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The Works of  
"FIONA MACLEOD"

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*UNIFORM EDITION*

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ARRANGED BY

MRS. WILLIAM SHARP

VOLUME VII

A263381





William Sharp







P O E M S  
A N D  
D R A M A S

—

BY

“FIONA MACLEOD”

(WILLIAM SHARP)



LONDON  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN  
1910

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THE TROW PRESS, NEW YORK

FROM THE HILLS OF  
DREAM  
THRENODIES, SONGS AND  
OTHER POEMS

*"As Love on buried ecstasy buildeth his tower."*

ROBERT BRIDGES.

TO A MEMORY

THE HILLS OF DREAM

ST. JOHN'S EVE 1901

*There has been twilight here, since one whom some name Life and some Death slid between us the little shadow that is the unfathomable dark and silence. In a grave deeper than is hollowed under the windsweet grass lies that which was so passing fair.*

*Who plays the Song of Songs upon the Hills of Dream? It is said Love is that reed-player, for there is no song like his.*

*But to-day I saw one, on these dim garths of shadow and silence, who put a reed to his lips and played a white spell of beauty. Then I knew Love and Death to be one, as in the old myth of Oengus of the White Birds and the Grey Shadows.*

*Here are the broken airs that once you loved. . . .*

*"The fable-flowering land wherein they grew  
Hath dreams for stars, and grey romance for dew."*

*They are but the breath of what has been: only are they for this, that they do the will of beauty and regret.*

*"The great winding sheets that bury all things in oblivion, are two: Love, that makes oblivious of Life; and Death, that obliterates Love."*

*"Was it because I desired thee darkly, that thou could'st not know the white spell? Or was it that the white spell could not reach thy darkness? One god debateth this: and another god answereth this: but one god knoweth it. With him be the issue."*

AN LEABHAR BÀN.

(The Book of White Magic.)

*"My wisdom became pregnant on lonely mountains; upon rugged stones she bore her young.*

*"Now she runneth strangely through the hard desert and seeketh, and ever seeketh for soft grass, mine own old wisdom."*

NIETZSCHE.



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Bibliographical Note.

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## POEMS

FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

" . . . . . I would not find;  
For when I find, I know  
I shall have claspt the wandering wind  
And built a house of snow."



## FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

Across the silent stream  
Where the slumber-shadows go,  
From the dim blue Hills of Dream  
I have heard the west wind blow.

Who hath seen that fragrant land,  
Who hath seen that unscanned west?  
Only the listless hand  
And the unpulsing breast.

But when the west wind blows  
I see moon-lances gleam  
Where the Host of Faerie flows  
Athwart the Hills of Dream.

And a strange song I have heard  
By a shadowy stream,  
And the singing of a snow-white bird  
On the Hills of Dream.

## WHITE STAR OF TIME

Each love-thought in thy mind doth rise  
As some white cloud at even,  
Till in sweet dews it falls on me  
Athirst for thee, my Heaven!

My Heaven, my Heaven, thou art so far!  
Stoop, since I cannot climb:  
I would this wandering fire were lost  
In thee, white Star of Time!

## EILIDH MY FAWN

Far away upon the hills at the lighting of the  
dawn  
I saw a stirring in the fern and out there leapt  
a fawn :  
And O my heart was up at that and like the  
wind it blew  
Till its shadow hovered o'er the fawn as 'mid  
the fern it flew.

And Eilidh! Eilidh! Eilidh! was the wind song  
on the hill,  
And Eilidh! Eilidh! Eilidh! did the echoing  
corries fill :  
My hunting heart was glad indeed, at the  
lighting of the dawn,  
For O it was the hunting then of my bonnie,  
bonnie Fawn!

## THY DARK EYES TO MINE

Thy dark eyes to mine, Eilidh,  
Lamps of desire!  
O how my soul leaps  
Leaps to their fire!

Sure, now, if I in heaven,  
Dreaming in bliss,  
Heard but a whisper,  
But the lost echo even  
Of one such kiss—

All of the Soul of me  
Would leap afar—  
If that called me to thee  
Aye, I would leap afar  
A falling star!

## GREEN BRANCHES

Wave, wave, green branches, wave me far  
away  
To where the forest deepens and the hill-  
winds, sleeping, stay:  
Where Peace doth fold her twilight wings, and  
through the heart of day  
There goes the rumour of passing hours grown  
faint and grey.

Wave, wave, green branches, my heart like a  
bird doth hover  
Above the nesting-place your green-gloom  
shadows cover:  
O come to my nesting heart, come close, come  
close, bend over,  
Joy of my heart, my life, my prince, my lover!

## SHULE, SHULE, SHULE, AGRAH!<sup>1</sup>

His face was glad as dawn to me,  
His breath was sweet as dusk to me,  
His eyes were burning flames to me,  
    Shule, Shule, Shule, agrah!

The broad noon-day was night to me,  
The full-moon night was dark to me,  
The stars whirled and the poles span  
The hour God took him far from me.

Perhaps he dreams in heaven now,  
Perhaps he doth in worship bow,  
A white flame round his foam-white brow,  
    Shule, Shule, Shule, agrah!

I laugh to think of him like this,  
Who once found all his joy and bliss  
Against my heart, against my kiss,  
    Shule, Shule, Shule, agrah!

<sup>1</sup> I do not give the correct spelling of the Gaelic. The line signifies "Move, move, move to me, my Heart's Love."

*Shule, Shule, Shule, Agrah!*

Star of my joy, art still the same  
Now thou hast gotten a new name?  
Pulse of my heart, my Blood, my Flame,  
Shule, Shule, Shule, agrah!

## LORD OF MY LIFE

He laid his dear face next to mine,  
His eyes aflame burned close to mine,  
His heart to mine, his lips to mine,  
O he was mine, all mine, all mine.

Drunk with old wine of love I was,  
Drunk as the wild bee in the grass:  
Yea, as the wild bee in the grass,  
Drunk, drunk, with wine of love I was!

His lips of life to me were fief,  
Beneath him I was but a leaf  
Blown by the wind, a shaken leaf,  
Yea, as the sickle reaps the sheaf,  
My Grief!  
He reaped me as a gathered sheaf!

His to be gathered, his the bliss,  
But not a greater bliss than this!  
All of the empty world to miss  
For wild redemption of his kiss!  
My Grief!



*Lord of my Life*

For hell was lost, though heaven was brief  
Sphered in the universe of thy kiss—  
So cries to thee thy fallen leaf,  
Thy gathered sheaf,  
Lord of my life, my Pride, my Chief,  
My Grief!

## THE LONELY HUNTER

Green branches, green branches, I see you  
beckon ; I follow !  
Sweet is the place you guard, there in the  
rowan-tree hollow.  
There he lies in the darkness, under the frail  
white flowers,  
Heedless at last, in the silence, of these sweet  
midsummer hours.

But sweeter, it may be, the moss whereon he  
is sleeping now,  
And sweeter the fragrant flowers that may  
crown his moon-white brow :  
And sweeter the shady place deep in an Eden  
hollow  
Wherein he dreams I am with him — and,  
dreaming, whispers, “ Follow ! ”

Green wind from the green-gold branches,  
what is the song you bring ?  
What are all songs for me, now, who no more  
care to sing ?

## *The Lonely Hunter*

Deep in the heart of Summer, sweet is life to  
me still,

But my heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on  
a lonely hill.

Green is that hill and lonely, set far in a  
shadowy place ;

White is the hunter's quarry, a lost-loved hu-  
man face :

O hunting heart, shall you find it, with arrow  
of failing breath,

Led o'er a green hill lonely by the shadowy  
hound of Death?

Green branches, green branches, you sing of  
a sorrow olden,

But now it is midsummer weather, earth-  
young, sunripe, golden :

Here I stand and I wait, here in the rowan-  
tree hollow,

But never a green leaf whispers, " Follow, oh,  
Follow, Follow! "

O never a green leaf whispers, where the  
green-gold branches swing :

O never a song I hear now, where one was  
wont to sing

Here in the heart of Summer, sweet is life to  
me still,

But my heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on  
a lonely hill.

## COR CORDIUM

Sweet Heart, true heart, strong heart, star of  
my life, oh, never  
For thee the lowered banner, the lost en-  
deavour!  
The weapons are still unforged that thee and  
me shall dissever,  
For I in thy heart have dwelling, and thou  
hast in mine for ever.

Can a silken cord strangle love, or a steel  
sword sever?  
Or be as a bruised reed, the flow'r of joy for  
ever?  
Love is a beautiful dream, a deathless en-  
deavour,  
And for thee the lowered banner, O Sweet  
Heart never!

## THE ROSE OF FLAME

Oh, fair immaculate rose of the world, rose  
of my dream, my Rose!  
Beyond the ultimate gates of dream I have  
heard thy mystical call:  
It is where the rainbow of hope suspends and  
the river of rapture flows—  
And the cool sweet dews from the wells of  
peace for ever fall.

And all my heart is aflame because of the rap-  
ture and peace,  
And I dream, in my waking dreams and deep  
in the dreams of sleep,  
Till the high sweet wonderful call that shall  
be the call of release  
Shall ring in my ears as I sink from gulf to  
gulf and from deep to deep——

Sink deep, sink deep beyond the ultimate  
dreams of all desire—  
Beyond the uttermost limit of all that the crav-  
ing spirit knows:

*The Rose of Flame*

Then, then, oh then I shall be as the inner  
flame of thy fire,  
O fair immaculate rose of the world, Rose of  
my dream, my Rose!

## ISLA

Isla, Isla, heart of my heart, it is you alone I  
am loving—

Pulse my life, my flame, my joy, love is a  
bitter thing!

Love has its killing pain, they say—and you  
alone I am loving—

Isla, Isla, my pride, my king, love is a bitter  
thing!

Isla, Isla, in the underworld where the elfin  
music is,

There we shall meet one day at last, as the  
wave with the wind o' the south!

Then you shall cry, " My Dream, my Queen! "  
and crown me with your kiss,

And I to my Kingdom come, my king, my  
mouth to thy mouth!

## AN IMMORTAL

*"For a mortal love an Immortal may be shapen."*

Child of no mortal birth, that yet doth live,  
Where loiterest thou, O blossom of our joy?  
Unsummon'd hence, dost thou, knowing all,  
    forgive?

Thy rainbow-rapture, doth it never cloy?  
O exquisite dream, dear child of our desire,  
On mounting wings flitt'st thou afar from  
    here?

We cannot reach thee who dost never tire,  
Sweet phantom of delight, appear, appear!  
How lovely thou must be, wrought in strange  
    fashion

From out the very breath and soul of pas-  
    sion . . .

With eyes as proud as his, my lover, thy sire,  
When seeking through the twilight of my hair  
He finds the suddenly secret flame deep hid-  
    den there.

Twin torches flashing into fire.



## THE VISION

In a fair place  
Of whin and grass,  
I heard feet pass  
Where no one was.

I saw a face  
Bloom like a flower—  
Nay, as the rain-bow shower  
Of a tempestuous hour.

It was not man, nor woman:  
It was not human:  
But, beautiful and wild  
Terribly undefiled,  
I knew an unborn child.

## PULSE OF MY HEART

Are these your eyes, Isla,  
That look into mine?  
Is this smile, this laugh,  
Thine?

Heart of me, dear,  
O pulse of my heart,  
This is our child, our child—  
And . . . we apart!

Wrought of thy life, Isla,  
Wrought in my womb,  
Never to feel thy kiss!—  
Ah, bitter doom.

*Hush, hush: within thine eyes  
His eyes I see . . .  
Soft as a bird's sighs  
Thy breathings rise! . . .  
If there be Paradise  
For him and me  
(Who hold it but a dream  
Because of bitter fate)  
The first supernal gleam*

*Pulse of my Heart*

Beyond the flame-swept gate  
Shall be thine eyes when thou drawest near—  
None other shall it be  
Who his lost hands, with mine, and thine  
In love refound, shall intertwine . . .  
But now, alas, alas, we are far apart,  
    My baby dear,  
    Pulse of my Heart!

## MO-LENNAV-A-CHREE

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, dear to me, dear and  
sweet,  
In dreams I am hearing the sound of your lit-  
tle running feet—  
The sound of your running feet that like the  
sea-hoofs beat  
A music by day an' night, Eilidh, on the  
sands of my heart, my Sweet!

Eilidh, blue i' the eyes, flower-sweet as chil-  
dren are,  
And white as the canna that blows with the  
hill-breast wind afar,  
Whose is the light in thine eyes—the light of  
a star?—a star  
That sitteth supreme where the starry lights  
of heaven a glory are!

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, put off your wee hands  
from the heart o' me,  
It is pain they are making there, where no  
more pain should be:

*Mo-Lennav-a-Chree*

For little running feet, an' wee white hands,  
an' croodlin' as of the sea,  
Bring tears to my eyes, Eilidh, tears, tears, out  
of the heart o' me—  
Mo-lennav-a-chree,  
Mo-lennav-a-chree!

## HUSHING SONG

Eilidh, Eilidh,  
My bonny wee lass:  
The winds blow,  
And the hours pass.

But never a wind  
Can do thee wrong,  
Brown Birdeen, singing  
Thy bird-heart song.

And never an hour  
But has for thee  
Blue of the heaven  
And green of the sea:

Blue for the hope of thee,  
Eilidh, Eilidh;  
Green for the joy of thee,  
Eilidh, Eilidh.

Swing in they nest, then,  
Here on my heart,  
Birdeen, Birdeen,  
Here on my heart,  
Here on my heart!

## MY BIRDEEN

On bonnie birdeen,  
Sweet-bird of my heart—  
Tell me, my dear one,  
How shall we part?

He calls me, he cries  
Who is 'father to thee:  
O birdeen, his eyes  
In these blue eyes I see.

Thou art wrought of our love,  
Of our joy that was slain:  
My birdeen, my dove,  
My passion, my pain.

## LULLABY

Lennavan-mo,  
Lennavan-mo,  
Who is it swinging you to and fro,  
With a long low swing and a sweet low croon,  
And the loving words of the mother's rune?

Lennavan-mo,  
Lennavan-mo,  
Who is it swinging you to and fro?  
I am thinking it is an angel fair,  
The Angel that looks on the gulf from the  
lowest stair  
And swings the green world upward by its  
leagues of sunshine hair.

Lennavan-mo,  
Lennavan-mo,  
Who swingeth you and the Angel to and fro?  
It is He whose faintest thought is a world afar,  
It is He whose wish is a leaping seven-moon'd  
star,  
It is He, Lennavan-mo,  
To whom you and I and all things flow.



## *Lullaby*

Lennavan-mo,  
Lennavan-mo,  
It is only a little wee lass you are, Eilidh-mo-  
chree,  
But as this wee blossom has roots in the depths  
of the sky,  
So you are at one with the Lord of Eternity—  
Bonnie wee lass that you are,  
My morning-star,  
Eilidh-mo-chree, Lennavan-mo,  
Lennavan-mo.

## THE BUGLES OF DREAMLAND

Swiftly the dews of the gloaming are falling:  
Faintly the bugles of Dreamland are calling.  
O hearken, my darling, the elf-flutes are  
blowing  
The shining-eyed folk from the hillside are  
flowing,  
I' the moonshine the wild-apple blossoms are  
snowing,  
And louder and louder where the white dews  
are falling  
The far-away bugles of Dreamland are call-  
ing.

O what are the bugles of Dreamland calling  
There where the dews of the gloaming are  
falling?  
Come away from the weary old world of  
tears,  
Come away, come away to where one never  
hears  
The slow weary drip of the slow weary  
years,

*The Bugles of Dreamland*

But peace and deep rest till the white dews  
are falling  
And the blithe bugle-laughters through  
Dreamland are calling.

Then bugle for us, where the cool dews are  
falling,  
O bugle for us, wild elf-flutes now calling—  
For Heart's-love and I are too weary to wait  
For the dim drowsy whisper that cometh  
too late,  
The dim muffled whisper of blind empty  
fate—  
O the world's well lost now the dream-dews  
are falling,  
And the bugles of Dreamland about us are  
calling.

## MORAG OF THE GLEN

When Morag of the Glen was fëy  
They took her where the Green Folk stray:  
And there they left her, night and day,  
A day and night they left her, fëy.

'And when they brought her home again,  
Aye of the Green Folk was she fain:  
They brought her leannan, Roy M'Lean,  
She looked at him with proud disdain.

For I have killed a man, she said,  
A better man than you to wed:  
I slew him when he clasped my head.  
And now he sleepeth with the dead.

'And did you see that little wren?  
My sister dear it was flew, then!  
That skull her home, that eye her den,  
Her song is *Morag o' the Glen!*

For when she went I did not go,  
But washed my hands in blood-red woe;  
O wren, trill out your sweet song's flow  
*Morag is white as the driven snow!*

## THE HILLS OF RUEL

“Over the hills and far away”—  
That is the tune I heard one day  
When heather-drowsy I lay and listened  
And watched where the stealthy sea-tide glis-  
tened.

Beside me there on the Hills of Ruel  
An old man stooped and gathered fuel—  
And I asked him this: if his son were dead,  
As the folk in Glendaruel all said,  
How could he still believe that never  
Duncan had crossed the shadowy river.

Forth from his breast the old man drew  
A lute that once on a rowan-tree grew:  
And, speaking no words, began to play  
“Over the hills and far away.”

“But how do you know,” I said, thereafter,  
“That Duncan has heard the fairy laughter?  
How do you know he has followed the cruel  
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel?”

*The Hills of Ruel*

“ How do I know? ” the old man said,  
“ Sure I know well my boy’s not dead:  
For late on the morrow they hid him, there  
Where the black earth moistens his yellow hair,  
I saw him alow on the moor close by,  
I watched him low on the hillside lie,  
An’ I heard him laughin’ wild up there,  
An’ talk, talk, talkin’ beneath his hair—  
For down o’er his face his long hair lay  
But I saw it was cold and ashy grey.

‘Aye, laughin’ and talkin’ wild he was,  
An’ that to a Shadow out on the grass,  
‘A Shadow that made my blood go chill,  
For never its like have I seen on the hill.  
An’ the moon came up, and the stars grew  
white,  
‘An’ the hills grew black in the bloom o’ the  
night,  
‘An’ I watched till the death-star sank in the  
moon  
‘And the moonmaid fled with her flittermice  
shoon,  
Then the Shadow that lay on the moorside  
there  
Rose up and shook its wildmoss hair,  
‘And Duncan he laughed no more, but grey  
As the rainy dust of a rainy day,  
Went over the hills and far away.”

*The Hills of Ruel*

“Over the hills and far away”  
That is the tune I heard one day.  
O that I too might hear the cruel  
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel.

## SHEILING SONG

I go where the sheep go,  
With the sheep are my feet :

I go where the kye go,  
Their breath is so sweet :

O lover who loves me,  
Art thou half so fleet ?

Where the sheep climb, the kye go,  
There shall we meet !



## THE BANDRUIDH <sup>1</sup>

My robe is of green,  
My crown is of stars—  
The grass is the green  
And the daisies the stars:  
O'er lochan and streamlet  
My breath moveth sweet . . .  
Bonnie blue lochans,  
Hillwaters fleet.

The song in my heart  
Is the song of the birds,  
And the wind in my heart  
Is the lowing of herds:  
The light in my eyes,  
And the breath of my mouth,  
Are the clouds of spring-skies  
And the sound of the South.

*(The Airs of Spring)*

Grass-green from thy mouth  
The sweet sound of the South!

<sup>1</sup> The Bandruith—lit. the Druidess, *i. e.* the Sorceress: poetically, the Green Lady, *i. e.* Spring.

## THE MOON-CHILD

A little lonely child am I  
That have not any soul:  
God made me as the homeless wave,  
That has no goal.

A seal my father was, a seal  
That once was man:  
My mother loved him tho' he was  
'Neath mortal ban.

He took a wave and drownëd her,  
She took a wave and lifted him:  
And I was born where shadows are  
In sea-depths dim.

All through the sunny blue-sweet hours  
I swim and glide in waters green:  
Never by day the mournful shores  
By me are seen.

But when the gloom is on the wave  
A shell unto the shore I bring:  
And then upon the rocks I sit  
And plaintive sing.

*The Moon-Child*

I have no playmate but the tide  
The seaweed loves with dark brown eyes :  
The night-waves have the stars for play,  
For me but sighs.

## THE RUNE OF THE FOUR WINDS

By the Voice in the corries  
When the Polestar danceth :

By the Voice on the summits  
The dead feet know :

By the soft wet cry  
When the Heat-star troubleth :

By the plaining and moaning  
Of the Sigh of the Rainbows :

By the four white winds of the world,  
Whose father the golden Sun is,  
Whose mother the wheeling Moon is,  
The North and the South and the East and  
the West :

By the four good winds of the world,  
That Man knoweth,  
That One dreadeth,  
That God blesseth—

Be all well  
On mountain and moorland and lea,  
On loch-face and lochan and river,  
On shore and shallow and sea!

*The Rune of the Four Winds*

By the Voice of the Hollow  
Where the worm dwelleth :

By the Voice of the Hollow  
Where the sea-wave stirs not :

By the Voice of the Hollow  
That sun hath not seen yet :

By the three dark winds of the world ;  
The chill dull breath of the Grave,  
The breath from the depths of the Sea,  
The breath of To-morrow :  
By the white and dark winds of the world,  
The four and the three that are seven,  
That Man knoweth,  
That One dreadeth,  
That God blesseth—

Be all well  
On mountain and moorland and lea,  
On loch-face and lochan and river,  
On shore and shallow and sea !

## DREAM FANTASY

*"If Death Sleep's brother be,  
And souls bereft of sense have so sweet dreams,  
How could I wish thus still to dream and die!"*  
(Madrigal)

WILLIAM DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.

There is a land of Dream ;  
I have trodden its golden ways :  
I have seen its amber light  
From the heart of its sun-swept days ;  
I have seen its moonshine white  
On its silent waters gleam—  
Ah, the strange sweet lonely delight  
Of the Valleys of Dream.

Ah, in that Land of Dream,  
The mystical moon-white land,  
Comes from what unknown sea—  
Adream on what unknown strand—  
A sound as of feet that flee,  
As of multitudes that stream  
From the shores of that shadowy sea  
Through the Valleys of Dream.

*Dream Fantasy*

It is dark in the Land of Dream.  
There is silence in all the Land.  
Are the dead all gathered there—  
In havens, by no breath fanned?  
This stir i' the dawn, this chill wan air—  
This faint dim yellow of morning-gleam—  
O is this sleep, or waking where  
Lie hush'd the Valleys of Dream?

## MATER CONSOLATRIX

Heart's-joy must fade . . . though it borrow  
Heaven's azure for its clay:  
But the Joy that is one with Sorrow,  
Treads an immortal way:  
For each, is born To-morrow,  
For each, is Yesterday.

Joy that is clothed with shadow  
Shall arise from the dead:  
But Joy that is clothed with the rainbow  
Shall with the bow be sped: . . .  
Where the Sun spends his fires is she,  
And where the Stars are led.



## CLOSING DOORS



## CLOSING DOORS

O sands of my heart, what wind moans low  
along thy shadowy shore?  
Is that the deep sea-heart I hear with the dying  
sob at its core?  
Each dim lost wave that lapses is like a closing  
door:  
'Tis closing doors they hear at last who soon  
shall hear no more,  
Who soon shall hear no more.

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, call low, come back, call  
low to me:  
My heart you have broken, your troth forsaken,  
but love even yet can be:  
Come near, call low, for closing doors are as  
the waves o' the sea,  
Once closed they are closed for ever, Eilidh,  
lost, lost, for thee and me,  
Lost, lost, for thee and me.

## AT THE LAST

She cometh no more :  
Time, too, is dead.  
The last tide is led  
From the last shore.  
Eternity . . .  
What is Eternity?  
But the sea coming,  
The sea going,  
For evermore.

## IN THE SHADOW

O she will have the deep dark heart, for all  
her face is fair ;  
As deep and dark as though beneath the  
shadow of her hair :  
For in her hair a spirit dwells that no white  
spirit is,  
And hell is in the hopeless heaven of that lost  
spirit's kiss.

