "I did not," says she, "but it's too late now for you to be following a deer, let you stop the night here." "What will I do with my horse and my hound?" said Jack. "Here are two ribs of hair," says she, "and let you tie them up with them." So Jack went out and tied up the horse and the hound, and when he came in again the old woman said, "You killed my three sons, and I'm going to kill you now," and she put on a pair of boxing-

gloves, each one of them nine stone weight, and the nails in them fifteen inches long. Then they began to fight, and Jack was getting the worst of it. "Help, hound!" he cried out, then "Squeeze, hair!" cried out the old woman, and the rib of hair that was about the hound's neck squeezed him to death. "Help, horse!" Jack called out, then "Squeeze, hair!" called out the old woman, and the rib of hair that was about the horse's neck began to tighten and squeeze him to death. Then the old woman made an end of Jack and threw him outside the door.

To go back now to Bill. He was out in the garden one day, and he took a look at the well, and what did he see but the water at the top was blood, and what was underneath was honey. So he went into the house again, and he said to his mother, "I will never eat a second meal at the same table, or sleep a second night in the same bed, till I know what is happening to Jack."

So he took the other horse and hound then, and set off, over hills where cock never crows and horn never sounds, and the devil never blows his bugle. And at last he came to the weaver's house, and when he went in, the weaver says, "You are welcome, and I can give you better treatment than I did the last time you came in to me," for he thought it

was Jack who was there, they were so much like one another. "That is good," said Bill to himself, "my brother has been here." And he gave the weaver the full of a basin of gold in the morning before he left.

Then he went on till he came to the king's house, and when he was at the door the princess came running down the stairs, and said, "Welcome to you back again." And all the people said, "It is a wonder you have gone hunting three days after your marriage, and to stop so long away." So he stopped that night with the princess, and she thought it was her own husband all the time.

And in the morning the deer came, and bells ringing on her, under the windows, and called out, "The hunt is here, where are the huntsmen and the hounds?" Then Bill got up and got his horse and his hound, and followed her over hills and hollows till they came to the wood, and there he saw nothing but the mud-wall cabin and the old woman sitting by the fire, and she bade him stop the night there, and gave him two ribs of hair to tie his horse and his hound with. But Bill was wittier than Jack was, and before he went out, he threw the ribs of hair into the fire secretly. When he came in the old woman said, "Your brother killed my three sons, and I killed him, and I'll kill you along with him." And she put her gloves on, and they began

the fight, and then Bill called out, "Help, horse!" "Squeeze, hair!" called the old woman. "I can't squeeze, I'm in the fire," said the hair. And the horse came in and gave her a blow of his hoof. "Help, hound!" said Bill then. "Squeeze, hair!" said the old woman. "I can't, I'm in the fire," said the second hair. Then the hound put his teeth in her, and Bill brought her down, and she cried for mercy. "Give me my life," she said, "and I'll tell you where you'll get your brother again, and his hound and horse." "Where's that?" said Bill. "Do you see that rod over the fire?" said she; "take it down and go outside the door where you'll see three green stones, and strike them with the rod, for they are your brother, and his horse and hound, and they'll come to life again." "I will, but I'll make a green stone of you first," said Bill, and he cut off her head with his sword.

Then he went out and struck the stones, and sure enough there were Jack and his horse and hound, alive and well. And they began striking other stones around, and men came from them, that had been turned to stones, hundreds and thousands of them.

Then they set out for home, but on the way they had some dispute or some argument together, for Jack was not well pleased to hear he had spent the night with his wife,

and Bill got angry, and he struck Jack with the rod, and turned him to a green stone. And he went home, but the princess saw he had something on his mind, and he said then, "I have killed my brother." And he went back then and brought him to life, and they lived happy ever after, and they had children by the basketful, and threw them out by the shovelful. I was passing one time myself, and they called me in and gave me a cup of tea.

1902.

BY THE ROADSIDE

Last night I went to a wide place on the Kiltartan road to listen to some Irish songs. While I waited for the singers an old man sang about that country beauty who died so many years ago, and spoke of a singer he had known who sang so beautifully that no horse would pass him, but must turn its head and cock its ears to listen. Presently a score of men and boys and girls, with shawls over their heads, gathered under the trees to listen. Somebody sang *Sa Muirnín Díles*, and then somebody else *Jimmy Mo Mílestór*, mournful songs of separation, of death, and of exile. Then some of the men stood up and began to dance, while another lilted the measure they danced to, and then somebody sang *Eiblín a Rúin*, that glad song of meeting which has always moved me more than other songs, because the lover who made it sang it to his sweetheart under the shadow of a mountain I looked at every day through my childhood. The voices melted into the twilight, and were mixed into the trees, and

when I thought of the words they too melted away, and were mixed with the generations of men. Now it was a phrase, now it was an attitude of mind, an emotional form, that had carried my memory to older verses, or even to forgotten mythologies. I was carried so far that it was as though I came to one of the four rivers, and followed it under the wall of Paradise to the roots of the Trees of Knowledge and of Life. There is no song or story handed down among the cottages that has not words and thoughts to carry one as far, for though one can know but a little of their ascent, one knows that they ascend like mediæval genealogies through unbroken dignities to the beginning of the world. Folk art is, indeed, the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, and because it refuses what is passing and trivial, the merely clever and pretty, as certainly as the vulgar and insincere, and because it has gathered into itself the simplest and most unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted. Wherever it is spoken by the fireside, or sung by the roadside, or carved upon the lintel, appreciation of the arts that a single mind gives unity and design to, spreads quickly when its hour is come.

In a society that has cast out imaginative tradition, only a few people—three or four

thousand out of millions—favoured by their own characters and by happy circumstance, and only then after much labour, have understanding of imaginative things, and yet "the imagination is the man himself". The churches in the Middle Age won all the arts into their service because men understood that when imagination is impoverished, a principal voice—some would say the only voice—for the awakening of wise hope and durable faith, and understanding charity, can speak but in broken words, if it does not fall silent. And so it has always seemed to me that we, who would re-awaken imaginative tradition by making old songs live again, or by gathering old stories into books, take part in the quarrel of Galilee. Those who are Irish and would spread foreign ways, which, for all but a few, are ways of spiritual poverty, take part also. Their part is with those who were of Jewry, and yet cried out, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend".

1901.

INTO THE TWILIGHT

Out-worn heart, in a time out-worn,
Come clear of the nets of wrong and right;
Laugh, heart, again in the grey twilight;
Sigh, heart, again in the dew of the morn.
Thy mother Eire is always young,
Dew ever shining and twilight grey;
Though hope fall from thee or love decay
Burning in fires of a slanderous tongue.
Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill,
For there the mystical brotherhood
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood
And river and stream work out their will.
And God stands winding his lonely horn;
And Time and the World are ever in flight,
And love is less kind than the grey twilight,
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

THE SECRET ROSE

As for living, our servants will do that for us.—*Villiers de L'Isle Adam.*

Helen, when she looked in her mirror, and saw there the wrinkles of old age, wept, and wondered that she had twice been carried away.—*From Leonardo da Vinci's note books.*

TO THE SECRET ROSE

Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,
Enfold me in my hour of hours; where those
Who sought thee at the Holy Sepulchre,
Or in the wine-vat, dwell beyond the stir
And tumult of defeated dreams; and deep
Among pale eyelids heavy with the sleep
Men have named beauty. Your great leaves
enfold
The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and gold
Of the crowned Magi; and the king whose eyes
Saw the Pierced Hands and Rood of Elder
rise
In druid vapour and make the torches dim;
Till vain frenzy awoke and he died; and him
Who met Fand walking among flaming dew,
By a grey shore where the wind never blew,
And lost the world and Emir for a kiss;
And him who drove the gods out of their liss
And till a hundred morns had flowered red
Feasted, and wept the barrows of his dead;
And the proud dreaming king who flung the
crown
And sorrow away, and calling bard and clown

Dwelt among wine-stained wanderers in deep
woods;
And him who sold tillage and house and goods,
And sought through lands and islands number-
less years
Until he found with laughter and with tears
A woman of so shining loveliness
That men threshed corn at midnight by a tress,
A little stolen tress. I too await
The hour of thy great wind of love and hate.
When shall the stars be blown about the sky,
Like the sparks blown out of a smithy, and die?
Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind
blows,
Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose?

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE OUTCAST

A MAN, with thin brown hair and a pale face, half ran, half walked, along the road that wound from the south to the town of Sligo. Many called him Cumhal, the son of Cormac, and many called him the Swift, Wild Horse; and he was a gleeman, and he wore a short parti-coloured doublet, and had pointed shoes, and a bulging wallet. Also he was of the blood of the Ernaans, and his birthplace was the Field of Gold; but his eating and sleeping places were in the five kingdoms of Eri, and his abiding place was not upon the ridge of the earth. His eyes strayed from the tower of what was later the Abbey of the White Friars to a row of crosses which stood out against the sky upon a hill a little to the eastward of the town, and he clenched his fist, and shook it at the crosses. He knew they were not empty, for the birds were fluttering about them; and he thought how, as like as not, just such another vagabond as himself

had been mounted on one of them; and he muttered: "If it were hanging or bow-stringing, or stoning or beheading, it would be bad enough. But to have the birds pecking your eyes and the wolves eating your feet! I would that the red wind of the Druids had withered in his cradle the soldier of Dathi, who brought the tree of death out of barbarous lands, or that the lightning, when it smote Dathi at the foot of the mountain, had smitten him also, or that his grave had been dug by the green-haired and green-toothed merrows deep at the roots of the deep sea."

While he spoke, he shivered from head to foot, and the sweat came out upon his face, and he knew not why, for he had looked upon many crosses. He passed over two hills and under the battlemented gate, and then round by a left-hand way to the door of the Abbey. It was studded with great nails, and when he knocked at it he roused the lay brother who was the porter, and of him he asked a place in the guest-house. Then the lay brother took a glowing turf on a shovel, and led the way to a big and naked outhouse strewn with very dirty rushes; and lighted a rush-candle fixed between two of the stones of the wall, and set the glowing turf upon the hearth and gave him two unlighted sods and a

wisp of straw, and showed him a blanket hanging from a nail, and a shelf with a loaf of bread and a jug of water, and a tub in a far corner. Then the lay brother left him and went back to his place by the door. And Cumhal the son of Cormac began to blow upon the glowing turf that he might light the two sods and the wisp of straw; but the sods and the straw would not light, for they were damp. So he took off his pointed shoes, and drew the tub out of the corner with the thought of washing the dust of the highway from his feet; but the water was so dirty that he could not see the bottom. He was very hungry, for he had not eaten all that day, so he did not waste much anger upon the tub, but took up the black loaf, and bit into it, and then spat out the bite, for the bread was hard and mouldy. Still he did not give way to his anger, for he had not drunken these many hours; having a hope of heath beer or wine at his day's end, he had left the brooks untasted, to make his supper the more delightful. Now he put the jug to his lips, but he flung it from him straightway, for the water was bitter and ill-smelling. Then he gave the jug a kick, so that it broke against the opposite wall, and he took down the blanket to wrap it about him for the night. But no sooner did he touch it than it was

alive with skipping fleas. At this, beside himself with anger, he rushed to the door of the guest-house, but the lay brother, being well accustomed to such outcries, had locked it on the outside; so he emptied the tub and began to beat the door with it, till the lay brother came to the door and asked what ailed him, and why he woke him out of sleep. "What ails me!" shouted Cumhal; "are not the sods as wet as the sands of the Three Rosses? and are not the fleas in the blanket as many as the waves of the sea and as lively? and is not the bread as hard as the heart of a lay brother who has forgotten God? and is not the water in the jug as bitter and as ill-smelling as his soul? and is not the foot-water the colour that shall be upon him when he has been charred in the Undying Fires?" The lay brother saw that the lock was fast, and went back to his niche, for he was too sleepy to talk with comfort. And Cumhal went on beating at the door, and presently he heard the lay brother's foot once more, and cried out at him, "O cowardly and tyrannous race of monks, persecutors of the bard and the gleeman, haters of life and joy! O race that does not draw the sword and tell the truth! O race that melts the bones of the people with cowardice and with deceit!"

"Gleeman," said the lay brother, "I also

make rhymes; I make many while I sit in my niche by the door, and I sorrow to hear the bards railing upon the monks. Brother, I would sleep, and therefore I make known to you that it is the head of the monastery, our gracious abbot, who orders all things concerning the lodging of travellers."

"You may sleep," said Cumhal, "I will sing a bard's curse on the abbot." And he set the tub upside down under the window, and stood upon it, and began to sing in a very loud voice. The singing awoke the abbot, so that he sat up in bed and blew a silver whistle until the lay brother came to him. "I cannot get a wink of sleep with that noise," said the abbot. "What is happening?"

"It is a gleeman," said the lay brother, "who complains of the sods, of the bread, of the water in the jug, of the foot-water, and of the blanket. And now he is singing a bard's curse upon you, O brother abbot, and upon your father and your mother, and your grandfather and your grandmother, and upon all your relations."

"Is he cursing in rhyme?"

"He is cursing in rhyme, and with two assonances in every line of his curse."

The abbot pulled his night-cap off and crumpled it in his hands, and the circular grey patch of hair in the middle of his

bald head looked like the cairn upon Knocknarea, for in Connaught they had not yet abandoned the ancient tonsure. "Unless we do somewhat," he said, "he will teach his curses to the children in the street, and the girls spinning at the doors, and to the robbers upon Ben Bulben."

"Shall I go, then," said the other, "and give him dry sods, a fresh loaf, clean water in a jug, clean foot-water, and a new blanket, and make him swear by the blessed Saint Benignus, and by the sun and moon, that no bond be lacking, not to tell his rhymes to the children in the street, and the girls spinning at the doors, and the robbers upon Ben Bulben?"

"Neither our Blessed Patron nor the sun and moon would avail at all," said the abbot; "for to-morrow or the next day the mood to curse would come upon him, or a pride in those rhymes would move him, and he would teach his lines to the children, and the girls, and the robbers. Or else he would tell another of his craft how he fared in the guest-house, and he in his turn would begin to curse, and my name would wither. For learn there is no steadfastness of purpose upon the roads, but only under roofs and between four walls. Therefore I bid you go and awaken Brother Kevin, Brother Dove, Brother Little Wolf, Brother Bald Patrick,

Brother Bald Brandon, Brother James, and Brother Peter. And they shall take the man, and bind him with ropes, and dip him in the river that he shall cease to sing. And in the morning, lest this but make him curse the louder, we will crucify him."

"The crosses are all full," said the lay brother.

"Then we must make another cross. If we do not make an end of him another will, for who can eat and sleep in peace while men like him are going about the world? We would stand shamed indeed before blessed Saint Benignus, and sour would be his face when he comes to judge us at the Last Day, were we to spare an enemy of his when we had him under our thumb! Brother, there is not one of these bards and gleemen who has not scattered his bastards through the five kingdoms, and if they slit a purse or a throat, and it is always one or the other, it never comes into their heads to confess and do penance. Can you name one that is not heathen in his heart, always longing after the Son of Lir, and Aengus, and Bridget, and the Dagda, and Dana the Mother, and all the false gods of the old days; always making poems in praise of those kings and queens of the demons, Finvaragh, whose home is under Cruachmaa, and Red Aodh of Cnocna-Sidhe, and Cleena of the Wave, and Aoibhell

of the Grey Rock, and him they call Donn of the Vats of the Sea; and railing against God and Christ and the blessed Saints." While he was speaking he crossed himself, and when he had finished he drew the night-cap over his ears to shut out the noise, and closed his eyes and composed himself to sleep.

The lay brother found Brother Kevin, Brother Dove, Brother Little Wolf, Brother Bald Patrick, Brother Bald Brandon, Brother James, and Brother Peter sitting up in bed, and he made them get up. Then they bound Cumhal, and they dragged him to the river, and they dipped him in it at the place which was afterwards called Buckley's Ford.

"Gleeman," said the lay brother, as they led him back to the guest-house, "why do you ever use the wit which God has given you to make blasphemous and immoral tales and verses? For such is the way of your craft. I have, indeed, many such tales and verses wellnigh by rote, and so I know that I speak true! And why do you praise with rhyme those demons, Finvaragh, Red Aodh, Cleena, Aoibhell and Donn? I, too, am a man of great wit and learning, but I ever glorify our gracious abbot, and Benignus our Patron, and the princes of the province. My soul is decent and orderly, but yours is like the wind among the salley gardens. I said

what I could for you, being also a man of many thoughts, but who could help such a one as you?"

"Friend," answered the gleeman, "my soul is indeed like the wind, and it blows me to and fro, and up and down, and puts many things into my mind and out of my mind, and therefore am I called the Swift, Wild Horse." And he spoke no more that night, for his teeth were chattering with the cold.

The abbot and the monks came to him in the morning, and bade him get ready to be crucified, and led him out of the guest-house. And while he still stood upon the step a flock of great grass-barnacles passed high above him with clanking cries. He lifted his arms to them and said, "O great grass-barnacles, tarry a little, and mayhap my soul will travel with you to the waste places of the shore and to the ungovernable sea!" At the gate a crowd of beggars gathered about them, being come there to beg from any traveller or pilgrim who might have spent the night in the guest-house. The abbot and the monks led the gleeman to a place in the woods at some distance, where many straight young trees were growing, and they made him cut one down and fashion it to the right length, while the beggars stood round them in a ring, talking and gesticulating.

The abbot then bade him cut off another and shorter piece of wood, and nail it upon the first. So there was his cross for him; and they put it upon his shoulder, for his crucifixion was to be on the top of the hill where the others were. A half-mile on the way he asked them to stop and see him juggle for them; for he knew, he said, all the tricks of Aengus the Subtle-hearted. The old monks were for pressing on, but the young monks would see him: so he did many wonders for them, even to the drawing of live frogs out of his ears. But after a while they turned on him, and said his tricks were dull and a little unholy, and set the cross on his shoulders again. Another half-mile on the way and he asked them to stop and hear him jest for them, for he knew, he said, all the jests of Conan the Bald, upon whose back a sheep's wool grew. And the young monks, when they had heard his merry tales, again bade him take up his cross, for it ill became them to listen to such follies. Another half-mile on the way, he asked them to stop and hear him sing the story of White-breasted Deirdre, and how she endured many sorrows, and how the sons of Usna died to serve her. And the young monks were mad to hear him, but when he had ended they grew angry, and beat him for waking forgotten longings in their hearts. So they set

the cross upon his back and hurried him to the hill.

When he was come to the top, they took the cross from him, and began to dig a hole for it to stand in, while the beggars gathered round, and talked among themselves. "I ask a favour before I die," says Cumhal.

"We will grant you no more delays," says the abbot.

"I ask no more delays, for I have drawn the sword, and told the truth, and lived my dream, and am content."

"Would you, then, confess?"

"By sun and moon, not I; I ask but to be let eat the food I carry in my wallet. I carry food in my wallet whenever I go upon a journey, but I do not taste of it unless I am wellnigh starved. I have not eaten now these two days."

"You may eat, then," says the abbot, and he turned to help the monks dig the hole.

The gleeman took a loaf and some strips of cold fried bacon out of his wallet and laid them upon the ground. "I will give a tithe to the poor," says he, and he cut a tenth part from the loaf and the bacon. "Who among you is the poorest?" And thereupon was a great clamour, for the beggars began the history of their sorrows and their poverty, and their yellow faces swayed like Gara

Lough when the floods have filled it with water from the bogs.

He listened for a little, and, says he, "I am myself the poorest, for I have travelled the bare road, and by the edges of the sea; and the tattered doublet of parti-coloured cloth upon my back and the torn pointed shoes upon my feet have ever irked me, because of the towered city full of noble raiment which was in my heart. And I have been the more alone upon the roads and by the sea because I heard in my heart the rustling of the rose-bordered dress of her who is more subtle than Aengus the Subtle-hearted, and more full of the beauty of laughter than Conan the Bald, and more full of the wisdom of tears than White-breasted Deirdre, and more lovely than a bursting dawn to them that are lost in the darkness. Therefore, I award the tithe to myself; but yet, because I am done with all things, I give it unto you."

So he flung the bread and the strips of bacon among the beggars, and they fought with many cries until the last scrap was eaten. But meanwhile the monks nailed the gleeman to his cross, and set it upright in the hole, and shovelled the earth into the hole, and trampled it level and hard. So then they went away, but the beggars stayed on, sitting round the cross. But when the

sun was sinking, they also got up to go, for the air was getting chilly. And as soon as they had gone a little way, the wolves, who had been showing themselves on the edge of a neighbouring coppice, came nearer, and the birds wheeled closer and closer. "Stay, outcasts, yet a little while," the crucified one called in a weak voice to the beggars, "and keep the beasts and the birds from me." But the beggars were angry because he had called them outcasts, so they threw stones and mud at him, and one that had a child held it up before his eyes and said that he was its father, and cursed him, and thereupon they left him. Then the wolves gathered at the foot of the cross, and the birds flew lower and lower. And presently the birds lighted all at once upon his head and arms and shoulders, and began to peck at him, and the wolves began to eat his feet. "Outcasts," he moaned, "have you all turned against the outcast?"

OUT OF THE ROSE

One winter evening an old knight in rusted chain-armour rode slowly along the woody southern slope of Ben Bulben, watching the sun go down in crimson clouds over the sea. His horse was tired, as after a long journey, and he had upon his helmet the crest of no neighbouring lord or king, but a small rose made of rubies that glimmered every moment to a deeper crimson. His white hair fell in thin curls upon his shoulders, and its disorder added to the melancholy of his face, which was the face of one of those who have come but seldom into the world, and always for its trouble, the dreamers who must do what they dream, the doers who must dream what they do.

After gazing a while towards the sun, he let the reins fall upon the neck of his horse, and, stretching out both arms towards the west, he said, "O Divine Rose of Intellectual Flame, let the gates of thy peace be opened to me at last!" And suddenly a loud squealing began in the woods some hundreds of

yards farther up the mountain-side. He stopped his horse to listen, and heard behind him a sound of feet and of voices. "They are beating them to make them go into the narrow path by the gorge," said some one, and in another moment a dozen peasants armed with short spears had come up with the knight, and stood a little apart from him, their blue caps in their hands.

"Where do you go with the spears?" he asked; and one who seemed the leader answered: "A troop of wood-thieves came down from the hills a while ago and carried off the pigs belonging to an old man who lives by Glen Car Lough, and we turned out to go after them. Now that we know they are four times more than we are, we follow to find the way they have taken; and will presently tell our story to De Courcey, and if he will not help us, to Fitzgerald; for De Courcey and Fitzgerald have lately made a peace, and we do not know to whom we belong."

"But by that time," said the knight, "the pigs will have been eaten."

"A dozen men cannot do more, and it was not reasonable that the whole valley should turn out and risk their lives for two, or for two dozen pigs."

"Can you tell me," said the knight, "if

the old man to whom the pigs belong is pious and true of heart?"

"He is as true as another and more pious than any, for he says a prayer to a saint every morning before his breakfast."

"Then it were well to fight in his cause," said the knight, "and if you will fight against the wood-thieves I will take the main brunt of the battle, and you know well that a man in armour is worth many like these wood-thieves, clad in wool and leather."

And the leader turned to his fellows and asked if they would take the chance; but they seemed anxious to get back to their cabins.

"Are the wood-thieves treacherous and impious?"

"They are treacherous in all their dealings," said a peasant, "and no man has known them to pray."

"Then," said the knight, "I will give five crowns for the head of every wood-thief killed by us in the fighting"; and he bid the leader show the way, and they all went on together. After a time they came to where a beaten track wound into the woods, and, taking this, they doubled back upon their previous course, and began to ascend the wooded slope of the mountain. In a little while the path grew very straight and

steep, and the knight was forced to dismount and leave his horse tied to a tree-stem. They knew they were on the right track, for they could see the marks of pointed shoes in the soft clay and mingled with them the cloven footprints of the pigs. Presently the path became still more abrupt, and they knew by the ending of the cloven footprints that the thieves were carrying the pigs. Now and then a long mark in the clay showed that a pig had slipped down, and been dragged along for a little way. They had journeyed thus for about twenty minutes, when a confused sound of voices told them that they were coming up with the thieves. And then the voices ceased, and they understood that they had been overheard in their turn. They pressed on rapidly and cautiously, and in about five minutes one of them caught sight of a leather jerkin half hidden by a hazel-bush. An arrow struck the knight's chain-armour, but glanced off, and then a flight of arrows swept over their heads. They ran and climbed, and climbed and ran towards the thieves, who were now all visible standing up among the bushes with their still quivering bows in their hands: for they had only their spears and they must at once come hand to hand. The knight was in the front and struck down first one and then another of the wood-thieves. The

peasants shouted, and, pressing on, drove the wood-thieves before them until they came out on the flat top of the mountain, and there they saw the two pigs quietly grubbing in the short grass, so they ran about them in a circle, and began to move back again towards the narrow path: the old knight coming now the last of all, and striking down thief after thief. The peasants had got no very serious hurts among them, for he had drawn the brunt of the battle upon himself, as could well be seen from the bloody rents in his armour; and when they came to the entrance of the narrow path he told them to drive the pigs down into the valley, while he stood there to guard the way behind them. So in a moment he was alone, and, being weak with loss of blood, might have been ended there and then by the wood-thieves had fear not made them begone out of sight in a great hurry.

An hour passed, and they did not return; and now the knight could stand on guard no longer, but had to lie down upon the grass. A half-hour more went by, and then a young lad with what appeared to be a number of cock's feathers stuck round his hat, came out of the path behind him, and began to move about among the dead thieves, cutting their heads off. Then he laid the

heads in a heap before the knight, and said: "O great knight, I have been bid come and ask you for the crowns you promised for the heads: five crowns a head. They told me to tell you that they have prayed to God and His Mother to give you a long life, but that they are poor peasants, and that they would have the money before you die. They told me this over and over for fear I might forget it, and promised to beat me if I did."

The knight raised himself upon his elbow, and opening a bag that hung to his belt, counted out the five crowns for each head. There were thirty heads in all.

"O great knight," said the lad, "they have also bid me take all care of you, and light a fire, and put this ointment upon your wounds." And he gathered sticks and leaves together, and, flashing his flint and steel under a mass of dry leaves, made a very good blaze. Then, drawing off the coat of mail, he began to anoint the wounds: but he did it clumsily, like one who does by rote what he has been told. The knight motioned him to stop, and said: "You seem a good lad."

"I would ask something of you for myself."

"There are still a few crowns," said the knight; "shall I give them to you?"

"O no," said the lad. "They would be no good to me. There is only one thing that I care about doing, and I have no need of money to do it. I go from village to village and from hill to hill, and whenever I come across a good cock I steal him and take him into the woods, and I keep him there under a basket until I get another good cock, and then I set them to fight. The people say I am an innocent, and do not do me any harm, and never ask me to do any work but go a message now and then. It is because I am an innocent that they send me to get the crowns: any one else would steal them; and they dare not come back themselves, for now that you are not with them they are afraid of the wood-thieves. Did you ever hear how, when the wood-thieves are christened, the wolves are made their godfathers, and their right arms are not christened at all?"

"If you will not take these crowns, my good lad, I have nothing for you, I fear, unless you would have that old coat of mail which I shall soon need no more."

"There was something I wanted: yes, I remember now," said the lad. "I want you to tell me why you fought like the champions and giants in the stories and for so little a thing. Are you indeed a man like us? Are you not rather an old wizard who lives among

these hills, and will not a wind arise presently and crumble you into dust? "

" I will tell you of myself," replied the knight, " for now that I am the last of the fellowship, I may tell all and witness for God. Look at the Rose of Rubies on my helmet, and see the symbol of my life and of my hope." And then he told the lad this story, but with always more frequent pauses; and, while he told it, the lad stuck the cock's feathers in the earth in front of him, and moved them about as though he made them actors in the play.

" I live in a land far from this, and was one of the Knights of St. John," said the old man; " but I was one of those in the Order who always longed for more arduous labours in the service of the truth that can only be understood within the heart. At last there came to us a knight of Palestine, to whom the truth of truths had been revealed by God Himself. He had seen a great Rose of Fire, and a Voice out of the Rose had told him how men would turn from the light of their own hearts, and bow down before outer order and outer fixity, and that then the light would cease, and none escape the curse except the foolish good man who could not think, and the passionate wicked man who would not. Already, the Voice told him, the light of the heart was shining with

less lustre, and that, as it paled, an infection was touching the world with corruption, and that none of those who had seen clearly the truth could enter into the Kingdom of God, which is in the Heart of the Rose, if they stayed on willingly in the corrupted world; and so they must prove their anger against the Powers of Corruption by dying in the service of the Rose. While the knight of Palestine was telling us these things the air was filled with fragrance of the Rose. By this we knew that it was the very Voice of God which spoke to us by the knight, and we told him to direct us in all things, and teach us how to obey the Voice. So he bound us with an oath, and gave us signs and words whereby we might know each other even after many years, and he appointed places of meeting, and he sent us out in troops into the world to seek good causes, and die in doing battle for them. At first we thought to die more readily by fasting to death in honour of some saint; but this he told us was evil, for we did it for the sake of death, and thus took out of the hands of God the choice of the time and manner of our death, and by so doing made His power the less. We must choose our service for its excellence, and for this alone, and leave it to God to reward us at His own time and in His own manner. And after this he compelled us to eat always

two at a table and watch each other lest we fasted unduly. And the years passed, and one by one my fellows died in the Holy Land, or in warring upon the evil princes of the earth, or in clearing the roads of robbers; and among them died the knight of Palestine, and at last I was alone. I fought in every cause where the few contended against the many, and my hair grew white, and a terrible fear lest I had fallen under the displeasure of God came upon me. But, hearing at last how this western isle was fuller of wars and rapine than any other land, I came hither, and I have found the thing I sought, and, behold! I am filled with a great joy."

Thereat he began to sing in Latin, and, while he sang, his voice faltered and grew faint. Then his eyes closed, and his lips fell apart, and the lad knew he was dead. "He has told me a good tale," said the lad, "for there was fighting in it, but I did not understand much of it, and it is hard to remember so long a story."

And, taking the knight's sword, he began to dig a grave in the soft clay. He dug hard, and he had almost done his work when a cock crowed in the valley below. "Ah," he said, "I must have that bird"; and he ran down the narrow path to the valley.

THE WISDOM OF THE KING

THE High-Queen of Ireland had died in childbirth, and her child was put to nurse with a woman who lived in a little house within the border of the wood. One night the woman sat rocking the cradle, and meditating upon the beauty of the child, and praying that the gods might grant him wisdom equal to his beauty. There came a knock at the door, and she got up wondering, for the nearest neighbours were in the High-King's house a mile away and the night was now late. "Who is knocking?" she cried, and a thin voice answered, "Open! for I am a crone of the grey hawk, and I come from the darkness of the great wood." In terror she drew back the bolt, and a grey-clad woman, of a great age, and of a height more than human, came in and stood by the head of the cradle. The nurse shrank back against the wall, unable to take her eyes from the woman, for she saw by the gleaming of the firelight that the feathers of the grey hawk were upon her head instead of

hair. "Open!" cried another voice, "for I am a crone of the grey hawk, and I watch over his nest in the darkness of the great wood." The nurse opened the door again, though her fingers could scarce hold the bolts for trembling, and another grey woman, not less old than the other, and with like feathers instead of hair, came in and stood by the first. In a little, came a third grey woman, and after her a fourth, and then another and another and another, until the hut was full of their immense bodies. They stood silent for a long time, but at last one muttered in a low thin voice: "Sisters, I knew him far away by the redness of his heart under his silver skin"; and then another spoke: "Sisters, I knew him because his heart fluttered like a bird under a net of silver cords"; and then another took up the word: "Sisters, I knew him because his heart sang like a bird that is happy in a silver cage." And after that they sang together, those who were nearest rocking the cradle with long wrinkled fingers; and their voices were now tender and caressing, now like the wind blowing in the great wood, and this was their song:

Out of sight is out of mind:
Long have man and woman-kind,
Heavy of will and light of mood,
Taken away our wheaten food,

Taken away our Altar stone;
Hail and rain and thunder alone,
And red hearts we turn to grey,
Are true till Time gutter away.

When the song had died out, the crone who had first spoken, said: "We have nothing more to do but to mix a drop of our blood into his blood." And she scratched her arm with the sharp point of a spindle, which she had made the nurse bring to her, and let a drop of blood, grey as the mist, fall upon the lips of the child; and passed out into the darkness.

When the crones were gone, the nurse came to her courage again, and hurried to the High-King's house, and cried out in the midst of the assembly hall that the Sidhe had bent over the child that night; and the king and his poets and men of law went with her to the hut and gathered about the cradle, and were as noisy as magpies, and the child sat up and looked at them.

Two years passed over, and the king died; and the poets and the men of law ruled in the name of the child, but looked to see him become the master himself before long, for no one had seen so wise a child, and everything had been well but for a miracle that began to trouble all men; and all women, who, indeed, talked of it without ceasing. The feathers of the grey hawk had begun to

grow in the child's hair, and though his nurse cut them continually, in but a little while they would be more numerous than ever. This had not been a matter of great importance, for miracles were a little thing in those days, but for an ancient law of Ireland that none who had any blemish of body could sit upon the throne; and as a grey hawk is a brute thing of the air, it was not possible to think of one in whose hair its feathers grew as other than marred and blasted; nor could the people separate from their admiration of the wisdom that grew in him a horror as at one of unhuman blood. Yet all were resolved that he should reign, for they had suffered much from foolish kings and their own disorders; and no one had any other fear but that his great wisdom might bid him obey the law, and call some other to reign in his stead.

When the child was seven years old the poets and the men of law were called together by the chief poet, and all these matters weighed and considered. The child had already seen that those about him had hair only, and, though they had told him that they too had had feathers but had lost them because of a sin committed by their forefathers, they knew that he would learn the truth when he began to wander into the country round about. After much consideration they made a new

law commanding every one upon pain of death to mingle artificially the feathers of the grey hawk into his hair; and they sent men with nets and slings and bows into the countries round about to gather a sufficiency of feathers. They decreed also that any who told the truth to the child should be put to death.

The years passed, and the child grew from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into manhood, and became busy with strange and subtle thought, distinctions between things long held the same, resemblance of things long held different. Multitudes came from other lands to see him and to question him, but there were guards set at the frontiers, who compelled all to wear the feathers of the grey hawk in their hair. While they listened to him his words seemed to make all darkness light and filled their hearts like music; but when they returned to their own lands his words seemed far off, and what they could remember too strange and subtle to help them in their lives. A number indeed did live differently afterwards, but their new life was less excellent than the old: some among them had long served a good cause, but when they heard him praise it, they returned to their own lands to find what they had loved less lovable, for he had taught them how little divides the false and true; others, again, who

had served no cause, but had sought in peace the welfare of their own households, found their bones softer and less ready for toil, for he had shown them greater purposes; and numbers of the young, when they had heard him upon all these things, remembered certain strange words that made ordinary joys nothing, and sought impossible joys and grew unhappy.

Among those who came to look at him and to listen to him was the daughter of a little king who lived a great way off; and when he saw her he loved, for she was beautiful, with a beauty unlike that of other women; but her heart was like that of other women, and when she thought of the mystery of the hawk feathers she was afraid. Overwhelmed with his greatness, she half accepted, and yet half refused his love, and day by day the king gave her gifts the merchants had carried from India or maybe from China itself; and still she was ever between a smile and a frown; between yielding and withholding. He laid all his wisdom at her feet, and told a multitude of things that even the Sidhe have forgotten, and he thought she understood because her beauty was like wisdom.

There was a tall young man in the house who had yellow hair, and was skilled in wrestling; and one day the king heard his

voice among the salley bushes. " My dear," it said, " I hate them for making you weave these dingy feathers into your beautiful hair, and all that the bird of prey upon the throne may sleep easy o' nights "; and then the low, musical voice he loved answered: " My hair is not beautiful like yours; and now that I have plucked the feathers out of your hair I will put my hands through it, thus, and thus, and thus; for it does not make me afraid." Then the king remembered many things that he had forgotten without understanding them, chance words of his poets and his men of law, doubts that he had reasoned away; and he called to the lovers in a trembling voice. They came from among the salley bushes and threw themselves at his feet and prayed for pardon. He stooped down and plucked the feathers out of the hair of the woman and turned away without a word. He went to the hall of assembly, and having gathered his poets and his men of law about him, stood upon the daïs and spoke in a loud, clear voice: " Men of law, why did you make me sin against the laws? Men of verse, why did you make me sin against the secrecy of wisdom, for law was made by man for the welfare of man, but wisdom the gods have made, and no man shall live by its light, for it and the hail and the rain and the thunder follow a way that

is deadly to mortal things? Men of law and men of verse, live according to your kind, and call Eocha of the Hasty Mind to reign over you, for I set out to find my kindred." He then came down among them, and drew out of the hair of first one and then another the feathers of the grey hawk, and, having scattered them over the rushes upon the floor, passed out, and none dared to follow him, for his eyes gleamed like the eyes of the birds of prey; and no man saw him again or heard his voice.

THE HEART OF THE SPRING

A VERY old man, whose face was almost as fleshless as the foot of a bird, sat meditating upon the rocky shore of the flat and hazel-covered isle which fills the widest part of Lough Gill. A russet-faced boy of seventeen years sat by his side, watching the swallows dipping for flies in the still water. The old man was dressed in threadbare blue velvet and the boy wore a frieze coat and had a rosary about his neck. Behind the two, and half hidden by trees, was a little monastery. It had been burned down a long while before by sacrilegious men of the Queen's party, but had been roofed anew with rushes by the boy, that the old man might find shelter in his last days. He had not set his spade, however, into the garden about it, and the lilies and the roses of the monks had spread out until their confused luxuriance met and mingled with the narrowing circle of the fern. Beyond the lilies and the roses the ferns were so deep that a child walking among them would be hidden from sight,

even though he stood upon his toes; and beyond the fern rose many hazels and small oak-trees.

"Master," said the boy, "this long fasting, and the labour of beckoning after nightfall to the beings who dwell in the waters and among the hazels and oak-trees, is too much for your strength. Rest from all this labour for a little, for your hand this day seemed more heavy upon my shoulder and your feet less steady than I have known them. Men say that you are older than the eagles, and yet you will not seek the rest that belongs to age." He spoke eagerly, as though his heart were in the words; and the old man answered slowly and deliberately, as though his heart were in distant days and events.

"I will tell you why I have not been able to rest," he said. "It is right that you should know, for you have served me faithfully these five years, and even with affection, taking away thereby a little of the doom of loneliness which always falls upon the wise. Now, too, that the end of my labour and the triumph of my hopes is at hand, it is more needful for you to have this knowledge."

"Master, do not think that I would question you. It is my life to keep the fire alight, and the thatch close that the rain may not come in, and strong, that the wind may not blow it among the trees; and to take

down the heavy books from the shelves, and to possess an incurious and reverent heart. God has made out of His abundance a separate wisdom for everything which lives, and to do these things is my wisdom."

"You are afraid," said the old man, and his eyes shone with a momentary anger.

"Sometimes at night," said the boy, "when you are reading, with a stick of mountain ash in your hand, I look out of the door and see, now a great grey man driving swine among the hazels, and now many little people in red caps who come out of the lake driving little white cows before them. I do not fear these little people so much as the grey man; for, when they come near the house, they milk the cows, and they drink the frothing milk, and begin to dance; and I know there is good in the heart that loves dancing; but I fear them for all that. And I fear the tall white-armed ladies who come out of the air, and move slowly hither and thither, crowning themselves with the roses or with the lilies, and shaking about them their living hair, which moves, for so I have heard them tell the little people, with the motion of their thoughts, now spreading out and now gathering close to their heads. They have mild, beautiful faces, but I am afraid of the Sidhe, and afraid of the art which draws them about us."

"Why," said the old man, "do you fear the ancient gods who made the spears of your father's fathers to be stout in battle, and the little people who came at night from the depth of the lakes and sang among the crickets upon their hearths? And in our evil day they still watch over the loveliness of the earth. But I must tell you why I have fasted and laboured when others would sink into the sleep of age, for without your help once more I shall have fasted and laboured to no good end. When you have done for me this last thing, you may go and build your cottage and till your fields, and take some girl to wife, and forget the ancient gods, for I shall leave behind me in this little house money to make strong the roof-tree of your cottage and to keep cellar and larder full. I have sought through all my life to find the secret of life. I was not happy in my youth, for I knew that it would pass; and I was not happy in my manhood, for I knew that age was coming; and so I gave myself, in youth and manhood and age, to the search for the Great Secret. I longed for a life whose abundance would fill centuries, I scorned the life of fourscore winters. I would be—no, I *will* be!—like the Ancient Gods of the land. I read in my youth, in a Hebrew manuscript I found in a Spanish monastery, that there is a moment

after the Sun has entered the Ram and before he has passed the Lion, which trembles with the Song of the Immortal Powers, and that whosoever finds this moment and listens to the Song shall become like the Immortal Powers themselves; I came back to Ireland and asked the faery men, and the cow-doctors, if they knew when this moment was; but though all had heard of it, there was none could find the moment upon the hour-glass. So I gave myself to magic, and spent my life in fasting and in labour that I might bring the Gods and the Men of Faery to my side; and now at last one of the Men of Faery has told me that the moment is at hand. One, who wore a red cap and whose lips were white with the froth of the new milk, whispered it into my ear. To-morrow, a little before the close of the first hour after dawn, I shall find the moment, and then I will go away to a southern land and build myself a palace of white marble amid orange trees, and gather the brave and the beautiful about me, and enter into the eternal kingdom of my youth. But, that I may hear the whole Song, I was told by the little fellow with the froth of the new milk on his lips, that you must bring great masses of green boughs and pile them about the door and the window of my room; and you must put

fresh green rushes upon the floor, and cover the table and the rushes with the roses and the lilies of the monks. You must do this to-night, and in the morning at the end of the first hour after dawn, you must come and find me."

"Will you be quite young then?" said the boy.

"I will be as young then as you are, but now I am still old and tired, and you must help me to my chair and to my books."

When the boy had left the wizard in his room, and had lighted the lamp which, by some contrivance, gave forth a sweet odour as of strange flowers, he went into the wood and began cutting green boughs from the hazels, and great bundles of rushes from the western border of the isle, where the small rocks gave place to gently sloping sand and clay. It was nightfall before he had cut enough for his purpose, and well-nigh midnight before he had carried the last bundle to its place, and gone back for the roses and the lilies. It was one of those warm, beautiful nights when everything seems carved of precious stones. Sleuth Wood away to the south looked as though cut out of green beryl, and the waters that mirrored it shone like pale opal. The roses he was gathering were like glowing rubies, and the lilies had the dull lustre of pearl. Everything had

taken upon itself the look of something imperishable, except a glow-worm, whose faint flame burnt on steadily among the shadows, moving slowly hither and thither, the only thing that seemed alive, the only thing that seemed perishable as mortal hope. The boy gathered a great armful of roses and lilies, and thrusting the glow-worm among their pearl and ruby, carried them into the room, where the old man sat in a half-slumber. He laid armful after armful upon the floor and above the table, and then, gently closing the door, threw himself upon his bed of rushes, to dream of a peaceful manhood with a desirable wife and laughing children. At dawn he got up, and went down to the edge of the lake, taking the hour-glass with him. He put some bread and wine into the boat, that his master might not lack food at the outset of his journey, and then sat down to wait the close of the first hour after dawn. Gradually the birds began to sing, and when the last grains of sand were falling, everything suddenly seemed to overflow with their music. It was the most beautiful and living moment of the year; one could listen to the spring's heart beating in it. He got up and went to find his master. The green boughs filled the door, and he had to make a way through them. When he entered the room the sun-

light was falling in flickering circles on floor and walls and table, and everything was full of soft green shadows. But the old man sat clasping a mass of roses and lilies in his arms, and with his head sunk upon his breast. On the table, at his left hand, was a leather wallet full of gold and silver pieces, as for a journey, and at his right hand was a long staff. The boy touched him and he did not move. He lifted the hands but they were quite cold, and they fell heavily.

"It were better for him," said the lad, "to have said his prayers and kissed his beads!" He looked at the threadbare blue velvet, and he saw it was covered with the pollen of the flowers, and while he was looking at it a thrush, who had alighted among the boughs that were piled against the window, began to sing.

THE CURSE OF THE FIRES AND OF THE SHADOWS

One summer night, when there was peace, a score of Puritan troopers, under the pious Sir Frederick Hamilton, broke through the door of the Abbey of the White Friars at Sligo. As the door fell with a crash they saw a little knot of friars gathered about the altar, their white habits glimmering in the steady light of the holy candles. All the monks were kneeling except the abbot, who stood upon the altar steps with a great brass crucifix in his hand. "Shoot them!" cried Sir Frederick Hamilton, but nobody stirred, for all were new converts, and feared the candles and the crucifix. For a little while all were silent, and then five troopers, who were the bodyguard of Sir Frederick Hamilton, lifted their muskets, and shot down five of the friars. The noise and the smoke drove away the mystery of the pale altar lights, and the other troopers took courage and began to strike. In a moment the friars lay about the altar steps, their white

habits stained with blood. "Set fire to the house!" cried Sir Frederick Hamilton, and a trooper carried in a heap of dry straw, and piled it against the western wall, but did not light it, because he was still afraid of crucifix and of candles. Seeing this, the five troopers who were Sir Frederick Hamilton's bodyguard went up to the altar, and taking each a holy candle set the straw in a blaze. The red tongues of fire rushed up towards the roof, and crept along the floor, setting in a blaze the seats and benches, and making the shadows of the troopers dance among the corbels and the memorial tablets.

For a time the altar stood safe and apart in the midst of its white light; the eyes of the troopers turned upon it. The abbot whom they had thought dead had risen to his feet and now stood before it with the crucifix lifted in both hands high above his head. Suddenly he cried with a loud voice, "Woe unto all who have struck down those who have lived in the Light of the Lord, for they shall wander among shadows, and among fires!" And having so cried he fell on his face dead, and the brass crucifix rolled down the steps of the altar. The smoke had now grown very thick, so that it drove the troopers out into the open air. Before them were burning houses. Behind them shone the Abbey

windows filled with saints and martyrs, awakened, as from a sacred trance, into an angry and animated life. The eyes of the troopers were dazzled, and for a while could see nothing but the flaming faces of saints and martyrs. Presently, however, they saw a man covered with dust who came running towards them. "Two messengers," he cried, "have been sent by the defeated Irish to raise against you the whole country about Manor Hamilton, and if you do not stop them you will be overpowered in the woods before you reach home again! They ride north-east between Ben Bulben and Cashel-na-Gael."

Sir Frederick Hamilton called to him the five troopers who had first fired upon the friars and said, "Mount quickly, and ride through the woods towards the mountain, and get before these men, and kill them."

In a moment the troopers were gone, and before many moments they had splashed across the river at what is now called Buckley's Ford, and plunged into the woods. They followed a beaten track that wound along the northern bank of the river. The boughs of the birch and mountain ash mingled above, and hid the cloudy moonlight, leaving the pathway in almost complete darkness. They rode at a rapid trot, now chatting together, now watching some stray

weasel or rabbit scuttling away in the darkness. Gradually, as the gloom and silence of the woods oppressed them, they drew closer together, and began to talk rapidly; they were old comrades and knew each other's lives. One was married, and told how glad his wife would be to see him return safe from this harebrained expedition against the White Friars, and to hear how fortune had made amends for rashness. The oldest of the five, whose wife was dead, spoke of a flagon of wine which awaited him upon an upper shelf; while a third, who was the youngest, had a sweetheart watching for his return, and he rode a little way before the others, not talking at all.