She has two men within the palm, the hollow  
of her hand :  
She takes their souls and blows them forth  
as idle drifted sand :  
And one falls back upon her breast that is his  
quiet home,  
And one goes out into the night and is as  
wind-blown foam.

And when she sees the sleep of one, ofttimes  
she rises there  
And looks into the outer dark and calleth soft  
and fair :

*In the Shadow*

And then the lost soul that afar within the  
dark doth roam  
Comes laughing, laughing, laughing, and cry-  
ing, Home! Home!

There is no home in faithless love, O fool that  
deems her fair:  
Bitter and drear that home you seek, the name  
of it, Despair:  
Drown, drown beneath the sterile kiss of the  
engulfing wave,  
A heaven of peace it is beside this mockery  
of a grave.

## THE STAR OF BEAUTY

It dwells not in the skies,  
    My Star of Beauty!  
'Twas made of her sighs,  
Her tears and agonies,  
The fire in her eyes,  
    My Star of Beauty!

Lovely and delicate,  
    My Star of Beauty!  
How could she master Fate,  
Although she gave back hate  
Great as my love was great,  
    My Star of Beauty!

I loved, she hated, well:  
    My Star of Beauty!  
Soon, soon the passing bell:  
She rose, and I fell:  
Soft shines in deeps of hell  
    My Star of Beauty!

## AN OLD TALE OF THREE

Ah, bonnie darling, lift your dark eyes dream-  
ing!

See, the firelight fills the gloaming, though  
deep darkness grows without—

[Hush, dear, hush, I hear the sea-birds  
screaming,  
And down beyond the haven the tide comes  
with a shout!]

Ah, birdeen, sweetheart, sure he is not coming,  
He who has your hand in his, while I have  
all your heart—

[Hush, dear, hush, I hear the wild bees hum-  
ming  
Far away in the underworld where true love  
shall not part!]

Darling, darling, darling, all the world is sing-  
ing,  
Singing, singing, singing a song of joy for me!



*An Old Tale of Three*

[Hush, dear, hush, what wild sea-wind is  
bringing  
Gloom o' the sea about thy brow, athwart the  
eyes of thee?]

Ah, heart o' me, darling, darling, all my heart's  
afame!  
Sure, at the last we are all in all, all in all we  
two!

*At the Door*

A VOICE

This is the way I take my own, this is the boon  
I claim!  
Sure at the last, ye are all in all, all in all, ye  
two—

*(Later, in the dark, the living brooding  
beside the dead:—)*

Ah, hell of my heart! Ye are dust to me—  
and dust with dust may woo!

## THE BURTHEN OF THE TIDE

The tide was dark an' heavy with the burden  
that it bore,  
I heard it talkin', whisperin', upon the weedy  
shore:  
Each wave that stirred the sea-weed was like  
a closing door,  
'Tis closing doors they hear at last who hear  
no more, no more,

My Grief,  
No more!

The tide was in the salt sea-weed, and like a  
knife it tore,  
The hoarse sea-wind went moaning, soeing,  
moaning o'er and o'er,  
The wild sea-heart was brooding deep upon  
its ancient lore,  
I heard the sob, the soeing sob, the dying sob  
at its core,

My Grief,  
Its core!

*The Burthen of the Tide*

The white sea-waves were wan and grey its  
  ashy lips before ;  
The whirled spume between its jaws in floods  
  did seaward pour—  
O whisperin' weed, O wild sea-waves, O hol-  
  low baffled roar,  
Since one thou hast, O dark dim Sea, why  
  callest thou for more,

My Grief,  
For more.

## WHEN THE DEW IS FALLING

When the dew is falling  
I have heard a calling  
Of aerial sweet voices o'er the low green hill;  
And when the noon is dying  
I have heard a crying  
Where the brown burn slippeth thro' the hol-  
lows green and still.

And O the sorrow upon me,  
The grey grief upon me,  
For a voice that whispered once, and now for  
aye is still:  
O heart forsaken, calling  
When the dew is falling,  
To the one that comes not ever o'er the low  
green hill.

## THE VOICE AMONG THE DUNES

I have heard the sea-wind sighing  
Where the dune-grasses grow,  
The sighing of the dying  
Where the salt tides flow.

For where the salt tides flow  
The sullen dead are lifting  
Tired arms, and to and fro  
Are idly drifting.

So through the grey dune-grasses  
Not the wind only cries,  
But a dim sea-wrought Shadow  
Breathes drownēd sighs.

## THE UNDERSONG

I hear the sea-song of the blood in my heart,  
I hear the sea-song of the blood in my ears:  
And I am far apart,  
And lost in the years.

But when I lie and dream of that which was  
Before the first man's shadow flitted on the  
    grass,  
I am stricken dumb  
With sense of that to come.

Is then this wildering sea-song but a part  
Of the old song of the mystery of the years—  
Or only the echo of the tired heart  
And of tears?

## DEAD LOVE

FROM THE GAELIC

*(Heard sung by an old woman of the  
Island of Tiree.)*

It is the grey rock I am,  
And grey rain on the rock:  
It is the grey wave . . .  
That grey hound.

What (is it) to be old:  
(It is to be as) the grey moss in winter:  
Alasdair-mo-ghaol,  
It is long since my laughter.

Alasdair-mo-ghaol,  
The breast is shrivelled  
That you said was white  
As canna in wind.

## THE SOUL'S ARMAGEDDON

I know not where I go,  
O Wind that calls afar;  
O Wind that calls for war,  
Where the Death-Moon doth glow  
In a darkness without star.

Nor do I know the blare  
Of the bugles that call:  
Nor who rise, nor who fall:  
Nor if the torches flare  
Where the gods laugh, or crawl.

But I hear, I hear the hum,  
The multitudinous cry,  
Where myriads fly,  
And I hear a voice say, Come:  
And the same voice say, Die!

What is the war, O Wind?  
Lo, without shield or spear  
How can I draw it near?  
I am deaf and dumb and blind  
With immeasurable fear.



## DAY AND NIGHT

From grey of dusk, the veils unfold  
To pearl and amethyst and gold—  
    Thus is the new day woven and spun:

From glory of blue to rainbow-spray,  
From sunset-gold to violet-grey—  
    Thus is the restful night re-won.

## THE WHITE PEACE

It lies not on the sunlit hill  
Nor on the sunlit plain:  
Nor ever on any running stream  
Nor on the unclouded main—

But sometimes, through the Soul of Man,  
Slow moving o'er his pain,  
The moonlight of a perfect peace  
Floods heart and brain.

## THE LOST STAR

A star was loosed from heaven;  
All saw it fall, in wonder,  
Where universe clashed universe  
With solar thunder.

The angels praised God's glory,  
To send this beacon-flare  
To show the terror of darkness  
Beneath the Golden Stair.

But God was brooding only  
Upon new births of light;  
The star was a drop of water  
On the lips of Eternal Light.

## THE RUNE OF AGE

O thou that on the hills and wastes of Night  
art Shepherd,  
Whose folds are flameless moons and icy  
planets,  
Whose darkling way is gloomed with ancient  
sorrows:  
Whose breath lies white as snow upon the  
olden,  
Whose sigh it is that furrows breasts grown  
milkless,  
Whose weariness is in the loins of man  
And is the barren stillness of the woman:  
O thou whom all would flee, and all must  
meet,  
Thou that the Shadow art of Youth Eter-  
nal,  
The gloom that is the hush'd air of the  
Grave,  
The sigh that is between last parted love,  
The light for aye withdrawing from weary  
eyes,  
The tide from stricken hearts for ever  
ebbing!

*The Rune of Age*

O thou the Elder Brother whom none loveth,  
Whom all men hail with reverence or mocking,  
Who broodest on the brows of frozen summits  
Yet dreamest in the eyes of babes and children :

Thou, Shadow of the Heart, the Mind, the  
Life,

Who art that dusk What-is that is already  
Has-Been,

To thee this rune of the fathers to the sons  
And of the sons to the sons, and mothers to  
new mothers—

To thee who art Aois,

To thee who art Age!

Breathe thy frosty breath upon my hair, for  
I am weary!

Lay thy frozen hand upon my bones that they  
support not,

Put thy chill upon the blood that it sustain  
not;

Place the crown of thy fulfilling on my fore-  
head;

Throw the silence of thy spirit on my spirit;  
Lay the balm and benediction of thy mercy  
On the brain-throb and the heart-pulse and the  
life-spring—

For thy child that bows his head is weary,

For thy child that bows his head is weary.

*The Rune of Age*

I the shadow am that seeks the Darkness.  
Age, that hath the face of Night unstarr'd  
and moonless,  
Age, that doth extinguish star and planet,  
Moon and sun and all the fiery worlds,  
Give me now thy darkness and thy silence!

## MIANN

*Miann ghaol, Sonas:*

*Miann bhithe, Sith:*

*Miann anama, Flathas:*

*Miann Dhe . . . gile rùn gu brath.*

## DESIRE

The desire of love, Joy :

The desire of life, Peace :

The desire of the soul, Heaven :

The desire of God . . . a flame-white secret  
for ever.





FROM THE HEART OF A  
WOMAN



## THE PRAYER OF WOMEN

O spirit that broods upon the hills  
And moves upon the face of the deep,  
And is heard in the wind,  
Save us from the desire of men's eyes,  
And the cruel lust of them.  
Save us from the springing of the cruel seed  
In that narrow house which is as the grave  
For darkness and loneliness . . .  
That women carry with them with shame, and  
weariness, and long pain,  
Only for the laughter of man's heart,  
And for the joy that triumphs therein,  
And the sport that is in his heart.  
Wherewith he mocketh us,  
Wherewith he playeth with us,  
Wherewith he trampleth upon us . . .  
Us, who conceive and bear him;  
Us, who bring him forth;  
Who feed him in the womb, and at the breast,  
and at the knee:  
Whom he calleth mother and wife,  
And mother again of his children and his  
children's children.

*The Prayer of Women*

Ah, hour of the hours,  
When he looks at our hair and sees it is  
    grey;  
And at our eyes and sees they are dim;  
And at our lips straightened out with long  
    pain;  
And at our breasts, fallen and seared as a  
    barren hill;  
And at our hands, worn with toil!  
Ah, hour of the hours,  
When, seeing, he seeth all the bitter ruin and  
    wreck of us—  
All save the violated womb that curses  
    him—  
All save the heart that forbeareth . . . for  
    pity—  
All save the living brain that condemneth  
    him—  
All save the spirit that shall not mate with  
    him—  
All save the soul he shall never see  
Till he be one with it, and equal;  
He who hath the bridle, but guideth not;  
He who hath the whip, yet is driven;  
He who as a shepherd calleth upon us,  
But is himself a lost sheep, crying among the  
    hills!  
O Spirit, and the Nine Angels who watch  
    us,

*The Prayer of Women*

And Thou, White Christ, and Mary Mother  
of Sorrow,  
Heal us of the wrong of man:  
We whose breasts are weary with milk,  
Cry, cry to Thee, O Compassionate!

## THE RUNE OF THE PASSION OF WOMAN

We who love are those who suffer,  
We who suffer most are the those who most  
do love.

O the heartbreak come of longing love,  
O the heartbreak come of love deferred,  
O the heartbreak come of love grown listless.  
Far upon the lonely hills I have heard the  
crying,

The lamentable crying of the ewes,  
And dreamed I heard the sorrow of poor  
mothers

Made lambless too and weary with that sor-  
row:

And far upon the waves I have heard the  
crying,

The lamentable crying of the seamews,  
And dreamed I heard the wailing of the  
women

Whose hearts are flamed with love above the  
gravestone,

Whose hearts beat fast but hear no fellow-  
beating.

*The Rune of the Passion of Woman*

Bitter, alas, the sorrow of lonely women,  
When no man by the ingle sits, and in the  
    cradle

No little flower-like faces flush with slumber:  
Bitter the loss of these, the lonely silence,  
The void bed, the hearthside void,  
The void heart, and only the grave not void:  
But bitterer, oh more bitter still, the longing  
Of women who have known no love at all,  
    who never,

Never, never, have grown hot and cold with  
    rapture

'Neath the lips or 'neath the clasp of longing,  
Who have never opened eyes of heaven to  
    man's devotion,

Who have never heard a husband whisper  
    "wife,"

Who have lost their youth, their dreams, their  
    fairness,

In a vain upgrowing to a light that comes not.

Bitter these: but bitterer than either,

O most bitter for the heart of woman

To have loved and been beloved with passion,

To have known the height and depth, the  
    vision

Of triple-flaming love—and in the heart-self

Sung a song of deathless love, immortal,

Sunrise-haired, and starry-eyed and wondrous:

To have felt the brain sustain the mighty

*The Rune of the Passion of Woman*

Weight and reach of thought unspanned and  
spanless,  
To have felt the soul grow large and noble,  
To have felt the spirit dauntless, eager, swift  
in hope and daring,  
To have felt the body grow in fairness,  
All the glory and the beauty of the body  
Thrill with joy of living, feel the bosom  
Rise and fall with sudden tides of passion,  
Feel the lift of soul to soul, and know the  
rapture  
Of the rising triumph of the ultimate dream  
Beyond the pale place of defeated dreams:  
To know all this, to feel all this, to be a  
woman  
Crowned with the double crown of lily and  
rose  
And have the morning star to rule the golden  
hours  
And have the evening star thro' hours of  
dream,  
To live, to do, to act, to dream, to hope,  
To be a perfect woman with the full  
Sweet, wondrous, and consummate joy  
Of womanhood fulfilled to all desire—  
And then . . . oh then, to know the waning of  
the vision,  
To go through days and nights of starless  
longing,



*The Rune of the Passion of Woman*

Through nights and days of gloom and bitter  
sorrow :

To see the fairness of the body passing,  
To see the beauty wither, the sweet colour  
Fade, the coming of the wintry lines  
Upon pale faces chilled with idle loving,  
The slow subsidence of the tides of living.  
To feel all this, and know the desolate sorrow  
Of the pale place of all defeated dreams,  
And to cry out with aching lips, and vainly ;  
And to cry out with aching heart, and vainly ;  
And to cry out with aching brain, and vainly ;  
And to cry out with aching soul, and  
vainly ;

To cry, cry, cry with passionate heartbreak,  
sobbing,

To the dim wondrous shape of Love Retreat-  
ing—

To grope blindly for the warm hand, for the  
swift touch,

To seek blindly for the starry lamps of pas-  
sion,

To crave blindly for the dear words of long-  
ing!

To go forth cold, and drear, and lonely, O so  
lonely,

With the heart-cry even as the crying,

The lamentable crying on the hills

When lambless ewes go desolately astray—

*The Rune of the Passion of Woman*

Yea, to go forth discrowned at last, who have  
worn  
The flower-sweet lovely crown of rapturous  
love:  
To know the eyes have lost their starry  
wonder;  
To know the hair no more a fragrant dusk  
Wherein to whisper secrets of deep longing;  
To know the breasts shall henceforth be no  
haven  
For the dear weary head that loved to lie  
there—  
To go, to know, and yet to live and suffer,  
To be as use and wont demand, to fly no  
signal  
That the soul founders in a sea of sorrow,  
But to be “true,” “a woman,” “patient,”  
“tender,”  
“Divinely acquiescent,” all-forbearing,  
To laugh, and smile, to comfort, to sustain,  
To do all this—oh this is bitterest,  
O this the heaviest cross, O this the tree  
Whereon the woman hath her crucifixion.

But, O ye women, what avail? Behold,  
Men worship at the tree, whereon is writ  
The legend of the broken hearts of women.  
And this is the end: for young and old the  
end:

*The Rune of the Passion of Woman*

For fair and sweet, for those not sweet nor  
fair,  
For loved, unloved, and those who once were  
loved,  
For all the women of all this weary world  
Of joy too brief and sorrow far too long,  
This is the end: the cross, the bitter tree,  
And worship of the phantom raised on high  
Out of your love, your passion, your despair,  
Hopes unfulfilled, and unavailing tears.

## THE RUNE OF THE SORROW OF WOMEN

*This is the rune of the women who bear in  
sorrow:*

*Who, having anguish of body, die in the pangs  
of bearing,*

*Who, with the ebb at the heart, pass ere the  
wane of the babe-mouth.*

### THE RUNE

O we are tired, we are tired, all we who are  
women:

Heavy the breasts with milk that never shall  
nourish:

Heavy the womb that never again shall be  
weighty.

For we have the burthen upon us, we have the  
burthen,

The long slow pain, the sorrow of going, and  
the parting.

O little hands, O little lips, farewell and fare-  
well.

Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with  
the parting.

*The Rune of the Sorrow of Women*

THE DREAM

Far away in the east of the world a Woman  
had sorrow.  
Heavy she was with child, and the pains were  
upon her.  
And God looked forth out of heaven, and he  
spake in his pity:  
“O Mary, thou bearest the Prince of Peace,  
and thy seed shall be blessed.”  
But Mary the Mother sighed, and God the  
All-Seeing wondered,  
For this is the rune he heard in the heart of  
Mary the Virgin:—  
“Man blindfold soweth the seed, and blindly  
he reapeth:  
And to the word of the Lord is a blessing  
upon the sower.  
O what of the blessing upon the field that is  
sown,  
What of the sown, not of the sower, what of  
the mother, the bearer?  
Sure it is this that I see: that everywhere over  
the world  
The man has the pain and the sorrow, the  
weary womb and the travail!  
Everywhere patient he is, restraining the tears  
of his patience

*The Runc of the Sorrow of Women*

Slow in upbraiding, swift in passion unselfish,  
Bearing his pain in silence, in silence the  
shame and the anguish :  
Slow, slow he is to put the blame on the love  
of the woman :  
Slow to say she led him astray, swift ever to  
love and excuse her !  
O 'tis a good thing, and I am glad at the  
seeing,  
That man who has all the pain and the patient  
sorrow and waiting  
Keepeth his heart ever young and never up-  
braideth the woman  
For that she laughs in the sun and taketh the  
joy of her living  
And holdeth him to her breast, and knoweth  
pleasure  
And plighteth troth akin to the starry im-  
mortals,  
And soon forgetteth, and lusteth after an-  
other,  
And plighteth again, and again, and yet again  
and again,  
And asketh one thing only of man who is pa-  
tient and loving,—  
This : that he swerve not ever, that faithful he  
be and loyal,  
And know that the sorrow of sorrows is only  
a law of his being,

*The Rune of the Sorrow of Women*

And all is well with Woman, and the World  
of Woman, and God.

O 'tis a good thing, and I am glad at the  
seeing!

And this is the rune of man the bearer of pain  
and sorrow,

The father who giveth the babe his youth his  
joy and the life of his living!"

(And high in His Heaven God the All-Seeing  
troubled.)

THE RUNE

O we are weary, how weary, all we of the  
burthen:

Heavy the breasts with milk that never shall  
nourish:

Heavy the womb that never again shall be  
fruitful:

Heavy the hearts that never again shall be  
weighty.

For we have the burthen upon us, we have the  
burthen,

The long slow pain, and the sorrow of going,  
and the parting.

O little hands, O little lips, farewell and fare-  
well:

*The Rune of the Sorrow of Women*

Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with  
the parting,  
Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with  
the parting.



## THE SHEPHERD

*"Verily, those herdsmen also were of the sheep!"*

NIETZSCHE.

### I

He loved me, as he said, in every part,  
And yet I could not, would not, give him  
all:

Why should a woman forfeit her whole  
heart

At bidding of a single shepherd's call?  
One vast the deep, and yet each wave is free  
To answer to the moonshine's drowsy smile  
Or leap to meet the storm-wind's rapturous  
glee:

This heart of mine a wave is oftenwhile.  
Depth below depth, strange currents cross, re-  
cross,

The anguished eddies ebb and flow,  
But on the placid surface seldom toss

The reckless flotsam of what seeths below:  
O placid calms and maelstrom heart of me,  
Shall it be thus till there be no more sea?

## *The Shepherd*

### II

“ I am thy shepherd, love, that on this hill  
Of life shall tend and guard thee evermore.”  
These were thy words that far-off day and still  
Lives on thine echoing lips this bond of yore.  
Yet who wert thou, O soul as I am, thus  
To take so blithely gage of shepherding?  
Were we not both astray where perilous  
Steps might each into the abysmal darkness  
fling?

Lo, my tired soul even as a storm-stayed ewe  
Across the heights unto my shepherd cried:  
But to the sheltered Vale at last I drew  
And laid me weary by the sleeping side.  
Thou didst not hear the Shepherd calling us,  
Nor far the night wind, vibrant, ominous.

### III

O shepherd of mine, lord of my little life,  
Guard me from knowledge even of the  
stress:  
And if I stray, take heed thou of thy wife,  
Errant from mere woman's wantonness.  
Even as the Lord of Hosts, lo, in thy hand,  
The hollow of thy hand, my soul support:  
Guide this poor derelict back unto the land  
And lead me, pilot, to thy sheltering port!

*The Shepherd*

No—no—keep back—away—not now thy kiss:

    O shepherd, pilot, wake! awake! awake!

The deep must whelm us both! Hark, the  
    waves hiss,

    And as a shaken leaf the land doth shake!

Awake, O shepherding soul, and take com-  
    mand!—

—Nay, vain, vain words: how shall he under-  
    stand?



# FOAM OF THE PAST

I

THRENODIES AND SONGS

CHANTS AND DIRGES

## FOAM OF THE PAST

TO W. B. YEATS

In a small book in a greater, "The Little Book of the Great Enchantment" in *The Book of White Magic (or Wisdom)* . . . the "Leabhran Mhòr Gheasadaireachd" to give the Gaelic name . . . it is said: "When you have a memory out of darkness, tell to a seer, to a poet, and to a friend, that which you remember: and if the seer say, I see it—and if the poet say, I hear it—and if the friend say, I believe it: then know of a surety that your remembrance is a true remembrance." But if our ancestral memories, or memories of the imagination, or reveries of the imagining mind wandering in a world publicly foregone yet inwardly actual, could become authentic only by a test such as this, then I fear they would indeed be apparent as mere foam, the froth of dream. For where is he who is at once seer and poet and friend? Well, you have the great desire, which is the threshold of vision, and vision itself you have, which is the

## *Foam of the Past*

white enchantment: your words that you compel to a new and subtle music, and the unknown airs in your mind that shepherd those words into the green glens of your imagination, would reveal you as the poet, though not one of your fellows acclaimed you, or none offered you the mistletoe bough with its old symbolism of wisdom and song: and, finally, I think I may call you friend, for we go one way, the dearer that it is narrow and little trod and leads by the whispering sedge and the wilderness, and meet sometimes on that way, and know that we seek the same Graal, and shall come upon it, beyond that fathomless hollow of green water that lies in the West as our poets say, the "Pool" whose breath is Silence and over which hangs a bow of red flame whitening to its moonwhite core.

So you, perhaps, may say of some of these lines in "From the Hills of Dream" and "Foam of the Past" that they come familiarly to you in other than the sense of mere acquaintance. I think you, too, have known the dew which falls when Dalua whispers under the shadowy rowan-trees, and have heard the laughter of the Hidden Host, and known, . . . not the fairie folk of later legend, . . . but the perilous passage of the great Lords of Shadow, "who tread the deeps of night." You, too,



## *Foam of the Past*

perhaps, have feared The White Hound and the Red Shepherd: and have known that weariness, too old and deep for words, of which the aged Gaelic woman of the Island of Tíree had dim knowledge when she sang

*It is the grey rock I am,  
And the grey rain on the rock:  
It is the grey wave . . .  
That grey hound.*

You have heard The Rune of the Winds, the blowing of the four white winds and the three dark winds: perhaps, if you have not seen, or heard, my little Moon-Child, you remember her from long ago, and her loneliness when she sang

*I have no playmate but the tide  
The seaweed loves with dark brown eyes:  
The night-waves have the stars for play,  
For me but sighs.*

For all poetry is in a sense memory: all art, indeed, is a mnemonic gathering of the innumerable and lost into the found and unique. I am sure that you, too, have seen the rising of the Crimson Moon, and have walked secretly with Midir of the Dew and moon-crown'd Brigid and wave-footed Mánan. For you also the long way that seems brief

## *Foam of the Past*

and the short way that seems long, who can say with Dalua in *The Immortal Hour*

*And if I tread the long, continuous way  
Within a narrow round, not thinking it long,  
And fare a single hour thinking it many days,  
I am not first or last of the Immortal Clan  
For whom the long ways of the world are brief  
And the short ways heavy with unimagined time.*

I have listened so long to the music of the three harpers of Fraech, that what I most love now in the cadence and inward breath of song is that which comes across the thorn. You remember them, the three sons of Boinn of the Sidhe, that fair queen: the three harpers of Fraech in the old tale of the *Táin bo Fraich* . . . who had for bard names Tear-Bringer, Smile-Bringer, and Sleep-Bringer: and how it was from the music of Uaithnê, the self-playing harp of the Everlasting One, that these three were named. And I, too, like Befinn, sister of Boinn, am spell-bound in that vision of sorrowful beauty . . . of beauty that comes secretly out of darkness and grey-ness and the sighing of wind, as the dew upon the grass and the reed by pale water: and is, for so brief a while: and, as the dew is gathered again swiftly and in silence, is become already a dream, a lost air remembered, a

## *Foam of the Past*

beautiful thing that might have been. For that is what is hidden in the lament of the shennachies of old, when they sang of the loveliness of Bëfinn fading, like a leaf of May at the cold fires of Samhain, before the great flame of beauty of her son Fraech, "most beautiful of the men of Erin and Albin" . . . because of what she saw in that exceeding beauty, like the blue dusk at the heart of flame. "Beautiful beyond all beauty of youth, he was: but he has not long lived." That is the burden of the song. And what is this deep undertide of longing for that which is beyond wavering reach, for that which is covered up in the secrecies of things immortal, but the longing of Finnavar, daughter of bright Oilill and dark-browed Maeve, for Fraech, the Son of Beauty, though she had never seen him, and loved only by hearsay, and because of the white passion in her heart, and because that inappeasable desire was more great to her than the things of life? Alas, what sorrowful truth lives in that dark saying of Boinn of the Sidhe . . . "Men shall die who have an ear for harmonies."

So that to you, for one, these poems, however rude in form they may sometimes be, will come with that remembrance of the imagination which is the incalculable air of the

otherworld of poetry. As you know, most of them have their place in tales of mine coloured with the colour of a lost day and of a beauty that is legend: and must suffer by severance from their context, as plucked pine-branches lose, if not their native savour, at least the light and gloom of their forest-company and the smooth hand of the wind. The sound and colour of a barbarous day may well vanish in these broken recalling strains . . . at their best dimly caught even when, for example, "The Death Dance" be read in its due place in "The Laughter of the Queen," apart from which it is perhaps like an air born a thousand years ago on a Gaelic minstrel's clarsach and played anew to-day with curious artifice on a many-noted instrument. One or two at least of these threnodies and chants will have for you the familiar cadence of thought as well as of the familiar fall of words, for they are but adaptations of what long ago were chanted to rude harps made of applewood and yew. The songs of the Swan-Children of Lir have been sung by many poets: Deirdrê's Lament on leaving Scotland, as she and Nathos (Naois) crossed the Irish Sea, has been a music in every generation of the Gael: and I do no more than remember, and repeat, with an accent of atmosphere or thought or

*Foam of the Past*

words, which, perhaps, just reveals the difference between paraphrase and metaphrase. Like Deirdrê, we, too, look often yearningly to a land from which we were exiled in time, but inhabit in dream and longing, saying with her

*Glen of the Roes, Glen of the Roes,  
In thee I have dreamed to the full my happy dream:  
O that where the shallow bickering Ruel flows  
I might hear again, o'er its flashing gleam,  
The cuckoos calling by the murmuring stream.*

F. M.

*LEAVES, SHADOWS, AND DREAMS*

*I have seen all things pass and all men go  
Under the shadow of the drifting leaf:  
    Green leaf, red leaf, brown leaf,  
    Grey leaf blown to and fro.  
        Blown to and fro.*

*I have seen happy dreams rise up and pass  
Silent and swift as shadows on the grass:  
    Grey shadows of old dreams,  
    Grey beauty of old dreams,  
        Grey shadows in the grass.*

## THE LAMENT OF IAN THE PROUD

What is this crying that I hear in the wind?  
Is it the old sorrow and the old grief?  
Or is it a new thing coming, a whirling leaf  
About the grey hair of me who am weary and  
blind?

I know not what it is, but on the moor above  
the shore

There is a stone which the purple nets of the  
heather bind,

And thereon is writ: *She will return no more.*

O blown whirling leaf,

And the old grief,

And wind crying to me who am old and blind!

## DEIRDRE IS DEAD . . .

*"Deirdre the beautiful is dead . . . is dead!"*  
(*The House of Usna*)

*The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,  
the grey wind weeps:  
Dust on her breast, dust on her eyes, the grey  
wind weeps!*

Cold, cold it is under the brown sod, and cold  
under the grey grass;  
Here only the wet wind and the flittermice and  
the plovers pass:

I wonder if the wailing birds, and the soft  
hair-covered things  
Of the air, and the grey wind hear what sigh-  
ing song she sings

Down in the quiet hollow where the coiled  
twilights of hair  
Are gathered into the darkness that broods on  
her bosom bare?



*Deirdrê is Dead*

It is said that the dead sing, though we have  
no ears to hear,  
And that whoso lists is lickt up of the Shad-  
ow, too, because of fear—

But this would give me no fear, that I heard  
a sighing song from her lips:  
No, but as the green heart of an upthrust  
towering billow slips

Down into the green hollow of the ingathering  
wave,  
So would I slip, and sink, and drown, in her  
grassy grave.

For is not my desire there, hidden away under  
the cloudy night  
Of her long hair that was my valley of whis-  
pers and delight—

And in her two white hands, like still swans  
on a frozen lake,  
Hath she not my heart that I have hidden  
there for dear love's sake?

Alas, there is no sighing song, no breath in  
the silence there:  
Not even the white moth that loves death flits  
through her hair

*Deirdrê is Dead*

As the bird of Brigid, made of foam and the  
pale moonwhite wine  
Of dreams, flits under the sombre windless  
plumes of the pine.

I hear a voice crying, crying, crying: is it the  
wind  
I hear, crying its old weary cry time out of  
mind?

*The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,  
the grey wind weeps:  
Dust on her breast, dust on her eyes, the grey  
wind weeps!*

## HEART O' BEAUTY

O where are thy white hands, Heart o' Beauty?

Heart o' Beauty!

They are as white foam on the swept sands,

Heart o' Beauty!

They are as white swans i' the dusk, thy white  
hands,

Wild swans in flight over shadowy lands,

Heart o' Beauty!

O lift again thy white hands, Heart o' Beauty,

Heart o' Beauty!

Harp to the white waves on the yellow sands,

Heart o' Beauty!

They will hearken now to these waving  
wands,

To the magic wands of thy white hands,

Heart o' Beauty!

From the white dawn till the grey dusk,

Heart o' Beauty!

I hear the unseen waves of unseen strands,

Heart o' Beauty!

*Heart O' Beauty*

I see the sun rise and set over shadowy lands,  
But never, never, never thy white hands, thy  
white hands,

Heart o' Beauty!

## THE MONODY OF ISLA THE SINGER

*"Like Bells on the wind . . ."*

Is it time to let the Hour rise and go forth as  
a hound loosed from the battle-cars?  
Is it time to let the Hour go forth, as the  
White Hound with the eyes of flame?  
For if it be not time I would have this hour  
that is left to me under the stars  
Wherein I may dream my dream again, and  
at the last whisper one name.

It is the name of one who was more fair than  
youth to the old, than life to the young:  
She was more fair than the first love of An-  
gus the Beautiful, and though I were blind  
And deaf for a hundred ages I would see her,  
more fair than any poet has sung,  
And hear her voice like mournful bells crying  
on the wind.

## WHITE-HANDS

O where in the north, or where in the south,  
or where in the east or west  
Is she who hath the flower-white hands and  
the swandown breast?  
O, if she be west, or east she be, or in the  
north or south,  
A sword will leap, a horse will prance, ere I  
win to Honey-Mouth.

She has great eyes, like the doe on the hill,  
and warm and sweet she is,  
O, come to me, Honey-Mouth, bend to me,  
Honey-Mouth, give me thy kiss!

*White-Hands* her name is, where she reigns  
amid the princes fair:  
White hands she moves like swimming swans  
athrough her dusk-wave hair:  
White hands she puts about my heart, white  
hands fan up my breath:  
White hands take out the heart of me, and  
grant me life or death!

*White-Hands*

White hands make better songs than hymns,  
white hands are young and sweet:  
O, a sword for me, O Honey-Mouth, and a  
war-horse fleet!

O wild sweet eyes! O glad wild eyes! O  
mouth, how sweet it is!  
O, come to me, Honey-Mouth! bend to me,  
Honey-Mouth! give me thy kiss!

THE DESIRE AND THE LAMENTA-  
TION OF COEL

*(The noise of harps and tympan. From the wood  
comes the loud chanting voice of COEL):*

O, 'tis a good house, and a palace fair, the  
Dûn of Macha,

And happy with a great household is Macha  
there:

Druids she has, and bards, minstrels, harpers,  
knights;

Hosts of servants she has, and wonders  
beautiful and rare,

But nought so wonderful and sweet as her  
face queenly fair,

O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

*(Choric Voices in a loud, swelling chant):  
O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!*

*(COEL chants):*

The colour of her great Dûn is the shining  
whiteness of lime,

And within it are floors strewn with green  
rushes and couches white;



*The Desire and the Lamentation of Coel*

Soft wondrous silks and blue gold-claspt  
mantles and furs  
Are there, and jewelled golden cups for  
revelry by night:  
Thy grianân of gold and glass is filled with  
sunshine-light,  
O Macha, queen by day, queen by  
night!

*(Choric Voices):*

*O Macha, queen by day, queen by  
night!*

Beyond the green portals, and the brown and  
red thatch of wings  
Striped orderly, the wings of innumerable  
stricken birds,  
A wide shining floor reaches from wall to  
wall, wondrously carven  
Out of a sheet of silver, whereon are graven  
swords  
Intricately ablaze: mistress of many hoards  
Art thou, Macha of few words!

*(Choric Voices):*

*O Macha of few words!*

Fair indeed is thy couch, but fairer still is thy  
throne,

*The Desire and the Lamentation of Coel*

A chair it is, all of a blaze of wonderful yellow gold:  
There thou sittest, and watchest the women going to and fro,  
Each in garments fair and with long locks twisted fold in fold:  
With the joy that is in thy house men would not grow old,  
O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

*(Choric Voices):*

*O Macha, proud, austere, cold!*

Of a surety there is much joy to be had of thee and thine,  
There in the song-sweet sunlit bowers in that place;  
Wounded men might sink in sleep and be well content  
So to sleep, and to dream perchance, and know no other grace  
Then to wake and look betimes on thy proud queenly face,  
O Macha of the Proud Face!

*(Choric Voices):*

*O Macha of the Proud Face!*

*The Desire and the Lamentation of Coel*

'And if there be any here who wish to know  
more of this wonder,  
Go, you will find all as I have shown, as I  
have said:  
From beneath its portico, thatched with wings  
of birds blue and yellow  
Reaches a green lawn, where a fount is fed  
From crystal and gems: of crystal and gold  
each bed  
In the house of Macha of the Ruddy  
Head!

*(Choric Voices):*

*In the house of Macha of the Ruddy  
Head!*

In that great house where Macha the queen  
has her pleasaunce  
There is everything in the whole world that  
a man might desire.  
God is my witness that if I say little it is for  
this,  
That I am grown faint with wonder, and  
can no more admire,  
But say this only, that I live and die in the  
fire  
Of thine eyes, O Macha, my desire,  
With thine eyes of fire!

*The Desire and the Lamentation of Coel*

*(Choric Voices in a loud swelling chant):*

*But say this only, that we live and die in the  
fire*

*Of thine eyes, O Macha, Dream, De-  
sire,*

*With thine eyes of fire!*

*(Choric Voices repeat their refrains, but  
fainter, and becoming more faint. Last van-  
ishing sound of the harps and tympan.)*

*(The Voice of COEL):*

And where now is Macha of the proud face  
and the ruddy hair,

Macha of few words, proud, austere, cold,  
with the eyes of fire?

Is she calling to the singers down there under  
the grass,

Is she saying to the bard, sing: and to the  
minstrel, where is thy lyre?

Or is that her voice that I hear, lonelier and  
further and higher

Than the wild wailing wind on the moor  
that echoes my desire,

O Macha of the proud face

And the eyes of fire!

## DALUA<sup>1</sup>

I have heard you calling, Dalua  
Dalua!

I have heard you on the hill,  
By the pool-side still,  
Where the lapwings shrill  
*Dalua . . . dalua . . . dalua!*

What is it you call, Dalua,  
Dalua!  
When the rains fall,  
When the mists crawl  
And the curlews call  
*Dalua . . . dalua . . . dalua!*

*I am the Fool, Dalua,  
Dalua!*  
*When men hear me, their eyes  
Darken: the shadow in the skies  
Droops: and the keening-woman cries*  
DALUA . . . DALUA . . . DALUA

<sup>1</sup> Dalúa, one of the names of a mysterious being in the Celtic mythology, the Fairy Fool.

## THE SONG OF FIONULA

Sleep, sleep, brothers dear, sleep and dream,  
Nothing so sweet lies hid in all your years.

Life is a storm-swept gleam

In a rain of tears :

Why wake to a bitter hour, to sigh, to weep ?

How better far to sleep—

To sleep and dream.

To sleep and dream, ah, that were well indeed :

Better than sighs, better than tears,

Ye can have nothing better for your meed

In all the years.

Why wake to a bitter hour, to sigh, to weep ?

How better far to sleep—

To sleep and dream, ah, that is well indeed !

## THE SONG OF AEIFA

*From The Swan-Children of Lir*

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,  
    Across the wind-sprent foam ;  
The wave shall be your father now,  
And the wind alone shall kiss your brow,  
    And the waste be your home.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,  
    Your age-long quest to make ;  
Three hundred years on Moyle's wild breast,  
Three hundred years on the wilder west,  
    Three hundred years on this lake.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,  
    And Lir shall call in vain  
For all his aching heart and tears,  
For all the weariness of his years,  
    Ye shall not come again.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,  
    Till the ringing of Christ's bell ;  
Then at the last ye shall have rest,  
And Death shall take ye to his breast  
    At the ringing of Christ's bell.

## THE SORROW OF THE HOUSE OF LIR

Happy our father Lir afar,  
With mead, and songs of love and war:  
The salt brine, and the white foam,  
With these his children have their home.

In the sweet days of long ago  
Soft-clad we wandered to and fro:  
But now cold winds of dawn and night  
Pierce deep our feathers thin and light.

The hazel mead in cups of gold  
We feasted from in days of old:  
The sea-weed now our food, our wine  
The salt, keen, bitter, barren brine.

On soft warm couches once we pressed:  
White harpers lulled us to our rest:  
Our beds are now where the sea raves,  
Our lullaby the clash of waves.

Alas! the fair sweet days are gone  
When love was ours from dawn to dawn:  
Our sole companion now is pain,  
Through frost and snow, through storm and  
rain.



*The Sorrow of the House of Lir*

Beneath my wings my brothers lie  
When the fierce ice-winds hurtle by:  
On either side and 'neath my breast  
Lir's sons have known no other rest.

Ah, kisses we shall no more know,  
Ah, love so dear exchanged for woe,  
All that is sweet for us is o'er,  
Homeless we are from shore to shore.

## THE CHANT OF ARDAN THE PICT

O Colum and monks of Christ  
It is peace we are having this night:  
Sure, peace is a good thing,  
And I am glad with the gladness.

We worship one God,  
Though ye call him Dè—  
And I say not, O Dia!  
But cry Bea'uil!

For it is one faith for man,  
And one for the living world,  
And no man is wiser than another—  
And none knoweth much.

· None knoweth a better thing than this:  
The Sword, Love, Song, Honour, Sleep.  
None knoweth a surer thing than this:  
Birth, Sorrow, Pain, Weariness, Death.

THE LAMENTATION OF BALVA THE  
MONK

Balva the old monk I am called: when I was  
young, Balva Honeymouth.  
That was before Colum the White came to  
Iona in the West.  
She whom I loved was a woman whom I won  
out of the South,  
And I had a good heaven with my lips on  
hers and with breast to breast.

Balva the old monk I am called: were it not  
for the fear  
That the soul of Colum the White would meet  
my soul in the Narrows  
That sever the living and dead, I would rise  
up from here  
And go back to where men pray with spears  
and arrows.

Balva the old monk I am called: ugh! ugh!  
the cold bell of the matins—'tis dawn!  
Sure it's a dream I have had that I was in a  
warm wood with the sun ashine,

*The Lamentation of Balva the Monk*

And that against me in the pleasant greenness  
was a soft fawn,  
And a voice that whispered " Balva Honey-  
mouth, drink, I am thy wine!"

THE LAST NIGHT OF ARTÂN THE  
CULDEE

It is but a little thing to sit here in the silence  
and the dark :

For I remember the blazing noon when I saw  
Oona the White :

I remember the day when we sailed the Moyle  
in our skin-built barque ;

And I remember when Oona's lips were on  
mine in the heart of the night.

So it is a little thing to sit here, hearing  
nought, seeing nought :

When the dawn breaks they will hurry me  
hence to the new-dug grave :

It will be quiet there, if it be true what the  
good Colum has taught,

And I shall hear Oona's voice as a sleeping  
seal hears the moving wave.

OONA OF THE DARK EYES AND THE  
CRYING OF WIND

I have fared far in the dim woods:  
And I have known sorrow and grief,  
And the incalculable years  
That haunt the solitudes.  
Where now are the multitudes  
Of the Field of Spears?  
Old tears  
Fall upon them as rain,  
Their eyes are quiet under the brown leaf.

I have seen the dead, innumeros:  
I too shall lie thus,  
And thou, Congal, thou too shalt lie  
Still and white  
Under the starry sky,  
And rise no more to any Field of Spears,  
But, under the brown leaf,  
Remember grief  
And the old, salt, bitter tears.

And I have heard the crying of wind.  
It is the crying that is in my heart:

*Oona of the Dark Eyes*

Oona of the Dark Eyes, Oona of the Dark  
Eyes,

Oona, Oona, Oona, Heart of my Heart!

But there is only crying of wind

Through the silences of the sky,

Dews that fall and rise,

The faring of long years,

And the coverlet of the brown leaf

For the old familiar grief

And the old tears.

## THE LOVE-SONG OF DROSTAN

(From "*Drostan and Yseul*": an unpublished drama.)

DROSTAN: *You have drunken of the cup of wisdom. Let me also drink.*

*[Suddenly snatches a small clar-sach from the woman's hand, and to its wild and rude music chants—*

In the days of the Great Fires when the hills  
were aflame,  
Aed the Shining God lay by a foamwhite  
mountain,  
The white thigh of moon-crown'd Dana,  
Beautiful Mother.  
And the wind fretted the blue with the tossed  
curling clouds  
Of her tangled hair, and like two flaming stars  
were her eyes  
Torches of sunfire and moonfire: and her vast  
breasts  
Heaved as the sea heaves in the white calms,  
and the wind of her sighs



*The Love-Song of Drostan*

Were as the 'winds of sunrise soaring the  
peaks of the eagles—  
Dana, Mother of the Gods, moon-crown'd,  
sea-shod, wonderful!

“Fire of my love,” she cried. . . . Aed of the  
Sunlight and Shadow  
Laughed: and he rose till he grew more vast  
than Dana:  
The sun was his trampling foot, and he wore  
the moon as a feather:  
And he lay by Dana: and the world swayed,  
and the stars swung.  
Thus was Oengus born, Lord of Love, Son of  
Wisdom and Death.

*Hear us, Oengus, Beautiful, Terrible, Sun-  
Lord and Death-Lord!  
Give us the white flame of love born of Aed  
and of Dana—  
Hearken, thou Pulse of hearts, and let the  
white doves from your lips  
Cover with passionate wings the silence be-  
tween us,  
Where a white fawn leaps and only Yseul and  
I behold it.*

## THE CUP

*Chuir Muiril mirr ann,  
Chuir Uiril mil ann,  
Chuir Muirinn fion ann,  
'S chuir Michal ann buadh.*

*“ Muriel placed myrrh in it:  
Uriel placed honey in it:  
Murien placed wine in it:  
And Michael strength.”*

The Cup of bitter-sweet I know  
That with old wine of love doth glow:  
The dew of tears to it doth go,  
And wisdom is its hidden woe.

Were I but young again to throw  
This cup where the wild thistles grow,  
Or where, oblivious, ceaseless, slow,  
The grey tumultuous waters flow!

THE LOVE-CHANT OF CORMAC  
CONLINGAS

Oimé, Oimé, woman of the white breasts,  
Eilidh!<sup>1</sup>

Woman of the golden hair, and lips of the  
red, red rowan!

Oimé, O-rì, Oimé!

Where is the swan that is whiter, with breast  
more smooth,

Or the wave on the sea that moves as thou  
movest, Eilidh—

Oimé, a-rò ; Oimé, a-rò !

It is the marrow in my bones that is aching,  
aching, Eilidh:

It is the blood in my body that is a bitter wild  
tide, Oimé!

O-rì, Ohion, O-rì, aròne!

Is it the heart of thee calling that I am hear-  
ing, Eilidh,

Or the wind in the wood, or the beating of  
the sea, Eilidh,

Or the beating of the sea?

<sup>1</sup> Eilidh is pronounced Eily.

*The Love-Chant of Cormac Conlingas*

Shule, shule, agràh, shule agràh, shule agràh,  
Shule!

Heart of me, move to me! move to me, heart  
of me, Eilidh, Eilidh,  
Move to me!

Ah! let the wild hawk take it, the name of me,  
Cormac Conlingas,  
Take it and tear at thy heart with it, heart  
that of old was so hot with it,  
Eilidh, Eilidh, O-rì, Eilidh, Eilidh!

## THE DEATH-DIRGE FOR CATHAL

Out of the wild hills I am hearing a voice, O  
Cathal!  
And I am thinking it is the voice of a bleeding  
sword.  
Whose is that sword? I know it well: it is  
the sword of the Slayer—  
Him that is called Death, and the song that it  
sings I know:—  
O where is Cathal mac Art, the white cup  
for the thirst of my lips?

Out of the cold greyness of the sea I am hear-  
ing, O Cathal,  
I am hearing a wave-muffled voice, as of one  
who drowns in the depths:  
Whose is that voice? I know it well: it is the  
voice of the Shadow—  
Her that is called the Grave, and the song that  
she sings I know:—  
O where is Cathal mac Art, that has warmth  
for the chill that I have?

*The Death-Dirge for Cathal*

Out of the hot greenness of the wood I am  
hearing, O Cathal,

I am hearing a rustling step, as of one stum-  
bling blind.

Whose is that rustling step? I know it well:  
the rustling walk of the Blind One—

Her that is called Silence, and the song that  
she sings I know:—

O where is Cathal mac Art, that has tears to  
water my stillness?

## THE DEATH DANCE

O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone!  
'Tis a good thing to be sailing across the seas!  
How the women smile and the children are  
    laughing glad  
When the galleys go out into the blue sea—  
    arone!

    O eily arone, arone!

But the children may laugh less when the  
    wolves come,  
And the women may smile less in the win-  
    ter-cold—  
For the Summer-sailors will not come again,  
    arone!

O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone!

I am thinking they will not sail back again,  
    O no!  
The yellow-haired men that came sailing  
    across the sea:  
For 'tis wild apples they would be, and swing  
    on green branches,  
And sway in the wind for the corbies to preen  
    their eyne,  
    O eily arone, eily a-ree!

And it is pleasure for Scathach the Queen to  
see this :

To see the good fruit that grows on the Tree  
of the Stones :

Long black fruit it is, wind-swayed by its yel-  
low roots,

And like men they are with their feet danc-  
ing in the void air !