Suddenly the young man stopped, and they saw that his horse was trembling. "I saw something," he said, "and yet it may have been but a shadow. It looked like a great worm with a silver crown upon his head." One of the five put his hand up to his forehead as if about to cross himself, but remembering that he had changed his religion he put it down, and said: "I am certain it was but a shadow, for there are a great many about us, and of very strange kinds." Then they rode on in silence. It had been raining in the earlier part of the day, and the drops fell from the branches, wetting their hair and their shoulders. In a

little they began to talk again. They had been in many battles against many a rebel together, and now told each other over again the story of their wounds, and half forgot the terrible solitude of the woods.

Suddenly the first two horses neighed, and then stood still, and would go no further. Before them was a glint of water, and they knew by the rushing sound that it was a river. They dismounted, and after much tugging and coaxing brought the horses to the river-side. In the midst of the water stood a tall old woman with grey hair flowing over a grey dress. She stood up to her knees in the water, and stooped from time to time as though washing. Presently they could see that she was washing something that half floated. The moon cast a flickering light upon it, and they saw that it was the dead body of a man, and, while they were looking at it, the eddy of the river turned the face towards them, and each of the five troopers recognised at the same moment his own face. While they stood dumb and motionless with horror, the woman began to speak, saying slowly and loudly: "Did you see my son? He has upon his head a crown of silver." Then the oldest of the troopers, he who had been most often wounded, drew his sword and said: "I have fought for the truth of my God, and need not fear the shadows of

Satan," and with that rushed into the water. In a moment he returned. The woman had vanished, and though he had thrust his sword into air and water he had found nothing.

The five troopers remounted, and set their horses at the ford, but all to no purpose. They tried again and again, and went plunging hither and thither, the horses foaming and rearing. "Let us," said the old trooper, "ride back a little into the wood, and strike the river higher up." They rode in under the boughs, the ground-ivy crackling under the hoofs, and the branches striking against their steel caps. After about twenty minutes' riding they came out again upon the river, and after another ten minutes found a place where it was possible to cross without sinking above the stirrups. The wood upon the other side was very thin, and broke the moonlight into long streams. The wind had arisen, and had begun to drive the clouds rapidly across the face of the moon, so that thin streams of light were dancing among scattered bushes and small fir-trees. The tops of the trees began also to moan, and the sound of it was like the voice of the dead in the wind; and the troopers remembered that the dead in purgatory are said to be spitted upon the points of the trees and upon the points of the rocks. They turned a little to the south, in the hope that they might strike

the beaten path again, but they could find no trace of it.

Meanwhile, the moaning grew louder and louder, and the dancing of the moonlight seemed more and more rapid. Gradually they began to be aware of a sound of distant music. It was the sound of a bagpipe, and they rode towards it with great joy. It came from the bottom of a deep, cuplike hollow. In the midst of the hollow was an old man with a red cap and withered face. He sat beside a fire of sticks, and had a burning torch thrust into the earth at his feet, and played an old bagpipe furiously. His red hair dripped over his face like the iron rust upon a rock. "Did you see my wife?" he said, looking up a moment; "she was washing! she was washing!" "I am afraid of him," said the young trooper, "I fear he is not a right man." "No," said the old trooper, "he is a man like ourselves, for I can see the sun-freckles upon his face. We will compel him to be our guide"; and at that he drew his sword, and the others did the same. They stood in a ring round the piper, and pointed their swords at him, and the old trooper then told him that they must kill two rebels, who had taken the road between Ben Bulben and the great mountain spur that is called Cashel-na-Gael, and that he must get up on the horse before one of

them and be their guide, for they had lost their way. The piper pointed to a neighbouring tree, and they saw an old white horse ready bitted, bridled, and saddled. He slung the pipe across his back, and, taking the torch in his hand, got upon the horse, and started off before them, as hard as he could go.

The wood grew thinner now, and the ground began to slope up toward the mountain. The moon had already set, but the stars shone brightly between the clouds. The ground sloped more and more until at last they rode far above the woods upon the wide top of the mountain. The woods lay spread out mile after mile below, and away to the south shot up the red glare of the burning town. The guide drew rein suddenly, and pointing upwards with the hand that did not hold the torch, shrieked out, "Look; look at the holy candles!" and then plunged forward at a gallop, waving the torch hither and thither. "Do you hear the hoofs of the messengers?" cried the guide. "Quick, quick! or they will be gone out of your hands!" and he laughed as with delight of the chase. The troopers thought they could hear far off, and as if below them, rattle of hoofs; but now the ground began to slope more and more, and the speed grew more headlong moment by moment. They tried

to pull up, but they could not, for the horses seemed to have gone mad. The guide had thrown the reins on to the neck of the old white horse, and was waving his arms and singing in Gaelic. Suddenly they saw the thin gleam of a river, at an immense distance below, and knew that they were upon the brink of the abyss that is now called Lug-na-Gael, or in English the Stranger's Leap. The six horses sprang forward, and five screams went up into the air, and a moment later five men and horses fell with a dull crash upon the green slopes at the foot of the rocks.

THE OLD MEN OF THE TWILIGHT

At the place, close to the Dead Man's Point, at the Rosses, where the disused pilot-house looks out to sea through two round windows like eyes, a mud cottage stood in the last century. It also was a watchhouse, for a certain old Michael Bruen, who had been a smuggler, and was still the father and grandfather of smugglers, lived there, and when, after nightfall, a tall French schooner crept over the bay from Roughley, it was his business to hang a horn lanthorn in the southern window, that the news might travel to Dorren's Island, and thence, by another horn lanthorn, to the village of the Rosses. But for this glimmering of messages, he had little business with mankind, for he was very old, and had no thought for anything but for the making of his soul, bent double over his Spanish beads. One night he had watched hour after hour, because a gentle and favourable wind was blowing, and *La Mère de Miséricorde* was much overdue. At last he was about to lie down upon his heap of straw,

for he knew that she would not dare to round Roughley and come to an anchor after daybreak; when he saw a long line of herons flying slowly from Dorren's Island and towards the pools which lie, half choked with reeds, behind what is called the Second Rosses. He had never before seen herons flying over the sea, for they are shore-keeping birds, and partly because this had startled him out of his drowsiness, and more because the long delay of the schooner had emptied his cupboard, he took down his rusty shot-gun, of which the barrel was tied on with a piece of string, and set out for the pools.

In a little he came upon the herons, of which there were a great number, standing with lifted legs in the shallow water; and crouching down behind a bank of rushes, looked to the priming of his gun, and bent for a moment over his rosary to murmur: "Holy St. Patrick, I have a great desire for heron-pie; and if you keep me from missing I will say a rosary to you every night until the pie is eaten." Then he lay down, and, resting his gun upon a large stone, turned towards a heron which stood upon a bank of smooth grass over a little stream that flowed into the pool; for he feared to take the rheumatism by wading, as he would have to do if he shot one of those which stood in the water. But

when he looked along the barrel the heron was gone, and, to his wonder and terror, a man that seemed of an infinitely great age stood in its place. He lowered the gun, and once more the heron stood there with bent head and motionless feathers. He raised the gun, and no sooner did he look along the barrel than the old man was again before him, only to vanish when he lowered the gun for the second time. He laid the gun down, and crossed himself three times, and said a *Paternoster* and an *Ave Maria*, and muttered half aloud: "Some enemy of God is fishing in the blessed water," and thereupon he aimed very carefully and slowly. He fired, and when the smoke had gone saw an old man, huddled upon the grass, and a long line of herons flying towards the sea. He went round a bend of the pool, and coming to the little stream looked down on a figure wrapped in faded clothes of an ancient pattern and spotted with blood. He shook his head at the sight of so great a wickedness. Suddenly the clothes moved and an arm was stretched upwards towards the rosary which hung about his neck, and long wasted fingers almost touched the cross. He started back, crying: "Wizard, I will let no wicked thing touch my blessed beads."

"If you listen to me," replied a voice so faint that it was like a sigh, "you will know

that I am not a wizard, and you will let me kiss the cross before I die."

"I will listen to you," he answered, "but I will not let you touch my blessed beads," and sitting on the grass a little way from the dying man, he reloaded his gun and laid it across his knees and composed himself to listen.

"I do not know how many generations ago we, who are now herons, were men of learning; we neither hunted, nor went to battle, nor said prayers, nor sang songs, nor made love. The druids told us, many a time, of a new druid Patrick; and most among them were angry with him, while a few thought his doctrine merely their own doctrine set out in new images, and were for giving him welcome; but we yawned when they spoke of him. At last they came crying that he was coming to the king's house, and fell to their dispute, but we would listen to neither party, for we disputed concerning prosody and the relative importance of rhyme and assonance, syllable and accent; nor were we disturbed when they passed our door with sticks of enchantment under their arms, travelling towards the forest, nor when they returned after nightfall with pale faces and despairing cries; for the click of our knives writing our thoughts in ogham delighted us. The next day crowds passed

going to the king's house, and one of us, who had laid down his knife to yawn and stretch himself, heard a voice speaking far off; but our hearts were deaf, and we carved and disputed and read, and laughed together. In a little we heard many feet coming towards the house, and presently two tall figures stood in the door, the one in white, the other in a crimson coat; and we knew the druid Patrick and our king. We laid down the slender knives and bowed before the king, but it was not the loud rough voice of our king that spoke to us, but a voice of rapture: 'I preached the commandments of God,' it said; 'within the king's house and from the centre of the earth to the windows of Heaven there was a great silence, so that the eagle floated with unmoving wings, and the fish with unmoving fins, while the linnets and the wrens and the sparrows stilled their ever-trembling tongues, and the clouds were like white marble, and the shrimps in the far-off sea-pools became still, enduring eternity in patience, although it was hard. But your slender knives kept up their clicking, and, all else being silent, the sound is not to be endured. Because you have lived where the feet of the angels cannot touch your heads, nor the hair of the demons sweep your feet-soles, I shall make you an example for ever and ever; you shall become

grey herons and stand pondering in grey pools and flit over the world in that hour when it is most full of sighs; and your deaths shall come by chance and unforeseen, for you shall not be certain about anything for ever and ever.'"

The voice became still, but the voteen bent over his gun with his eyes upon the ground, too stupid to understand what he had heard; and he had remained so, it may be for a long time, had not a tug at his rosary aroused him. The old man of learning had crawled along the grass, and was now trying to draw the cross down low enough for his lips to reach it.

"You must not touch my blessed beads," cried the voteen, and struck the long withered fingers with the barrel of his gun. He need not have trembled, for the old man fell back upon the grass with a sigh and was quiet. He bent down and began to consider the discoloured clothes, for his fear had grown less when he understood that he had something the man of learning wanted, and now that the blessed beads were safe, his fear had nearly all gone; and surely, he thought, if that cloak be warm and without holes, Saint Patrick would take the enchantment out of it and leave it fit for use. But the old discoloured cloth fell away wherever his fingers touched it, and presently a slight wind blew

over the pool and crumbled the old man of learning and all his ancient gear into a little heap of dust, and then made the little heap less and less until there was nothing but the smooth green grass.

PROUD COSTELLO, MACDERMOT'S DAUGHTER AND THE BITTER TONGUE

Costello had come up from the fields and lay upon the ground before the door of his square tower, resting his head upon his hands and looking at the sunset, and considering the chances of the weather. Though the customs of Elizabeth and James, now going out of fashion in England, had begun to prevail among the gentry, he still wore the great cloak of the native Irish; and the untroubled confidence of his face and his big body had the pride and strength of a simpler age. His eyes wandered from the sunset to where the long white road lost itself over the south-western horizon and to a horseman who toiled slowly up the hill. A few more minutes and the horseman was near enough for his little shapeless body, his long Irish cloak, and the dilapidated bagpipes hanging from his shoulders, and the rough-haired garron under him, to be seen distinctly in the grey dusk. So soon as he had come within earshot, he

began crying: "Is it sleeping you are, Tumaus Costello, when better men break their hearts on the great white roads? Get up out of that, proud Tumaus, for I have news! Get up out of that, you great omadhaun! Shake yourself out of the earth, you great weed of a man!"

Costello had risen to his feet, and as the piper came up to him seized him by the neck of his jacket, lifted him out of his saddle and shook him.

"Let me alone, let me alone," said the other, but Costello still shook him.

"I have news from MacDermot's daughter Una." The great fingers were loosened, and the piper fell gasping.

"Why did you not tell me," said Costello, "that you came from her? You might have railed your fill."

"I have come from her, but I will not speak until I am paid for the shaking."

Costello fumbled at the bag in which he carried his money, and it was some time before it would open, for his hand trembled. "Here is all the money in my bag," he said, dropping some French and Spanish money into the hand of the piper, who bit the coins before he would answer.

"That is right, that is a fair price, but I will not speak till I have good protection, for if the MacDermots lay their hands upon me

in any boreen after sundown, or in Cool-a-vin by day, I will be left to rot among the nettles of a ditch, or hung where they hung the horse-thieves last Beltaine four years." And while he spoke he tied the reins of his garron to a bar of rusty iron that was mortared into the wall.

"I will make you my piper and my body-servant," said Costello, "and no man dare lay hands upon a man or upon a dog if he belong to Tumaus Costello."

"And I will only tell my message," said the other, flinging the saddle on the ground, "with a noggin of whisky in my hand, for though I am ragged and empty, my old fathers were well clothed and full, until their house was burnt down and their cattle driven away seven centuries ago by the Dillons, whom I shall yet see on the hob of hell, and they screeching."

Costello led him up a narrow winding stone stair into a rush-strewn chamber, where were none of the comforts which had begun to grow common among the gentry, and pointed to a seat in the great chimney; and when the piper had sat down, filled up a horn noggin and set it on the floor beside him, and a jug beside that, and then turned towards him and said: "Will MacDermot's daughter come to me, Duallach, son of Daly?"

" MacDermot's daughter will not come to you, for her father has set women to watch her, but I am to tell you that this day week will be the eve of St. John and the night of her betrothal to MacNamara of the Lake, and she wants you to be there that, when they tell her to drink to him she loves best, she may drink to you, Tumaus Costello, and let all know where her heart is; and I myself advise you to go with good men about you, for I have seen the horse-thieves with my own eyes." And then he held the now empty noggin towards Costello, and cried: " Fill my noggin again, for I wish the day had come when all the water in the world is to shrink into a periwinkle-shell, that I might drink nothing but whisky."

Finding that Costello made no reply, but sat in a dream, he burst out: " Fill my noggin, I tell you, for no Costello is so great in the world that he should not wait upon a Daly, even though the Daly travel the road with his pipes and the Costello have a bare hill, an empty house, a horse, and a handful of cows."

" Praise the Dalys if you will," said Costello as he filled the noggin, " for you have brought me a kind word from my love."

For the next few days Duallach went here and there trying to raise a bodyguard, and

every man he met had some story of Costello: one told how he killed the wrestler when but a boy by so straining at the belt that went about them both that he broke the big wrestler's back; another how he dragged fierce horses through a ford for a wager; another how when grown to be a man he broke the steel horseshoe in Mayo; but none who would trust himself with a man so passionate and poor in a quarrel with careful and wealthy persons like MacDermot of the Sheep and MacNamara of the Lake.

Then Costello went out himself, and brought in a big half-witted fellow, a farm-labourer who worshipped him for his strength, a fat farmer whose forefathers had served his family, and a couple of lads who looked after his goats and cows; and marshalled them before the fire. They had brought with them their heavy sticks, and Costello gave them an old pistol apiece, and kept them all night drinking and shooting at a white turnip which he pinned against the wall with a skewer. Duallach sat on the bench in the chimney playing "The Green Bunch of Rushes", "The Unchion Stream", and "The Princes of Breffeny" on his old pipes, and abusing now the appearance of the shooters, now their clumsy shooting, and now Costello because he had no better servants. The labourer, the half-witted fellow,

the farmer and the lads were well accustomed to Duallach's abusiveness, but they wondered at the forbearance of Costello, who seldom came either to wake or wedding, and if he had would not have been patient with a scolding piper.

On the next evening they set out for Cool-a-vin, Costello riding a tolerable horse and carrying a sword, the others upon rough-haired ponies, and with their cudgels under their arms. As they rode over the bogs and in the boreens among the hills they could see fire answering fire from hill to hill, from horizon to horizon, and everywhere groups who danced in the red light of the turf. When they came to MacDermot's house they saw before the door an unusually large group of the very poor, dancing about a fire, in the midst of which was a blazing cart-wheel, and from the door and through the loopholes on either side came the light of candles and the sound of many feet dancing a dance of Elizabeth and James.

They tied their horses to bushes, for the number so tied already showed that the stables were full, and shoved their way through a crowd of peasants who stood about the door, and went into the big hall where the dance was. The labourer, the half-witted fellow, the farmer and the two lads mixed with a group of servants who were

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looking on from an alcove, and Duallach sat with the pipers on their bench, but Costello made his way through the dancers to where MacDermot stood pouring out whisky, MacNamara at his side.

"Tumaus Costello," said the old man, "you have done a good deed to forget what has been, and come to the betrothal of my daughter."

"I come," answered Costello, "because when in the time of Costello De Angalo my ancestors overcame your ancestors and afterwards made peace, a compact was made that a Costello might go with his body-servants and his piper to every feast given by a MacDermot for ever, and a MacDermot with his body-servants and his piper to every feast given by a Costello for ever."

"If you come with evil thoughts and armed men," said MacDermot flushing, "no matter how good you are with your weapons, it shall go badly with you, for some of my wife's clan have come out of Mayo, and my three brothers and their servants have come down from the Ox Mountains"; and while he spoke he kept his hand inside his coat as though upon the handle of a weapon.

"No," answered Costello, "I but come to dance a farewell dance with your daughter."

MacDermot drew his hand out of his coat

and went over to a pale girl who was now standing but a little way off with her mild eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Costello has come to dance a farewell dance, for he knows that you will never see one another again."

As Costello led her among the dancers her gentle and humble eyes were fixed in love upon his pride and violence. They took their place in Pavane, that stately dance which, with the Saraband, the Gallead, and the Morris dances, had driven out, among all but the most Irish of the gentry, the quicker rhythms of the verse-interwoven, pantomimic dances of earlier days; and while they danced there came over them the weariness with the world, the melancholy, the pity one for the other, which is the exultation of love. And when a dance ended and the pipers laid down the pipes and lifted the noggins, they stood a little from the others waiting pensively and silently for the dance to begin again and the fire in their hearts to leap up and to wrap them anew; and so they danced Pavane and Saraband and Gallead and Morris the night long, and many stood still to watch them, and the peasants came about the door and peered in, as though they understood that they would gather their children's children about them long hence, and tell how they

had seen Costello dance with MacDermot's daughter Una; and through all the dancing and piping MacNamara went hither and thither talking loudly and making foolish jokes that all might seem well, and old MacDermot grew redder and redder, waiting for the dawn.

At last he saw that the moment to end had come, and, in a pause after a dance, cried out that his daughter would now drink the cup of betrothal; then Una came over to where he was, and the guests stood round in a half-circle, Costello close to the wall, and the piper, the labourer, the farmer, the half-witted man and the two farm lads close behind him. The old man took out of a niche in the wall the silver cup from which her mother and her mother's mother had drunk the toasts of their betrothals, filled it with Spanish wine and handed the cup to his daughter with the customary words, "Drink to him whom you love the best."

She held the cup to her lips for a moment, and then said in a clear soft voice: "I drink to my true love, Tumaus Costello."

And then the cup rolled over and over on the ground, ringing like a bell, for the old man had struck her in the face and the cup had fallen, and there was a deep silence.

There were many of MacNamara's people among the servants now come out of the

alcove, and one of them, a story-teller and poet, who had a plate and chair in MacNamara's kitchen, drew a French knife out of his girdle, but in a moment Costello had struck him to the ground. The click of steel had followed quickly, had not there come a muttering and shouting from the peasants about the door and from those crowding up behind them; for all knew that these were no children of Queen's Irish, but of the wild Irish about Lough Gara and Lough Cara, Kellys, Dockerys, Drurys, O'Regans, Mahons, and Lavins, who had left the right arms of their children unchristened that they might give the better blows, and were even said to have named the wolves godfathers to their children.

Costello's knuckles had grown white upon the handle of his sword, but now he drew his hand away, and, followed by those who were with him, went towards the door, the dancers giving way before him, the most angrily and slowly, and with glances at the muttering and shouting peasants, but some gladly and quickly, because the glory of his fame was over him. He passed through the fierce and friendly peasant faces, and came where his horse and the ponies were tied to bushes; and mounted and made his bodyguard mount also and ride into the narrow boreen. When they had gone a little way, Duallach,

who rode last, turned towards the house where a little group of MacDermots and MacNamaras stood next to a bigger group of countrymen, and cried: " MacDermot, you deserve to be as you are this hour, for your hand was always niggardly to piper and fiddler and to poor travelling people." He had not done before the three old MacDermots from the Ox Mountains had run towards their horses, and old MacDermot himself had caught the bridle of a pony belonging to the MacNamaras and was calling to the others to follow him; and many blows and many deaths had been had not the countrymen caught up still blazing sticks from the ashes of the fires and thrown them among the horses so that they broke away from those who held them and scattered through the fields, and before they could be gathered again Costello was far off.

For the next few weeks Costello had no lack of news of Una, for now a woman selling eggs, and now a man or a woman going to the Holy Well, would tell him how his love had fallen ill the day after St. John's Eve, and how she was a little better or a little worse.

At last a serving-man rode up to Costello, who was helping his two lads to reap a meadow, and gave him a letter, and rode away; and the letter contained these words in English: " Tumaus Costello, my daughter

is very ill. She will die unless you come to her. I therefore command you come to her whose peace you stole by treachery."

Costello threw down his scythe, and sent one of the lads for Duallach, and himself saddled his horse and Duallach's pony.

When they came to MacDermot's house it was late afternoon, and Lough Gara lay down below them, blue, and deserted; and though they had seen, when at a distance, dark figures moving about the door, the house appeared not less deserted than the Lough. The door stood half open, and Costello knocked upon it again and again, but there was no answer.

"There is no one here," said Duallach, "for MacDermot is too proud to welcome Proud Costello," and he threw the door open, and they saw a ragged, dirty, very old woman, who sat upon the floor leaning against the wall. Costello knew that it was Bridget Delaney, a deaf and dumb beggar; and she, when she saw him, stood up and made a sign to him to follow, and led him and his companion up a stair and down a long corridor to a closed door. She pushed the door open and went a little way off and sat down as before; Duallach sat upon the ground also, but close to the door, and Costello went and gazed upon Una sleeping upon a bed. He sat upon a chair beside her and waited, and a

long time passed and still she slept, and then Duallach motioned to him through the door to wake her, but he hushed his very breath, that she might sleep on. Presently he turned to Duallach and said: " It is not right that I stay here where there are none of her kindred, for the common people are always ready to blame the beautiful." And then they went down and stood at the door of the house and waited, but the evening wore on and no one came.

" It was a foolish man that called you Proud Costello," Duallach said at last; " had he seen you waiting and waiting where they left none but a beggar to welcome you, it is Humble Costello he would have called you."

Then Costello mounted and Duallach mounted, but when they had ridden a little way Costello tightened the reins and made his horse stand still. Many minutes passed, and then Duallach cried: " It is no wonder that you fear to offend MacDermot, for he has many brothers and friends, and though he is old, he is a strong and stirring man, and he is of the Queen's Irish, and the enemies of the Gael are upon his side."

And Costello answered flushing and looking towards the house: " I swear by the Mother of God that I will never return there again if they do not send after me before I pass the ford in the Brown River," and he

rode on, but so very slowly that the sun went down and the bats began to fly over the bogs. When he came to the river he lingered awhile upon the edge, but presently rode out into the middle and stopped his horse in a shallow. Duallach, however, crossed over and waited on a further bank above a deeper place. After a good while Duallach cried out again, and this time very bitterly: "It was a fool who begot you and a fool who bore you, and they are fools who say you come of an old and noble stock, for you come of whey-faced beggars who travelled from door to door, bowing to serving-men."

With bent head, Costello rode through the river and stood beside him, and would have spoken had not hoofs clattered on the further bank and a horseman splashed towards them. It was a serving-man of MacDermot's, and he said, speaking breathlessly like one who had ridden hard: "Tumaus Costello, I come to bring you again to MacDermot's house. When you had gone, his daughter Una awoke and called your name, for you had been in her dreams. Bridget Delaney the Dummy saw her lips move, and came where we were hiding in the wood above the house and took MacDermot by the coat and brought him to his daughter. He saw the trouble upon her, and bid me ride his own horse to bring you the quicker."

Then Costello turned towards the piper Duallach Daly, and taking him about the waist lifted him out of the saddle and threw him against a big stone that was in the river, so that he fell lifeless into a deep place. Then plunging his spurs into the horse, he rode away furiously toward the north-west, along the edge of the river, and did not pause until he came to another and smoother ford, and saw the rising moon mirrored in the water. He paused for a moment irresolute, and then rode into the ford and on over the Ox Mountains, and down towards the sea; his eyes almost continually resting upon the moon. But now his horse, long dark with sweat and breathing hard, for he kept spurring it, fell heavily, throwing him on the roadside. He tried to make it stand up, and failing in this, went on alone towards the moonlight; and came to the sea and saw a schooner lying there at anchor. Now that he could go no further because of the sea, he found that he was very tired and the night very cold, and went into a shebeen close to the shore and threw himself down upon a bench. The room was full of Spanish and Irish sailors who had just smuggled a cargo of wine, and were waiting a favourable wind to set out again. A Spaniard offered him a drink in bad Gaelic. He drank it and began talking wildly and rapidly.

For some three weeks the wind blew inshore or with too great violence, and the sailors stayed drinking and talking and playing cards, and Costello stayed with them, sleeping upon a bench in the shebeen, and drinking and talking and playing more than any. He soon lost what little money he had, and then his long cloak and his spurs and even his boots. At last a gentle wind blew towards Spain, and the crew rowed out to their schooner, and in a little while the sails had dropped under the horizon. Then Costello turned homeward, his life gaping before him, and walked all day, coming in the early evening to the road that went from near Lough Gara to the southern edge of Lough Cay. Here he overtook a crowd of peasants and farmers, who were walking very slowly after two priests and a group of well-dressed persons, certain of whom were carrying a coffin. He stopped an old man and asked whose burying it was and whose people they were, and the old man answered: "It is the burying of Una, MacDermot's daughter, and we are the MacNamaras and the MacDermots and their following, and you are Tumaus Costello who murdered her."

Costello went on towards the head of the procession, passing men who looked angrily at him, and only vaguely understood what he had heard. Presently he stopped and

asked again whose burying it was, and a man answered: "We are carrying MacDermot's daughter Una, whom you murdered, to her burying upon Insula Trinitatis," and the man picked up a stone and threw it at Costello, striking him on the cheek and making the blood flow out over his face. Costello went on scarcely feeling the blow, and coming to those about the coffin, shouldered his way into the midst of them, and laying his hand upon the coffin, asked in a loud voice: "Who is in this coffin?"

The three old MacDermots from the Ox Mountains caught up stones and told those about them to do the same; and he was driven from the road, covered with wounds.

When the procession had passed on, Costello began to follow again, and saw from a distance the coffin laid upon a large boat, and those about it get into other boats, and the boats move slowly over the water to Insula Trinitatis; and after a time he saw the boats return and their passengers mingle with the crowd upon the bank, and all scatter by many roads and boreens. It seemed to him that Una was somewhere on the island smiling gently, and when all had gone he swam in the way the boats had been rowed and found the new-made grave beside the ruined

Abbey, and threw himself upon it, calling to Una to come to him.

He lay there all that night and through the day after, from time to time calling her to come to him, but when the third night came he had forgotten that her body lay in the earth beneath, but only knew she was somewhere near and would not come to him.

Just before dawn, the hour when the peasants hear his ghostly voice crying out, he called loudly: "If you do not come to me, Una, I will go and never return," and before his voice had died away a cold and whirling wind had swept over the island and he saw women of the Sidhe rushing past; and then Una, but no longer smiling, for she passed him swiftly and angrily, and as she passed struck him upon the face, crying: "Then go and never return."

Costello got up from the grave, understanding nothing but that he had made his sweetheart angry and that she wished him to go, and wading out into the lake, began to swim. He swam on, but his limbs seemed too weary to keep him afloat, and when he had gone a little way he sank without a struggle.

The next day a fisherman found him among the reeds upon the lake shore, lying upon the white lake sand, and carried him to his own house. And the peasants

lamented over him and sang the keen, and laid him in the Abbey on Insula Trinitatis with only the ruined altar between him and MacDermot's daughter, and planted above them two ash-trees that in after days wove their branches together and mingled their leaves.

STORIES OF RED HANRAHAN

(1897, REWRITTEN IN 1907 WITH LADY GREGORY'S HELP)

RED HANRAHAN

HANRAHAN, the hedge schoolmaster, a tall, strong, red-haired young man, came into the barn where some of the men of the village were sitting on Samhain Eve. It had been a dwelling-house, and when the man that owned it had built a better one, he had put the two rooms together, and kept it for a place to store one thing or another. There was a fire on the old hearth, and there were dip candles stuck in bottles, and there was a black quart bottle upon some boards that had been put across two barrels to make a table. Most of the men were sitting beside the fire, and one of them was singing a long wandering song, about a Munster man and a Connaught man that were quarrelling about their two provinces.

Hanrahan went to the man of the house and said, "I got your message"; but when he had said that, he stopped, for an old mountainy man that had a shirt and trousers of unbleached flannel, and that was sitting by himself near the door, was looking at

him, and moving an old pack of cards about in his hands and muttering. "Don't mind him," said the man of the house; "he is only some stranger came in awhile ago, and we bade him welcome, it being Samhain night, but I think he is not in his right wits. Listen to him now and you will hear what he is saying."

They listened then, and they could hear the old man muttering to himself as he turned the cards, "Spades and Diamonds, Courage and Power; Clubs and Hearts, Knowledge and Pleasure."

"That is the kind of talk he has been going on with for the last hour," said the man of the house, and Hanrahan turned his eyes from the old man as if he did not like to be looking at him.

"I got your message," Hanrahan said then; "'He is in the barn with his three first cousins from Kilchriest,' the messenger said, 'and there are some of the neighbours with them.'"

"It is my cousin over there is wanting to see you," said the man of the house, and he called over a young frieze-coated man, who was listening to the song, and said, "This is Red Hanrahan you have the message for."

"It is a kind message, indeed," said the young man, "for it comes from your sweetheart, Mary Lavelle."

"How would you get a message from her, and what do you know of her?"

"I don't know her, indeed, but I was in Loughrea yesterday, and a neighbour of hers that had some dealings with me was saying that she bade him send you word, if he met any one from this side in the market, that her mother has died from her, and if you have a mind yet to join with herself, she is willing to keep her word to you."

"I will go to her indeed," said Hanrahan.

"And she bade you make no delay, for if she has not a man in the house before the month is out, it is likely the little bit of land will be given to another."

When Hanrahan heard that, he rose up from the bench he had sat down on. "I will make no delay indeed," he said; "there is a full moon, and if I get as far as Kilchreist to-night, I will reach to her before the setting of the sun to-morrow."

When the others heard that, they began to laugh at him for being in such haste to go to his sweetheart, and one asked him if he would leave his school in the old lime-kiln, where he was giving the children such good learning. But he said the children would be glad enough in the morning to find the place empty, and no one to keep them at their task; and as for his school he could set it up again in any place, having as

he had his little inkpot hanging from his neck by a chain, and his big Virgil and his primer in the skirt of his coat.

Some of them asked him to drink a glass before he went, and a young man caught hold of his coat, and said he must not leave them without singing the song he had made in praise of Venus and of Mary Lavelle. He drank a glass of whisky, but he said he would not stop but would set out on his journey.

"There's time enough, Red Hanrahan," said the man of the house. "It will be time enough for you to give up sport when you are after your marriage, and it might be a long time before we will see you again."

"I will not stop," said Hanrahan; "my mind would be on the roads all the time, bringing me to the woman that sent for me, and she lonesome and watching till I come."

Some of the others came about him, pressing him that had been such a pleasant comrade, so full of songs and every kind of trick and fun, not to leave them till the night would be over, but he refused them all, and shook them off, and went to the door. But as he put his foot over the threshold, the strange old man stood up and put his hand that was thin and withered like a bird's claw on Hanrahan's hand, and said:

" It is not Hanrahan, the learned man and the great songmaker, that should go out from a gathering like this, on a Samhain night. And stop here, now," he said, " and play a hand with me; and here is an old pack of cards has done its work many a night before this, and old as it is, there has been much of the riches of the world lost and won over it."

One of the young men said, " It isn't much of the riches of the world has stopped with yourself, old man," and he looked at the old man's bare feet, and they all laughed. But Hanrahan did not laugh, but he sat down very quietly, without a word. Then one of them said, " So you will stop with us after all, Hanrahan "; and the old man said: " He will stop indeed, did you not hear me asking him? "

They all looked at the old man then as if wondering where he came from. " It is far I am come," he said, " through France I have come, and through Spain, and by Lough Greine of the hidden mouth, and none has refused me anything." And then he was silent and nobody liked to question him, and they began to play. There were six men at the boards playing, and the others were looking on behind. They played two or three games for nothing, and then the old man took a fourpenny bit, worn very

thin and smooth, out from his pocket, and he called to the rest to put something on the game. Then they all put down something on the boards, and little as it was it looked much, from the way it was shoved from one to another, first one man winning it and then his neighbour. And sometimes the luck would go against a man and he would have nothing left, and then one or another would lend him something, and he would pay it again out of his winnings, for neither good nor bad luck stopped long with any one.

And once Hanrahan said as a man would say in a dream, "It is time for me to be going the road"; but just then a good card came to him, and he played it out, and all the money began to come to him. And once he thought of Mary Lavelle, and he sighed; and that time his luck went from him, and he forgot her again.

But at last the luck went to the old man and it stayed with him, and all they had flowed into him, and he began to laugh little laughs to himself, and to sing over and over to himself, "Spades and Diamonds, Courage and Power," and so on, as if it was a verse of a song.

And after a while any one looking at the men, and seeing the way their bodies were rocking to and fro, and the way they kept

their eyes on the old man's hands, would think they had drink taken, or that the whole store they had in the world was put on the cards; but that was not so, for the quart bottle had not been disturbed since the game began, and was nearly full yet, and all that was on the game was a few six-penny bits and shillings, and maybe a hand-ful of coppers.

"You are good men to win and good men to lose," said the old man, "you have play in your hearts." He began then to shuffle the cards and to mix them, very quick and fast, till at last they could not see them to be cards at all, but you would think him to be making rings of fire in the air, as little lads would make them with whirling a lighted stick; and after that it seemed to them that all the room was dark, and they could see nothing but his hands and the cards.

And all in a minute a hare made a leap out from between his hands, and whether it was one of the cards that took that shape, or whether it was made out of nothing in the palms of his hands, nobody knew, but there it was running on the floor of the barn, as quick as any hare that ever lived.

Some looked at the hare, but more kept their eyes on the old man, and while they were looking at him a hound made a leap out between his hands, the same way as the

hare did, and after that another hound and another, till there was a whole pack of them following the hare round and round the barn.

The players were all standing up now, with their backs to the boards, shrinking from the hounds, and nearly deafened with the noise of their yelping, but as quick as the hounds were they could not overtake the hare, but it went round, till at the last it seemed as if a blast of wind burst open the barn door, and the hare doubled and made a leap over the boards where the men had been playing, and went out of the door and away through the night, and the hounds over the boards and through the door after it.

Then the old man called out, " Follow the hounds, follow the hounds, and it is a great hunt you will see to-night," and he went out after them. But used as the men were to go hunting after hares, and ready as they were for any sport, they were in dread to go out into the night, and it was only Hanrahan that rose up and that said, " I will follow, I will follow on."

" You had best stop here, Hanrahan," the young man that was nearest him said, " for you might be going into some great danger." But Hanrahan said, " I will see fair play, I will see fair play," and he went stumbling

out of the door like a man in a dream, and the door shut after him as he went.

He thought he saw the old man in front of him, but it was only his own shadow that the full moon cast on the road before him, but he could hear the hounds crying after the hare over the wide green fields of Granagh, and he followed them very fast for there was nothing to stop him; and after a while he came to smaller fields that had little walls of loose stones around them, and he threw the stones down as he crossed them, and did not wait to put them up again; and he passed by the place where the river goes underground at Ballylee, and he could hear the hounds going before him up towards the head of the river. Soon he found it harder to run, for it was uphill he was going, and clouds came over the moon, and it was hard for him to see his way, and once he left the path to take a short cut, but his foot slipped into a bog-hole and he had to come back to it. And how long he was going he did not know, or what way he went, but at last he was up on the bare mountain, with nothing but the rough heather about him, and he could neither hear the hounds nor any other thing. But their cry began to come to him again, at first far off and then very near, and when it came quite close to him, it went up all of a

sudden into the air, and there was the sound of hunting over his head; then it went away northward till he could hear nothing at all. "That's not fair," he said, "that's not fair." And he could walk no longer, but sat down on the heather where he was, in the heart of Slieve Echtge, for all the strength had gone from him, with the dint of the long journey he had made.

And after a while he took notice that there was a door close to him, and a light coming from it, and he wondered that being so close to him he had not seen it before. And he rose up, and tired as he was he went in at the door, and although it was night time outside, it was daylight he found within. And presently he met with an old man that had been gathering summer thyme and yellow flag-flowers, and it seemed as if all the sweet smells of the summer were with them. And the old man said: "It is a long time you have been coming to us, Hanrahan the learned man and the great song-maker."

And with that he brought him into a very big shining house, and every grand thing Hanrahan had ever heard of, and every colour he had ever seen, were in it. There was a high place at the end of the house, and on it there was sitting in a high chair a woman, the most beautiful the world ever

saw, having a long pale face and flowers about it, but she had the tired look of one that had been long waiting. And there were sitting on the step below her chair four grey old women, and the one of them was holding a great cauldron in her lap; and another a great stone on her knees, and heavy as it was it seemed light to her; and another of them had a very long spear that was made of pointed wood; and the last of them had a sword that was without a scabbard.

Hanrahan stood looking at them for a long time, but none of them spoke any word to him or looked at him at all. And he had it in his mind to ask who that woman in the chair was, that was like a queen, and what she was waiting for; but ready as he was with his tongue and afraid of no person, he was in dread now to speak to so beautiful a woman, and in so grand a place. And then he thought to ask what were the four things the four grey old women were holding like great treasures, but he could not think of the right words to bring out.

Then the first of the old women rose up, holding the cauldron between her two hands, and she said "Pleasure," and Hanrahan said no word. Then the second old woman rose up with the stone in her hands, and she said "Power"; and the third old

woman rose up with a spear in her hand, and she said " Courage "; and the last of the old women rose up having the sword in her hands, and she said " Knowledge." And every one, after she had spoken, waited as if for Hanrahan to question her, but he said nothing at all. And then the four old women went out of the door, bringing their four treasures with them, and as they went out one of them said, " He has no wish for us "; and another said, " He is weak, he is weak "; and another said, " He is afraid "; and the last said, " His wits are gone from him." And then they all said, " Echtge, daughter of the Silver Hand, must stay in her sleep. It is a pity, it is a great pity."

And then the woman that was like a queen gave a very sad sigh, and it seemed to Hanrahan as if the sigh had the sound in it of hidden streams; and if the place he was in had been ten times grander and more shining than it was, he could not have hindered sleep from coming on him; and he staggered like a drunken man and lay down there and then.

When Hanrahan awoke, the sun was shining on his face, but there was white frost on the grass around him, and there was ice on the edge of the stream he was lying by, and that goes running on through Daire-caol and Druim-da-rod. He knew by the shape of the hills and by the shining

of Lough Greine in the distance that he was upon one of the hills of Slieve Echtge, but he was not sure how he came there; for all that had happened in the barn had gone from him, and all of his journey but the soreness of his feet and the stiffness in his bones.

It was a year after that, there were men of the village of Cappaghtagle sitting by the fire in a house on the roadside, and Red Hanrahan that was now very thin and worn and his hair very long and wild, came to the half-door and asked leave to come in and rest himself; and they bid him welcome because it was Samhain night. He sat down with them, and they gave him a glass of whisky out of a quart bottle; and they saw the little inkpot hanging about his neck, and knew he was a scholar, and asked for stories about the Greeks.

He took the Virgil out of the big pocket of his coat, but the cover was very black and swollen with the wet, and the page when he opened it was very yellow, but that was no great matter, for he looked at it like a man that had never learned to read. Some young man that was there began to laugh at him then, and to ask why did he carry so heavy a book with him when he was not able to read it.

It vexed Hanrahan to hear that, and he put the Virgil back in his pocket and asked if they had a pack of cards among them, for cards were better than books. When they brought out the cards he took them and began to shuffle them, and while he was shuffling them something seemed to come into his mind, and he put his hand to his face like one that is trying to remember, and he said: "Was I ever here before, or where was I on a night like this?" and then of a sudden he stood up and let the cards fall to the floor, and he said, "Who was it brought me a message from Mary Lavelle?"

"We never saw you before now, and we never heard of Mary Lavelle," said the man of the house. "And who is she," he said, "and what is it you are talking about?"

"It was this night a year ago, I was in a barn, and there were men playing cards, and there was money on the table, they were pushing it from one to another here and there—and I got a message, and I was going out of the door to look for my sweetheart that wanted me, Mary Lavelle." And then Hanrahan called out very loud: "Where have I been since then? Where was I for the whole year?"

"It is hard to say where you might have been in that time," said the oldest of the men, "or what part of the world you may

have travelled; and it is like enough you have the dust of many roads on your feet; for there are many go wandering and forgetting like that," he said, "when once they have been given the touch."

"That is true," said another of the men. "I knew a woman went wandering like that through the length of seven years; she came back after, and she told her friends she had often been glad enough to eat the food that was put in the pig's trough. And it is best for you to go to the priest now," he said, "and let him take off you whatever may have been put upon you."

"It is to my sweetheart I will go, to Mary Lavelle," said Hanrahan; "it is too long I have delayed, how do I know what might have happened her in the length of a year?"

He was going out of the door then, but they all told him it was best for him to stop the night, and to get strength for the journey; and indeed he wanted that, for he was very weak, and when they gave him food he ate it like a man that had never seen food before, and one of them said, "He is eating as if he had trodden on the hungry grass." It was in the white light of the morning he set out, and the time seemed long to him till he could get to Mary Lavelle's house. But when he came to it, he found the door broken, and the

thatch dropping from the roof, and no living person to be seen. And when he asked the neighbours what had happened her, all they could say was that she had been put out of the house, and had married some labouring man, and they had gone looking for work to London or Liverpool or some big place. And whether she found a worse place or a better he never knew, but anyway he never met with her or with news of her again.

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE

HANRAHAN was walking the roads one time near Kinvara at the fall of day, and he heard the sound of a fiddle from a house a little way off the roadside. He turned up the path to it, for he never had the habit of passing by any place where there was music or dancing or good company, without going in. The man of the house was standing at the door, and when Hanrahan came near he knew him and he said: "A welcome before you, Hanrahan, you have been lost to us this long time." But the woman of the house came to the door and she said to her husband: "I would be as well pleased for Hanrahan not to come in to-night, for he has no good name now among the priests, or with women that mind themselves, and I wouldn't wonder from his walk if he has a drop of drink taken." But the man said, "I will never turn away Hanrahan of the poets from my door," and with that he bade him enter.

There were a good many neighbours

gathered in the house, and some of them remembered Hanrahan; but some of the little lads that were in the corners had only heard of him, and they stood up to have a view of him, and one of them said: "Is not that Hanrahan that had the school, and that was brought away by Them?" But his mother put her hand over his mouth and bade him be quiet, and not be saying things like that. "For Hanrahan is apt to grow wicked," she said, "if he hears talk of that story, or if any one goes questioning him." One or another called out then, asking him for a song, but the man of the house said it was no time to ask him for a song, before he had rested himself; and he gave him whisky in a glass, and Hanrahan thanked him and wished him good health and drank it off.

The fiddler was tuning his fiddle for another dance, and the man of the house said to the young men, they would all know what dancing was like when they saw Hanrahan dance, for the like of it had never been seen since he was there before. Hanrahan said he would not dance, he had better use for his feet now, travelling as he was through the four provinces of Ireland. Just as he said that, there came in at the half-door Oona, the daughter of the house, having a few bits of bog deal from Conne-

mara in her arms for the fire. She threw them on the hearth and the flame rose up, and showed her to be very comely and smiling, and two or three of the young men rose up and asked for a dance. But Hanrahan crossed the floor and brushed the others away, and said it was with him she must dance, after the long road he had travelled before he came to her. And it is likely he said some soft word in her ear, for she said nothing against it, and stood out with him, and there were little blushes in her cheeks. Then other couples stood up, but when the dance was going to begin, Hanrahan chanced to look down, and he took notice of his boots that were worn and broken, and the ragged grey socks showing through them; and he said angrily it was a bad floor, and the music no great things, and he sat down in the dark place beside the hearth. But if he did, the girl sat down there with him.

The dancing went on, and when that dance was over another was called for, and no one took much notice of Oona and Red Hanrahan for a while, in the corner where they were. But the mother grew to be uneasy, and she called to Oona to come and help her to set the table in the inner room. But Oona that had never refused her before, said she would come soon, but not yet, for

she was listening to whatever he was saying in her ear. The mother grew yet more uneasy then, and she would come nearer them, and let on to be stirring the fire or sweeping the hearth, and she would listen for a minute to hear what the poet was saying to her child. And one time she heard him telling about white-handed Deirdre, and how she brought the sons of Usnach to their death; and how the blush in her cheeks was not so red as the blood of kings' sons that was shed for her, and her sorrows had never gone out of mind; and he said it was maybe the memory of her that made the cry of the plover on the bog as sorrowful in the ear of the poets as the keening of young men for a comrade. And there would never have been that memory of her, he said, if it was not for the poets that had put her beauty in their songs. And the next time she did not well understand what he was saying, but as far as she could hear, it had the sound of poetry though it was not rhymed, and this is what she heard him say: "The sun and the moon are the man and the girl, they are my life and your life, they are travelling and ever travelling through the skies as if under the one hood. It was God made them for one another. He made your life and my life before the beginning of the world, he made them that

they might go through the world, up and down, like the two best dancers that go on with the dance up and down the long floor of the barn, fresh and laughing, when all the rest are tired out and leaning against the wall."

The old woman went then to where her husband was playing cards, but he would take no notice of her, and then she went to a woman of the neighbours and said: "Is there no way we can get them from one another?" and without waiting for an answer she said to some young men that were talking together: "What good are you when you cannot make the best girl in the house come out and dance with you? And go now the whole of you," she said, "and see can you bring her away from the poet's talk." But Oona would not listen to any of them, but only moved her hand as if to send them away. Then they called to Hanrahan and said he had best dance with the girl himself, or let her dance with one of them. When Hanrahan heard what they were saying he said: "That is so, I will dance with her; there is no man in the house must dance with her but myself."

He stood up with her then, and led her out by the hand, and some of the young men were vexed, and some began mocking

at his ragged coat and his broken boots. But he took no notice, and Oona took no notice, but they looked at one another as if all the world belonged to themselves alone. But another couple that had been sitting together like lovers stood out on the floor at the same time, holding one another's hands and moving their feet to keep time with the music. But Hanrahan turned his back on them as if angry, and in place of dancing he began to sing, and as he sang he held her hand, and his voice grew louder, and the mocking of the young men stopped, and the fiddle stopped, and there was nothing heard but his voice that had in it the sound of the wind. And what he sang was a song he had heard or had made one time in his wanderings on Slieve Echtge, and the words of it as they can be put into English were like this:

O Death's old bony finger
Will never find us there
In the high hollow townland
Where love's to give and to spare;
Where boughs have fruit and blossom
At all times of the year;
Where rivers are running over
With red beer and brown beer.
An old man plays the bagpipes
In a golden and silver wood;
Queens, their eyes blue like the ice,
Are dancing in a crowd.