O, O, arone, a-ree, eily arone !

O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone,

O, O, arone, a-ree, eily arone !



## THE END OF AODH-OF-THE-SONGS

The swift years slip and slide adown the  
steep;

The slow years pass; neither will come again.  
Yon huddled years have weary eyes that weep,  
These laugh, these moan, these silent frown,  
these plain,

These have their lips curl'd up with proud  
disdain.

O years with tears, and tears through weary  
years,

How weary I who in your arms have lain :  
Now, I am tired: the sound of slipping spears  
Moves soft, and tears fall in a bloody rain,  
And the chill footless years go over me who  
am slain.

I hear, as in a wood, dim with old light, the  
rain,

Slow falling; old, old, weary, human tears :  
And in the deepening dark my comfort is my  
Pain,

Sole comfort left of all my hopes and fears,  
Pain that alone survives, gaunt hound of the  
shadowy years.

## THE LAMENT OF DARTHOOL

*Ionmhuin tir, an tir ud shoir—  
Alba go na h'-iongantaibh;  
Nocha ttiocfainn aiste ale,  
Muna ttagainn le Naoise.*

O woods of Oona, I can hear the singing  
Of the west wind among the branches green  
And the leaping and laughing of cool waters  
springing,  
And my heart aches for all that has been,  
For all that has been, my Home, all that has  
been!

Glenmassan! O Glenmassan!  
High the sorrel there, and the sweet fragrant  
grasses:  
It would be well if I were listening now to  
where  
In Glenmassan the sun shines and the cool  
west wind passes,  
Glenmassan of the grasses!

*The Lament of Darthool*

Lock Etive, O fair Loch Etive, that was my  
first home,  
I think of thee now when on the grey-green  
sea—  
And beneath the mist in my eyes and the fly-  
ing foam  
I look back wearily,  
I look back wearily to thee!

Glen Orchy, O Glen Orchy, fair sweet glen,  
Was ever I more happy than in thy shade?  
Was not Nathos there the happiest of men?  
O may thy beauty never fade,  
Most fair and sweet and beautiful glade.

Glen of the Roes, Glen of the Roes,  
In thee I have dreamed to the full my happy  
dream:  
O that where the shallow bickering Ruel  
flows,  
I might hear again, o'er its flashing gleam,  
The cuckoos calling by the murmuring stream.

## THE LOVE-KISS OF DERMID AND GRAINNE

When by the twilit sea these twain were come  
Dermid spake no one word, Grainne was  
dumb,

And in the hearts of both deep silence was.  
"Sorrow upon me, love," whispered the grass;  
"Sorrow upon me, love," the sea-bird cried;  
"Sorrow upon me, love," the lapsed wave  
sighed.

"For what the King has willed, that thing  
must be,

O Dermid! As two waves upon this sea  
Wind-swept we are,—the wind of his dark  
mind,

With fierce inevitable tides behind."

"What would you have, O Grainne: he is  
King."

"I would we were the birds that come with  
Spring,

The purple-feathered birds that have no home,  
The birds that love, then fly across the  
foam."

*The Love-Kiss of Dermid and Grainne*

“Give me thy mouth, O Dermid,” Grainne  
said

Thereafter, and whispering thus she leaned  
her head—

Ah, supple, subtle snake she glided there  
Till, on his breast, a kiss-deep was her hair  
That twisted serpent-wise in gold red pain  
From where his lips held high their proud dis-  
dain.

“Here, here,” she whispered low, “here on  
my mouth

The swallow, Love, hath found his haunted  
South.”

Then Dermid stooped and passionlessly  
kissed.

But therewith Grainne won what she had  
missed,

And that night was to her, and all sweet  
nights

Thereafter, as Love’s flaming swallow-flights  
Of passionate passion beyond speech to  
tell.

But Dermid knew how vain was any spell

Against the wrath of Finn: and Grainne’s  
breath

To him was ever chill with Grainne’s death;  
Full well he knew that in a soundless place

*The Love-Kiss of Dermid and Grainne*

His own wraith stood and with a moon-white  
face  
Watched its own shadow laugh and shake its  
spear  
Far in a phantom dell against a phantom deer.

## THE TRYST OF QUEEN HYNDE

Queen Hynde was in the rowan-wood with  
scarlet fruit aflame,  
Her face was as the berries were, one sun-hot  
wave of shame.

With scythes of fire the August sun mowed  
down vast swathes of shade:  
With blazing eyes the waiting queen stared on  
her steel-blue blade.

“What, thirsty hound,” she muttered low,  
“with thirst you flash and gleam:  
Bide, bide a wee, my bonnie hound, I’ll show  
ye soon a stream!”

The sun had tossed against the West his  
broken scythes of fire  
When Lord Gillanders bowed before his  
Queen and Sweet Desire.

She did not give him smile or kiss; her hand  
she did not give:  
“But are ye come for death,” she said, “or  
are ye come to live?”

*The Tryst of Queen Hynde*

Gillanders reined and looked at her: "Hynde,  
Queen and Love," he said,  
"I wooed in love, I come in love, to this the  
tryst we made:

"Why are your eyes so fierce and wild? why  
is your face so white?  
I love you with all my love," he said, "by day  
and by night."

"What o' the word that's come to me, of how  
my lord's to wed  
The lilywhite maid o' one that has a gold  
crown on his head?

"What o' the word that yesternight ye wan-  
toned with my name,  
And on a windy scorn let loose the blown leaf  
o' my shame?"

The Lord Gillanders looked at her, and never  
a word said he,  
But sprang from off his great black horse and  
sank upon his knee.

"This is my love," said white Queen Hynde,  
"and this, and this, and this"—  
Four times she stabbed him to the heart while  
she his lips did kiss.



*The Tryst of Queen Hynde*

She left him in the darkling wood: and as she  
rode she sang  
(The little notes swirled in and out amid the  
horsehoof clang)

*My love was sweet, was sweet, was sweet,  
but not so sweet as now!  
A deep long sleep my sweet love has beneath  
the rowan-bough.*

They let her in, they lifted swords, his head  
each one did bare:  
Slowly she bowed, slowly she passed, slowly  
she clomb the stair:

Her little son she lifted up, and whispered  
'neath his cries—  
“The old king's son, they say; mayhap; he has  
Gillander's eyes.”

## THE SONG OF AHÈZ THE PALE

But this was in the old, old, far-off days,  
But this was in the old, old, far-off days.

They rode beneath the ancient boughs, and as  
they rode she sang,  
But at the last both silent were: only the  
horse-hoofs rang.

Guenn took up his sword, and she felt its shin-  
ing blade,  
And she laughed and vowed it fitted ill for the  
handling of a maid.

He looked at her, and darkly smiled, and said  
she was a queen:  
For she could swing the white sword high and  
love its dazzling sheen.

She lifted up the great white sword and swung  
it o'er his head—  
“ Ah, you may smile, my lord, now you may  
smile,” she said.

For this was in the old, old, far-off days,  
For this was in the old, old, far-off days.

## THE WAR-SONG OF THE VIKINGS

Let loose the hounds of war,  
The whirling swords!  
Send them leaping afar,  
Red in their thirst for war;  
Odin laughs in his car  
At the screaming of the swords!

Far let the white-ones fly,  
The whirling swords!  
Afar off the ravens spy  
Death-shadows cloud the sky.  
Let the wolves of the Gael die  
'Neath the screaming swords!

The Shining Ones yonder  
High in Valhalla  
Shout now, with thunder:  
Drive the Gaels under,  
Cleave them asunder—  
Swords of Valhalla!

## THE CRIMSON MOON

Behind the Legions of the Sun, the Star Bat-  
talions of the night,  
The reddening of the West I see, from morn  
till dusk, from dusk till light.  
A day must surely come at last, and that day  
soon,  
When the Hidden People shall march out be-  
neath the Crimson Moon.

Our palaces shall crumble then, our towers  
shall fall away,  
And on the plains our burning towns shall  
flaunt a desolate day:  
The cities of our pride shall wear tiaras of red  
flame,  
And all our phantom glory be an idle wind-  
blown name.

What shall our vaunt be on that day, or who  
thereon shall hear  
The laughter of our laughing lips become the  
wail of fear?  
Our vaunt shall be the windy dust in eddies  
far and wide,

*The Crimson Moon*

The hearing, theirs who follow us with swift  
and dreadful stride.

A cry of lamentation, then, shall sweep from  
land to land :

A myriad waving hands shall shake above a  
myriad strand :

The Day shall swoon before a Shade of vast  
ancestral Night,

Till a more dreadful Morn awake to flood and  
spume of light.

This is the prophecy of old, before the roam-  
ing tribes of Man

Spread Multitude athwart the heirdom of an  
earlier Clan—

Before the gods drank Silence, and hid their  
way with cloud,

And Man uprose and claimed the Earth and  
all the starry crowd.

So Man conceived and made his dream, till at  
the last he smiled to see

Its radiant skirts brush back the stars from  
Immortality :

He crowned himself with the Infinite, and  
gave his Soul a Home,

And then the quiet gods awoke and blew his  
life to foam.

*The Crimson Moon*

This is the Dream I see anew, when all the  
West is red with light,  
Behind the Legions of the Sun, the Star Bat-  
talions of the night.  
Verily the day may come at last, and that day  
soon,  
When the Hidden People shall march out be-  
neath the Crimson Moon.

## THE WASHER OF THE FORD

There is a lonely stream afar in a lone dim  
land;

It hath white dust for shore it has, white bones  
bestrew the strand:

The only thing that liveth there is a naked  
leaping sword;

But I, who a seer am, have seen the whirling  
hand

Of the Washer of the Ford.

A shadowy shape of cloud and mist, of gloom  
and dusk, she stands,

The Washer of the Ford:

She laughs, at times, and strews the dust  
through the hollow of her hands.

She counts the sins of all men there, and slays  
the red-stained horde—

The ghosts of all the sins of men must know  
the whirling sword

Of the Washer of the Ford.

She stoops and laughs when in the dust she  
sees a writhing limb:

“Go back into the ford,” she says, “and  
hither and thither swim;

*The Washer of the Ford*

Then I shall wash you white as snow, and  
shall take you by the hand,  
And slay you there in silence with this my  
whirling brand,  
And trample you into the dust of this white,  
windless sand"—

This is the laughing word  
Of the Washer of the Ford  
Along that silent strand.



## THE MOURNERS

*(From the Breton)*

When they had made the cradle  
Of ivory and of gold,  
Their hearts were heavy still  
With the sorrow of old.

And ever as they rocked, the tears  
Ran down, sad tears :  
Who is it lieth dead therein,  
Dead all these weary years?

And still they rock that cradle there  
Of ivory and of gold :  
For in their minds the shadow is  
The Shadow of Old.

They weep, and know not what they weep ;  
They wait a vain re-birth :  
Vanity of vanities, alas,  
For there is but one birth  
On the wide green earth.



FOAM OF THE PAST

II



## MILKING SIAN

Give up thy milk to her who calls  
Across the low green hills of Heaven  
And stream-cool meads of Paradise!

Across the low green hills of Heaven  
How sweet to hear the milking call,  
The milking call i' the meads of Heaven:

Stream-cool the meads of Paradise,  
Across the low green hills of Heaven.

Give up thy milk to her who calls,  
Sweet voiced amid the Starry Seven.  
Give up thy milk to her who calls!

## THE KYE-SONG OF ST. BRIDE

O sweet St. Bride of the  
    Yellow, yellow hair :  
Paul said, and Peter said,  
And all the saints alive or dead  
Vowed she had the sweetest head,  
Bonnie, sweet St. Bride of the  
    Yellow, yellow hair.

White may my milkin' be,  
    White as thee :  
Thy face is white, thy neck is white,  
Thy hands are white, thy feet are white,  
For thy sweet soul is shinin' bright—  
    O dear to me,  
    O dear to see  
    St. Briget white !

Yellow may my butter be,  
    Firm, and round :  
Thy breasts are sweet,  
Firm, round and sweet,  
So may my butter be :  
So may my butter be O  
    Briget sweet !

*The Kye-Song of St. Bride*

Safe thy way is, safe, O  
Safe, St. Bride :  
May my kye come home at even,  
None be fallin', none be leavin',  
Dusky even, breath-sweet even,  
Here, as there, where O  
St. Bride thou  
Keepst tryst with God in heav'n,  
Seest the angels bow  
And souls be shriven—  
Here, as there, 'tis breath-sweet even  
Far and wide—  
Singeth thy little maid  
Safe in thy shade  
Briget, Bride !

## ST. BRIDE'S LULLABY

Oh, Baby Christ, so dear to me,  
Sang Briget Bride:  
How sweet thou art,  
My baby dear,  
Heart of my heart!

Heavy her body was with thee,  
Mary, beloved of One in Three—  
Sang Briget Bride—  
Mary, who bore thee, little lad:  
But light her heart was, light and glad  
With God's love clad.

Sit on my knee,  
Sang Briget Bride:  
Sit here  
O Baby dear,  
Close to my heart, my heart:  
For I thy foster-mother am,  
My helpless lamb!  
O have no fear,  
Sang good St. Bride.



*St. Bride's Lullaby*

None, none,  
No fear have I:  
So let me cling  
Close to thy side  
While thou dost sing,  
O Briget Bride!

My Lord, my Prince, I sing:  
My Baby dear, my King!  
Sang Briget Bride.

## THE BIRD OF CHRIST

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Christ upon the Cross :  
My little nest was near,  
Hidden in the moss.

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Christ was pale and wan :  
His eyes beheld me singing  
Bron, Bron, mo Bron! <sup>1</sup>

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
“Come near, O wee brown bird!”  
Christ spake, and lo, I lighted  
Upon the Living Word.

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
I heard the mocking scorn!  
But Holy, Holy, Holy,  
I sang against a thorn!

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Ah, his brow was bloody :  
Holy, Holy, Holy,  
All my breast was ruddy.

<sup>1</sup> “O my Grief, my Grief!”

*The Bird of Christ*

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Christ's-Bird shalt thou be :  
Thus said Mary Virgin  
There on Calvary.

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
A wee brown bird am I :  
But my breast is ruddy  
For I saw Christ die.

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
By this ruddy feather,  
Colum, call thy monks, and  
All the birds together.

## THE MEDITATION OF COLUM

*Before the Miracle of the Fishes and the Flies*

### I

Praise be to God, and a blessing too at that,  
and a blessing!  
For Colum the White, Colum the Dove, hath  
worshipped;  
Yea he hath worshipped and made of a desert  
a garden,  
And out of the dung of men's souls hath made  
a sweet savour of burning.

### II

A savour of burning, most sweet, a fire for  
the altar,  
This he hath made in the desert; the hell-saved  
all gladden.  
Sure he hath put his benison, too, on milch-  
cow and bullock,  
On the fowls of the air, and the man-eyed  
seals, and the otter.

*The Meditation of Colum*

III

But where in his Dûn in the great blue main-  
land of Heaven  
God the Allfather broodeth, where the harpers  
are harping His glory ;  
There where He sitteth, where a river of ale  
poureth ever,  
His great sword broken, His spear in the dust,  
He broodeth.

IV

And this is the thought that moves in His  
brain, as a cloud filled with thunder  
Moves through the vast hollow sky filled with  
the dust of the stars :  
What boots it the glory of Colum, since he  
maketh a Sabbath to bless me  
And hath no thought of my sons in the deeps  
of the air and the sea ?

## ST. CHRISTOPHER OF THE GAEL

Behind the wattle-woven house  
Nial the Mighty gently crept  
From out a screen of ashtree boughs  
To where a captive white-robe slept.

Lightly he moved, as though ashamed ;  
To right and left he glanced his fears.  
Nial the Mighty was he named  
Though but an untried youth in years—

But tall he was, as tall as he,  
White Dermid of the magic sword,  
Or Torcall of the Hebrid Sea  
Or great Cuhoolin of the Ford ;

Strong as the strongest, too, he was :  
As Balor of the Evil Eye ;  
As Fionn who kept the Ulster Pass  
From dawn till blood-flusht sunset sky.

Much had he pondered all that day  
The mystery of the men who died  
On crosses raised along the way,  
And perished singing side by side.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

Modred the chief had sailed the Moyle,  
Had reached Iona's guardless-shore,  
Had seized the monks when at their toil  
And carried northward, bound, a score.

Some he had thrust into the deep,  
To see if magic fins would rise:  
Some from high rocks he forced to leap,  
To see wings fall from out the skies:

Some he had pinned upon tall spears,  
Some tossed on shields with brazen clang,  
To see if through their blood and tears  
Their god would hear the hymns they sang.

But when his oarsmen flung their oars,  
And laughed to see across the foam  
The glimmer of the highland shores  
And smoke-wreaths of the hidden home,

Modred was weary of his sport.  
All day he brooded as he strode  
Betwixt the reef-encircled port  
And the oak-grove of the Sacred Road.

At night he bade his warriors raise  
Seven crosses where the foamswept strand  
Lay still and white beyond the blaze  
Of the hundred camp-fires of the land.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

The women milked the late-come kye,  
The children raced in laughing glee;  
Like sheep from out the fold of the sky  
Stars leapt and stared at earth and sea.

At times a wild and plaintive air  
Made delicate music far away:  
A hill-fox barked before its lair:  
The white owl hawked its shadowy prey.

But at the rising of the moon  
The druids came from grove and glen,  
And to the chanting of a rune  
Crucified St. Columba's men.

They died in silence side by side,  
But first they sang the evening hymn:  
By midnight all but one had died,  
At dawn he too was grey and grim.

One monk alone had Modred kept,  
A youth with hair of golden-red,  
Who never once had sighed or wept,  
Not once had bowed his proud young head.

Broken he lay, and bound with thongs.  
Thus had he seen his brothers toss  
Like crows transfixed upon great prongs,  
Till death crept up each silent cross.



*St. Christopher of the Gael*

Night grew to dawn, to scarlet morn ;  
Day waned to firelit, starlit night :  
But still with eyes of passionate scorn  
He dared the worst of Modred's might.

When from the wattle-woven house  
Nial the Mighty softly stepped,  
And peered beneath the ashtree boughs  
To where he thought the whiterobe slept,

He heard the monk's words rise in prayer,  
He heard a hymn's ascending breath—  
*“ Christ, Son of God, to Thee I fare  
This night upon the wings of death.”*

Nial the Mighty crossed the space,  
He waited till the monk had ceased ;  
Then, leaning o'er the foam-white face,  
He stared upon the dauntless priest.

“ Speak low,” he said, “ and tell me this :  
Who is the king you hold so great?—  
Your eyes are dauntless flames of bliss  
Though Modred taunts you with his hate:—

“ This god or king, is He more strong  
Than Modred is? And does He sleep  
That thus your death-in-life is long,  
And bonds your aching body keep? ”

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

The monk's eyes stared in Nial's eyes:  
" Young giant with a child's white heart,  
I see a cross take shape and rise,  
And thou upon it nailèd art!"

Nial looked back: no cross he saw  
Looming from out the dreadful night:  
Yet all his soul was filled with awe,  
A thundercloud with heart of light.

" Tell me thy name," he said, " and why  
Thou waitest thus the druid knife,  
And carest not to live or die?  
Monk, hast thou little care of life?"

" Great care of that I have," he said,  
And looked at Nial with eyes of fire:  
" My life begins when I am dead,  
There only is my heart's desire."

Nial the mighty sighed. " Thy words  
Are as the idle froth of foam,  
Or clashing of triumphant swords  
When Modred brings the foray home.

" My name is Nial: Nial the Strong:  
A lad in years, but as you see  
More great than heroes of old song  
Or any lordly men that be.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

“ To Modred have I come from far,  
O'er many a hill and strath and stream,  
To be a mighty sword in war,  
And this because I dreamed a dream :

“ My dream was that my strength so great  
Should serve the greatest king there is :  
Modred the Pict thus all men rate,  
And so I sought this far-off Liss.

“ But if there be a greater yet,  
A king or god whom he doth fear,  
My service he shall no more get,  
My strength shall rust no longer here.”

The monk's face gladdened. “ Go, now, go ;  
To Modred go : he sitteth dumb,  
And broods on what he fain would know :  
And say, ‘ *O King, the Cross is come!*’

“ Then shall the king arise in wrath,  
And bid you go from out his sight,  
For if he meet you on his path  
He'll leave you stark and still and white.

“ Thus shall he show, great king and all,  
He fears the glorious Cross of Christ,  
And dreads to hear slain voices call  
For vengeance on the sacrificed.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

“ But, Nial, come not here again :  
Long before dawn my soul shall be  
Beyond the reach of any pain  
That Modred dreams to prove on me.

“ Go forth thyself at dawn, and say  
‘ This is Christ’s holy natal morn,  
My king is He from forth this day  
When He to save mankind was born ’ :

“ Go forth and seek a lonely place  
Where a great river fills the wild ;  
There bide, and let thy strength be grace,  
And wait the Coming of a Child.

“ A wondrous thing shall then befall :  
And when thou seek’st if it be true,  
Green leaves along thy staff shall crawl,  
With flowers of every lovely hue.”

The monk’s face whitened, like sea-foam :  
Seaward he stared, and sighed “ I go—  
Farewell—my Lord Christ calls me home ! ”  
Nial stooped and saw death’s final throe.

An hour before the dawn he rose  
And sought out Modred, brooding, dumb ;  
“ O King,” he said, “ my bond I close,  
King Christ I seek : the Cross is come ! ”

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

Swift as a stag's leap from a height  
King Modred drew his dreadful sword:  
Then as a snow-wraith, silent, white,  
He stared and passed without a word.

Before the flush of dawn was red  
A druid came to Nial the Great:  
"The doom of death hath Modred said,  
Yet fears this Christ's mysterious hate:

"So get you hence, you giant-thewed man:  
Go your own way: come not again:  
No more are you of Modred's clan:  
Go now, forthwith, lest you be slain."

Nial went forth with gladsome face;  
No more of Modred's clan he was:  
"Now, now," he cried, "Christ's trail I'll  
trace,  
And nowhere turn, and nowhere pause."

He laughed to think how Modred feared  
The wrath of Christ, the monk's white king:  
"A greater than Modred hath appeared,  
To Him my sword and strength I bring."

All day, all night, he walked afar:  
He saw the moon rise white and still:  
The evening and the morning star:  
The sunrise burn upon the hill.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

He heard the moaning of the seas,  
The vast sigh of the sunswept plain,  
The myriad surge of forest-trees ;  
Saw dusk and night return again.

At falling of the dusk he stood  
Upon a wild and desert land :  
Dark fruit he gathered for his food,  
Drank water from his hollowed hand

Cut from an ash a mighty bough  
And trimmed and shaped it to the half :  
“ Safe in the desert am I now,  
With sword,” he said, “ and with this staff.”

The stars came out : Arcturus hung  
His ice-blue fire far down the sky :  
The Great Bear through the darkness swung :  
The Seven Watchers rose on high.

A great moon flooded all the west.  
Silence came out of earth and sea  
And lay upon the husht world's breast,  
And breathed mysteriously.

Three hours Nial walked, three hours and  
more ;  
Then halted when beyond the plain  
He stood upon that river's shore  
The dying monk had bid him gain.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

A little house he saw : clay-wrought,  
Of wattle woven through and through :  
Then, all his weariness forgot,  
The joy of drowning-sleep he knew.

Three hours he slept, and then he heard  
A voice—and yet a voice so low  
It might have been a dreaming bird  
Safe-nested by the rushing flow.

Almost he slept once more : then, *Hush!*  
Once more he heard above the noise  
And tempest of the river's rush  
The thin faint words of a child's voice.

*“ Good Sir, awake from sleep and dream,  
Good Sir, come out and carry me  
Across this dark and raging stream  
Till safe on the other side I be.”*

Great Nial shivered on his bed :  
“ No human creature calls this night,  
It is a wild fetch of the dead,”  
He thought, and shrunk, and shook with  
fright.