And while he was singing it Oona moved nearer to him, and the colour had gone from her cheek, and her eyes were not blue now, but grey with the tears that were in them, and any one that saw her would have thought she was ready to follow him there and then from the west to the east of the world.

But one of the young men called out: "Where is that country he is singing about? Mind yourself, Oona, it is a long way off, you might be a long time on the road before you would reach to it." And another said: "It is not to the Country of the Young you will be going if you go with him, but to Mayo of the bogs." Oona looked at him then as if she would question him, but he raised her hand in his hand, and called out between singing and shouting: "It is very near us that country is, it is on every side; it may be on the bare hill behind it is, or it may be in the heart of the wood." And he said out very loud and clear: "In the heart of the wood; oh, death will never find us in the heart of the wood. And will you come with me there, Oona?" he said.

But while he was saying this the two old women had gone outside the door, and Oona's mother was crying, and she said: "He has put an enchantment on Oona.

Can we not get the men to put him out of the house?"

"That is a thing you cannot do," said the other woman, "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."

"God help us," said the mother, "and why did I ever let him into the house at all, and the wild name he has!"

"It would have been no harm at all to have kept him outside, but there would great harm come upon you if you put him out by force. But listen to the plan I have to get him out of the house by his own doing, without any one putting him from it at all."

It was not long after that the two women came in again, each of them having a bundle of hay in her apron. Hanrahan was not singing now, but he was talking to Oona very fast and soft, and he was saying: "The house is narrow but the world is wide, and there is no true lover that need be afraid of night or morning or sun or stars or shadows of evening, or any earthly thing." "Hanrahan," said the mother then, striking him on the shoulder, "will you give me a hand here for a minute?" "Do that, Hanrahan," said the woman of

the neighbours, "and help us to make this hay into a rope, for you are ready with your hands, and a blast of wind has loosened the thatch on the haystack."

"I will do that for you," said he, and he took the little stick in his hands, and the mother began giving out the hay, and he twisting it, but he was hurrying to have done with it, and to be free again. The women went on talking and giving out the hay, and encouraging him, and saying what a good twister of a rope he was, better than their own neighbours or than any one they had ever seen. And Hanrahan saw that Oona was watching him, and he began to twist very quick and with his head high, and to boast of the readiness of his hands, and the learning he had in his head, and the strength in his arms. And as he was boasting, he went backward, twisting the rope always till he came to the door that was open behind him, and without thinking he passed the threshold and was out on the road. And no sooner was he there than the mother made a sudden rush, and threw out the rope after him, and she shut the door and the half-door and put a bolt upon them.

She was well pleased when she had done that, and laughed out loud, and the neighbours laughed and praised her. But they

heard him beating at the door, and saying words of cursing outside it, and the mother had but time to stop Oona that had her hand upon the bolt to open it. She made a sign to the fiddler then, and he began a reel, and one of the young men asked no leave but caught hold of Oona and brought her into the thick of the dance. And when it was over and the fiddle had stopped, there was no sound at all of anything outside, but the road was as quiet as before.

As to Hanrahan, when he knew he was shut out and that there was neither shelter nor drink nor a girl's ear for him that night, the anger and the courage went out of him, and he went on to where the waves were beating on the strand.

He sat down on a big stone, and he began swinging his right arm and singing slowly to himself, the way he did always to hearten himself when every other thing failed him. And whether it was that time or another time he made the song that is called to this day "The Twisting of the Rope", and that begins, "What was the dead cat that put me in this place", is not known.

But after he had been singing a while, mist and shadows seemed to gather about him, sometimes coming out of the sea, and sometimes moving upon it. It seemed to him that one of the shadows was the queen-

woman he had seen in her sleep at Slieve Echtge; not in her sleep now, but mocking, and calling out to them that were behind her: "He was weak, he was weak, he had no courage". And he felt the strands of the rope in his hand yet, and went on twisting it, but it seemed to him as he twisted that it had all the sorrows of the world in it. And then it seemed to him as if the rope had changed in his dream into a great water-worm that came out of the sea, and that twisted itself about him, and held him closer and closer. And then he got free of it, and went on, shaking and unsteady, along the edge of the strand, and the grey shapes were flying here and there around him. And this is what they were saying, "It is a pity for him that refuses the call of the daughters of the Sidhe, for he will find no comfort in the love of the women of the earth to the end of life and time, and the cold of the grave is in his heart for ever. It is death he has chosen; let him die, let him die, let him die."

HANRAHAN AND CATHLEEN THE DAUGHTER OF HOOLIHAN

It was travelling northward Hanrahan was one time, giving a hand to a farmer now and again in the hurried time of the year, and telling his stories and making his share of songs at wakes and at weddings.

He chanced one day to overtake on the road to Collooney one Margaret Rooney, a woman he used to know in Munster when he was a young man. She had no good name at that time, and it was the priest routed her out of the place at last. He knew her by her walk and by the colour of her eyes, and by a way she had of putting back the hair off her face with her left hand. She had been wandering about, she said, selling herrings and the like, and now she was going back to Sligo, to the place in the Burrough where she was living with another woman, Mary Gillis, who had much the same story as herself. She would be well pleased, she said, if he would come and stop in the house with them, and be singing

his songs to the bocachs and blind men and fiddlers of the Burrough. She remembered him well, she said, and had a wish for him; and as to Mary Gillis, she had some of his songs off by heart, so he need not be afraid of not getting good treatment, and all the bocachs and poor men that heard him would give him a share of their own earnings for his stories and his songs while he was with them, and would carry his name into all the parishes of Ireland.

He was glad enough to go with her, and to find a woman to be listening to the story of his troubles and to be comforting him. It was at the moment of the fall of day when every man may pass as handsome and every woman as comely. She put her arm about him when he told her of the misfortune of the Twisting of the Rope, and in the half light she looked as well as another.

They kept in talk all the way to the Burrough, and as for Mary Gillis, when she saw him and heard who he was, she went near crying to think of having a man with so great a name in the house.

Hanrahan was well pleased to settle down with them for a while, for he was tired with wandering; and since the day he found the little cabin fallen in, and Mary Lavelle gone from it, and the thatch scattered, he had never asked to have any place of his own;

and he had never stopped long enough in any place to see the green leaves come where he had seen the old leaves wither, or to see the wheat harvested where he had seen it sown. It was a good change to him to have shelter from the wet, and a fire in the evening time, and his share of food put on the table without the asking.

He made a good many of his songs while he was living there, so well cared for and so quiet. The most of them were love songs, but some were songs of repentance, and some were songs about Ireland and her griefs, under one name or another.

Every evening the bocachs and beggars and blind men and fiddlers would gather into the house and listen to his songs and his poems, and his stories about the old time of the Fianna, and they kept them in their memories that were never spoiled with books; and so they brought his name to every wake and wedding and pattern in the whole of Connaught. He was never so well off or made so much of as he was at that time.

One evening of December he was singing a little song that he said he had heard from the green plover of the mountain, about the fair-haired boys that had left Limerick, and that were wandering and going astray in all parts of the world. There were a good many

people in the room that night, and two or three little lads that had crept in, and sat on the floor near the fire, and were too busy with the roasting of a potato in the ashes or some such thing to take much notice of him; but they remembered long afterwards when his name had gone up, the sound of his voice, and what way he had moved his hand, and the look of him as he sat on the edge of the bed, with his shadow falling on the white-washed wall behind him, and as he moved going up as high as the thatch.

Of a sudden his singing stopped, and his eyes grew misty as if he was looking at some far thing.

Mary Gillis was pouring whisky into a mug that stood on a table beside him, and she left off pouring and said, "Is it of leaving us you are thinking?"

Margaret Rooney heard what she said, and did not know why she said it, and she took the words too much in earnest and came over to him, and there was dread in her heart that she was going to lose so good a comrade, and a man that was thought so much of, and that brought so many to her house.

"You would not go away from us, my heart?" she said, catching him by the hand.

"It is not of that I am thinking," he said, "but of Ireland and the weight of grief that

is on her." And he leaned his head against his hand, and began to sing these words, and the sound of his voice was like the wind in a lonely place.

The old brown thorn trees break in two high over
Cummen Strand
Under a bitter black wind that blows from the left
hand;
Our courage breaks like an old tree in a black wind
and dies,
But we have hidden in our hearts the flame out of
the eyes
Of Cathleen the daughter of Hoolihan.

The winds have bundled up the clouds high over
Knocknarea
And thrown the thunder on the stones for all that
Maeve can say;
Angers that are like noisy clouds have set our hearts
abeat,
But we have all bent low and low and kissed the
quiet feet
Of Cathleen the daughter of Hoolihan.

The yellow pool has overflowed high up on
Clooth-na-Bare,
For the wet winds are blowing out of the clinging
air;
Like heavy flooded waters our bodies and our blood,
But purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood
Is Cathleen the daughter of Hoolihan.

While he was singing, his voice began to break, and tears came rolling down his cheeks,

and Margaret Rooney put down her face into her hands and began to cry along with him. Then a blind beggar by the fire shook his rags with a sob, and after that there was no one of them all but cried tears down.

RED HANRAHAN'S CURSE

One fine May morning a long time after Hanrahan had left Margaret Rooney's house, he was walking the road near Collooney, and the sound of the birds singing in the bushes that were white with blossom set him singing as he went. It was to his own little place he was going, that was no more than a cabin, but that pleased him well. For he was tired of so many years of wandering from shelter to shelter at all times of the year, and although he was seldom refused a welcome and a share of what was in the house, it seemed to him sometimes that his mind was getting stiff like his joints, and it was not so easy to him as it used to be to make fun and sport through the night, and to set all the boys laughing with his pleasant talk, and to coax the women with his songs. And a while ago, he had turned into a cabin that some poor man had left to go harvesting and had never come to again. And when he had mended the thatch and made a bed in the corner with a few sacks and rushes, and had swept out the

floor, he was well content to have a little place for himself, where he could go in and out as he liked, and put his head in his hands through the length of an evening if the fret was on him, and loneliness after the old times. One by one the neighbours began to send their children in to get some learning from him, and with what they brought, a few eggs, or an oaten cake or a couple of sods of turf, he made out a way of living. And if he went for a wild day and night now and again to the Burrough, no one would say a word, knowing him to be a poet, with wandering in his heart.

It was from the Burrough he was coming that May morning, light-hearted enough, and singing some new song that had come to him. But it was not long till a hare ran across his path, and made away into the fields, through the loose stones of the wall. And he knew it was no good sign a hare to have crossed his path, and he remembered the hare that had led him away to Slieve Echtge the time Mary Lavelle was waiting for him, and how he had never known content for any length of time since them. "And it is likely enough they are putting some bad thing before me now," he said.

And after he said that he heard the sound of crying in the field beside him, and he looked over the wall. And there he saw a

young girl sitting under a bush of white hawthorn, and crying as if her heart would break. Her face was hidden in her hands, but her soft hair and her white neck and the young look of her, put him in mind of Bridget Purcell and Margaret Gillane and Maeve Connelan and Oona Curry and Celia Driscoll, and the rest of the girls he had made songs for and had coaxed the heart from with his flattering tongue.

She looked up, and he saw her to be a girl of the neighbours, a farmer's daughter. "What is on you, Nora?" he said. "Nothing you could take from me, Red Hanrahan." "If there is any sorrow on you it is I myself should be well able to serve you," he said then, "for it is I know the history of the Greeks, and I know well what sorrow is and parting, and the hardship of the world. And if I am not able to save you from trouble," he said, "there is many a one I have saved from it with the power that is in my songs, as it was in the songs of the poets that were before me from the beginning of the world. And it is with the rest of the poets I myself will be sitting and talking in some far place beyond the world, to the end of life and time," he said. The girl stopped her crying, and she said, "Owen Hanrahan, I often heard you have had sorrow and persecution, and that you know all the troubles of the

world since the time you refused your love to the queen-woman in Slieve Echtge; and that she never left you in quiet since. But when it is people of this earth that have harmed you, it is yourself knows well the way to put harm on them again. And will you do now what I ask you, Owen Hanrahan?" she said. "I will do that indeed," said he.

"It is my father and my mother and my brothers," she said, "that are marrying me to old Paddy Doe, because he has a farm of a hundred acres under the mountain. And it is what you can do, Hanrahan," she said, "put him into a rhyme the same way you put old Peter Kilmartin in one the time you were young, that sorrow may be over him rising up and lying down, that will put him thinking of Collooney churchyard and not of marriage. And let you make no delay about it, for it is for to-morrow they have the marriage settled, and I would sooner see the sun rise on the day of my death than on that day."

"I will put him into a song that will bring shame and sorrow over him; but tell me how many years has he, for I would put them in the song?"

"O, he has years upon years. He is as old as you yourself, Red Hanrahan." "As old as myself," said Hanrahan, and his voice was as if broken; "as old as myself; there

are twenty years and more between us! It is a bad day indeed for Owen Hanrahan when a young girl with the blossom of May in her cheeks thinks him to be an old man. And my grief!" he said, "you have put a thorn in my heart."

He turned from her then and went down the road till he came to a stone, and he sat down on it, for it seemed as if all the weight of the years had come on him in the minute. And he remembered it was not many days ago that a woman in some house had said: "It is not Red Hanrahan you are now but yellow Hanrahan, for your hair is turned to the colour of a wisp of tow." And another woman he had asked for a drink had not given him new milk but sour; and sometimes the girls would be whispering and laughing with young ignorant men while he himself was in the middle of giving out his poems or his talk. And he thought of the stiffness of his joints when he first rose of a morning, and the pain of his knees after making a journey, and it seemed to him as if he was come to be a very old man, with cold in the shoulders and speckled shins and his wind breaking and he himself withering away. And with those thoughts there came on him a great anger against old age and all it brought with it. And just then he looked up and saw a great spotted eagle sailing slowly towards

Ballygawley, and he cried out: "You, too, eagle of Ballygawley, are old, and your wings are full of gaps, and I will put you and your ancient comrades, the Pike of Dargan Lake and the Yew of the Steep Place of the Strangers into my rhyme, that there may be a curse on you for ever."

There was a bush beside him to the left, flowering like the rest, and a little gust of wind blew the white blossoms over his coat. "May blossoms," he said, gathering them up in the hollow of his hand, "you never know age because you die away in your beauty, and I will put you into my rhyme and give you my blessing."

He rose up then and plucked a little branch from the bush, and carried it in his hand. But it is old and broken he looked going home that day with the stoop in his shoulders and the darkness in his face.

When he got to his cabin there was no one there, and he went and lay down on the bed for a while as he was used to do when he wanted to make a poem or a praise or a curse. And it was not long he was in making it this time, for the power of the curse-making bards was upon him. And when he had made it he searched his mind how he could send it out over the whole countryside.

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Some of the scholars began coming in then, to see if there would be any school that day, and Hanrahan rose up and sat on the bench by the hearth, and they all stood around him.

They thought he would bring out the Virgil or the Mass book or the primer, but instead of that he held up the little branch of hawthorn he had in his hand yet. "Children," he said, "this is a new lesson I have for you to-day.

"You yourselves and the beautiful people of the world are like this blossom, and old age is the wind that comes and blows the blossom away. And I have made a curse upon old age and upon the old men, and listen now while I give it out to you." And this is what he said,—

The poet, Owen Hanrahan, under a bush of may
Calls down a curse on his own head because it withers grey;
Then on the speckled eagle cock of Ballygawley Hill,
Because it is the oldest thing that knows of cark and ill;
And on the yew that has been green from the times out of mind
By the Steep Place of the Strangers and the Gap of the Wind;
And on the great grey pike that broods in Castle Dargan Lake
Having in his long body a many a hook and ache;

Then curses he old Paddy Bruen of the Well of
Bride
Because no hair is on his head and drowsiness inside.
Then Paddy's neighbour, Peter Hart, and Michael
Gill, his friend,
Because their wandering histories are never at an
end.
And then old Shemus Cullinan, shepherd of the
Green Lands
Because he holds two crutches between his crooked
hands;
Then calls a curse from the dark North upon old
Paddy Doe,
Who plans to lay his withering head upon a breast
of snow,
Who plans to wreck a singing voice and break a
merry heart;
He bids a curse hang over him till breath and body
part,
But he calls down a blessing on the blossom of the
may,
Because it comes in beauty, and in beauty blows
away.

He said it over to the children verse by verse till all of them could say a part of it, and some that were the quickest could say the whole of it.

"That will do for to-day," he said then. "And what you have to do now is to go out and sing that song for a while, to the tune of the Green Bunch of Rushes, to every one you meet, and to the old men themselves."

"I will do that," said one of the little

lads; "I know old Paddy Doe well. Last Saint John's Eve we dropped a mouse down his chimney, but this is better than a mouse."

"I will go into the town of Sligo and sing it in the street," said another of the boys. "Do that," said Hanrahan, "and go into the Burrough and tell it to Margaret Rooney and Mary Gillis, and bid them sing it, and to make the beggars and the bocachs sing it wherever they go." The children ran out then, full of pride and of mischief, calling out the song as they ran, and Hanrahan knew there was no danger it would not be heard.

He was sitting outside the door the next morning, looking at his scholars as they came by in twos and threes. They were nearly all come, and he was considering the place of the sun in the heavens to know whether it was time to begin, when he heard a sound that was like the buzzing of a swarm of bees in the air, or the rushing of a hidden river in time of flood. Then he saw a crowd coming up to the cabin from the road, and he took notice that all the crowd was made up of old men, and that the leaders of it were Paddy Bruen, Michael Gill and Paddy Doe, and there was not one in the crowd but had in his hand an ash stick or a blackthorn. As soon as they caught sight of him, the sticks began to

wave hither and thither like branches in a storm, and the old feet to run.

He waited no longer, but made off up the hill behind the cabin till he was out of their sight.

After a while he came back round the hill, where he was hidden by the furze growing along a ditch. And when he came in sight of his cabin he saw that all the old men had gathered around it, and one of them was just at that time thrusting a rake with a wisp of lighted straw on it into the thatch.

"My grief," he said, "I have set Old Age and Time and Weariness and Sickness against me, and I must go wandering again. And, O Blessed Queen of Heaven," he said, "protect me from the Eagle of Ballygawley, the Yew Tree of the Steep Place of the Strangers, the Pike of Castle Dargan Lake, and from the lighted wisps of their kindred, the Old Men!"

HANRAHAN'S VISION

It was in the month of June Hanrahan was on the road near Sligo, but he did not go into the town, but turned towards Ben Bulben; for there were thoughts of the old times coming upon him, and he had no mind to meet with common men. And as he walked he was singing to himself a song that had come to him one time in his dreams:

O Death's old bony finger
Will never find us there
In the high hollow townland
Where love's to give and to spare;
Where boughs have fruit and blossom
At all times of the year;
Where rivers are running over
With red beer and brown beer.
An old man plays the bagpipes
In a golden and silver wood;
Queens, their eyes blue like the ice,
Are dancing in a crowd.

The little fox he murmured,
"O what of the world's bane?"
The sun was laughing sweetly,
The moon plucked at my rein;

But the little red fox murmured,
" O do not pluck at his rein,
He is riding to the townland
That is the world's bane."

When their hearts are so high
That they would come to blows,
They unhook their heavy swords
From golden and silver boughs;
But all that are killed in battle
Awaken to life again.
It is lucky that their story
Is not known among men,
For O, the strong farmers
That would let the spade lie,
Their hearts would be like a cup
That somebody had drunk dry.

Michael will unhook his trumpet
From a bough overhead,
And blow a little noise
When the supper has been spread,
Gabriel will come from the water
With a fish tail, and talk
Of wonders that have happened
On wet roads where men walk,
And lift up an old horn
Of hammered silver, and drink
Till he has fallen asleep
Upon the starry brink.

Hanrahan had begun to climb the mountain then, and he gave over singing, for it was a long climb for him, and every now and again he had to sit down and to

rest for a while. And one time he was resting he took notice of a wild briar bush, with blossoms on it, that was growing beside a rath, and it brought to mind the wild roses he used to bring to Mary Lavelle, and to no woman after her. And he tore off a little branch of the bush, that had buds on it and open blossoms, and he went on with his song:

The little fox he murmured,
"O what of the world's bane?"
The sun was laughing sweetly,
The moon plucked at my rein;
But the little red fox murmured,
"O do not pluck at his rein,
He is riding to the townland
That is the world's bane."

And he went on climbing the hill, and left the rath, and there came to his mind some of the old poems that told of lovers, good and bad, and of some that were awakened from the sleep of the grave itself by the strength of one another's love, and brought away to a life in some shadowy place, where they are waiting for the judgment and banished from the face of God.

And at last, at the fall of day, he came to the Steep Place of the Strangers, and there he laid himself down along a ridge of rocks and looked into the valley, that was full

of grey mist spreading from mountain to mountain.

And it seemed to him as he looked that the mist changed to shapes of shadowy men and women, and his heart began to beat with the fear and the joy of the sight. And his hands, that were always restless, began to pluck off the leaves of the roses on the little branch, and he watched them as they went floating down into the valley in a little fluttering troop.

Suddenly he heard a faint music, a music that had more laughter in it and more crying than all the music of this world. And his heart rose when he heard that, and he began to laugh out loud, for he knew that music was made by some who had a beauty and a greatness beyond the people of this world. And it seemed to him that the little soft rose leaves as they went fluttering down into the valley began to change their shape till they looked like a troop of men and women far off in the mist, with the colour of the roses on them. And then that colour changed to many colours, and what he saw was a long line of tall beautiful young men, and of queen-women, that were not going from him but coming towards him and past him, and their faces were full of tenderness for all their proud looks, and were very pale and worn, as if they were seeking and ever

seeking for high sorrowful things. And shadowy arms were stretched out of the mist as if to take hold of them, but could not touch them, for the quiet that was about them could not be broken. And before them and beyond them, but at a distance as if in reverence, there were other shapes, sinking and rising and coming and going, and Hanrahan knew them by their whirling flight to be the Sidhe, the ancient defeated gods; and the shadowy arms did not rise to take hold of the Sidhe who are of those that can neither sin nor obey. And they all lessened then in the distance, and they seemed to be going towards the white door that is in the side of the mountain.

The mist spread out before him now like a deserted sea washing the mountains with long grey waves, but while he was looking at it, it began to fill again with a flowing broken witless life that was a part of itself, and arms and pale heads covered with tossing hair appeared in the greyness. It rose higher and higher till it was level with the edge of the steep rock, and then the shapes seemed all but solid, and that new procession half lost in mist passed very slowly with uneven steps, and in the midst of each shadow there was something shining in the starlight. They came nearer and nearer, and Hanrahan saw that they also were lovers,

and that they had heart-shaped mirrors instead of hearts, and they were looking and ever looking on their own faces in one another's mirrors. They passed on, sinking downward as they passed, and other shapes rose in their place, and these did not keep side by side, but followed after one another, holding out wild beckoning arms, and he saw that those who were followed were women, and as to their heads they were beyond all beauty, but as to their bodies they were but shadows without life, and their long hair was moving and trembling about them, as if it lived with some terrible life of its own. And then the mist rose of a sudden and hid them; and then a light gust of wind blew them away towards the north-east, and covered Hanrahan at the same time with a white wing of cloud.

He stood up trembling and was going to turn away from the valley, when he saw two dark and half-hidden forms standing as if in the air just beyond the rock, and one of them that had the sorrowful eyes of a beggar said to him in a woman's voice, "Speak to me, for no one in this world or any other world has spoken to me for seven hundred years."

"Tell me who are those that have passed by," said Hanrahan.

"Those that passed first," the woman

said, "are the lovers that had the greatest name in the old times, Blanad and Deirdre and Grania and their dear comrades, and a great many that are not so well known but are as well loved. And because it was not only the blossom of youth they were looking for in one another, but the beauty that is as lasting as the night and the stars, the night and the stars hold them for ever from the warring and the perishing, in spite of the death and bitterness their love brought into the world. And those that came next," she said, "and that still breathe the sweet air and have the mirrors in their hearts, are not put in songs by the poets, because they sought only to triumph one over the other, and so to prove their strength and beauty, and out of this they made a kind of love. And as to the women with shadow-bodies, they desired neither to triumph nor to love but only to be loved, and there is no blood in their hearts or in their bodies until it flows through them from a kiss, and their life is but for a moment. All these are unhappy, but I am the unhappiest of all, for I am Dervagilla, and this is Dermot, and it was our sin brought the Norman into Ireland. And the curses of all the generations are upon us, and none are punished as we are punished. It was but the blossom of the man and of the

woman we loved in one another, and so when we died there was no lasting unbreakable quiet about us, and the bitterness of the battles we brought into Ireland turned to our own punishment. We go wandering together for ever, but Dermot that was my lover sees me always as a body that has been a long time in the ground, and I know that is the way he sees me. Ask me more, ask me more, for all the years have left their wisdom in my heart, and no one has listened to me for seven hundred years."

A great terror had fallen upon Hanrahan, and lifting his arms above his head he screamed out loud three times, and the cattle in the valley lifted their heads and lowed, and the birds in the wood at the edge of the mountain awaked out of their sleep and fluttered through the trembling leaves. But a little below the edge of the rock, the troop of rose leaves still fluttered in the air, for the gateway of Eternity had opened and shut again in one beat of the heart.

THE DEATH OF HANRAHAN

HANRAHAN, that was never long in one place, was back again among the villages that are at the foot of Slieve Echtge, Illeton and Scalp and Ballylee, stopping sometimes in one house and sometimes in another, and finding a welcome in every place for the sake of the old times and of his poetry and his learning. There was some silver and some copper money in the little leather bag under his coat, but it was seldom he needed to take anything from it, for it was little he used, and there was not one of the people that would have taken payment from him. His hand had grown heavy on the blackthorn he leaned on, and his cheeks were hollow and worn, but so far as food went, potatoes and milk and a bit of oaten cake, he had what he wanted of it; and it is not on the edge of so wild and boggy a place as Echtge a mug of spirits would be wanting, with the taste of the turf smoke on it. He would wander about the big wood at Kinadife, or he would sit through many hours of the

day among the rushes about Lake Belshragh, listening to the streams from the hills, or watching the shadows in the brown bog pools; sitting so quiet as not to startle the deer that came down from the heather to the grass and the tilled fields at the fall of night. As the days went by it seemed as if he was beginning to belong to some world out of sight and misty, that has for its mearing the colours that are beyond all other colours and the silences that are beyond all silences of this world. And sometimes he would hear coming and going in the wood music that when it stopped went from his memory like a dream; and once in the stillness of midday he heard a sound like the clashing of many swords, that went on for a long time without any break. And at the fall of night and at moonrise the lake would grow to be like a gateway of silver and shining stones, and there would come from its silence the faint sound of keening and of frightened laughter broken by the wind, and many pale beckoning hands.

He was sitting looking into the water one evening in harvest time, thinking of all the secrets that were shut into the lakes and the mountains, when he heard a cry coming from the south, very faint at first, but getting louder and clearer as the shadow

of the rushes grew longer, till he could hear the words, "I am beautiful, I am beautiful. The birds in the air, the moths under the leaves, the flies over the water look at me, for they never saw any one so beautiful as myself. I am young; I am young: look upon me, mountains; look upon me, perishing woods, for my body will shine like the white waters when you have been hurried away. You and the whole race of men, and the race of the beasts, and the race of the fish, and the winged race, are dropping like a candle that is nearly burned out, but I laugh aloud because I am in my youth." The voice would break off from time to time, as if tired, and then it would begin again, calling out always the same words, "I am beautiful, I am beautiful." Presently the bushes at the edge of the little lake trembled for a moment, and a very old woman forced her way among them, and passed by Hanrahan, walking with very slow steps. Her face was of the colour of earth, and more wrinkled than the face of any old hag that was ever seen, and her grey hair was hanging in wisps, and the rags she was wearing did not hide her dark skin that was roughened by all weathers. She passed by him with her eyes wide open, and her head high, and her arms hanging straight beside her, and she went

into the shadow of the hills towards the west.

A sort of dread came over Hanrahan when he saw her, for he knew her to be one Winny Byrne of the Cross Roads, that went begging from place to place crying always the same cry, and he had often heard that she had once such wisdom that all the women of the neighbours used to go looking for advice from her, and that she had a voice so beautiful that men and women would come from every part to hear her sing at a wake or a wedding; and that the Others, the great Sidhe, had stolen her wits one Samhain night many years ago, when she had fallen asleep on the edge of a rath, and had seen in her dreams the servants of Echtge of the hills.

And as she vanished away up the hillside, it seemed as if her cry, "I am beautiful, I am beautiful," was coming from among the stars in the heavens.

There was a cold wind creeping among the rushes, and Hanrahan began to shiver, and he rose up to go to some house where there would be a fire on the hearth. But instead of turning down the hill as he was used, he went on up the hill, along the little track that was maybe a road and maybe the dry bed of a stream. It was the same way Winny had gone, and it led to

the little cabin where she stopped when she stopped in any place at all. He walked very slowly up the hill as if he had a great load on his back, and at last he saw a light a little to the left, and he thought it likely it was from Winny's house it was shining, and he turned from the path to go to it. But clouds had come over the sky, and he could not well see his way, and after he had gone a few steps his foot slipped and he fell into a bog drain, and though he dragged himself out of it, holding on to the roots of the heather, the fall had given him a great shake, and he felt better fit to lie down than to go travelling. But he had always great courage, and he made his way on, step by step, till at last he came to Winny's cabin, that had no window, but the light was shining from the door. He thought to go into it and to rest for a while, but when he came to the door he did not see Winny inside it, but what he saw was four old grey-haired women playing cards, but Winny herself was not among them. Hanrahan sat down on a heap of turf beside the door, for he was tired out and out, and had no wish for talking or for card-playing, and his bones and his joints aching the way they were. He could hear the four women talking as they played, and calling out their hands. And it seemed to him that

they were saying, like the strange man in the barn long ago: "Spades and Diamonds, Courage and Power. Clubs and Hearts, Knowledge and Pleasure." And he went on saying those words over and over to himself; and whether or not he was in his dreams, the pain that was in his shoulder never left him. And after a while the four women in the cabin began to quarrel, and each one to say the other had not played fair, and their voices grew from loud to louder, and their screams and their curses, till at last the whole air was filled with the noise of them around and above the house, and Hanrahan, hearing it between sleep and waking, said: "That is the sound of the fighting between the friends and the ill-wishers of a man that is near his death. And I wonder," he said, "who is the man in this lonely place that is near his death."

It seemed as if he had been asleep a long time, and he opened his eyes, and the face he saw over him was the old wrinkled face of Winny of the Cross Roads. She was looking hard at him, as if to make sure he was not dead, and she wiped away the blood that had grown dry on his face with a wet cloth, and after a while she partly helped him and partly lifted him into the cabin, and laid him down on what served her for a bed. She gave him a couple of

potatoes from a pot on the fire, and, what served him better, a mug of spring water. He slept a little now and again, and sometimes he heard her singing to herself as she moved about the house, and so the night wore away. When the sky began to brighten with the dawn he felt for the bag where his little store of money was, and held it out to her, and she took out a bit of copper and a bit of silver money, but she let it drop again as if it was nothing to her, maybe because it was not money she was used to beg for, but food and rags; or maybe because the rising of the dawn was filling her with pride and a new belief in her own great beauty. She went out and cut a few armfuls of heather, and brought it in and heaped it over Hanrahan, saying something about the cold of the morning, and while she did that he took notice of the wrinkles in her face, and the greyness of her hair, and the broken teeth that were black and full of gaps. And when he was well covered with the heather she went out of the door and away down the side of the mountain, and he could hear the cry, "I am beautiful, I am beautiful," getting less and less as she went, till at last it died away altogether.

Hanrahan lay there through the length of the day, in his pains and his weakness,

and when the shadows of the evening were falling he heard her voice again coming up the hillside, and she came in and boiled the potatoes and shared them with him the same way as before. And one day after another passed like that, and the weight of his flesh was heavy about him. But little by little as he grew weaker he knew there were some greater than himself in the room with him, and that the house began to be filled with them; and it seemed to him they had all power in their hands, and that they might with one touch of the hand break down the wall the hardness of pain had built about him, and take him into their own world. And sometimes he could hear voices, very faint and joyful, crying from the rafters or out of the flame on the hearth, and other times the whole house was filled with music that went through it like a wind. And after a while his weakness left no place for pain, and there grew up about him a great silence like the silence in the heart of a lake, and there came through it, like the flame of a rushlight, the faint joyful voices ever and always.

One morning he heard music somewhere outside the door, and as the day passed it grew louder and louder until it drowned the faint joyful voices, and even Winny's cry upon the hillside at the fall of evening.

About midnight and in a moment, the walls seemed to melt away and to leave his bed floating on a pale misty light that shone on every side as far as the eye could see; and after the first blinding of his eyes he saw that it was full of great shadowy figures rushing here and there.

At the same time the music came very clearly to him, and he knew that it was but the continual clashing of swords.

"I am after my death," he said, "and in the very heart of the music of Heaven. O Cherubim and Seraphim, receive my soul!"

At his cry the light where it was nearest to him filled with sparks of yet brighter light, and he saw that these were the points of swords turned towards his heart; and then a sudden flame, bright and burning like God's love or God's hate, swept over the light and went out and he was in darkness. At first he could see nothing, for all was as dark as if there was black bog earth about him, but all of a sudden the fire blazed up as if a wisp of straw had been thrown upon it. And as he looked at it, the light was shining on the big pot that was hanging from a hook, and on the flat stone where Winny used to bake a cake now and again, and on the long rusty knife she used to be cutting the roots of the heather with, and on the long blackthorn stick he

had brought into the house himself. And when he saw those four things, some memory came into Hanrahan's mind, and strength came back to him, and he rose sitting up in the bed, and he said very loud and clear: "The Cauldron, the Stone, the Sword, the Spear. What are they? Who do they belong to? And I have asked the question this time."

And then he fell back again, weak, and the breath going from him.

Winny Byrne, that had been tending the fire, came over then, having her eyes fixed on the bed; and the faint laughing voices began crying out again, and a pale light, grey like a wave, came creeping over the room, and he did not know from what secret world it came. He saw Winny's withered face and her withered arms that were grey like crumbled earth, and weak as he was he shrank back farther towards the wall. And then there came out of the mud-stiffened rags arms as white and as shadowy as the foam on a river, and they were put about his body, and a voice that he could hear well but that seemed to come from a long way off said to him in a whisper: "You will go looking for me no more upon the breasts of women."

"Who are you?" he said then.

"I am one of the lasting people, of the

lasting unwearied Voices, that make my dwelling in the broken and the dying, and those that have lost their wits; and I came looking for you, and you are mine until the whole world is burned out like a candle that is spent. And look up now," she said, " for the wisps that are for our wedding are lighted."

He saw then that the house was crowded with pale shadowy hands, and that every hand was holding what was sometimes like a wisp lighted for a marriage, and sometimes like a tall white candle for the dead.

When the sun rose on the morning of the morrow Winny of the Cross Roads rose up from where she was sitting beside the body, and began her begging from townland to townland, singing the same song as she walked, " I am beautiful, I am beautiful. The birds in the air, the moths under the leaves, the flies over the water look at me. I am young: look upon me, mountains; look upon me, perishing woods, for my body will be shining like the white waters when you have been hurried away. You and the whole race of men, and the race of the beasts, and the race of the fish, and the winged race, are dropping like a candle that is nearly burned out. But I laugh aloud, because I am in my youth."

She did not come back that night or any

night to the cabin, and it was not till the end of two days that the turf cutters going to the bog found the body of Red Owen Hanrahan, and gathered men to wake him and women to keen him, and gave him a burying worthy of so great a poet.

ROSA ALCHEMICA

THE TABLES OF THE LAW

AND

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

"O blessed and happy he who, knowing the mysteries of the gods, sanctifies his life, and purifies his soul, celebrating orgies in the mountains with holy purifications."

EURIPIDES.

TO

A. E.

ROSA ALCHEMICA

I

It is now more than ten years since I met, for the last time, Michael Robartes, and for the first time and the last time his friends and fellow students; and witnessed his and their tragic end, and passed through strange experiences, which have changed me so that my writings have grown less popular and less intelligible, and may compel me to take refuge in the habit of St. Dominic. I had just published *Rosa Alchemica*, a little work on the Alchemists, somewhat in the manner of Sir Thomas Browne, and had received many letters from believers in the arcane sciences, upbraiding what they called my timidity, for they could not believe so evident sympathy but the sympathy of the artist, which is half pity, for everything which has moved men's hearts in any age. I had discovered, early in my researches, that their doctrine was no merely chemical phantasy, but a philosophy they applied to

the world, to the elements and to man himself; and that they sought to fashion gold out of common metals merely as part of an universal transmutation of all things into some divine and imperishable substance; and this enabled me to make my little book a fanciful reverie over the transmutation of life into art, and a cry of measureless desire for a world made wholly of essences.

I was sitting dreaming of what I had written, in my house in one of the old parts of Dublin; a house my ancestors had made almost famous through their part in the politics of the city and their friendships with the famous men of their generations; and was feeling an unwonted happiness at having at last accomplished a long-cherished design, and changed my rooms into an expression of this favourite doctrine. The portraits, of more historical than artistic interest, had gone; and tapestry, full of the blue and bronze of peacocks, fell over the doors, and shut out all history and activity untouched with beauty and peace; and now when I looked at my Crevelli and pondered on the rose in the hand of the Virgin, wherein the form was so delicate and precise that it seemed more like a thought than a flower, or my Francesca, so full of ghostly astonishment, I knew a Christian's ecstasy without

his slavery to rule and custom. When I pondered over the antique bronze gods and goddesses, which I had mortgaged my house to buy, I had all a pagan's delight in various beauty and without his terror at sleepless destiny and his labour with many sacrifices; and I had but to go to my book-shelf, where every book was bound in leather, stamped with intricate ornament, and of a carefully chosen colour: Shakespeare in the orange of the glory of the world, Dante in the dull red of his anger, Milton in the blue grey of his formal calm; to know what I would of human passions without their bitterness and without satiety. I had gathered about me all gods because I believed in none, and experienced every pleasure because I gave myself to none, but held myself apart, individual, indissoluble, a mirror of polished steel. I looked in the triumph of this imagination at the birds of Hera, glittering in the light of the fire as though of Bizantine mosaic; and to my mind, for which symbolism was a necessity, they seemed the doorkeepers of my world, shutting out all that was not of as affluent a beauty as their own; and for a moment I thought as I had thought in so many other moments, that it was possible to rob life of every bitterness except the bitterness of death; and then a thought which had

followed this thought, time after time, filled me with a passionate sorrow. All those forms: that Madonna with her brooding purity, those delighted ghostly faces under the morning light, those bronze divinities with their passionless dignity, those wild shapes rushing from despair to despair, belonged to a divine world wherein I had no part; and every experience, however profound, every perception, however exquisite, would bring me the bitter dream of a limitless energy I could never know, and even in my most perfect moment I would be two selves, the one watching with heavy eyes the other's moment of content. I had heaped about me the gold born in the crucibles of others; but the supreme dream of the alchemist, the transmutation of the weary heart into a weariless spirit, was as far from me as, I doubted not, it had been from him also. I turned to my last purchase, a set of alchemical apparatus which, the dealer in the Rue le Peletier had assured me, once belonged to Raymond Lully, and as I joined the *alembic* to the *athanor* and laid the *lavacrum maris* at their side, I understood the alchemical doctrine, that all beings, divided from the great deep where spirits wander, one and yet a multitude, are weary; and sympathised, in the pride of my connoisseurship, with the consuming thirst for

destruction which made the alchemist veil under his symbols of lions and dragons, of eagles and ravens, of dew and of nitre, a search for an essence which would dissolve all mortal things. I repeated to myself the ninth key of Basilius Valentinus, in which he compares the fire of the last day to the fire of the alchemist, and the world to the alchemist's furnace, and would have us know that all must be dissolved before the divine substance, material gold or immaterial ecstasy, awake. I had dissolved indeed the mortal world and lived amid immortal essences, but had obtained no miraculous ecstasy. As I thought of these things, I drew aside the curtains and looked out into the darkness, and it seemed to my troubled fancy that all those little points of light filling the sky were the furnaces of innumerable divine alchemists, who labour continually, turning lead into gold, weariness into ecstasy, bodies into souls, the darkness into God; and at their perfect labour my mortality grew heavy, and I cried out, as so many dreamers and men of letters in our age have cried, for the birth of that elaborate spiritual beauty which could alone uplift souls weighted with so many dreams.

II

My reverie was broken by a loud knocking at the door, and I wondered the more at this because I had no visitors, and had bid my servants do all things silently, lest they broke the dream of an all but secret life. Feeling a little curious, I resolved to go to the door myself, and, taking one of the silver candlesticks from the mantelpiece, began to descend the stairs. The servants appeared to be out, for though the sound poured through every corner and crevice of the house there was no stir in the lower rooms. I remembered that because my needs were so few, my part in life so little, they had begun to come and go as they would, often leaving me alone for hours. The emptiness and silence of a world from which I had driven everything but dreams suddenly overwhelmed me, and I shuddered as I drew the bolt. I found before me Michael Robartes, whom I had not seen for years, and whose wild red hair, fierce eyes, sensitive, tremulous lips and rough clothes, made him look now, just as they used to do fifteen years before, something between a debauchee, a saint, and a peasant. He had recently come to Ireland, he said, and wished to see me on a matter of im-

portance: indeed, the only matter of importance for him and for me. His voice brought up before me our student years in Paris, and remembering the magnetic power he had once possessed over me, a little fear mingled with much annoyance at this irrelevant intrusion, as I led the way up the wide staircase, where Swift had passed joking and railing, and Curran telling stories and quoting Greek, in simpler days, before men's minds, subtilised and complicated by the romantic movement in art and literature, began to tremble on the verge of some unimagined revelation. I felt that my hand shook, and saw that the light of the candle wavered more than it need have upon the gods and nymphs set upon the wall by some Italian plasterer of the eighteenth century, making them look like the first beings slowly shaping in the formless and void darkness. When the door had closed, and the peacock curtain fell between us and the world, I felt, in a way I could not understand, that some singular and unexpected thing was about to happen. I went over to the mantelpiece, and finding that a little chainless bronze censer, set, upon the outside, with pieces of painted china by Orazio Fontana, which I had filled with antique amulets, had fallen upon its side and poured out its contents, I began to gather the amulets into the bowl, partly to

collect my thoughts and partly with that habitual reverence which seemed to me the due of things so long connected with secret hopes and fears. "I see," said Michael Robartes, "that you are still fond of incense, and I can show you an incense more precious than any you have ever seen," and as he spoke he took the censer out of my hand and put the amulets in a little heap between the *athanor* and the *alembic*. I sat down, and he sat down at the side of the fire, and sat there for a while looking into the fire, and holding the censer in his hand. "I have come to ask you something," he said, "and the incense will fill the room, and our thoughts, with its sweet odour while we are talking. I got it from an old man in Syria, who said it was made from flowers, of one kind with the flowers that laid their heavy purple petals upon the hands and upon the hair and upon the feet of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and folded Him in their heavy breath, until He cried against the cross and His destiny." He shook some dust into the censer out of a small silk bag, and set the censer upon the floor and lit the dust which sent up a blue stream of smoke, that spread out over the ceiling, and flowed downwards again until it was like Milton's banyan tree. It filled me, as incense often does, with a faint sleepiness, so that I started when

he said, "I have come to ask you that question which I asked you in Paris, and which you left Paris rather than answer."

He had turned his eyes towards me, and I saw them glitter in the firelight, through the incense cloud, as I replied: "You mean, will I become an initiate of your Order of the Alchemical Rose? I would not consent in Paris, when I was full of unsatisfied desire, and now that I have at last fashioned my life according to my desire, am I likely to consent?"

"You have changed greatly since then," he answered. "I have read your books, and now I see you among all these images, and I understand you better than you do yourself, for I have been with many and many dreamers at the same cross-ways. You have shut away the world and gathered the gods about you, and if you do not throw yourself at their feet, you will be always full of lassitude, and of wavering purpose, for a man must forget he is miserable in the bustle and noise of the multitude in this world and in time; or seek a mystical union with the multitude who govern this world and time." And then he murmured something I could not hear, and as though to some one I could not see.

For a moment the room appeared to darken, as it used to do when he was about

to perform some singular experiment, and in the darkness the peacocks upon the doors seemed to glow with a more intense colour. I cast off the illusion, which was, I believed, merely caused by memory, and by the twilight of incense, for I would not acknowledge that he could overcome my now mature intellect; and I said: "Even if I grant that I need a spiritual belief and some form of worship, why should I go to Eleusis and not to Calvary?" He leaned forward and began speaking with a slightly rhythmical intonation, and as he spoke I had to struggle again with the shadow, as of some older night than the night of the sun, which began to dim the light of the candles and to blot out the little gleams upon the corner of picture-frames and on the bronze divinities, and to turn the blue of the incense to a heavy purple; while it left the peacocks to glimmer and glow as though each separate colour were a living spirit. I had fallen into a profound dream-like reverie in which I heard him speaking as at a distance. "And yet there is no one who communes with only one god," he was saying, "and the more a man lives in imagination and in a refined understanding, the more gods does he meet with and talk with, and the more does he come under the power of Roland, who sounded in the Valley of Roncesvalles the last trumpet of the body's will and

pleasure; and of Hamlet, who saw them perishing away, and sighed; and of Faust, who looked for them up and down the world and could not find them; and under the power of all those countless divinities who have taken upon themselves spiritual bodies in the minds of the modern poets and romance writers, and under the power of the old divinities, who since the Renaissance have won everything of their ancient worship except the sacrifice of birds and fishes, the fragrance of garlands and the smoke of incense. The many think humanity made these divinities, and that it can unmake them again; but we who have seen them pass in rattling harness, and in soft robes, and heard them speak with articulate voices while we lay in deathlike trance, know that they are always making and unmaking humanity, which is indeed but the trembling of their lips."

He had stood up and begun to walk to and fro, and had become in my waking dream a shuttle weaving an immense purple web whose folds had begun to fill the room. The room seemed to have become inexplicably silent, as though all but the web and the weaving were at an end in the world. "They have come to us; they have come to us," the voice began again; "all that have ever been in your reverie, all that you have met with in

books. There is Lear, his head still wet with the thunderstorm, and he laughs because you thought yourself an existence who are but a shadow, and him a shadow who is an eternal god; and there is Beatrice, with her lips half parted in a smile, as though all the stars were about to pass away in a sigh of love; and there is the mother of the God of humility, He who has cast so great a spell over men that they have tried to unpeople their hearts that He might reign alone, but she holds in her hand the rose whose every petal is a god; and there, O swiftly she comes! is Aphrodite under a twilight falling from the wings of numberless sparrows, and about her feet are the grey and white doves." In the midst of my dream I saw him hold out his left arm and pass his right hand over it as though he stroked the wings of doves. I made a violent effort which seemed almost to tear me in two, and said with forced determination: "You would sweep me away into an indefinite world which fills me with terror; and yet a man is a great man just in so far as he can make his mind reflect everything with indifferent precision like a mirror." I seemed to be perfectly master of myself, and went on, but more rapidly: "I command you to leave me at once, for your ideas and phantasies are but the illusions that creep like maggots into civilisations when they begin to decline,

and into minds when they begin to decay." I had grown suddenly angry, and seizing the *alembic* from the table, was about to rise and strike him with it, when the peacocks on the door behind him appeared to grow immense; and then the *alembic* fell from my fingers and I was drowned in a tide of green and blue and bronze feathers, and as I struggled hopelessly I heard a distant voice saying: "Our master Avicenna has written that all life proceeds out of corruption." The glittering feathers had now covered me completely, and I knew that I had struggled for hundreds of years, and was conquered at last. I was sinking into the depth when the green and blue and bronze that seemed to fill the world became a sea of flame and swept me away, and as I was swirled along I heard a voice over my head cry, "The mirror is broken in two pieces," and another voice answer, "The mirror is broken in four pieces," and a more distant voice cry with an exultant cry, "The mirror is broken into numberless pieces"; and then a multitude of pale hands were reaching towards me, and strange gentle faces bending above me, and half-wailing and half-caressing voices uttering words that were forgotten the moment they were spoken. I was being lifted out of the tide of flame, and felt my memories, my hopes, my thoughts, my will, everything I held to be

myself, melting away; then I seemed to rise through numberless companies of beings who were, I understood, in some way more certain than thought, each wrapped in his eternal moment, in the perfect lifting of an arm, in a little circlet of rhythmical words, in dreaming with dim eyes and half-closed eyelids. And then I passed beyond these forms, which were so beautiful they had almost ceased to be, and, having endured strange moods, melancholy, as it seemed, with the weight of many worlds, I passed into that Death which is Beauty herself, and into that Loneliness which all the multitudes desire without ceasing. All things that had ever lived seemed to come and dwell in my heart, and I in theirs; and I had never again known mortality or tears, had I not suddenly fallen from the certainty of vision into the uncertainty of dream, and become a drop of molten gold falling with immense rapidity, through a night elaborate with stars, and all about me a melancholy exultant wailing. I fell and fell and fell, and then the wailing was but the wailing of the wind in the chimney, and I awoke to find myself leaning upon the table and supporting my head with my hands. I saw the *alembic* swaying from side to side in the distant corner it had rolled to, and Michael Robartes watching me and waiting. "I will go wherever you will," I

said, "and do whatever you bid me, for I have been with eternal things." "I knew," he replied, "you must need answer as you have answered, when I heard the storm begin. You must come to a great distance, for we were commanded to build our temple between the pure multitude by the waves and the impure multitude of men."