Once more he heard that infant-cry :  
*“ Come out, Good Sir, or else I drown—  
Come out, Good Sir, or else I die  
And you, too, lose a golden crown.”*

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

“ A golden crown ”—so Nial thought—  
“ No—no—not thus shall I be ta'en!  
Keep, ghost-of-the-night, your crown gold-  
wrought—  
Of sleep and peace I am full fain!”

Once more the windy dark was filled  
With lonely cry, with sobbing plaint:  
Nial's heart grew sore, its fear was stilled,  
King Christ, he knew, would scorn him faint.

“ Up, up thou coward, thou sluggard, thou,”  
He cried, and sprang from off his bed—  
“ No crown thou seekest for thy brow,  
But help for one in pain and dread!”

Out in the wide and lonely dark  
No fetch he saw, no shape, no child:  
Almost he turned again—but *hark!*  
A song rose o'er the waters wild:

*A king am I  
Tho' a little Child,  
Son of God am I,  
Meek and mild,  
Beautiful  
Because God hath said  
Let my cup be full  
Of wine and bread.*



*St. Christopher of the Gael*

*Come to me  
Shaken heart,  
Shaken heart!  
I will not flee.  
My heart  
Is thy heart  
O shaken heart!  
Stoop to my Cup,  
Sup,  
Drink of the wine:  
The wine and the bread,  
Saith God,  
Are mine—  
My Flesh and my Blood!*

*Throw thy sword in the flood:  
Come, shaken heart:  
Fearful thou art!  
Have no more fear—  
Lo, I am here,  
The little One,  
The Son,  
Thy Lord and thy King.*

*It is I who sing:  
Christ, your King . . .  
Be not afraid:  
Look, I am Light,  
A great star*

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

*Seen from afar  
In the darkness of night:  
I am Light,  
Be not afraid . . .  
Wade, wade  
Into the deep flood!  
Think of the Bread,  
The Wine and the Bread  
That are my Flesh and Blood.  
Cross, cross the Flood,  
Sure is the goal . . .  
Be not afraid  
O Soul,  
Be not afraid!*

Nial's heart was filled with joy and pain:  
" This is my king, my king indeed:  
To think that drown'd in sleep I've lain  
When Christ the Child-God crieth in need! "

Swift from his wattled hut he strode,  
Stumbling among the grass and bent,  
And, seeking where the river flowed,  
Far o'er the dark flood peered and leant:

Then suddenly beside him saw  
A little Child all clad in white:  
He bowed his head in love and awe,  
Then lifted high his burthen light.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

High on his shoulders sat the Child,  
While with strong limbs he fared among  
The rushing waters black and wild  
And where the fiercest currents swung.

The waters rose more high, more high,  
Higher and higher every yard . . .  
Nial stumbled on with sob and sigh,  
Christ heard him panting sore and hard. \*

“O Child,” Nial cried, “forbear, forbear!  
Hark you not how these waters whirled!  
The weight of all the earth I bear,  
The weary weight of all the world!”

“*Christopher!*” . . . low above the noise,  
The rush, the darkness, Nial heard  
The far-off music of a Voice  
That said all things in saying one word—

“*Christopher . . . this thy name shall be!  
Christ-bearer is thy name, even so . . .  
Because of service done to me  
Heavy with weight of the world's woe.*”

With breaking sobs, with panting breath  
Christopher grasped a bent-held dune,  
Then with flung staff and as in death  
Forward he fell in a heavy swoon.

*St. Christopher of the Gael*

All night he lay in silence there,  
But safe from reach of surging tide:  
White angels had him in their care,  
Christ healed and watched him side by side.

When all the silver wings of dawn  
Had waved above the rose-flusht east,  
Christopher woke . . . his dream was gone.  
The angelic songs had ceased.

Was it a dream in very deed,  
He wondered, broken, trembling, dazed?  
His staff he lifted from the mead  
And as an upright sapling raised.

Lo, it was as the monk had said—  
*If he would prove the vision true,*  
*His staff would blossom to its head*  
*With flowers of every lovely hue.*

Christopher bowed: before his eyes  
Christ's love fulfilled the holy hour . . .  
A south-wind blew, green leaves did rise  
And the staff bloomed a myriad flower!

Christopher bowed in holy prayer,  
While Christ's love fell like healing dew:  
God's father-hand was on him there:  
The peace of perfect peace he knew.

## THE CROSS OF THE DUMB

A CHRISTMAS ON IONA, LONG, LONG AGO

One eve, when St. Columba strode  
In solemn mood along the shore,  
He met an angel on the road  
Who but a poor man's semblance bore.

He wondered much, the holy saint,  
What stranger sought the lonely isle,  
But seeing him weary and wan and faint  
St. Colum hailed him with a smile.

" Remote our lone Iona lies  
Here in the grey and windswept sea,  
And few are they whom my old eyes  
Behold as pilgrims bowing the knee. . . .

" But welcome . . . welcome . . . stranger-  
    guest,  
And come with me and you shall find  
A warm and deer-skin'd cell for rest  
And at our board a welcome kind. . . .

*The Cross of the Dumb*

“ Yet tell me ere the dune we cross  
How came you to this lonely land?  
No curraghs in the tideway toss  
And none is beached upon the strand!”

The weary pilgrim raised his head  
And looked and smiled and said, “ From far,  
My wandering feet have here been led  
By the glory of a shining star. . . .”

St. Colum gravely bowed, and said,  
“ Enough, my friend, I ask no more;  
Doubtless some silence-vow was laid  
Upon thee, ere thou sought'st this shore:

“ Now, come: and doff this raiment sad  
And those rough sandals from thy feet:  
The holy brethren will be glad  
To haven thee in our retreat.”

Together past the praying cells  
And past the wattle-woven dome  
Whence rang the tremulous vesper bells  
St. Colum brought the stranger home.

From thyme-sweet pastures grey with dews  
The milch-cows came with swinging tails:  
And whirling high the wailing mews  
Screamed o'er the brothers at their pails.

*The Cross of the Dumb*

A single spire of smoke arose,  
And hung, a phantom, in the cold:  
Three younger monks set forth to close  
The ewes and lambs within the fold.

The purple twilight stole above  
The grey-green dunes, the furrowed leas:  
And Dusk, with breast as of a dove,  
Brooded: and everywhere was peace.

Within the low refectory sate  
The little clan of holy folk:  
Then, while the brothers mused and ate,  
The wayfarer arose and spoke. . . .

*“ O Colum of Iona-Isle,  
And ye who dwell in God’s quiet place,  
Before I crossed your narrow kyle  
I looked in Heaven upon Christ’s face.”*

Thereat St. Colum’s startled glance  
Swept o’er the man so poorly clad,  
And all the brethren looked askance  
In fear the pilgrim-guest was mad.

*“ And, Colum of God’s Church i’ the sea  
And all ye Brothers of the Rood,  
The Lord Christ gave a dream to me  
And bade me bring it ye as food.”*

*The Cross of the Dumb*

*"Lift to the wandering cloud your eyes  
And let them scan the wandering Deep. . . .  
Hark ye not there the wandering sighs  
Of brethren ye as outcasts keep?"*

Thereat the stranger bowed, and blessed;  
Then, grave and silent, sought his cell:  
St. Colum mused upon his guest,  
Dumb wonder on the others fell.

At dead of night the Abbot came  
To where the weary wayfarer slept:  
"Tell me," he said, "thy holy name . . ."  
—No more, for on bowed knees he wept. . . .

Great awe and wonder fell on him;  
His mind was like a lonely wild  
When suddenly is heard a hymn  
Sung by a little innocent child.

For now he knew their guest to be  
No man as he and his, but one  
Who in the Courts of Ecstasy  
Worships, flame-winged, the Eternal Son.

The poor bare cell was filled with light,  
That came from the swung moons the Seven  
Seraphim swing day and night  
Adown the infinite walls of Heaven.



*The Cross of the Dumb*

But on the fern-wove mattress lay  
No weary guest. St. Colum kneeled,  
And found no trace; but, ashen-grey,  
Far off he heard glad anthems pealed.

At sunrise when the matins-bell  
Made a cold silvery music fall  
Through silence of each lonely cell  
And over every fold and stall,

St. Colum called his monks to come  
And follow him to where his hands  
Would raise the Great Cross of the Dumb  
Upon the Holy Island's sands. . . .

“ For I shall call from out the Deep  
And from the grey fields of the skies,  
The brethren we as outcasts keep,  
Our kindred of the dumb wild eyes. . . .

“ Behold, on this Christ's natal morn,  
God wills the widening of His laws,  
Another miracle to be born—  
*For lo, our guest an Angel was! . . .*

“ His Dream the Lord Christ gave to him  
To bring to us as Christ-Day food,  
That Dream shall rise a holy hymn  
And hang like a flower upon the Rood! . . .”

*The Cross of the Dumb*

Thereat, while all with wonder stared  
St. Colum raised the Holy Tree:  
Then all with Christ-Day singing fared  
To where the last sands lipped the sea.

St. Colum raised his arms on high . . .  
*"O ye, all creatures of the wing,  
Come here from out the fields o' the sky,  
Come here and learn a wondrous thing!"*

At that the wild clans of the air  
Came sweeping in a mist of wings—  
Ospreys and fierce solanders there,  
Sea-swallows wheeling mazy rings,

The foam-white mew, the green-black scart,  
The famishing hawk, the wailing tern,  
All birds from the sand-building mart  
To lonely bittern and heron. . . .

St. Colum raised beseeching hands  
And blessed the pastures of the sea:  
*"Come, all ye creatures, to the sands,  
Come and behold the Sacred Tree!"*

At that the cold clans of the wave  
With spray and surge and splash appeared:  
Up from each wrack-strewn, lightless cave  
Dim day-struck eyes affrighted peered.

## *The Cross of the Dumb*

The pollacks came with rushing haste,  
The great sea-cod, the speckled bass;  
Along the foaming tideway raced  
The herring-tribes like shimmering glass:

The mackerel and the dog-fish ran,  
The whiting, haddock, in their wake:  
The great sea-flounders upward span,  
The fierce-eyed conger and the hake:

The greatest and the least of these  
From hidden pools and tidal ways  
Surged in their myriads from the seas  
And stared at St. Columba's face.

“Hearken,” he cried, with solemn voice—  
“Hearken! ye people of the Deep,  
Ye people of the skies, Rejoice!  
No more your soulless terror keep!

“For lo, an Angel from the Lord  
Hath shown us that wherein we sin—  
But now we humbly do His Word  
And call you, Brothers, kith and kin. . . .

“No more we claim the world as ours  
And everything that therein is—  
To-day, Christ's-Day, the infinite powers  
Decree a common share of bliss.

*The Cross of the Dumb*

“ I know not if the new-waked soul  
That stirs in every heart I see  
Has yet to reach the far-off goal  
Whose symbol is this Cross-shaped Tree. . . .

“ But, O dumb kindred of the skies,  
O kinsfolk of the pathless seas,  
All scorn and hate I exorcise,  
And wish you nought but Love and Peace! ”

\* \* \*

Thus, on that Christmas-day of old  
St. Colum broke the ancient spell.  
A thousand years away have rolled,  
’Tis now . . . “ a baseless miracle.”

*O fellow-kinsmen of the Deep,  
O kindred of the wind and cloud,  
God’s children too . . . how He must weep  
Who on that day was glad and proud!*

## NAOI MIANNAIN

Miann mna sithe, braon :  
Miann Sluagh, gaoth :  
Miann fitheach, fuil :  
Miann eunarag, an fasaich :  
Miann faoileag, faileagan mhara :  
Miann Bàrd, fith-cheol-min lhuchd nan  
trusganan uaine :  
Miann fear, gaol bhean :  
Miann mna, chlann beag :  
Miann anama, ais.

## NINE DESIRES

The desire of the fairy women, dew :  
The desire of the fairy host, wind :  
The desire of the raven, blood :  
The desire of the snipe, the wilderness :  
The desire of the seamew, the lawns of the  
sea :  
The desire of the poet, the soft low music of  
the Tribe of the Green Mantles :  
The desire of man, the love of woman :  
The desire of women, the little clan :  
The desire of the soul, wisdom.



THROUGH THE IVORY  
GATE

*"Green thou would'st not be plucked, thy purple fruit I longed for. . . ."*

THE STEPHANOS OF PHILIPPUS.

*"Là-bas, tout nous appelle. . . . Et, qui sait, tous les rêves à réaliser! . . ."*

*"À quoi bon les réaliser . . . ils sont si beaux!"*

AXEL.

*"Love is as a vapour that is licked up of the wind. Let whoso longeth after this lovely mist—that as a breath is, and is not—beware of this wind. There is no sorrow like unto the sorrow of this wind."*

LEABHRAN MHÒR-GHEASADAIREACHD.

*(The Little Book of the Great Enchantment.)*

*"The waves of the sea have spoken to me; the wild birds have taught me; the music of many waters has been my master."*

KALEVALA.



## THE SECRET DEWS

Poor little songs, children of sorrow, go.  
A wind may take you up, and blow you far.  
My heart will go with you, too, wherever  
you go.

As the little leaves in the wood, they pass:  
The wind has lifted them, and the wind is gone.  
Have I too not heard the wind come, and  
pass?

The secret dewes fall under the Evening-Star,  
And there is peace I know in the west: yet,  
if there be no dawn,  
The secret dewes fall under the Evening-Star.

## THE ENCHANTED VALLEYS

By the Gate of Sleep we enter the En-  
chanted Valleys.

White soundless birds fly near the twilit  
portals :

Follow, and they lead to the Silent Alleys.

Grey pastures are there, and hush'd spell-  
bound woods,

And still waters, girt with unwhispering reeds :  
Lost dreams linger there, wan multitudes :

They haunt the grey waters, the alleys dense  
and dim,

The immemorial woods of timeless age,  
And where the forest leans on the grey  
sea's rim.

Nothing is there of gladness or of sorrow :  
What is past can neither be glad nor sad :  
It is past : there is no dawn : no to-morrow.

## THE VALLEY OF WHITE POPPIES

Between the grey pastures and the dark  
wood  
A valley of white poppies is lit by the low  
moon:  
It is the grave of dreams, a holy rood.

It is quiet there: no wind doth ever fall.  
Long, long ago a wind sang once a heart-  
sweet rune.  
Now the white poppies grow, silent and tall.

A white bird floats there like a drifting leaf:  
It feeds upon faint sweet hopes and perishing  
dreams  
And the still breath of unremembering grief.

And as a silent leaf the white bird passes,  
Winnowing the dusk by dim forgetful streams.  
I am alone now among the silent grasses.

## THE VALLEY OF SILENCE

In the secret Valley of Silence  
No breath doth fall;  
No wind stirs in the branches;  
No bird doth call:  
As on a white wall  
A breathless lizard is still,  
So silence lies on the valley  
Breathlessly still.

In the dusk-grown heart of the valley  
An altar rises white:  
No rapt priest bends in awe  
Before its silent light:  
But sometimes a flight  
Of breathless words of prayer  
White-wing'd enclose the altar,  
Eddies of prayer.

## DREAM MEADOWS

Girt with great garths of shadow  
Dim meadows fade in grey:  
No moon lightens the gloaming,  
The meadows know no day:  
But pale shapes shifting  
From dusk to dusk, or lifting  
Frail wings in flight, go drifting  
Adown each flowerless way.

These phantom-dreams in shadow  
Were once in wild-rose flame;  
Each wore a star of glory,  
Each had a loved sweet name:  
Now they are nameless, knowing  
Nor star nor flame, but going  
Whither they know not, flowing  
Waves without wind or aim.

But later through the gloaming  
The Midnight-Shepherd cries:  
The trooping shadows follow  
Making a wind of sighs:

*Dream Meadows*

The fold is hollow and black;  
No pathway thence, no track;  
No dream ever comes back  
Beneath those silent skies.

## GREY PASTURES

In the grey gloaming where the white  
moth flies—  
When I, quiet dust on the forgetful wind,  
Shall be untroubled by any breath of  
sighs—

It may be I shall fall like dew upon  
The still breath of grey pastures such as these  
Wherein I wander now 'twixt dusk and  
dawn.

See, in this phantom bloom I leave a kiss :  
It was given me in fire ; now it is grey dust :  
Mayhap I may thrill again at the touch  
of this.

## LONGING

O would I were the cool wind that's blowing  
from the sea,  
Each loneliest valley I would search till I  
should come to thee.

In the dew on the grass is your name, dear,  
i' the leaf on the tree—  
O would I were the cool wind that's blowing  
from the sea.

O would I were the cool wind that's blowing  
far from me—  
The grey silence, the grey waves, the grey  
wastes of the sea.



## THE SINGER IN THE WOODS

*"Were Memory but a voice. . . ."*

Where moongrey-thistled dunes divide the  
woods from the sea

Sometimes a phantom drifts, like smoke, from  
tree to tree:

His voice is as the thin faint song when the  
wind wearily

Sighs in the grass, and sighing, dies: barely it  
comes to me.

Sometimes I hear the sighing voice along the  
shadowy shore;

Sometimes wave-borne it comes, as when on  
labouring oar

Dying men sigh once, and die, at the closing  
of the door

They hear below the muffled tides or the dull  
drowning roar.

Sometimes he passes through the caves where  
twilight dies;

His voice like mist from a valley then doth  
rise,

*The Singer in the Woods*

Or, in a windy flight of gathered sighs,  
Is blown like perishing smoke against the  
midnight skies.

But oftenest in the dark woods I hear him  
sing  
Dim, half-remembered things, where the old  
mosses cling  
To the old trees, and the faint wandering ed-  
dies bring  
The phantom echoes of a phantom Spring.

Lost in the dark gulf of the woods, his song  
sinks low:  
I listen: and hear only the long, inevitable,  
slow  
Falling of wave on wave, the sighing flow:  
In the silence I hear my heart sobbing its  
old woe.

## BY THE GREY STONE

It is quiet here: the wet hill-wind's sigh  
Sobs faintly, as though behind a curtain of  
thick grass.

The vanishing curlew wails a fading cry.

I can hear the least soft footfall pass.  
Is that the shrewmouse I hear, or does the  
night-moth whirr?

I have waited so long, so long, so long,  
alas!

No one. No one. I hear no faintest stir.  
Yet Love spake once, with lips of flame and  
eyes of fire,  
With breath of burning frankincense and  
myrrh—

Spake, and the vow was even as De-  
sire . . .  
Terrible, winged, magnificent, crested with  
flame,  
So that I bowed before it, mounting  
gyre upon gyre. . . .

*By the Grey Stone*

I see now a grey bird by the grey stone  
of no name:

It is blind and deaf, and its wings are tipped  
with mire.

Is it Love's lordly vow or mine own bit-  
ter shame?

## THE VALLEY OF PALE BLUE FLOWERS

In a hidden valley a pale blue flower  
grows.  
It is so pale that in the moonshine it is dim-  
mer than dim gold,  
And in the starshine paler than the palest  
rose.

It is the flower of dream. Who holds it  
is never old.  
It is the flower of forgetfulness: and oblivion  
is youth:  
Breathing it, flame is not empty air, dust  
is not cold.

Lift it, and there is no memory of sorrow  
or any ruth;  
The grey monotone of the low sky is filled  
with light;  
The dim, terrible, inpalpable lie wears  
the raiment of truth.

*The Valley of Pale Blue Flowers*

I lift it, now, for somewhat in the heart  
of the night  
Fills me with dread. It may be that, as a  
tiger in his lair,  
Memory, crouching, waits to spring into  
the light.

No, I will clasp it close to my heart, over-  
droop with my hair:  
I will breathe thy frail faint breath, O pale  
blue flower,  
And then . . . and then . . . nothing  
shall take me unaware!

Nothing: no thought: no fear: only the  
invisible power  
Of the vast deeps of night, wherein down a  
shadowy stair  
My soul slowly, slowly, slowly, will sink  
to its ultimate hour.

## REMEMBRANCE

No more : let there be no more said.  
It is over now, the long hope, the beautiful  
dream.

The poor body of love in his grave is laid.

I had dreamed his shining eyes eternal,  
alas!

Now, dead love, I know, can never rise again.  
Never, never again shall I see even his  
shadow pass.

A star has ceased to shine in my lonely  
skies.

Sometimes I dream I see it shining in my  
heart,  
As a bird the windless pool over which it  
flies.

No: no more: I will not say what I see,  
there:  
Sorrow has depths within depths . . . silence  
is best:

Farewell, Dead Love: no more the same  
road we fare.

## THE VEILED AVENGER

(FRAGMENT)

### *A Voice*

. . . I am He,  
The Veiled Avenger. I am clothed with  
shadow  
The silence and the shadow of your soul  
Where it has withered slowly from the light.

### *Unseen Chorus*

The Veiled Avenger speaks. He knows him  
not.

### *The Man*

I hear a honey voice that murmureth peace,  
Peace and oblivion. O ye secret doves  
That feed the mind with sweet and perilous  
breaths  
And murmur ever among gossamer dreams,  
Bring me the tidings out of the hidden place  
Wherein your wings wake fire. Come once  
again, wild doves



*The Veiled Avenger*

Of Beauty and Desire and the Twin Flame!  
Wild doves, wild doves, bear unto me the  
    flame  
That rises moonwhite amid scarlet fire . . .  
    (*A lapwing wails.*)  
O melancholy bird, Dalua's messenger!  
I am too weary now for further thought.

*The Veiled Avenger*

Pillows of sleepless sorrow. . . . Bow your  
    head.  
To-night I shall build up for you a place  
Where sleep shall not be silent and where  
    dreams  
Shall whisper, and a little infinite voice  
Shall wail as a wailing plover in your ears.  
Then you shall know that shaken voice, and  
    wake,  
Crying your own name.

*The Man*

Again, the wheeling cry  
Where in the dusk the lapwing slips and falls  
From ledge to ledge of darkness.

*Unseen Chorus*

He knoweth not  
His own bitter infinite cry we hear him cry!

## THE BELLS OF SORROW

It is not only when the sea is dark and chill  
and desolate

I hear the singing of the queen who lives be-  
neath the ocean :

Oft have I heard her chanting voice when  
noon swings wide his golden gate,

Or when the moonshine fills the wave with  
snow-white mazy motion.

And some day will it hap to me, when the  
black waves are leaping,

Or when within the breathless green I see her  
shell-strewn door,

The fatal bells will lure me where my sea-  
drown'd death lies sleeping

Beneath the slow white hands of her who  
rules the sunken shore.

For in my heart I hear the bells that ring  
their fatal beauty,

The wild, remote, uncertain bells that chant  
their dim to-morrow ;

*The Bells of Sorrow*

The lonely bells of sorrow, the bells of fatal  
beauty,  
From lonely heights within my heart tolling  
their lonely sorrow.

## THE UNKNOWN WIND

*"There is a wind that has no name." (Gaelic Saying.)*

When the day darkens,  
When dusk grows light,  
When the dew is falling,  
    When Silence dreams. . . .  
I hear a wind  
Calling, calling  
By day and by night.

What is the wind  
That I hear calling  
By day and by night,  
    The crying of wind?  
When the day darkens,  
When dusk grows light,  
When the dew is falling?

## CANTILENA MUNDI

Where the rainbows rise through sunset rains  
By shores forlorn of isles forgot,  
A solitary Voice complains  
“The world is here, the world is not.”

The Voice the Wind is, or the sea,  
Or the Spirit of the sundown West:  
Or is it but a breath set free  
From off the Islands of the Blest?

It may be: but I turn my face  
To that which still I hold so dear:  
And lo, the voices of the days—  
“The World is not, the World is here.”

'Tis the same end whichever way,  
And either way is soon forgot:  
“The World is all in all To-day,  
To-morrow all the World is not.”

## LITTLE CHILDREN OF THE WIND

I hear the little children of the wind  
Crying solitary in lonely places:  
I have not seen their faces  
But I have seen the leaves eddying behind,  
The little tremulous leaves of the wind.

## IN THE SILENCES OF THE WOODS

In the silences of the woods  
I have heard all day and all night  
The moving multitudes  
Of the Wind in flight.  
He is named Myriad :  
And I am sad  
Often, and often I am glad,  
But oftener I am white  
With fear of the dim broods  
That are his multitudes.