III

I did not speak as we drove through the deserted streets, for my mind was curiously empty of familiar thoughts and experiences; it seemed to have been plucked out of the definite world and cast naked upon a shoreless sea. There were moments when the vision appeared on the point of returning, and I would half-remember, with an ecstasy of joy or sorrow, crimes and heroisms, fortunes and misfortunes; or begin to contemplate, with a sudden leaping of the heart, hopes and terrors, desires and ambitions, alien to my orderly and careful life; and then I would awake shuddering at the thought that some great imponderable being had swept through my mind. It was indeed days before this feeling passed perfectly away, and even now, when I have sought refuge in the only definite faith, I feel a great tolerance for those people with incoherent personalities, who gather in

the chapels and meeting-places of certain obscure sects, because I also have felt fixed habits and principles dissolving before a power, which was *hysterica passio* or sheer madness, if you will, but was so powerful in its melancholy exultation that I tremble lest it wake again and drive me from my new-found peace.

When we came in the grey light to the great half-empty terminus, it seemed to me I was so changed that I was no more, as man is, a moment shuddering at eternity, but eternity weeping and laughing over a moment; and when we had started and Michael Robartes had fallen asleep, as he soon did, his sleeping face, in which there was no sign of all that had so shaken me and that now kept me wakeful, was to my excited mind more like a mask than a face. The fancy possessed me that the man behind it had dissolved away like salt in water, and that it laughed and sighed, appealed and denounced at the bidding of beings greater or less than man. "This is not Michael Robartes at all: Michael Robartes is dead; dead for ten, for twenty years perhaps," I kept repeating to myself. I fell at last into a feverish sleep, waking up from time to time when we rushed past some little town, its slated roofs shining with wet, or still lake gleaming in the cold morning light. I had

been too preoccupied to ask where we were going, or to notice what tickets Michael Robartes had taken, but I knew now from the direction of the sun that we were going westward; and presently I knew also, by the way in which the trees had grown into the semblance of tattered beggars flying with bent heads towards the east, that we were approaching the western coast. Then immediately I saw the sea between the low hills upon the left, its dull grey broken into white patches and lines.

When we left the train we had still, I found, some way to go, and set out, buttoning our coats about us, for the wind was bitter and violent. Michael Robartes was silent, seeming anxious to leave me to my thoughts; and as we walked between the sea and the rocky side of a great promontory, I realised with a new perfection what a shock had been given to all my habits of thought and of feelings, if indeed some mysterious change had not taken place in the substance of my mind, for the grey waves, plumed with scudding foam, had grown part of a teeming, fantastic inner life; and when Michael Robartes pointed to a square ancient-looking house, with a much smaller and newer building under its lee, set out on the very end of a dilapidated and almost deserted pier, and said it was the Temple of the Alchemical

Rose, I was possessed with the phantasy that the sea, which kept covering it with showers of white foam, was claiming it as part of some indefinite and passionate life, which had begun to war upon our orderly and careful days, and was about to plunge the world into a night as obscure as that which followed the downfall of the classical world. One part of my mind mocked this phantastic terror, but the other, the part that still lay half plunged in vision, listened to the clash of unknown armies, and shuddered at unimaginable fanaticisms, that hung in those grey leaping waves.

We had gone but a few paces along the pier when we came upon an old man, who was evidently a watchman, for he sat in an overset barrel, close to a place where masons had been lately working upon a break in the pier, and had in front of him a fire such as one sees slung under tinkers' carts. I saw that he was also a voteen, as the peasants say, for there was a rosary hanging from a nail on the rim of the barrel, and as I saw I shuddered, and I did not know why I shuddered. We had passed him a few yards when I heard him cry in Gaelic, "Idolaters, idolaters, go down to Hell with your witches and your devils; go down to Hell that the herrings may come again into the bay"; and for some moments

I could hear him half screaming and half muttering behind us. "Are you not afraid," I said, "that these wild fishing people may do some desperate thing against you?"

"I and mine," he answered, "are long past human hurt or help, being incorporate with immortal spirits, and when we die it shall be the consummation of the supreme work. A time will come for these people also, and they will sacrifice a mullet to Artemis, or some other fish to some new divinity, unless indeed their own divinities set up once more their temples of grey stone. Their reign has never ceased, but only waned in power a little, for the Sidhe still pass in every wind, and dance and play at hurley, but they cannot build their temples again till there have been martyrdoms and victories, and perhaps even that long-foretold battle in the Valley of the Black Pig."

Keeping close to the wall that went about the pier on the seaward side, to escape the driving foam and the wind, which threatened every moment to lift us off our feet, we made our way in silence to the door of the square building. Michael Robartes opened it with a key, on which I saw the rust of many salt winds, and led me along a bare passage and up an uncarpeted stair to a little room surrounded with bookshelves.

A meal would be brought, but only of fruit, for I must submit to a tempered fast before the ceremony, he explained, and with it a book on the doctrine and method of the Order, over which I was to spend what remained of the winter daylight. He then left me, promising to return an hour before the ceremony. I began searching among the bookshelves, and found one of the most exhaustive alchemical libraries I have ever seen. There were the works of Morienus, who hid his immortal body under a shirt of hair-cloth; of Avicenna, who was a drunkard and yet controlled numberless legions of spirits; of Alfarabi, who put so many spirits into his lute that he could make men laugh, or weep, or fall in deadly trance as he would; of Lully, who transformed himself into the likeness of a red cock; of Flamel, who with his wife Parnella achieved the elixir many hundreds of years ago, and is fabled to live still in Arabia among the Dervishes; and of many of less fame. There were very few mystics but alchemical mystics, and because, I had little doubt, of the devotion to one god of the greater number and of the limited sense of beauty, which Robartes would hold an inevitable consequence; but I did notice a complete set of facsimiles of the prophetical writings of William Blake, and probably

because of the multitudes that thronged his illumination and were "like the gay fishes on the wave when the moon sucks up the dew". I noted also many poets and prose writers of every age, but only those who were a little weary of life, as indeed the greatest have been everywhere, and who cast their imagination to us, as a something they needed no longer now that they were going up in their fiery chariots.

Presently I heard a tap at the door, and a woman came in and laid a little fruit upon the table. I judged that she had once been handsome, but her cheeks were hollowed by what I would have held, had I seen her anywhere else, an excitement of the flesh and a thirst for pleasure, instead of which it doubtless was an excitement of the imagination and a thirst for beauty. I asked her some question concerning the ceremony, but getting no answer except a shake of the head, saw that I must await initiation in silence. When I had eaten, she came again, and having laid a curiously wrought bronze box on the table, lighted the candles, and took away the plates and the remnants. So soon as I was alone, I turned to the box, and found that the peacocks of Hera spread out their tails over the sides and lid, against a background, on which were wrought great stars, as though

to affirm that the heavens were a part of their glory. In the box was a book bound in vellum, and having upon the vellum and in very delicate colours, and in gold, the alchemical rose with many spears thrusting against it, but in vain, as was shown by the shattered points of those nearest to the petals. The book was written upon vellum, and in beautiful clear letters, interspersed with symbolical pictures and illuminations, after the manner of the *Splendor Solis*.

The first chapter described how six students, of Celtic descent, gave themselves separately to the study of alchemy, and solved, one the mystery of the Pelican, another the mystery of the Green Dragon, another the mystery of the Eagle, another that of Salt and Mercury. What seemed a succession of accidents, but was, the book declared, the contrivance of preternatural powers, brought them together in the garden of an inn in the South of France, and while they talked together the thought came to them that alchemy was the gradual distillation of the contents of the soul, until they were ready to put off the mortal and put on the immortal. An owl passed, rustling among the vine-leaves overhead, and then an old woman came, leaning upon a stick, and, sitting close to them, took up the thought where they had dropped it. Having

expounded the whole principle of spiritual alchemy, and bid them found the Order of the Alchemical Rose, she passed from among them, and when they would have followed was nowhere to be seen. They formed themselves into an Order, holding their goods and making their researches in common, and, as they became perfect in the alchemical doctrine, apparitions came and went among them, and taught them more and more marvellous mysteries. The book then went on to expound so much of these as the neophyte was permitted to know, dealing at the outset and at considerable length with the independent reality of our thoughts, which was, it declared, the doctrine from which all true doctrines rose. If you imagine, it said, the semblance of a living being, it is at once possessed by a wandering soul, and goes hither and thither working good or evil, until the moment of its death has come; and gave many examples, received, it said, from many gods. Eros had taught them how to fashion forms in which a divine soul could dwell and whisper what it would into sleeping minds; and Ate, forms from which demonic beings could pour madness, or unquiet dreams, into sleeping blood; and Hermes, that if you powerfully imagined a hound at your bedside it would keep watch there until you woke, and drive away all

but the mightiest demons, but that if your imagination was weakly, the hound would be weakly also, and the demons prevail, and the hound soon die; and Aphrodite, that if you made, by a strong imagining, a dove crowned with silver and bade it flutter over your head, its soft cooing would make sweet dreams of immortal love gather and brood over mortal sleep; and all divinities alike had revealed with many warnings and lamentations that all minds are continually giving birth to such beings, and sending them forth to work health or disease, joy or madness. If you would give forms to the evil powers, it went on, you were to make them ugly, thrusting out a lip with the thirsts of life, or breaking the proportions of a body with the burdens of life; but the divine powers would only appear in beautiful shapes, which are but, as it were, shapes trembling out of existence, folding up into a timeless ecstasy, drifting with half-shut eyes, into a sleepy stillness. The bodiless souls who descended into these forms were what men called the moods; and worked all great changes in the world; for just as the magician or the artist could call them when he would, so they could call out of the mind of the magician or the artist, or if they were demons, out of the mind of the mad or

the ignoble, what shape they would, and through its voice and its gestures pour themselves out upon the world. In this way all great events were accomplished; a mood, a divinity, or a demon, first descending like a faint sigh into men's minds and then changing their thoughts and their actions until hair that was yellow had grown black, or hair that was black had grown yellow, and empires moved their border, as though they were but drifts of leaves. The rest of the book contained symbols of form, and sound, and colour, and their attribution to divinities and demons, so that the initiate might fashion a shape for any divinity or any demon, and be as powerful as Avicenna among those who live under the roots of tears and of laughter.

IV

A couple of hours after sunset Michael Robartes returned and told me that I would have to learn the steps of an exceedingly antique dance, because before my initiation could be perfected I had to join three times in a magical dance, for rhythm was the wheel of Eternity, on which alone the transient and accidental could be broken, and the spirit set free. I found that the steps, which were simple enough, resembled

certain antique Greek dances, and having been a good dancer in my youth and the master of many curious Gaelic steps, I soon had them in my memory. He then robed me and himself in a costume which suggested by its shape both Greece and Egypt, but by its crimson colour a more passionate life than theirs; and having put into my hands a little chainless censer of bronze, wrought into the likeness of a rose, by some modern craftsman, he told me to open a small door opposite to the door by which I had entered. I put my hand to the handle, but the moment I did so the fumes of the incense, helped perhaps by his mysterious glamour, made me fall again into a dream, in which I seemed to be a mask, lying on the counter of a little Eastern shop. Many persons, with eyes so bright and still that I knew them for more than human, came in and tried me on their faces, but at last flung me into a corner laughing; but all this passed in a moment, for when I awoke my hand was still upon the handle. I opened the door, and found myself in a marvellous passage, along whose sides were many divinities wrought in a mosaic, not less beautiful than the mosaic in the Baptistery at Ravenna, but of a less severe beauty; the predominant colour of each divinity, which was surely a symbolic colour,

being repeated in the lamps that hung from the ceiling, a curiously scented lamp before every divinity. I passed on, marvelling exceedingly how these enthusiasts could have created all this beauty in so remote a place, and half persuaded to believe in a material alchemy, by the sight of so much hidden wealth; the censer filling the air, as I passed, with smoke of ever-changing colour.

I stopped before a door, on whose bronze panels were wrought great waves in whose shadow were faint suggestions of terrible faces. Those beyond it seemed to have heard our steps, for a voice cried: "Is the work of the Incorruptible Fire at an end?" and immediately Michael Robartes answered: "The perfect gold has come from the *athanor*." The door swung open, and we were in a great circular room, and among men and women who were dancing slowly in crimson robes. Upon the ceiling was an immense rose wrought in mosaic; and about the walls, also in mosaic, was a battle of gods and angels, the gods glimmering like rubies and sapphires, and the angels of the one greyness, because, as Michael Robartes whispered, they had renounced their divinity, and turned from the unfolding of their separate hearts, out of love for a God of humility and sorrow. Pillars supported the roof and made a kind of

unending sympathy; and if ignobly through vehement jealousy, sudden hatred, and unappeasable desire; but unveiled love he never knows. While I thought these things, a voice cried to me from the crimson figures: "Into the dance! there is none that can be spared out of the dance; into the dance! into the dance! that the gods may make them bodies out of the substance of our hearts"; and before I could answer, a mysterious wave of passion, that seemed like the soul of the dance moving within our souls, took hold of me, and I was swept, neither consenting nor refusing, into the midst. I was dancing with an immortal august woman, who had black lilies in her hair, and her dreamy gesture seemed laden with a wisdom more profound than the darkness that is between star and star, and with a love like the love that breathed upon the waters; and as we danced on and on, the incense drifted over us and round us, covering us away as in the heart of the world, and ages seemed to pass, and tempests to awake and perish in the folds of our robes and in her heavy hair.

Suddenly I remembered that her eyelids had never quivered, and that her lilies had not dropped a black petal, nor shaken from their places, and understood with a great horror that I danced with one who was

more or less than human, and who was drinking up my soul as an ox drinks up a wayside pool; and I fell, and darkness passed over me.

V

I awoke suddenly as though something had awakened me, and saw that I was lying on a roughly painted floor, and that on the ceiling, which was at no great distance, was a roughly painted rose, and about me on the walls half-finished paintings. The pillars and the censers had gone; and near me a score of sleepers lay wrapped in disordered robes, their upturned faces looking to my imagination like hollow masks; and a chill dawn was shining down upon them from a long window I had not noticed before; and outside the sea roared. I saw Michael Robartes lying at a little distance and beside him an overset bowl of wrought bronze which looked as though it had once held incense. As I sat thus, I heard a sudden tumult of angry men and women's voices mix with the roaring of the sea; and leaping to my feet, I went quickly to Michael Robartes, and tried to shake him out of his sleep. I then seized him by the shoulder and tried to lift him, but he fell backwards, and sighed faintly; and the voices became louder and angrier; and

there was a sound of heavy blows upon the door, which opened on to the pier. Suddenly I heard a sound of rending wood, and I knew it had begun to give, and I ran to the door of the room. I pushed it open and came out upon a passage whose bare boards clattered under my feet, and found in the passage another door which led into an empty kitchen; and as I passed through the door I heard two crashes in quick succession, and knew by the sudden noise of feet and the shouts that the door which opened on to the pier had fallen inwards. I ran from the kitchen and out into a small yard, and from this down some steps which descended the seaward and sloping side of the pier, and from the steps clambered along the water's edge, with the angry voices ringing in my ears. This part of the pier had been but lately refaced with blocks of granite, so that it was almost clear of seaweed; but when I came to the old part, I found it so slippery with green weed that I had to climb up on to the roadway. I looked towards the Temple of the Alchemical Rose, where the fishermen and the women were still shouting, but somewhat more faintly, and saw that there was no one about the door or upon the pier; but as I looked, a little crowd hurried out of the door and began gathering large stones from

where they were heaped up in readiness for the next time a storm shattered the pier, when they would be laid under blocks of granite. While I stood watching the crowd, an old man, who was, I think, the voteen, pointed to me, and screamed out something, and the crowd whitened, for all the faces had turned towards me. I ran, and it was well for me that pullers of the oar are poorer men with their feet than with their arms and their bodies; and yet while I ran I scarcely heard the following feet or the angry voices, for many voices of exultation and lamentation, which were forgotten as a dream is forgotten the moment they were heard, seemed to be ringing in the air over my head.

There are moments even now when I seem to hear those voices of exultation and lamentation, and when the indefinite world, which has but half lost its mastery over my heart and my intellect, seems about to claim a perfect mastery; but I carry the rosary about my neck, and when I hear, or seem to hear them, I press it to my heart and say: "He whose name is Legion is at our doors deceiving our intellects with subtlety and flattering our hearts with beauty, and we have no trust but in Thee"; and then the war that rages within me at other times is still, and I am at peace.

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THE TABLES OF THE LAW

I

"WILL you permit me, Aherne," I said, "to ask you a question, which I have wanted to ask you for years, and have not asked because we have grown nearly strangers? Why did you refuse the berretta, and almost at the last moment? When you and I lived together, you cared neither for wine, women, nor money, and had thoughts for nothing but theology and mysticism." I had watched through dinner for a moment to put my question, and ventured now, because he had thrown off a little of the reserve and indifference, which, ever since his last return from Italy, had taken the place of our once close friendship. He had just questioned me, too, about certain private and almost sacred things, and my frankness had earned, I thought, a like frankness from him.

When I began to speak he was lifting a glass of that wine which he could choose so well and valued so little; and while I spoke,

he set it slowly and meditatively upon the table and held it there, its deep red light dyeing his long delicate fingers. The impression of his face and form, as they were then, is still vivid with me, and is inseparable from another and fanciful impression: the impression of a man holding a flame in his naked hand. He was to me, at that moment, the supreme type of our race, which, when it has risen above, or is sunken below, the formalisms of half-education and the rationalisms of conventional affirmation and denial, turns away, unless my hopes for the world and for the Church have made me blind, from practicable desires and intuitions towards desires so unbounded that no human vessel can contain them, intuitions so immaterial that their sudden and far-off fire leaves heavy darkness about hand and foot. He had the nature, which is half monk, half soldier of fortune, and must needs turn action into dreaming, and dreaming into action; and for such there is no order, no finality, no contentment in this world. When he and I had been students in Paris, we had belonged to a little group which devoted itself to speculations about alchemy and mysticism. More orthodox in most of his beliefs than Michael Robartes, he had surpassed him in a fanciful hatred of all life, and this hatred had found expression in the curious paradox—half

borrowed from some fanatical monk, half invented by himself—that the beautiful arts were sent into the world to overthrow nations, and finally life herself, by sowing everywhere unlimited desires, like torches thrown into a burning city. This idea was not at the time, I believe, more than a paradox, a plume of the pride of youth; and it was only after his return to Ireland that he endured the fermentation of belief which is coming upon our people with the reawakening of their imaginative life.

Presently he stood up, saying:

"Come, and I will show you why, you at any rate will understand," and taking candles from the table, he lit the way into the long paved passage that led to his private chapel. We passed between the portraits of the Jesuits and priests—some of no little fame—his family had given to the Church; and engravings and photographs of pictures that had especially moved him; and the few paintings his small fortune, eked out by an almost penurious abstinence from the things most men desire, had enabled him to buy in his travels. The photographs and engravings were from the masterpieces of many schools; but in all the beauty, whether it was a beauty of religion, of love, or of some fantastical vision of mountain and wood, was the beauty achieved by temperaments which

seek always an absolute emotion, and which have their most continual, though not most perfect expression in the legends and vigils and music of the Celtic peoples. The certitude of a fierce or gracious fervour in the enraptured faces of the angels of Francesca, and in the august faces of the sibyls of Michael Angelo; and the incertitude, as of souls trembling between the excitement of the spirit and the excitement of the flesh, in wavering faces from frescoes in the churches of Siena, and in the faces like thin flames, imagined by the modern symbolists and pre-Raphaelites, had often made that long, grey, dim, empty, echoing passage become to my eyes a vestibule of eternity.

Almost every detail of the chapel, which we entered by a narrow Gothic door, whose threshold had been worn smooth by the secret worshippers of the penal times, was vivid in my memory; for it was in this chapel that I had first, and when but a boy, been moved by the mediævalism which is now, I think, the governing influence in my life. The only thing that seemed new was a square bronze box which stood upon the altar before the six unlighted candles and the ebony crucifix, and was like those made in ancient times of more precious substances to hold the sacred books. Aherne made me sit down on an oak bench, and having bowed

very low before the crucifix, took the bronze box from the altar, and sat down beside me with the box upon his knees.

"You will perhaps have forgotten," he said, "most of what you have read about Joachim of Flora, for he is little more than a name to even the well-read. He was an abbot in Cortale in the twelfth century, and is best known for his prophecy, in a book called *Expositio in Apocalypsin*, that the Kingdom of the Father was passed, the Kingdom of the Son passing, the Kingdom of the Spirit yet to come. The Kingdom of the Spirit was to be a complete triumph of the Spirit, the *spiritualis intelligentia* he called it, over the dead letter. He had many followers among the more extreme Franciscans, and these were accused of possessing a secret book of his called the *Liber inducens in Evangelium aeternum*. Again and again groups of visionaries were accused of possessing this terrible book, in which the freedom of the Renaissance lay hidden, until at last Pope Alexander IV. had it found and cast into the flames. I have here the greatest treasure the world contains. I have a copy of that book; and see what great artists have made the robes in which it is wrapped. This bronze box was made by Benvenuto Cellini, who covered it with gods and demons, whose eyes are closed to signify an absorp-

tion in the inner light." He lifted the lid and took out a book bound in leather, covered with filigree work of tarnished silver. "And this cover was bound by one of the binders that bound for Canevari; while Giulio Clovio, an artist of the later Renaissance, whose work is soft and gentle, took out the beginning page of every chapter of the old copy, and set in its place a page surmounted by an elaborate letter and a miniature of some one of the great whose example was cited in the chapter; and wherever the writing left a little space elsewhere, he put some delicate emblem or intricate pattern."

I took the book in my hands and began turning over the gilded, many-coloured pages, holding it close to the candle to discover the texture of the paper.

"Where did you get this amazing book?" I said. "If genuine, and I cannot judge by this light, you have discovered one of the most precious things in the world."

"It is certainly genuine," he replied. "When the original was destroyed, one copy alone remained, and was in the hands of a lute-player of Florence, and from him it passed to his son, and so from generation to generation until it came to the lute-player who was father to Benvenuto Cellini, and from him it passed to Giulio Clovio, and

from Giulio Clovio to a Roman engraver; and then from generation to generation, the story of its wandering passing on with it, until it came into the possession of the family of Aretino, and so Giulio Aretino, an artist and worker in metals, and student of the kabalistic reveries of Pico della Mirandola. He spent many nights with me at Rome, discussing philosophy; and at last I won his confidence so perfectly that he showed me this, his greatest treasure; and, finding how much I valued it, and feeling that he himself was growing old and beyond the help of its teaching, he sold it to me for no great sum, considering its great preciousness."