## IN THE NIGHT

O wind, why break in idle pain  
    This wave that swept the seas  
*Foam is the meed of barren dreams*  
    *And hearts that cry for peace!*

Lift then, O wind, this heart of mine,  
    And whirl aside in foam;  
*No—wander on, unchanging heart,*  
    *The undrowning deeps thy home!*

Less than a billow of the sea  
    That at the last doth no more roam,  
Less than a wave, less than a wave,  
    This thing that hath no home,  
    This thing that hath no grave.



## THE LORDS OF SHADOW

Where the water whispers 'mid the shadowy  
rowan-trees  
I have heard the Hidden People like the hum  
of swarming bees:  
And when the moon has risen and the brown  
burn glisters grey  
I have seen the Green Host marching in  
laughing disarray.

Dalua then must sure have blown a sudden  
magic air  
Or with the mystic dew have sealed my eyes  
from seeing fair:  
For the great Lords of Shadow who tread the  
deeps of night  
Are no frail puny folk who move in dread of  
mortal sight.

For sure Dalua laughed alow, Dalua the fairy  
Fool,  
When with his wildfire eyes he saw me 'neath  
the rowan-shadowed pool:

*The Lords of Shadow*

His touch can make the chords of life a bitter jangling tune,  
The false glows true, the true glows false, beneath his moontide rune.

The laughter of the Hidden Host is terrible to hear,  
The Hounds of Death would harry me at lifting of a spear:  
Mayhap Dalua made for me the hum of swarming bees  
And sealed my eyes with dew beneath the shadowy rowan-trees.

## INVOCATION OF PEACE

AFTER THE GAELIC

Deep peace I breathe into you,  
O weariness, here :  
O ache, here !  
Deep peace, a soft white dove to you ;  
Deep peace, a quiet rain to you ;  
Deep peace, an ebbing wave to you !  
Deep peace, red wind of the east from you ;  
Deep peace, grey wind of the west to you ;  
Deep peace, dark wind of the north from you ;  
Deep peace, blue wind of the south to you !  
Deep peace, pure red of the flame to you ;  
Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you ;  
Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you ;  
Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you ;  
Deep peace, pure grey of the dew to you,  
Deep peace, pure blue of the sky to you !  
Deep peace of the running wave to you,  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,  
Deep peace of the sleeping stones to you !  
Deep peace of the Yellow Shepherd to you,

*Invocation of Peace*

Deep peace of the Wandering Shepherdess to  
you,

Deep peace of the Flock of Stars to you,  
Deep peace from the Son of Peace to you,  
Deep peace from the heart of Mary to you,  
From Briget of the Mantle

Deep peace, deep peace!

And with the kindness too of the Haughty  
Father,

Peace!

In the name of the Three who are One,  
And by the will of the King of the Elements,  
Peace! Peace!

THE DIRGE OF THE FOUR  
CITIES

*“There are four cities that no mortal eye has seen but that the soul knows; these are Gorias, that is in the east; and Finias, that is in the south; and Murias, that is in the west; and Falias, that is in the north. And the symbol of Falias is the stone of death, which is crowned with pale fire. And the symbol of Gorias is the dividing sword. And the symbol of Finias is a spear. And the symbol of Murias is a hollow that is filled with water and fading light.”*

THE LITTLE BOOK OF THE  
GREAT ENCHANTMENT.

*“Wind comes from the spring star in the East; fire from the summer star in the South; water from the autumn star in the West; wisdom, silence and death from the star in the North.”*

THE DIVINE ADVENTURE.

## THE DIRGE OF THE FOUR CITIES

*"The four cities of the world that was: the sunken city of Murias, and the city of Gorias, and the city of Finias, and the city of Falias."* (Ancient Gaelic Chronicle.)

Finias and Falias,  
Where are they gone?  
Does the wave hide Murias—  
Does Gorias know the dawn?  
Does not the wind wail  
In the city of gems?  
Do not the prows sail  
Over fallen diadems  
And the spires of dim gold  
And the pale palaces  
Of Murias, whose tale was told  
Ere the world was old?

Do women cry *Alas!* . . .  
Beyond Finias?  
Does the eagle pass  
Seeing but her shadow on the grass  
Where once was Falias:  
And do her towers rise  
Silent and lifeless to the frozen skies?

*The Dirge of the Four Cities*

And do whispers and sighs  
    Fill the twilights of Finias  
With love that has not grown cold  
Since the days of old?

Hark to the tolling of bells  
    And the crying of wind!  
The old spells  
    Time out of mind,  
They are crying before me and behind!  
I know now no more of my pain,  
But am as the wandering rain  
Or as the wind's shadow on the grass  
Beyond Finias of the Dark Rose:  
Or, 'mid the pinnacles and still snows  
Of the Silence of Falias,  
I go: or am as the wave that idly flows  
Where the pale weed in songless thickets  
    grows  
Over the towers and fallen palaces  
    Where the Sea-city was,  
    The city of Murias.



## FINIAS

In the torch-lit city of Finias that flames on  
the brow of the South  
The Spear that divideth the heart is held in  
a brazen mouth—

Arias the flame-white keeps it, he whose  
laughter is heard  
Where never a man has wandered, where  
never a god has stirred.

High kings have sought it, great queens have  
sought it, poets have dreamed—  
And ever louder and louder the flame-white  
laughter of Arias streamed.

For kingdoms shaken and queens forsaken  
and high hopes starved in their drouth,  
These are the torches ablaze on the walls of  
Finias that lightens the South.

Forbear, O Arias, forbear, forbear—lift not  
the dreadful Spear—  
I had but dreamed of thee, Finias, Finias . . .  
now I am stricken . . . now I am here!

## FALIAS

In the frost-grown city of Falias lit by the  
falling stars  
I have seen the ravens flying like banners of  
old wars—  
I have seen the snow-white ravens amid the  
ice-green spires  
Seeking the long-lost havens of all old lost  
desires.

O winged desire and broken, once nested in  
my heart,  
Canst thou, there, give a token, that, even now,  
thou art?  
From bitter war defeated thou too hadst  
flight afar,  
When all my joy was cheated ere set of  
Morning Star.

Call loud; O ancient Moirias, who dwellest in  
that place,  
Tell me if lost in Falias my old desire hath  
grace?

*Falias*

If now a snow-white raven it haunts the silent  
    spires  
For the old impossible haven 'mid the old  
    auroral fires?

## GORIAS

In Gorias are gems,  
And pale gold,  
Shining diadems  
Gathered of old  
From the long fragrant hair  
Of dead beautiful queens.

There the reaper gleans  
Vast opals of white air :  
The dawn leans  
Upon emerald there :  
Out of the dust of kings  
The sunrise lifts a cloud of shimmering wings.

In Gorias of the East  
My love was born,  
Erias dowered with a sword  
And the treasures of the Morn—  
But now all the red gems  
And the pale gold  
Are as the trampled diadems  
Of the queens of old  
In Gorias the pale-gold.

*Gorias*

Have I once heard the least,  
    But the least breath, again?  
No: my love is no more fain  
    Of Gorias of the East.  
Erias hath sheathed this sword  
    Long, long ago.  
My heart is old . . .  
Though in Gorias are gems  
    And pale gold.

## MURIAS

In the sunken city of Murias  
A golden Image dwells:  
The sea-song of the trampling waves  
Is as muffled bells  
Where He dwells,  
In the city of Murias.

In the sunken city of Murias  
A golden Image gleams:  
The loud noise of the moving seas  
Is as woven beams  
Where He dreams,  
In the city of Murias.

In the sunken city of Murias,  
Deep, deep beneath the sea  
The Image sits and hears Time break  
The heart I gave to thee  
And thou to me,  
In the city of Murias.

In the city of Murias,  
Long, oh, so long ago,  
Our souls were wed when the world  
was young;

*Murias*

Are we old now, that we know  
This silent woe  
In the city of Murias?

In the sunken city of Murias  
A graven Image dwells:  
The sound of our little sobbing prayer  
Is as muffled bells  
Where He dwells,  
In the city of Murias.





THE HOUR OF BEAUTY

*"None but God and I  
Knows what is in my heart."*

SAHARA SONG.

*"Wherever snow falls, or water flows, or birds fly,  
wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever  
the blue heaven is hung by clouds, or sown with stars,  
wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wher-  
ever are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger,  
and awe, and love, there is Beauty."*

EMERSON.

## DIM FACE OF BEAUTY

Dim face of Beauty haunting all the world,  
Fair face of Beauty all too fair to see,  
Where the lost stars adown the heavens are  
    hurled,  
    There, there alone for thee  
    May white peace be.

For here where all the dreams of men are  
    whirled  
Like sere torn leaves of autumn to and fro,  
There is no place for thee in all the world,  
    Who driftest as a star,  
    Beyond, afar.

Beauty, sad face of Beauty, Mystery, Wonder,  
What are these dreams to foolish babbling  
    men?—  
Who cry with little noises 'neath the thunder  
    Of ages ground to sand,  
    To a little sand.

## DREAMS WITHIN DREAMS

I have gone out and seen the lands of Faery  
And have found sorrow and peace and  
beauty there,  
And have not known one from the other, but  
found each  
Lovely and gracious alike, delicate and  
fair.

“ They are children of one mother, she that is  
called Longing,  
Desire, Love,” one told me: and another,  
“ her secret name  
Is Wisdom:” and another, “ they are not  
three but one: ”  
And another, “ touch them not, seek them  
not, they are wind and flame.”

I have come back from the hidden, silent  
lands of Faery  
And have forgotten the music of its an-  
cient streams:  
And now flame and wind and the long, grey,  
wandering wave  
And beauty and peace and sorrow are  
dreams within dreams.

## A CRY ON THE WIND

*Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they  
are blind:*

*Pity the great with love, time out of mind:*

This is the song of the grey-haired wandering  
wind

Since Oisín's mother fled to the hill a spell-  
bound hind.

*Sorrow on love!* was the sob that rose in her  
throat,

*I, that a woman was, now wear the wild  
fawn's coat:*

*This is to lift the heart to leap like a wave  
to the oar,*

*This is to see the heart flung back like foam  
on the shore.*

Have not the hunters heard them, Oisín and  
she together

Like peewits crying on the wind where the  
world is sky and heather—

The peewits that wail to each other, rising  
and wheeling and falling

Till greyness of noon or darkness of dusk is  
full of a windy calling.

*A Cry on the Wind*

*Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they  
are blind:*

*Pity the great with love, time out of mind!*

O sorrowful face of Deirdrê seen on the hill!  
Once I have seen you, once, beautiful, silent,  
still:

As a cloud that gathers her robe like drifted  
snow

You stood in the mountain-corrie, and  
dreamed on the world below.

Like a rising sound of the sea in woods in the  
heart of the night

I heard a noise as of hounds, and of spears  
and arrows in flight:

And a glory came like a flame, and morning  
sprang to your eyes—

And the flame passed, and the vision, and I  
heard but the wind's sighs.

*Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they  
are blind:*

*Pity the great with love, time out of mind!*

Last night I walked by the shore where the  
machar slopes:

I drowned my heart in the sea, I cast to the  
wind my hopes.

*A Cry on the Wind*

What is this thing so great that all the Children of Sorrow  
Are weary each morn for night, and weary  
each night for the morrow!

*Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they  
are blind:*

*Pity the great with love, time out of mind:  
This is the song of the grey-haired wandering  
wind*

*Since Oisín's mother fled to the hill a spell-  
bound hind.*

## VALE, AMOR!

We do not know this thing  
By the spoken word:  
It is as though in a dim wood  
One heard a bird  
Suddenly sing:  
Then, in the twinkling of an eye  
A shadow glooms the earth and sky,  
And we stand silent, startled, in a changed  
mood.

It is but a little thing  
The leaping sword,  
When in the startled silence of changed mood  
It comes as when a bird  
Doth suddenly sing.  
But thrust of sword or agony of soul  
Are alike swift and terrible and strong,  
And no foot stirs the dead leaves of that si-  
lent wood.



## FLAME ON THE WIND

O wind without that moans and cries, O dark  
wind in my soul!  
I would I were the wet wild wind that's blowing  
to the Pole!  
I'd seek the plunging bergs of ice to cool my  
flaming heart . . .

O Flaming Heart,  
I'd drown you deep where the great ice-  
bergs roll!  
I'd follow on thy beating wings the wings of  
the wild geese,  
I'd seek among the plunging hills the phan-  
tom-flight of peace . . .  
O is there peace for hearts of fire in gloom  
and cold and flight—  
Torches of night  
'Mid swaying bergs that grind the trampling  
seas?

O wind without and rain without, O melan-  
choly choir  
Of tempest in the lonely night and tempest-  
whirled desire,

*Flame on the Wind*

What if there be no peace amid the snow-  
clouds of the Pole . . .

O Burning Soul,  
Can hills of ice assuage this whirling fire!

O wet wild wind bow down dark wings and  
winnow me away,

Whirl me on mighty shadowy wings where's  
neither night nor day,

Where 'mid the plunging bergs of ice may  
fade a whirling flame . . .

O Heart of Flame! . . .  
'Mid dirges of white shapes that plunge and  
sway.

## THE ROSE OF THE NIGHT

*There is an old mystical legend that when a soul among the dead woos a soul among the living, so that both may be reborn as one, the sign is a dark rose, or a rose of flame, in the heart of the night.*

The dark rose of thy mouth  
Draw nigher, draw nigher!  
Thy breath is the wind of the south,  
A wind of fire,  
The wind and the rose and darkness, O Rose  
of my Desire!

Deep silence of the night,  
Husht like a breathless lyre,  
Save the sea's thunderous might,  
Dim, menacing, dire,  
Silence and wind and sea, they are thee, O  
Rose of my Desire!

As a wind-eddy flame  
Leaping higher and higher,  
Thy soul, thy secret name,  
Leaps thro' Death's blazing pyre,  
Kiss me, Imperishable Fire, dark Rose, O  
Rose of my Desire!

## I-BRASÎL

There's sorrow on the wind, my grief, there's  
sorrow on the wind,

Old and grey!

I hear it whispering, calling, where the last  
stars touch the sea,

Where the cloud creeps down the hill, and the  
leaf shakes on the tree,

There's sorrow on the wind and it's calling  
low to me

*Come away! Come away!*

There's sorrow in the world, O wind, there's  
sorrow in my heart

Night and day:

So why should I not listen to the song you  
sing to me?

The hill cloud falls away in rain, the leaf  
whirls from the tree,

And peace may live in I-Brasil where the last  
stars touch the sea

Far away, far away.

## LOVE AND SORROW

Love said one morn to Sorrow  
    “Lend me your robe of grey,  
    And here is mine so gay:  
        Please borrow,  
And each the other be until to-morrow.”

At morn they met and parted:  
    Each had her own again;  
    But each a new-felt pain;  
        Broken-hearted,  
Love; and Sorrow, broken-hearted.

Love sighed “No more I’ll borrow:  
    I’ll never more be glad.”  
    . . . “Can Love be oh so sad,”  
Sighed Sorrow:  
And so they kissed and parted on that  
    morrow.

But when these lovers parted  
    God made them seem as one—  
    “For so My will is done  
Among the broken-hearted,”  
He said; “O ye who are broken-hearted.”

## SONG-IN-MY-HEART<sup>1</sup>

Song-in-my-heart, my heart's sorrow, my  
delight,  
I hear a thin whistling as of a high arrow in  
flight  
Or when the wind suddenly leaps, leaving the  
grass snowy-white :  
Is it your voice, Song-in-my-heart, that calls  
to me to-night ?

It is dark here, my Love, my Pulse, my  
Heart, my Flame :  
Dark the night, dark with wind and cloud, the  
wind without aim  
Baffled and blind, the cloud low, broken, drag-  
ging, lame,  
And a stir in the darkness at the end of the  
room sighing my name, whispering my  
name !

Is that the sea calling, or the hounds of the  
sea, or the wind's hounds

<sup>1</sup> *Oran-a-chridhe*, "Song in my heart," a term of  
endearment.

*Song-in-My-Heart*

Baffling billow on billow, wave into wave,  
with trampling sounds  
As of herds confusedly crowding gorges?—  
or with leaps and bounds  
The narwhals in the polar seas crashing be-  
tween ice-grown mounds?

Great is that dark noise under the black north  
wind  
Out on the sea to-night: but still it is—still as  
the frost that bind  
The stark inland waters in green depths where  
icebergs grind—  
In this noise of shaking storm in my heart  
and this blast sweeping my mind.

## MO BRÒN!

(A SONG ON THE WIND)

O come across the grey wild seas,  
Said my heart in pain;  
Give me peace, give me peace,  
Said my heart in pain.

This is the song of the Swan  
On the tides of the wind,  
The song of the wild Swan  
Time out of mind.

O come across the grey wild seas,  
O give me a token!  
My head is on my knees,  
My heart is broken.

This is the song of the Heart  
On the tides of Sorrow:  
This is the song of my heart  
To-day and to-morrow.



## SORROW

The wrack is lapping in the pools, the sea's  
lip feels the sand,  
Upon the mussel-purple rocks the restless  
mews are wailing:  
The sinuous serpents of the tide are darkly  
twisting to the land:  
The west wind drinks the foam as east she  
comes a-sailing.

*(A whisper of the secret tides upon another  
coast,  
The windy headlands of the soul, the lone  
sands of the mind. . . .  
That whisper swells as of a congregating  
host,  
And I am as one frozen or deaf or blind.)*

O Tide that fills the little pools along the sun-  
set-strand,  
That sets the mews a-wailing above the  
wailing sea,  
Bring back, hold out, O flowing Tide, O with  
a saviour hand  
Restore the long-ebbed hopes, some frag-  
ment give to me!

*Sorrow*

*(Along the dim and broken coasts the tired  
mind knows its own,  
By day and night the silent tides are silent  
evermore:  
Around the headlands of the soul the great  
deeps moan,  
Or with dull thunders plunge from shore  
to shore.)*

## THE FOUNTS OF SONG

*"What is the song I am singing?"*

Said the pine-tree to the wave:

"Do you not know the song

You have sung so long

Down in the dim green alleys of the sea,

And where the great blind tides go swinging

Mysteriously,

And where the countless herds of the billows  
are hurl'd

On all the wild and lonely beaches of the  
world?"

"Ah, Pine-tree," sighed the wave,

"I have no song but what I catch from thee:

Far off I hear thy strain

Of infinite sweet pain

That floats along the lovely phantom land.

I sigh, and murmur it o'er and o'er and o'er,

When 'neath the slow compelling hand

That guides me back and far from the loved  
shore,

I wander long

*The Founts of Song*

Where never falls the breath of any song,  
But only the loud, empty, crashing roar  
Of seas swung this way and that for ever-  
more."

*"What is the song I am singing?"*

Said the poet to the pine:

"Do you not know the song

You have sung so long

Here in the dim green alleys of the woods

Where the wild winds go wandering in all  
moods,

And whisper often o'er and o'er,

Or in tempestuous clamours roar

Their dark eternal secret evermore?"

"Oh, Poet," said the Pine,

"Thine

Is that song!

Not mine!

I have known it, loved it, long!

Nothing I know of what the wild winds cry

Through dusk and storm and night,

Or prophesy

When tempests whirl us with their awful  
might.

Only, I know that when

The poet's voice is heard

Among the woods

*The Founts of Song*

The infinite pain from out the hearts of men  
Is sweeter than the voice of wave or branch  
or bird  
In these dumb solitudes."

ON A REDBREAST SINGING AT THE  
GRAVE OF PLATO

(IN THE GROVE OF ACADEME)

The rose of gloaming everywhere!  
And through the silence cool and sweet  
A song falls through the golden air  
And stays my feet—  
For there! . . .  
This very moment surely I have heard  
The sudden, swift, incalculable word  
That takes me o'er the foam  
Of these empurpling, dim Ionian seas,  
That takes me home  
To where  
Far on an isle of the far Hebrides  
Sits on a spray of gorse a little home-sweet  
bird.

The great white Attic poplars rise,  
And down their tremulous stairs I hear  
Light airs and delicate sighs.  
Even here  
Outside this grove of ancient olive-trees,  
Close by this trickling murmuring stream,

*A Redbreast at the Grave of Plato*

Was laid long, long ago, men say,  
That lordly Prince of Peace  
Who loved to wander here from day to day,  
Plato, who from this Academe  
Sent radiant dreams sublime  
Across the troubled seas of time,  
Dreams that not yet are passed away,  
Nor faded grown, nor grey,  
But white, immortal are  
As that great star  
That yonder hangs above Hymettos' brow.

But now  
It is not he, the Dreamer of the Dream,  
That holds my thought.  
Greece, Plato, and the Academe  
Are all forgot:  
It is as though I am unloosed by hands:  
My heart aches for the grey-green seas  
That hold a lonely isle  
Far in the Hebrides,  
An isle where all day long  
The redbreast's song  
Goes fluting on the wind o'er lonely sands.

So beautiful, so beautiful  
Is Hellas, here.  
Divinely clear  
The mellow golden air,

*A Redbreast at the Grave of Plato*

Filled, as a rose is full,  
Of delicate flame:  
And oh the secret tides of thought and dream  
That haunt this slow Kephisian stream!  
But yet more sweet, more beautiful, more dear  
The secret tides of memory and thought  
That link me to the far-off shore  
For which I long—  
Greece, Plato, and the Academe forgot  
For a robin's song!



## THE BELLS OF YOUTH

The Bells of Youth are ringing in the gate-  
ways of the South:

The bannerets of green are now unfurled:  
Spring has risen with a laugh, a wild-rose in  
her mouth,  
And is singing, singing, singing thro' the  
world.

The Bells of Youth are ringing in all the  
silent places,

The primrose and the celandine are out:  
Children run a-laughing with joy upon their  
faces,  
The west wind follows after with a shout.

The Bells of Youth are ringing from the  
forests to the mountains,

From the meadows to the moorlands,  
hark their ringing!  
Ten thousand thousand splashing rills and  
fern-dappled fountains  
Are flinging wide the Song of Youth, and  
onward flowing, singing!

*The Bells of Youth*

The Bells of Youth are ringing in the gate-  
ways of the South:

The bannerets of green are now unfurled:  
Spring has risen with a laugh, a wild-rose in  
her mouth,

And is singing, singing, singing thro' the  
world.

## SONG OF APPLE-TREES

Song of Apple-trees, honeysweet and mur-  
murous,  
Where the swallows flash and shimmer as  
they thrid the foamwhite maze,  
Breaths of far-off Avalon are blown to us,  
come down to us,  
Avalon of the Heart's Desire, Avalon of the  
Hidden Ways!

Song of Apple-blossom, when the myriad  
leaves are gleaming  
Like undersides of small green waves in foam  
of shallow seas,  
One may dream of Avalon, lie dreaming,  
dreaming, dreaming,  
Till wandering through dim vales of dusk the  
stars hang in the trees.

Song of Apple-trees, honeysweet and mur-  
murous,  
When the night-wind fills the branches with  
a sound of muffled oars,

*Song of Apple-Trees*

Breaths of far-off Avalon are blown to us,  
come down to us,  
Avalon of the Heart's Desire, Avalon of the  
Hidden Shores.

## RÒSEEN-DHU

Little wild-rose of my heart,  
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu!  
Why must we part,  
Ròseen-dhu?  
To meet but to part again!  
Is it because we are fain  
Of the wind and the rain,  
Because we are hungry of pain,  
Ròseen-dhu?

Little wild-rose of my heart,  
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu,  
Where *I* am, *thou* art,  
Ròseen-dhu!  
If summer come and go,  
If the wild wind blow,  
Come rain, come snow,  
If the tide ebb, if the tide flow,  
Ròseen-dhu!

Little wild-rose of my heart,  
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu . . .  
Time poiseth his shadowy dart,  
Ròseen-dhu!

*Ròseen-Dhu*

What matter, O Ròseen mochree,  
Since each is a wave on the sea—  
Since Love is as lightning for thee  
And as thunder for me,  
Ròseen-dhu!

## THE SHREWMOUSE

The creatures with the shining eyes  
That live among the tender grass  
See great stars falling down the skies  
And mighty comets pass.

Torches of thought within the mind  
Wave fire upon the dancing streams  
Of souls that shake upon them wind  
In rain of falling dreams.

The shrewmouse builds her windy nest  
And laughs amid the corn :  
She hath no dreams within her breast :  
God smiled when she was born.

## THE LAST FAY

I have wandered where the cuckoo fills  
The woodlands with her magic voice:  
I have wandered on the brows of hills  
Where the last heavenward larks rejoice:  
Far I have wandered by the wave,  
By shadowy loch and swaying stream,  
But never have I found the grave  
Of him who made me a wandering Dream.  
If I could find that lonely place  
And him who lies asleep therein,  
I'd bow my head and kiss his face  
And sleep and rest and peace would win.

He made me, he who lies asleep  
Hidden in some forgotten spot  
Where winds sweep and rains weep  
And foot of wayfarer cometh not:  
He made me, Merlin, ages ago,  
He shaped me in an idle hour,  
He made a heart of fire to glow  
And hid it in an April shower!  
For I am but a shower that calls  
A thin sweet song of rain, and pass:



*The Last Fay*

Even the wind-whirled leaf that falls  
Lingers awhile within the grass,  
But I am blown from hill to vale,  
From vale to hill like a bird's cry  
That shepherds hear a far-off wail  
And woodfolk as a drowsy sigh.

And I am tired, whom Merlin made.  
I would lie down in the heart of June  
And fall asleep in a leafy shade  
And wake not till in the Faery Moon  
Merlin shall rise our lord and king,  
To leave for aye the tribes of Man,  
And let the clarion summons ring  
The kingdom of the Immortal Clan.  
If but in some green place I'd see  
An ancient tangled moss-like beard  
And half-buried boulder of a knee  
I should not flutter away afeared!  
With leap of joy, with low glad cry  
I'd sink beside the Sleeper fair:  
He would not grudge my fading sigh  
In the ancient stillness brooding there.

## THE DIRGE OF "CLAN SIUBHAIL"

(THE WANDERING FOLK)

Sorrow upon me on the grass and on the wandering road:

My heart is heavy in the morn and heavier still at night.

Sometimes I rest in a quiet place and lay me down my heavy load,

And watch in the dewy valley the coming of light after light,

Watch on the dusky hill and the darkening plain the coming of light after light.

At dawn I am stirring again, and weary of the night:

And all the morn and all the noon I lift my heavy load:

At fall of day I see once more the coming of light after light:

And night is as day and day is as night on the endless road—

*Sorrow upon me on the grass and on the wandering road.*

## THE EXILE

It is not when the seamew cries above the  
    grey-green foam  
Or circling o'er the bracken-fields the flutter-  
    ing lapwings fly,  
Or when above the broom and gale the lark  
    is in his windy home  
    That thus I long, and with old longing sigh.

For I am far away now, and now have time  
    for sighing,  
For sighing and for longing, where the grey  
    houses stand.  
In dreams I am a seamew flying, flying, flying  
    To where my heart is, in my own lost land.

It is when in the crowded streets the rustling  
    of white willows  
And tumbling of a brown hill-water obscure  
    the noisy ways;  
Then is the ache a bitter pain; and to hear  
    grey-green billows,  
    Or the hill-wind in a broom-sweet place.

## THE SHADOW

“ Do you hear the calling, Mary, down by the sea?

Who is it callin', yonder, callin' to me?

Last night a shadow came up to the rowan-tree,

And *Muirnean*, it whispered, *Muirnean*, *I'm waiting for thee!*

“ Do you hear the calling, Mary, down by the shore?

Who is it callin', yonder, callin' sore?

Last night I came in from the rowan an' shut the door,

But some one without kept whisperin' the same thing o'er and o'er.

“ Do you hear the calling, Mary, here, close by?

Who is it callin', whisperin', here, so nigh?

Give me my shawl, Mary, an' don't whimper an' cry:

I'm going out into the night, just to look at the sky.”

*The Shadow*

*Mary—Mary—Mary—*wailed the wind wear-  
ily:

*Mary—Mary—Mary—*wailed the rain in the  
tree:

*One! Two! Three!* ticked the clock—*One!*  
*Two! Three!*

Out in the darkness rose the calling of the sea.

## ORAN-BHROIN <sup>1</sup>

*(A crying in the wilderness as of a little child is the  
symbol of l st love)*

When all the West is blowing wild,  
    Is blowing wild  
With tempest wings that fan the fire  
Of sunset to one awful pyre,  
    I hear the crying of a child—  
    The crying of a little child  
When all the West is blowing wild,  
    Is blowing wild.

The screaming scart, the wailing mew,  
    The lone curlew,  
From shore and moor these voices rise:  
The grey wind roams through ashèn skies:  
    The West is all a blood-red hue:  
    Out of the glistening moorland dew  
I hear a child's voice wail and rise  
    In mournful cries.

When all the West is blowing wild,  
    Is blowing wild

<sup>1</sup> A song of sorrow.

*Oran-Bhroin*

And shrill and faint along the shore,  
By moor, or hill, and o'er and o'er  
    A child's lament is tost on high . . .  
    It is a love that cannot die,  
    A lost love weeping evermore  
While all the West is blowing wild,  
    Is blowing wild.

AT THE COMING OF THE WILD  
SWANS

By loch and darkening river,  
Above the salt sea-plains,  
Across the misty mountains  
Amid the blinding rains,  
In fierce or silent weather  
The wild swans southward fare,  
The wild swans swing together  
Through lonely fields of air,  
Crying *Honk, Honk, Honk,*  
*Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,*  
*Honk! Honk!*

The seamew's lonely laughter  
Flits down the flowing wave,  
The green scarts follow after  
The surge where cross-tides rave:  
The sea-duck's mellow wailing  
Floats over sheltered places,  
And southward, southward sailing  
Go all the feathered races. . . .  
When the swans cry *Honk, Honk,*  
• *Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,*  
*Honk! Honk!*



*At the Coming of the Wild Swans*

White spirits from the Northland,  
Grey clan of Storm and Frost,  
Wind-swooping to the Southland  
From icy-seas blast-tost. . . .  
Wild clan of sons and daughters,  
A welcome, now you are come  
When all your polar waters  
Are frozen, white, and dumb! . . .  
Crying *Honk, Honk, Honk,*  
*Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,*  
*Honk! Honk!*

## THE WEAVER OF SNOW

In Polar noons when the moonshine glimmers,  
    And the frost-fans whirl,  
And whiter than moonlight the ice-flowers  
    grow,  
And the lunar rainbow quivers and shimmers,  
And the Silent Laughters dance to and fro,  
    A stooping girl  
    As pale as pearl  
Gathers the frost-flowers where they blow :  
And the fleet-foot fairies smile, for they know  
    The Weaver of Snow.

And she climbs at last to a berg set free,  
    That drifteth slow :  
And she sails to the edge of the world we see :  
And waits till the wings of the north wind lean  
Like an eagle's wings o'er a lochan of green,  
    And the pale stars glow  
    On berg and floe. . . .  
Then down on our world with a wild laugh  
    of glee  
She empties her lap full of shimmer and sheen.  
*And that is the way in a dream I have seen*  
    *The Weaver of Snow.*

## A SONG OF DREAMS

One came to me in the night  
And said *Arise!*  
I rose, phantom-white ;  
Far was my flight  
To a star shaken with light  
In the heart of the skies.

Through seven spheres I fled,  
Opal and rose and white,  
Emerald, violet, red,  
Through azure was I led,  
And the coronal on my head  
With seven moons was bright.

What wonder that the day  
Swings slowly through slow hours !  
My heart leaps when the grey  
Husht feet of Night are astray,  
And I hear her wild bells play  
On her starry towers.

## EASTER

The stars wailed when the reed was born,  
And heaven wept at the birth of the thorn :  
Joy was pluckt like a flower and torn,  
For Time foreshadowed Good-Friday Morn.

But the stars laughed like children free  
And heaven was hung with the rainbow's glee  
When at Easter Sunday, so fair to see,  
Time bowed before Eternity.

## WHEN THERE IS PEACE

There is peace on the sea to-night  
Thought the fish in the white wave :  
There is peace among the stars to-night  
Thought the sleeper in the grave :

There is peace in my heart to-night  
Sighed Love beneath his breath ;  
For God dreamed in the silence of His might  
Amid the earthquakes of death.

## TIME

I saw a happy Spirit  
That wandered among flowers :  
Her crown was a rainbow,  
Her gown was wove of hours.

She turned with sudden laughter,  
*I was, but am no more!*  
And as I followed after  
Time smote me on the brow.

## INVOCATION

*Written in the Gulf of Lyons during a storm.*

Play me a lulling tune, O Flute-Player of  
Sleep.

Across the twilight bloom of thy purple  
havens.

Far off a phantom stag on the moon-yellow  
highlands

Ceases; and, as a shadow, wavers; and passes:  
So let Silence seal me and Darkness gather,  
Piper of Sleep.

Play me a lulling chant, O Anthem-Maker,  
Out of the fall of lonely seas, and the wind's  
sorrow:

Behind are the burning glens of the sunset sky  
Where like blown ghosts the seamews wail  
their desolate sea-dirges:

Make me of these a lulling chant, O Anthem-  
Maker.

No—no—from nets of silence weave me, O  
Sigher of Sleep,

A dusky veil ash-grey as the moon-pale moth's  
grey wing;

*Invocation*

Of thicket-stillness woven, and sleep of grass,  
and thin evanishing air  
Where the tall reed spires breathless—for I  
am tired, O Sigher of Sleep,  
And long for thy muffled song as of bells on  
the wind, and the wind's cry  
Falling, and the dim wastes that lie  
Beyond the last, low, long, oblivious  
sigh.



## THE SECRET GATE

From out the dark of sleep I rose, on the  
wings of desire:

“Give me the joy of sight,” I cried, “O Mas-  
ter of Hidden Fire!”

And a Voice said: *Wait*  
*Till you pass the Gate.*

“Give me the joy of sight,” I cried, “O Mas-  
ter of Hidden Fire!

By the flame in the heart of the soul, grant  
my desire!”

And a Voice said: *Wait*  
*Till you pass the Gate.*

I shook the dark with the tremulous beat of  
my wings of desire:

“Give me but once the thing I ask, O Master  
of Hidden Fire!”

And a Voice said: *Wait!*  
*You have reached the Gate.*

I rose from flame to flame on pinions of desire:  
And I heard the voice of the Master of Hid-  
den Fire:

*Behold the Flaming Gate,*  
*Where Sight doth wait!*

*The Secret Gate*

Like a wandering star I fell through the deeps  
of desire,  
And back through the portals of sleep the  
Master of Hidden Fire  
Thundered: *Await*  
*The opening of the Gate!*

But now I pray, now I pray, with passionate  
desire:  
“Blind me, O blind me, Master of Hidden  
Fire,  
I supplicate,  
Ope not the Gate.”

## THE MYSTIC'S PRAYER

Lay me to sleep in sheltering flame,  
O Master of the Hidden Fire!  
Wash pure my heart, and cleanse for me  
My soul's desire.

In flame of sunrise bathe my mind,  
O Master of the Hidden Fire,  
That, when I wake, clear-eyed may be  
My soul's desire.



# DRAMAS



To whose editorial hospitality I have so often  
been indebted; and whose *Undine* following upon  
*The Idea of Tragedy* shows that the dramatic poet  
and the critic of imaginative drama can be one.

To

W. L. COURTNEY.

## FOREWORD

*It is Destiny, then, that is the Protagonist in the Celtic Drama. . . . And it is Destiny, that sombre Demogorgon of the Gael, whose boding breath, whose menace, whose shadow glooms so much of the remote life I know, and hence glooms also this book of interpretations: for pages of life must either be interpretative or merely documentary, and these following pages have for the most part been written as by one who repeats, with curious insistence, a haunting, familiar, yet ever wild and remote air, whose obscure meanings he would fain reiterate, interpret."*

(From the PROLOGUE to *The Sin-Eater*.)



## FOREWORD

In these short dramas I have attempted to give voice to two elemental emotions, the emotion of the inevitableness of destiny and the emotion of tragical loveliness. One does not need to know the story of Midir and Etain, of Concobar and Deirdrê, of Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna, in order to know the mystery and the silent arrivals of destiny, or to know the emotion of sorrow at the passage of beauty: as one does not need to know the story of *Iphigenia in Aulis* in order to know the emotion of indignation at kingly guile or the emotion of pity for the betrayed: as one does not need to know the story of the *Crowned Hippolytos* in order to know the emotion of tragical suspense, as when Phædra's love for the son of her husband is like a leaf on the wind; or in order to know the emotion of bewildered futility, as when Theseus curses and banishes his innocent son and persuades to him the doom of Poseidon. For these emotions are not the properties of drama, which is but a fowler snaring them in a net. These

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deep elementals are the obscure Chorus which plays upon the silent flutes, upon the nerves wherein the soul sits enmeshed. They have their own savage or divine energy, and the man of the woods and the dark girl of the canebrakes know them with the same bowed suspense or uplifted lamentation or joy as do the men and women who have great names and to whom the lords of the imagination have given immortality.

Many kings have desired, and the gods forbidden. Concohar has but lain down where Cæsars have fallen and Pharaohs closed imperial eyes, and many satraps and many tyrants have bent before the wind. All old men who in strength and passion rise up against the bitterness of destiny are the kindred of Lear: those who have kept love as the crown of years, and seen it go from them like a wreath of sand, are of the kin of Concohar. There is not one Lear only, or one Concohar, in the vast stage of life: but a multitude of men who ask, in the dark hour of the Winged Destiny, *Am I in truth a king?* or who, incredulous, whisper *Deirdrê is dead, Deirdrê the beautiful is dead, is dead.*

The tradition of accursed families is not the fantasy of one dramatist or of one country or of one time. The *Oresteia* of Aischylos is no

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more than a tragic fugue wherein one hears the cries of uncountable threnodies. The doom of the clan of Usna is not less veiled in terror and perpetuated in fatality than the doom of the Atreidai: and even "The Fall of the House of Usher" is but a single note of the same ancient mystery over which Sophocles brooded in the lamentations which eddy like mournful winds around the House of Labdacus.

Whether the poet turn to the tragedy of the Theban dynasty wherein Laios and Iokaste and Oidipus move like children of fire in a wood doomed to flames; or to the tragedy of the Achaian dynasty, wherein Pelops and Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos, Helen and Iphigenia, Klytaemnestra prophesying and the prophet Kalchas, are like shadowy figures, crowned with terror and beauty, on the verge of a dark sea where the menace of an obscure wind is continually heard beyond the enchanted shore; or to the tragedy of Lear weeping, where all kingship seems as a crown left in the desert to become the spoil of the adder or a pillow for wandering dust; or to the Celtic tragedy of the House of Fionn, where Dermid and Grania, where Oisin and Malveen, are like the winds and the waters, the rains and the lamentations of the hills; or to

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that other and less familiar Gaelic tragedy of the House of Usna, where an old king knows madness because of garnered love spilt and wasted, and where a lamp of deathless beauty shines like a beacon, and where heroes die as leaves fall, and where a wind of prophesying is like the sound of dark birds flying over dark trees in the darkness of forgotten woods:—whether one turn to these, or to the doom of the House of Malatesta, or to the doom of the House of Macbeth, or to the doom of the House of Ravenswood, one turns in vain if he be blind and deaf to the same elemental forces as they move their eternal ichor through the blood that has to-day's warmth in it, that are the same powers though they be known of the obscure and the silent, and are committed like wandering flame to the torch of a ballad as well as to the starry march of the compelling words of genius; are of the same dominion, though that be in the shaken hearts of islesfolk and mountaineers, and not with kings in Mykênai, or by the thrones of Tamburlaine and Aurungzebe, or with great lords and broken nobles and thanes.

But the poet, the dramatist, is not able—is not yet able—to express in beauty and convey in symbol the visible energy of these emotions without resort to the artifice of men and

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women set in array, with harmonious and arbitrary speech given to them, and a background of illusion made unreal by being made emphatic.

If one were to express the passion of remorse under the signal of a Voice lamenting, or the passion of tears under the signal of a Cry, and be content to give no name to these protagonists and to deny them the background of history or legend: and were to unite them in the sequence of significant and essential things which is drama in action, but in a sequence of suggestion and symbol rather than of statement and pageant: he would be told that he had mistaken the method of music passing into drama for the method of verbal illusion passing into drama.

And, while this is so, it cannot be gainsaid that he must not seek to disengage from the creature of his imagination these old allies, the intimate name and the familiar circumstance. It may be true that a Voice and a Cry may suffice, not as choric echo or emphasis, but as protagonists in a drama where the passions and energies and unveiled emotions are unloosed, and elemental strives with elemental, till Love and Terror may in very weariness lie down together, and Death and Sorrow and Wrath and Lamentation disclose their own

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august nakedness, beings standing apart from the mortal wrappings of words and action, of silence and sound and colour and shape, to which our mind compels them. But that is too subtle a dream for realisation to seem possible yet. It is too subtle perhaps even as the insubstantial phantom of a dream, save for those who, hungering after the wild honey of the mind and thirsting for the remoter springs, foresee a time when the imagination shall lay aside words and pigments and clay, as raiment needless during the festivals of the spirit, and express itself in the thoughts which inhabit words—as light inhabits water or as greenness inhabits grass; and in the colours which inhabit pigments, as wild-roses and dew-wet laburnum and white and purple iris gathered from a June morning and hidden in earthenware jars; and in the perpetual and protean energy of Form which, tranced and unique, dreams in clay or sleeps in marble or ivory.

But so long as the imagination dwells in this old convention which imposes upon us the use of events that chime to the bells of the past, and the use of names which are at once congruous and traditional . . . in this convention of episode and phrase in the concert of action and suspense . . . it will be well

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ever and again to turn to those ancestral themes past which so many generations have slipt like sea-going winds over pastures, and upon which the thoughts of many minds have fallen in secret dews. I do not say, for I do not so think, that there might not be drama as moving whether it deal with the event of to-day and the accent of the hour as with a remote accent recovered and with remote event. Some of the dramas of Browning, some of the finer French dramas, some of the short plays of Mr. Yeats and others, are to the point. But, to many minds, there must always be a supreme attraction in great themes of drama as familiar to us as the tales of faerie and wonder to the mind of childhood. The mind, however, need not be bondager to formal tradition. I know one who can evoke modern dramatic scenes by the mere iterance of the great musical names of the imagination . . . Menelaos, Helen, Klytaemnestra, Andromachê, Kassandra, Orestes, blind Oidipus, Elektra, Kreusa, and the like. This is not because these names are in themselves esoteric symbols, or are built of letters of revelation as the fabled tower of Ys was built of evocatory letters made of wind and water, of brownness of earth, of greenness of grass, and of dew, all of which the druids held in the hollows of

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the five vowels. My friend has not seen any representation of the *Agamemnon* or the *Choephoroi*, of *Aias* or *Oidipus* at *Kolonos*, of *Elektra* or *Ion*, or indeed of any Greek play. But he knows the story of every name mentioned in each of the dramas of the three kings of Greek Tragedy. So, as he says, why should he go out to see a trivial play of trivial people animated by trivial emotions against a background of trivial circumstance, when he can sit before his fire and see Elektra and Orestes standing appalled before the dead body of Klytaemnestra, listening if the coming steps are the steps of murdered Aigisthos, and cowering when they see the pale immortal faces of the Dioskoroi: or see Oidipus, that proud king, when he hears the first terrible whisper of destiny from the lips of the prophet Teiresias, or when, blind and abased, he lies in the dust, with Iokaste, wife and queen and revealed mother, already 'a silent fruit on the tree of death,' while, beyond, the Chorus raves: or when, as in *Aias* (as our Cuchulain fighting the waves with drawn sword and foam on his lips, or Concobar in the legendary tale that on the day of the Crucifixion he ran into the woods lopping great branches from the trees and calling 'A king is fallen to-day, an innocent king is slain, a great king is fallen!')



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the mad prince runs among a herd of cattle and slaughters the lowing bulls, thinking them to be Agamemnon and Menelaos—or, later, when he stands subtly smiling as though acquiescing to the fair words of Tekmessa, and then with sidelong eyes goes furtively to the solitary place where he may fall upon his sword? Or, again, he may see Klytaemnestra entering the doorway, with Elektra and Orestes waiting with beating hearts, not as either Euripides or Aischylos has revealed to us; or may see Oidipus staring with sudden scornful wrath at Teiresias, not as either Aischylos or Sophocles has revealed to us; but a Klytaemnestra, an Elektra, an Orestes, an Oidipus, a Teiresias, as revealed to his own vision that is of to-day, shaped from the mould that moulds the spirit of to-day and coloured with the colour of to-day's mind. And here, he says, is his delight. "For I do not live only in the past, but in the present, in these dramas of the mind. The names stand for the elemental passions, and I can come to them through my own gates of to-day as well as through the ancient portals of Aischylos or Sophocles or Euripides: and for background I prefer the flame-light and the sound of the wind to any of the crude illusions of stagecraft."

It is no doubt in this attitude that Racine,

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so French in the accent of his classical genius, looked at the old drama which was his inspiration: that Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Bridges, so English in the accent of their genius, have looked at it; that Echegaray, in Spain, looked at it before he produced his troubled modern *Elektra* which is so remote in shapen thought and coloured semblance from the colour and idea of its prototype; that Gabriele D'Annunzio looked at it before he became obsessed with the old terrible idea of the tangled feet of Destiny, so that a tuft of grass might withhold or a breath from stirred dust empoison, and wrote that most perturbing of all modern dramas, *La Città Morta*.

It concurs, then, that there is no inherent reason why a poet of to-day should not overtake the same themes as Aischylos overtook from Phrynicus, and Sophocles from Aischylos, and Euripides from all three, and Philoclès and Agathôn and Xenoclès indiscriminately. The difficulty is not in the remoteness of the theme, still less in the essential substance. It is in the mistaken idea that the ancient formal method is inevitable, and in the mistaken idea that a theme sustained on essential and elemental things and therefore independent of unique circumstance can be exhausted by the flashing upon it of one great light. *Kassandra*

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and Helen and Iphigenia . . . they live: they are not dead. But, to approach them, to come face to face with them, that is not the reward of the most eager mind, or of the most uplifted desire: it is the reward only of genius akin in quality at least with that of those great ones of old who, like drifting Pharos, flashed across the dark seas of antiquity a dazzling illumination on this lifted wave called Helen, on that lifted wave called Andromachê, on these long rolling billows called Agamemnon or Aias or Orestes. It is not the themes that have receded but the imaginations that have quailed.

Merely to parody the Greek tragedians, by taking a great theme and putting one's presumption and weakness beside it—that is another thing altogether. It is difficult after Shelley and Robert Browning, after Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Robert Bridges, to say that no modern English poet has achieved a play with a Greek heart . . . no play written as a nineteenth century Sophocles or Euripides or Agathôn would have written it. Even on *Prometheus Unbound* and *Atalanta in Calydon*, even on *Ercchtheus*, the Gothic genius of the North has laid a touch as delicate as frost, as durable as the finger of primeval fire on the brows of the immemorial rock. Perhaps the

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plays of Mr. Bridges are more truly classical than any modern drama since Racine. But their flame is flame seen in a mirror: we see the glow, we are intellectually warmed by it, but we do not feel it . . . our minds only, not our hearts that should burn, our nerves that should thrill, respond.

The reason, I do not doubt, is mainly a physical rather than an intellectual difficulty. It is the indwelling difficulty. It is the indwelling spirit and not the magnetic mind that is wayward and eager to evade the compelling wand of the imagination. For the spirit is not under the spell of tradition. It wishes to go its own way. Tradition says, if you would write of the slaying of Klytaemnestra you must present a recognisable Elektra and a recognisable Orestes, and Dioskoroi recognisable as Dioskoroi against a recognisable background: but to the spirit Elektra and Orestes are simply abstract terms of the theatre of the imagination, the Dioskoroi are august powers, winnowers of fate, and the old Greek background is but a remembered semblance of a living stage that is not to-day what it was yesterday or shall be to-morrow, and yet is ever in essentials the same.