"What is the doctrine?" I said. "Some mediæval straw-splitting about the nature of the Trinity, which is only useful to-day to show how many things are unimportant to us, which once shook the world?"

"I could never make you understand," he said with a sigh, "that nothing is unimportant in belief, but even you will admit that this book goes to the heart. Do you see the tables on which the commandments were written in Latin?" I looked to the end of the room, opposite to the altar, and saw that the two marble tablets were gone, and that two large empty tablets of ivory, like large copies of the little tablets we set over our desks, had taken their place. "It

has swept the commandments of the Father away," he went on, "and displaced the commandments of the Son by the commandments of the Holy Spirit. The first book is called *Fractura Tabularum*. In the first chapter it mentions the names of the great artists who made them graven things and the likeness of many things, and adored them and served them; and the second the names of the great wits who took the name of the Lord their God in vain; and that long third chapter, set with the emblems of sanctified faces, and having wings upon its borders, is the praise of breakers of the seventh day and wasters of the six days, who yet lived comely and pleasant days. Those two chapters tell of men and women who railed upon their parents, remembering that their god was older than the god of their parents; and that which has the sword of Michael for an emblem commends the kings that wrought secret murder and so won for their people a peace that was *amore somnoque gravata et vestibus versicoloribus*, 'heavy with love and sleep and many-coloured raiment'; and that with the pale star at the closing has the lives of the noble youths who loved the wives of others and were transformed into memories, which have transformed many poorer hearts into sweet flames; and that with the winged head is the history of the

robbers who lived upon the sea or in the desert, lives which it compares to the twittering of the string of a bow, *nervi stridentis instar*; and those two last, that are fire and gold, are devoted to the satirists who bore false witness against their neighbours and yet illustrated eternal wrath, and to those that have coveted more than other men wealth and woman, and have thereby and therefore mastered and magnified great empires.

"The second book, which is called *Straminis Deflagratio*, recounts the conversations Joachim of Flora held in his monastery at Cortale, and afterwards in his monastery in the mountains of La Sila, with travellers and pilgrims, upon the laws of many countries; how chastity was a virtue and robbery a little thing in such a land, and robbery a crime and unchastity a little thing in such a land; and of the persons who had flung themselves upon these laws and become *decussa veste Dei sidera*, stars shaken out of the raiment of God.

"The third book, which is the close, is called *Lex Secreta*, and describes the true inspiration of action, the only Eternal Evangel; and ends with a vision, which he saw among the mountains of La Sila, of his disciples sitting throned in the blue deep of the air, and laughing aloud, with a laughter that was like the rustling of the wings of

Time: *Coelis in coeruleis ridentes sedebant discipuli mei super thronos: talis erat risus, qualis temporis pennati susurrus.*"

"I know little of Joachim of Flora," I said, "except that Dante set him in Paradise among the great doctors. If he held a heresy so singular, I cannot understand how no rumours of it came to the ears of Dante; and Dante made no peace with the enemies of the Church."

"Joachim of Flora acknowledged openly the authority of the Church, and even asked that all his published writings, and those to be published by his desire after his death, should be submitted to the censorship of the Pope. He considered that those, whose work was to live and not to reveal, were children and that the Pope was their father; but he taught in secret that certain others, and in always increasing numbers, were elected, not to live, but to reveal that hidden substance of God which is colour and music and softness and a sweet odour; and that these have no father but the Holy Spirit. Just as poets and painters and musicians labour at their works, building them with lawless and lawful things alike, so long as they embody the beauty that is beyond the grave, these children of the Holy Spirit labour at their moments with eyes upon the shining substance on which Time has heaped

the refuse of creation; for the world only exists to be a tale in the ears of coming generations; and terror and content, birth and death, love and hatred, and the fruit of the Tree, are but instruments for that supreme art which is to win us from life and gather us into eternity like doves into their dove-cots.

"I shall go away in a little while and travel into many lands, that I may know all accidents and destinies, and when I return, will write my secret law upon those ivory tablets, just as poets and romance writers have written the principles of their art in prefaces; and will gather pupils about me that they may discover their law in the study of my law, and the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit be more widely and firmly established."

He was pacing up and down, and I listened to the fervour of his words and watched the excitement of his gestures with not a little concern. I had been accustomed to welcome the most singular speculations, and had always found them as harmless as the Persian cat, who half closes her meditative eyes and stretches out her long claws, before my fire. But now I would battle in the interests of orthodoxy, even of the commonplace: and yet could find nothing better to say than:

"It is not necessary to judge every one

by the law, for we have also Christ's commandment of love."

He turned and said, looking at me with shining eyes:

"Jonathan Swift made a soul for the gentlemen of this city by hating his neighbour as himself."

"At any rate, you cannot deny that to teach so dangerous a doctrine is to accept a terrible responsibility."

"Leonardo da Vinci," he replied, "has this noble sentence: 'The hope and desire of returning home to one's former state, is like the moth's desire for the light; and the man, who with constant longing awaits each new month and new year, deeming that the things he longs for are ever too late in coming, does not perceive that he is longing for his own destruction.' How then can the pathway which will lead us into the heart of God be other than dangerous? why should you, who are no materialist, cherish the continuity and order of the world as those do who have only the world? You do not value the writers who will express nothing unless their reason understands how it will make what is called the right more easy; why then will you deny a like freedom to the supreme art, the art which is the foundation of all arts? Yes, I shall send out of this chapel saints, lovers, rebels, and prophets:

souls that will surround themselves with peace, as with a nest made with grass; and others over whom I shall weep. The dust shall fall for many years over this little box; and then I shall open it; and the tumults, which are, perhaps, the flames of the last day, shall come from under the lid."

I did not reason with him that night, because his excitement was great and I feared to make him angry; and when I called at his house a few days later, he was gone and his house was locked up and empty. I have deeply regretted my failure both to combat his heresy and to test the genuineness of his strange book. Since my conversion I have indeed done penance for an error which I was only able to measure after some years.

II

I was walking along one of the Dublin quays, on the side nearest the river, about ten years after our conversation, stopping from time to time to turn over the works upon an old book-stall, and thinking, curiously enough, of the terrible destiny of Michael Robartes, and his brotherhood; when I saw a tall and bent man walking slowly along the other side of the quay. I recognised, with a start, in a lifeless mask with dim eyes, the once resolute and delicate

face of Owen Aherne. I crossed the quay quickly, but had not gone many yards before he turned away, as though he had seen me, and hurried down a side street; I followed, but only to lose him among the intricate streets on the north side of the river. During the next few weeks I inquired of everybody who had once known him, but he had made himself known to nobody; and I knocked, without result, at the door of his old house; and had nearly persuaded myself that I was mistaken, when I saw him again in a narrow street behind the Four Courts, and followed him to the door of his house.

I laid my hand on his arm; he turned quite without surprise; and indeed it is possible that to him, whose inner life had soaked up the outer life, a parting of years was a parting from forenoon to afternoon. He stood holding the door half open, as though he would keep me from entering; and would perhaps have parted from me without further words had I not said:

"Owen Aherne, you trusted me once, will you not trust me again, and tell me what has come of the ideas we discussed in this house ten years ago?—but perhaps you have already forgotten them."

"You have a right to hear," he said, "for since I have told you the ideas, I should tell you the extreme danger they contain, or

rather the boundless wickedness they contain; but when you have heard this we must part, and part for ever, because I am lost, and must be hidden!"

I followed him through the paved passage, and saw that its corners were choked with dust and cobwebs; and that the pictures were grey with dust and shrouded with cobwebs; and that the dust and cobwebs which covered the ruby and sapphire of the saints on the window had made it very dim. He pointed to where the ivory tablets glimmered faintly in the dimness, and I saw that they were covered with small writing, and went up to them and began to read the writing. It was in Latin, and was an elaborate casuistry, illustrated with many examples, but whether from his own life or from the lives of others I do not know. I had read but a few sentences when I imagined that a faint perfume had begun to fill the room, and turning round asked Owen Aherne if he were lighting the incense.

"No," he replied, and pointed where the thurible lay rusty and empty on one of the benches; as he spoke the faint perfume seemed to vanish, and I was persuaded I had imagined it.

"Has the philosophy of the *Liber inducens in Evangelium aeternum* made you very unhappy?" I said.

"At first I was full of happiness," he replied, "for I felt a divine ecstasy, an immortal fire in every passion, in every hope, in every desire, in every dream; and I saw, in the shadows under leaves, in the hollow waters, in the eyes of men and women, its image, as in a mirror; and it was as though I was about to touch the Heart of God. Then all changed and I was full of misery; and in my misery it was revealed to me that man can only come to that Heart through the sense of separation from it which we call sin, and I understood that I could not sin, because I had discovered the law of my being, and could only express or fail to express my being, and I understood that God has made a simple and an arbitrary law that we may sin and repent!"

He had sat down on one of the wooden benches and now became silent, his bowed head and hanging arms and listless body having more of dejection than any image I have met with in life or in any art. I went and stood leaning against the altar, and watched him, not knowing what I should say; and I noticed his black closely-buttoned coat, his short hair, and shaven head, which preserved a memory of his priestly ambition, and understood how catholicism had seized him in the midst of the vertigo he called philosophy; and I noticed his lightless

eyes and his earth-coloured complexion, and understood how she had failed to do more than hold him on the margin: and I was full of an anguish of pity.

"It may be," he went on, "that the angels who have hearts of the Divine Ecstasy, and bodies of the Divine Intellect, need nothing but a thirst for the immortal element, in hope, in desire, in dreams; but we whose hearts perish every moment, and whose bodies melt away like a sigh, must bow and obey!"

I went nearer to him and said: "Prayer and repentance will make you like other men."

"No, no," he said, "I am not among those for whom Christ died, and this is why I must be hidden. I have a leprosy that even eternity cannot cure. I have seen the whole, and how can I come again to believe that a part is the whole? I have lost my soul because I have looked out of the eyes of the angels."

Suddenly I saw, or imagined that I saw, the room darken, and faint figures robed in purple, and lifting faint torches with arms that gleamed like silver, bending, above Owen Aherne; and I saw, or imagined that I saw, drops, as of burning gum, fall from the torches, and a heavy purple smoke, as of incense, come pouring from the flames and

sweeping about us. Owen Aherne, more happy than I who have been half initiated into the Order of the Alchemical Rose, or protected perhaps by his great piety, had sunk again into dejection and listlessness, and saw none of these things; but my knees shook under me, for the purple-robed figures were less faint every moment, and now I could hear the hissing of the gum in the torches. They did not appear to see me, for their eyes were upon Owen Aherne; now and again I could hear them sigh as though with sorrow for his sorrow, and presently I heard words which I could not understand except that they were words of sorrow, and sweet as though immortal was talking to immortal. Then one of them waved her torch, and all the torches waved, and for a moment it was as though some great bird made of flames had fluttered its plumage, and a voice cried as from far up in the air: "He has charged even his angels with folly, and they also bow and obey; but let your heart mingle with our hearts, which are wrought of divine ecstasy, and your body with our bodies, which are wrought of divine intellect." And at that cry I understood that the Order of the Alchemical Rose was not of this earth, and that it was still seeking over this earth for whatever souls it could gather within its glittering net; and when all

the faces turned towards me, and I saw the mild eyes and the unshaken eyelids, I was full of terror, and thought they were about to fling their torches upon me, so that all I held dear, all that bound me to spiritual and social order, would be burnt up, and my soul left naked and shivering among the winds that blow from beyond this world and from beyond the stars; and then a faint voice cried, "Why do you fly from our torches that were made out of the trees under which Christ wept in the Garden of Gethsemane? Why do you fly from our torches that were made out of sweet wood, after it had perished from the world?"

It was not until the door of the house had closed behind my flight, and the noise of the street was breaking on my ears, that I came back to myself and to a little of my courage; and I have never dared to pass the house of Owen Aherne from that day, even though I believe him to have been driven into some distant country by the spirits whose name is legion, and whose throne is in the indefinite abyss, and whom he obeys and cannot see.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

I WAS sitting reading late into the night a little after my last meeting with Aherne, when I heard a light knocking on my front door; and found upon the doorstep three very old men with stout sticks in their hands, who said they had been told I would be up and about, and that they were to tell me important things. I brought them into my study, and when the peacock curtains had closed behind us, I set their chairs for them close to the fire, for I saw that the frost was on their great-coats of frieze and upon the long beards that flowed almost to their waists. They took off their great-coats, and leaned over the fire warming their hands, and I saw that their clothes had much of the country of our time, but a little also, as it seemed to me, of the town life of a more courtly time. When they had warmed themselves — and they warmed themselves, I thought, less because of the cold of the night than because of a pleasure in warmth for the sake of warmth—they turned towards me,

so that the light of the lamp fell full upon their weather-beaten faces, and told the story I am about to tell. Now one talked and now another, and they often interrupted one another, with a desire, like that of country-men, when they tell a story, to leave no detail untold. When they had finished they made me take notes of whatever conversation they had quoted, so that I might have the exact words, and got up to go, and when I asked them where they were going, and what they were doing, and by what names I should call them, they would tell me nothing, except that they had been commanded to travel over Ireland continually, and upon foot and at night, that they might live close to the stones and the trees and at the hours when the immortals are awake.

I have let some years go by before writing out this story, for I am always in dread of the illusions which come of that inquietude of the veil of the Temple, which M. Mallarmé considers a characteristic of our times; and only write it now because I have grown to believe that there is no dangerous idea which does not become less dangerous when written out in sincere and careful English.

The three old men were three brothers, who had lived in one of the western islands from their early manhood, and had cared all their lives for nothing except for those

classical writers and old Gaelic writers who expounded an heroic and simple life. Night after night in winter, Gaelic story-tellers would chant old poems to them over the poteen; and night after night in summer, when the Gaelic story-tellers were at work in the fields or away at the fishing, they would read to one another Virgil and Homer, for they would not enjoy in solitude, but as the ancients enjoyed. At last a man, who told them he was Michael Robartes, came to them in a fishing-boat, like St. Brandan drawn by some vision and called by some voice; and told them of the coming again of the gods and the ancient things; and their hearts, which had never endured the body and pressure of our time, but only of distant times, found nothing unlikely in anything he told them, but accepted all simply and were happy. Years passed, and one day, when the oldest of the old men, who had travelled in his youth and thought sometimes of other lands, looked out on the grey waters, on which the people see the dim outline of the Islands of the Young—the Happy Islands where the Gaelic heroes live the lives of Homer's Phæacians—a voice came out of the air over the waters and told him of the death of Michael Robartes. While they were still mourning, the next oldest of the old men fell asleep whilst he was reading out

the Fifth Eclogue of Virgil, and a strange voice spoke through him, and bid them set out for Paris, where a dying woman would give them secret names and thereby so transform the world that another Leda would open her knees to the swan, another Achilles beleaguer Troy.

They left their island, and were at first troubled at all they saw in the world, and came to Paris, and there the youngest met a person in a dream, who told him they were to wander about at hazard until those who had been guiding their footsteps had brought them to a street and a house, whose likeness was shown him in the dream. They wandered hither and thither for many days, until one morning they came into some narrow and shabby streets, on the south of the Seine, where women with pale faces and untidy hair looked at them out of the windows; and just as they were about to turn back because Wisdom could not have alighted in so foolish a neighbourhood, they came to the street and the house of the dream. The oldest of the old men, who still remembered some of the modern languages he had known in his youth, went up to the door and knocked, and when he had knocked, the next in age to him said it was not a good house, and could not be the house they were looking for, and urged him to ask for somebody who could

not be there and go away. The door was opened by an old over-dressed woman, who said, "O you are her three kinsmen from Ireland. She has been expecting you all day." The old men looked at one another and followed her upstairs, passing doors from which pale and untidy women thrust out their heads, and into a room where a beautiful woman lay asleep, another woman sitting by her.

The old woman said: "Yes, they have come at last; now she will be able to die in peace," and went out.

"We have been deceived by devils," said one of the old men, "for the immortals would not speak through a woman like this."

"Yes," said another, "we have been deceived by devils, and we must go away quickly."

"Yes," said the third, "we have been deceived by devils, but let us kneel down for a little, for we are by the deathbed of one that has been beautiful." They knelt down, and the woman sitting by the bed whispered, and as though overcome with fear, and with lowered head, "At the moment when you knocked she was suddenly convulsed and cried out as I have heard a woman in child-birth and fell backward as though in a swoon." Then they watched for a little the face upon the pillow and wondered at

its look, as of unquenchable desire, and at the porcelain-like refinement of the vessel in which so malevolent a flame had burned.

Suddenly the second oldest of them crowed like a cock, till the room seemed to shake with the crowing. The woman in the bed still slept on in her death-like sleep, but the woman who sat by her head crossed herself and grew pale, and the youngest of the old men cried out: "A devil has gone into him, and we must begone or it will go into us also." Before they could rise from their knees, a resonant chanting voice came from the lips that had crowed and said:

"I am not a devil, but I am Hermes the Shepherd of the Dead, I run upon the errands of the gods, and you have heard my sign. The woman who lies there has given birth, and that which she bore has the likeness of a unicorn and is most unlike man of all living things, being cold, hard and virginal. It seemed to be born dancing; and was gone from the room wellnigh upon the instant, for it is of the nature of the unicorn to understand the shortness of life. She does not know it has gone for she fell into a stupor while it danced, but bend down your ears that you may learn the names that it must obey." Neither of the other two old men spoke, but doubtless looked at the speaker with perplexity, for the voice began again:

"When the Immortals would overthrow the things that are to-day and bring the things that were yesterday, they have no one to help them, but one whom the things that are to-day have cast out. Bow down and very low, for they have chosen this woman in whose heart all follies have gathered, and in whose body all desires have awaked; this woman who has been driven out of Time and has lain upon the bosom of Eternity."

The voice ended with a sigh, and immediately the old man awoke out of sleep, and said: "Has a voice spoken through me, as it did when I fell asleep over my Virgil, or have I only been asleep?"

The oldest of them said: "A voice has spoken through you. Where has your soul been while the voice was speaking through you?"

"I do not know where my soul has been, but I dreamed I was under the roof of a manger, and I looked down and I saw an ox and an ass; and I saw a red cock perching on the hay-rack; and a woman hugging a child; and three old men in chain armour kneeling with their heads bowed very low in front of the woman and the child. While I was looking the cock crowed and a man with wings on his heels swept up through the air, and as he passed me, cried out: 'Foolish old men, you had once all the wisdom of the

stars.' I do not understand my dream or what it would have us do, but you who have heard the voice out of the wisdom of my sleep know what we have to do."

Then the oldest of the old men told him they were to take the parchments they had brought with them out of their pockets and spread them on the ground. When they had spread them on the ground, they took out of their pockets their pens, made of three feathers, which had fallen from the wing of the old eagle that is believed to have talked of wisdom with St. Patrick.

"He meant, I think," said the youngest, as he put their ink-bottles by the side of the rolls of parchment, "that when people are good the world likes them and takes possession of them, and so eternity comes through people who are not good or who have been forgotten. Perhaps Christianity was good and the world liked it, so now it is going away and the immortals are beginning to awake."

"What you say has no wisdom," said the oldest, "because if there are many immortals, there cannot be only one immortal."

"Yet it seems," said the youngest, "that the names we are to take down are the names of one, so it must be that he can take many forms."

Then the woman on the bed moved as in a dream, and held out her arms as though to

clasp the being that had left her, and murmured names of endearment, and yet strange names, "Harsh sweetness", "Dear bitterness", "O solitude", "O terror", and after lay still for awhile. Then her voice changed, and she, no longer afraid and happy but seeming like any dying woman, murmured a name so faintly that the woman who sat by the bed bent down and put her ear close to her mouth.

The oldest of the old men said in French: "There must have been yet one name which she had not given us, for she murmured a name while the spirit was going out of the body," and the woman said, "She was merely murmuring over the name of a symbolist painter she was fond of. He used to go to something he called the Black Mass, and it was he who taught her to see visions and to hear voices."

This is all the old men told me, and when I think of their speech and of their silence, of their coming and of their going, I am almost persuaded that had I followed them out of the house, I would have found no footsteps on the snow. They may, for all I or any man can say, have been themselves immortals: immortal demons, come to put an untrue story into my mind for some purpose I do not understand. Whatever they were, I have turned into a pathway which

will lead me from them and from the Order of the Alchemical Rose. I no longer live an elaborate and haughty life, but seek to lose myself among the prayers and the sorrows of the multitude. I pray best in poor chapels, where frieze coats brush against me as I kneel, and when I pray against the demons I repeat a prayer which was made I know not how many centuries ago to help some poor Gaelic man or woman who had suffered with a suffering like mine.

Seacht b-páidreacha fó seacht
Chuir Muire faoi n-a Mac,
Chuir Brighid faoi n-a brat,
Chuir Dia faoi n-a neart,
Eidir sinn 'san Sluagh Sidhe,
Eidir sinn 'san Sluagh Gaoith.

Seven paters seven times,
Send Mary by her Son,
Send Bridget by her mantle,
Send God by His strength,
Between us and the faery host,
Between us and the demons of the air.

NOTES

The Wanderings of Usheen and *Crossways*, page 1 to page 93, were first published in a book called "The Wanderings of Usheen" in 1889. Many of the poems in *Crossways*, certainly those upon Indian subjects or upon shepherds and fauns, must have been written before I was twenty, for from the moment when I began *The Wanderings of Usheen*, which I did at that age, I believe, my subject matter became Irish. Every time I have reprinted them I have considered the leaving out of most, and then remembered an old school friend who has some of them by heart, for no better reason, as I think, than that they remind him of his own youth. The little Indian dramatic scene was meant to be the first of a play about a man loved by two women, who had the one soul between them, the one woman waking when the other slept, and knowing but daylight as the other only night. It came into my head when I saw a man at Rosses Point carrying two salmon. "One man with two souls," I said, and added, "Oh, no, two people with one soul." I am now once more in "A Vision" busy with that thought, the antitheses of day and of night and of moon and of sun.

The Rose, page 95 to page 135, was part of my second book, "The Countess Cathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics," 1892, and I notice upon reading these poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolised as The Rose differs from The Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spencer in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar. It must have been a thought of my generation, for I remember the mystical painter Horton, whose work had little of his personal charm and real strangeness, writing me these words, "I met your beloved in Russell Square, and she was weeping", by which he meant that he had seen a vision of my neglected soul. I have altered several

of these poems, *Cuchulain's Fight with the Waves*, *The Dedication to a Book of Stories*, and *To Ireland in the Coming Times*, considerably, and *The Song of the Old Pensioner* and *The Sorrow of Love* till they are altogether new poems. Whatever changes I have made are but an attempt to express better what I thought and felt when I was a very young man. I have left out a few passages in "The Celtic Twilight", which was first published in 1893. *The Stories of Red Hanrahan*, page 395 to page 459, were published with the stories now called *The Secret Rose* and *Rosa Alchemica* in a book called "The Secret Rose" in 1897, and they owe much of their merit to Lady Gregory. They were, as first published, written in that artificial, elaborate English so many of us played with in the 'nineties, and I had come to hate them. When I was changing the first story in the light of a Sligo tale about "a wild old man in flannel" who could change a pack of cards into the likeness of a pack of hounds, I asked Lady Gregory's help. We worked together, first upon that tale, and after upon all the others, she now suggesting a new phrase or thought, and now I, till all had been put into that simple English she had learned from her Galway countrymen, and the thought had come closer to the life of the people. If their style has merit now, that merit is mainly hers. Dr. Hyde had already founded the first Gaelic play ever performed in a theatre upon one of the stories, and but the other day Lady Gregory made a Hanrahan play upon an incident of her own invention. *The Tables of the Law* and *The Adoration of the Magi*, page 498 to page 526, were intended to be part of "The Secret Rose", but the publisher, A. H. Bullen, took a distaste to them and asked me to leave them out, and then after the book was published liked them and put them into a little volume by themselves. In these as in most of the other stories I have left out or rewritten a passage here and there.

W. B. Y.

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