There is not one of the Greek dramas which might not in spiritual identity be achieved to-

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day by genius that, with equality of power, could perceive the intransiency of the essential and immortal factors in the life of the imagination and the mutability of what is accidental in time and circumstance.

We are, I believe, turning toward a new theatre. The theatre of Ibsen, and all it stands for, is become outworn as a compelling influence. Its inherent tendency to demonstrate intellectually from a series of incontrovertible material facts is not adequate for those who would see in the drama the means to demonstrate symbolically from a sequence of intuitive perception. A subtle French critic, writing of the theatre of Ibsen, appreciates it as a theatre more negative than positive, more revolutionary than foundational, more intellectual than religious. "À ce théâtre amer et sec," he adds, "l'âme moderne ne peut étancher toutes ses soifs d'infini et d'absolu."

I think that, there, the right thing is said, as well as the significant indication given. "More intellectual than religious": that is, more congruous with the method of the mirror that gathers and reveals certain facets of the spirit than with the spirit who as in a glass darkly looks into the mirror. "More intellectual than religious": that is, more persuaded

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by the sight that reveals the visible than by the vision that perceives what materially is not visible. "At this bitter and dry theatre of the intellect, the modern soul cannot quench its thirst for the infinite and absolute": and that is the reason, alone adequate, why to-day the minds of men are turning to a new drama, wherein thoughts and ideas and intuitions shall play a more significant part than the acted similitudes of the lesser emotions that are not so much the incalculable life of the soul as the conditioned energies of the body. The Psychic Drama shall not be less nervous; but the emotional energy shall be along the nerves of the spirit, which sees beneath and above and beyond, rather than merely along the nerves of material life, which sees only that which is in the line of sight.

And as I have written elsewhere, it may well be that, in a day of outworn conventions, many of us are ready to turn gladly from the scenic illusions of the stage carpenter and the palpable illusions of the playwright, to the ever-new illusions of the dreaming mind, woven in a new intense dramatic reality against "imagined tapestries"

*. . . dream-coloured dramas of the mind  
Best seen against imagined tapestries . . .*

## Foreword

against revealing shadows and tragic glooms and radiances as real, and as near, as the crude symbols of painted boards and stereotyped phrase in which we still have a receding pleasure.

I think the profoundest utterance I know, witnessing to the fundamentally psychical nature of the drama, is a phrase of Chateaubriand which I came upon recently in Book V of his *Mémoires* . . . "to recover the desert I took refuge in the theatre." The whole effort of a civilisation become anæmic and disillusioned must be to "recover the desert." That is a central truth, perceived now of many who are still the few. This great writer knew that in the *théâtre de l'âme* lay the subtlest and most searching means for the imagination to compel reality to dreams, to compel actuality to vision, to compel to the symbolic congregation of words the bewildered throng of wandering and illusive thoughts and ideas. By "the desert" he meant that wilderness, that actual or symbolic solitude, to which the creative imagination goes as the curlew to the wastes or as the mew to foam and wind.

Other writers speak of "nature" and "solitude" as though regarding them as sanctuaries where the passions may, like the wild falcons,

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cover their faces with their wings, and be still. Chateaubriand was of those few who look upon the solitudes of nature as enchanted lands, where terror walks with beauty, and where dreams start affrighted from quiet pools because the shadow of invisible fear falls past their shadowy hair and they see the phantom slipping from depth to depth as a wind-eddy from leaf to leaf. He was of those who looked upon solitude as, of old, anchorites looked upon waste places where the vulture had her eyrie and the hyena wailed and in desolate twilights the lioness filled the dark with the hunger of her young. "Be upon your guard against solitude: the great passions are solitary, and to transport them to the desert is to restore them to their triumph."

But I have wandered from the narrower path on which I set out. Elsewhere, I hope to express more adequately what here I have cursorily outlined, and, also tentatively to illustrate the Psychic Drama as thus indicated. It is because my mind is occupied with many problems of a new drama that I have thus burdened a short play, remembered as it were from some vast unwritten ancient drama, with so lengthy a preface. However, it may stand as the statement of a movement of return on



## *Foreword*

the part of individual thought, that I believe to be indicative of a movement of return on the part of modern thought, to the instinct of organic unity and . . . in the deep sense of the term . . . to a religious inspiration.

F. M.



THE IMMORTAL HOUR  
A DRAMA



## NOTE

*The Immortal Hour* is founded on the ancient Celtic legend of Midir and Etain (or Edane). I have no doubt that the legend, though only honey for the later Gaelic poets, had originally a deep significance, and that the Wooing to the Otherworld . . . i.e., to the Gaelic *Tir na 'n Og*, the Land of Youth, of the Ever Living, of Love, the Land of Heart's Desire . . . of the beautiful woman Etain, wife of King Eochaidh, symbolised another wooing and another mystery than that alone of the man for the woman. It symbolised, I think, the winning of life back to the world after an enforced thralldom: the renewal of Spring: in other words, Etain is a Gaelic Eurydice, Midir a Gaelic Orpheus who penetrated the dismal realm of Eochaidh, and Eochaidh but a humanised Gaelic Dis. It is not Persephone, gathering flowers on Enna, whom legend remembers here, but the not less beautiful love of Apollo's son, slain by the treacherous earth in the guise of a grass-hid asp as she flees from her pursuer: nor is there word

## Note

of Demeter, nor yet of Aristæus. To the Gaelic mind, remembering what it had dreamed in the Vale of Tempe (or in Asian valleys, long before the Song-Charmer had a Greek muse for mother and a birthright in Hellas) the myths of Persephone and Eurydice might well be identified, so that Orpheus sought each or both-in-one, in the gloomy underworld. And the tale suffered no more than a sea-change when, by the sundown shores, it showed Eurydice-Persephone as Etain being wooed back to sunshine and glad life by the longing passion of Orpheus as Midir. For in the Gaelic mythology, Midir, too, is a son of light, a servant of song, a son of Apollo, being of the divine race of Oengus the Sun-God, Lord of Life and Death. By his symbol of the dew he is also the Restorer, the Reviver.

Of Dalua I can say but a word here.<sup>1</sup> He is the Amadan-Dhu, or Dark Fool, the Faery Fool, whose touch is madness or death for any mortal: whose falling shadow even causes bewilderment and forgetfulness. The Fool is

<sup>1</sup>The name *Dalua* and *Etain* should be pronounced *Da-lōō-ā*, and *Ēh-tain* (short, as in *satın*). The name of Eochaidh, who later wins Etain for a time, is pronounced *Yōchay*, and that of Midir, *Mid'-eer* (short, as in *mid-day*).

## Note

at once an elder and dreadful god, a mysterious and potent spirit, avoided even of the proud immortal folk themselves: and an abstraction, "the shadow of pale hopes, forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds." He is, too, to my imagining, madness incorporate as a living force. In several of my writings this dark presence intervenes as a shadow . . . sometimes without being named, or as an elemental force, as in the evil music of Gloom Achanna in the tale called "The Dan-Nan-Ron," sometimes as a spirit of evil, as in "Dalua," the opening tale in *The Dominion of Dreams*.

The Black Hawk (or Eagle) alluded to in first "direction" preceding text is the *Iolair Dhu*, which on the first day of the world launched itself into the darkness and has never yet caught up with the dawn, though its rising or sinking shadow may be seen over the edge of dark at the night-dusk or morning twilight. It should be added that with the ancient Gaels (and with the few to-day who have not forgotten or do not disdain the old wisdom) the Hidden People (the *Sidhe* or *Shee*; or *Shee'an* or *Sheechun* of the Isles) were great and potent, not small and insignificant beings. "Mab" long ago was the terrible "dark" queen, Maive (*Medb*, *Medbh*,

## Note

*Mabh*) : and the still more ancient Puck was not a frolicsome spirit, but a shadowy and dreadful Power.

Students of Celtic mythology will be familiar with the legend of the love of Etain or Edane (herself half divine of race), wife of Eochaidh, the High King, for a mysterious stranger who came to the King's Dûn, and played chess with the King, and won Etain away with him, he being Midir, a King in the Otherworld. Some may look upon Midir as another Orpheus, and upon Etain as a Eurydice with the significance of Proserpine: others may see also in Etain, what I see, and would convey in *The Immortal Hour*, a symbol of the wayward but home-wandering soul; and in Midir, a symbol of the Spirit; and in Eochaidh, a symbol of the mundane life, of mortal love. Others will see only the sweet vanity of the phosphorescent play of the mythopœic Gaelic mind, or indeed not even this, but only the natural dreaming of the Gaelic imagination, ever in love with fantasy and with beauty in fantasy. But, lest the old and the new be confused, this should be added: . . . That Eochaidh finds Etain in the way he does, and that Dalua comes and goes between Etain and Eochaidh as he comes and goes, and the meaning that lies in the obscure love of Dalua, and the bewildered love of



*Note*

Etain, and the mortal love of Eochaidh, and the immortal love of Midir . . . this is new, perhaps: though what seems new may be the old become transparent only, the old in turn being often the new seen in reverse . . . as one may for the first time see a star in a deep water that has already immemorially mirrored it. Nor has Dalua part or mention in the antique legend. Like other ancient things, this divinity hath come secretly upon us in a forgetful time, new and strange and terrible, though his unremembered shadow crossed our way when first we set out on our long travel, in the youth of the world.

F. M.



ACT I

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EOCHAIDH. *High King of Ireland.*

ETAIN. *A Lost Princess, afterwards  
Eochaidh's Queen.*

MIDIR. *A Prince of the Hidden People.*

DALUA. *The Amadan-Dhu.*

*Two Peasants, Manus and Maive, and Har-  
pers, Warriors, etc.*

## ACT I

*A forest glade at the rising of the moon. In the background is the hazel-shadowed pool of a wide waste of water. As the moonshine falls upon an ancient oak to the right, the tall figure of DALUA is seen leaning against the bole. He is clad in black, with a small black cap from which hangs a black hawk's feather.*

DALUA

*[Slowly coming out of the shadow*

By dim moon-glimmering coasts and dim grey wastes

Of thistle-gathered shingle, and sea-murmuring woods

Trod once but now untrod . . . under grey skies

That had the grey wave sighing in their sails  
And in their drooping sails the grey sea-ebb,  
And with the grey wind wailing evermore  
Blowing the dun leaf from the blackening trees,

I have travelled from one darkness to another.

*The Immortal Hour*

VOICES IN THE WOOD

Though you have travelled from one darkness  
to another  
Following the dun leaf from the blackening  
trees  
That the grey wind harries, and have trodden  
the woods  
Where the grey-hooded crows that once were  
men  
Gather in multitude from the long grey wastes  
Of thistled shingle by sea-murmurous coasts,  
Yet you have come no further than a rood,  
A little rood of ground in a circle woven.

DALUA

My lips have lost the salt of the driven foam,  
Howbeit I hear no more the long dull roar,  
Of the long grey beaches of the Hebrides.

VOICES

Behind the little windless leaves of the wood  
The sea-wastes of the wind-worn Hebrides  
With thunderous crashes falling wave on  
wave,  
Are but the troubled sighs of a great silence.

DALUA

To the world's end I have come, to the  
world's end.

*The Immortal Hour*

VOICES

You have come but a little way who think so  
far  
The long uncounted leagues to the world's  
end:  
And now you are mazed because you stand at  
the edge  
Where the last tangled slope leans over the  
abyss.

DALUA

You know not who I am, sombre and ancient  
voices.

[*Silence*

And if I tread the long, continuous way  
Within a narrow round, not thinking it  
long,  
And fare a single hour thinking it many  
days,  
I am not first or last, of the Immortal Clan,  
For whom the long ways of the world are  
brief  
And the short ways heavy with unimagined  
time.

VOICES IN THE WOOD

There is no first or last, or any end.

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

I have come hither, led by dreams and  
visions,  
And know not why I come, and to what  
end,  
And wherefore mid the noise of chariot  
wheels  
Where the swung world roars down the starry  
ways  
The Voice I know and dread was one with  
me,  
As the uplifted grain and wind are one.

VOICES

Above you is the light of a wandering  
star . . .  
O Son of the Wandering Star, we know you  
now!

DALUA

Like great black birds the demons haunt the  
woods . . .  
Hail, ye unknown who know me! . . .

A VOICE

Hail, Son of Shadow!



*The Immortal Hour*

VOICES

Hail, Brother of the strong, immortal gods,  
And of the gods who have passed into a  
sleep  
In sandless hollows of forgotten hills,  
And of the homeless, sad, bewildered gods  
Who as grey wandering mists lick up of the  
wind  
Pass slowly in the dull unfriendly light  
Of the cold, curious eyes of envious  
men. . . .

OTHER VOICES

. . . . . Ai! Ai!  
Who yet have that which gives their mortal  
clay  
A light and a power and a wonder that none  
has  
Of all the Clans of the Shee, save only those  
who are not sprung of Orchil and of Kail  
The mother and father of the earth-wrought  
folk,  
Greater than men but less than Orchil and  
Kail,  
As they in turn are less than sky-set Lu  
Or Oengus who is keeper of the four great  
keys . . .

*The Immortal Hour*

OTHER VOICES

Than sky-set Lu who leads the hosts of the  
stars . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Dagda, Lord of Thunder and of Si-  
lence,  
And Ana, the ancient Mother of the gods. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Mánan of the innumerable waters. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than moon-crown'd Brigid of the undying  
flame. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Midir of the Dew and the Evening  
Star. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Oengus, keeper of the East: of Birth:  
of Song:  
The keeper of the South: of Passion: and of  
War:  
The keeper of the West: of Sorrow: of  
Dreams:  
The keeper of the North: of Death: of Life.

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

Yet one more ancient even than the god of  
the sun,  
Than flame-haired Oengus, lord of Love and  
Death,  
Holds the last dreadful key . . . Oblivion.

VOICES

Dim ages that are dust are but the loosened  
laughters  
Spilt in the youth of Oengus the Ever-Young!

DALUA

I am old, more old, more ancient than the  
gods,  
For I am son of Shadow, eldest god  
Who dreamed the passionate and terrible  
dreams  
We have called Fire and Light, Water and  
Wind,  
Air, Darkness, Death, Change, and Decay,  
and Birth  
And all the infinite bitter range that is.

*The Immortal Hour*

A VOICE

Brother and kin to all the twilit gods,  
Living, forgot, long dead: sad Shadow of  
pale hopes,  
Forgotten dreams, and madness of men's  
minds:

Outcast among the gods, and called the Fool,  
Yet dreaded even by those immortal eyes  
Because thy fateful touch can wreck the mind  
Or lay a frost of silence on the heart:  
Dalua, hail! . . .

DALUA

I am but what I am.  
I am no thirsty evil lapping life.

*[Loud laughters from the wood*

Laugh not, ye outcasts of the invisible world,  
For Lu and Oengus laugh not, nor the gods  
Safe set above the perishable stars.

*[Silence*

They laugh not, nor any in the high celestial  
house.

Their proud immortal eyes grow dim and  
clouded

“ When as a morning shadow I am gathered  
Into their holy light, for well they know  
The dreadful finger of the Nameless One,

*The Immortal Hour*

That moves as a shadow falls. For I Dalua  
Am yet the blown leaf of the unknown  
powers. /

VOICES

*[Tumultuously]*

We too are the blown leaves of the unseen  
powers.

DALUA

Demons and Dreams and Shadows, and all ye  
Invisible folk who haunt the darkling ways,  
I am grown weary, who have stooped and lain  
Over the green edge o' the shaken world  
And seen beneath the whirling maze of stars  
Infinite gulfs of silence, and the obscure  
Abysmal wastes where Time hath never trod.

VOICES

We too are weary: we are Weariness.

DALUA

*[Listening intently]*

Voices of shadowy things, be still! I hear  
The feet of one who wanders through the  
wood.

*The Immortal Hour*

VOICES

We who are the children of the broken way,  
The wandered wind, the idle wave, blown  
leaves,  
The wild distempered hour and swirling dust,  
Hail thee, Dalua, Herdsman of fallen stars,  
Shepherd of Shadows! Lord of the Hidden  
Way!

DALUA

*[Going back to the oak*

Voices be still! The woods are suddenly  
troubled.

I hear the footfall of predestined things.

*[Enter ETAIN, in a coiled robe of pale  
green, with mistletoe intertwined  
in her long, dark, unloosened hair.  
She comes slowly forward, and  
stands silent, looking at the moon-  
shine on the water.*

ETAIN

*[Singing to a slow monotonous air*  
Fair is the moonlight  
And fair the wood,  
But not so fair  
As the place I come from.

*The Immortal Hour*

Why did I leave it,  
The beautiful country,  
Where Death is only  
A drifting Shadow?

O face of Love,  
Of Dream and Longing,  
There is sorrow upon me  
That I am here.

I will go back  
To the Country of the Young,  
And see again  
The lances of the Shee

As they keep hosting  
With laughing cries  
In pale places  
Under the moon.

[ETAIN *turns, and walks slowly forward. She starts as she hears a peculiar cry from the wood*

ETAIN

None made that cry who has not known the  
Shee.

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

*[Coming forward and bowing low with  
fantastic grace*

Hail, daughter of kings, and star among the  
dreams

Which are the lives and souls of whom have  
won

The Country of the Young!

ETAIN

I know you not:

But though I have not seen your face before,  
I think you are of those who have not kept  
The bitter honey of mortality,

But are among the deathless folk who dwell  
In hollow hills, or isles far off, or where  
Flatheanas lies, or cold Ifurin is.

DALUA

I have come far, led here by dreams and  
visions.

ETAIN

By dreams and visions led I too have come  
But know not whence or by what devious way,  
Nor to what end I am come through these dim  
woods

To this grey lonely loch.



*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

*[Touching her lightly with the shadow  
of his hand*

Have you forgot  
The delicate smiling land beneath the arcs  
Which day and night and momentarily are wove  
Between its peaceful shores and the vast gulf  
Of dreadful silence and the unpathwayed  
dark?

ETAIN

If somewhat I remember, more is lost.  
Have I come here to meet with you, fair sir,  
Whose name I do not know, whose face is  
strange?

DALUA

Can you remember. . . .

ETAIN

I have forgotten all . . .  
I can remember nothing: no, not this  
The little song I sang ev'n now, or what sweet  
thought,  
What ache of longing lay behind the song.  
All is forgot. And this has come to me  
The wind-way of the leaf. But now my  
thoughts

*The Immortal Hour*

Ran leaping through the green ways of my  
mind  
Like fawns at play: but now I know no more  
That this: that I am Etain White o' the Wave,  
Etain come hither from the lovely land  
Where the immortal Shee fill up their lives  
As flowers with honey brewed of summer  
airs,  
Flame of the sun, dawn-rains, and evening  
dews.

DALUA

[*Sombrely*

How knew you not that once, where the un-  
setting moon  
The grassy elf mounds fills with drowsy  
gold,  
I kissed your shadowy lips beneath the thorn  
Heavy with old foam of changeless blossom?

ETAIN

[*Leaning forward and looking into his  
face*

You loved me once? I have no memory  
Of this: if once you loved me, have you lost  
The subtle breath of love, the sudden fire?  
For you are cold as are your shadowy eyes.

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

*[Unstirring*

When, at the last, amid the o'erwearied  
Shee—

Weary of long delight and deathless joys—  
One you shall love may fade before your eyes,  
Before your eyes may fade, and be as mist  
Caught in the sunny hollow of Lu's hand,  
Lord of the Day. . . .

ETAIN

*[Eagerly, with her left hand pressed  
against her heart*

What then?

DALUA

It may be then, white dove,  
Your eyes may dwell on one on whom falls  
not  
The first chill breath blown from the Un-  
known Land,  
Of which the tender poets of the Shee  
Sing in the dewy eyes when the wild deer  
Are milked, and 'neath the evening-star moths  
rise #  
Grey-gold against a wave-uplifted moon.

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

Well?

DALUA

Then I, Dalua, in that fateful hour,  
Shall know the star-song of supreme desire,  
And placing hand upon the perfect fruit  
Shall taste and die. . . .

[*A pause*

. . . or, if I do not die,  
Shall know the sweet fruit mine, then see it  
slip  
Down through dim branches into the abyss  
Where all sweet fruit that is, the souls of men,  
The joyous Shee, old gods, all beautiful words,  
Song, music, dreams, desires, shall in the end  
Sway like blown moths against the rosewhite  
flame  
That is the fiery plume upon the brows  
Of Him called Silence.

ETAIN

I do not understand:  
Your love shall fall about me like sweet rain  
In drouth of death: so much I hear and know:  
But how can death o'ertake the immortal folk  
With whom I dwell? And if you love me  
thus,

*The Immortal Hour*

Why is there neither word nor smile nor  
glance  
Of love, nor any little sign that love  
Shakes like a windy reed within your heart?

DALUA

[*Sombrely*

I am Dalua.

ETAIN

I have heard lips whisper  
Of one Dalua, but with sucked-in breath,  
As though the lips were fearful of the word.  
No more than this I know, no more recall.

DALUA

I cannot give you word of love, or kiss,  
Sweet love, for in my fatal breath there lies  
The subtle air of madness: from my hand  
Death shoots an arrowy tongue, if I but touch  
The unsuspecting clay with bitter heed,  
With hate darkling as the swift winter hail,  
Or sudden malice such as lifts and falls  
A dreadful shadow of ill within my mind.  
Nor could I if I would. We are sheep led  
By an unknown Shepherd, we who are the  
Shee,  
For all we dream we are as gods, and far  
Upgathered from the little woes of men.

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

Then why this meeting, here in this old wood,  
By moonlight, by this melancholy water?

DALUA

I knew not: now I know. A king of men  
Has wooed the Immortal Hour. He seeks to  
know

The joy that is more great than joy  
The beauty of the old green earth can give.  
He has known dreams, and because bitter  
dreams

Have sweeter been than honey he has sought  
The open road that lies mid shadowy things.  
He hath sought and found and called upon the  
Shee

To lead his love to one more beautiful  
Than any mortal maid, so fair that he  
Shall know a joy beyond all mortal joy,  
And stand silent and rapt beside the gate,  
The rainbow gate of her whom none may  
find,  
The Beauty of all Beauty.

ETAIN

Can this be?

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

Nay, but he doth not know the end. There is  
But one way to that Gate: it is not Love  
Aflame with all desire, but Love at peace.

ETAIN

Who is this poet, this king?

DALUA

Led here by dreams,  
By dreams and visions led as you and I,  
His feet are nearing us. When you are won  
By love and adoration, star of dreams,  
And take sweet mortal clay, and have forgot  
The love-sweet whisper of the King of The  
Shee,  
And, even as now, hear Midir's name unmov'd  
When you are won thus, Etain, and none  
know,  
Not any of your kindred, whence unknown  
As all unknowing you have come, for you  
The wayward thistledown of fate shall blow  
On the same idle wind—the doom of him  
Who blindfold seeks you.

ETAIN

But he may not love?

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

Yes, he shall love. Upon him I shall lay  
My touch, the touch of him men dread and  
call

The Amadan-Dhu, the Dark One, Fairy Fool.  
He shall have madness even as he wills,  
And think it wisdom. I shall be his thought—  
A dream within a dream, the flame wherein  
The white moths of his thought shall rise and  
die.

*[A blast of a horn is heard*

DALUA

*[Abruptly*

FAREWELL.

*[Touches her lightly with the shadow  
of his hand, and whispers in her  
ear*

Now go. The huntsman's lodge is near.  
I have told all that need be told, and given  
Bewilderment and dreams, but dreams that  
are

The fruit of that sweet clay of which I spoke.

*[ETAİN slowly goes, putting her hand  
to her head bewilderedly. Before  
she passes into and out of sight in  
the wood, she sings plaintively*



*The Immortal Hour*

*I would go back  
To the Country of the Young,  
And see again  
The lances of the Shee,*

*As they keep their hosting  
With laughing cries  
In pale places  
Under the moon.*

SCENE II.—*The same.*

[DALUA stands, waiting the coming of  
EOCHAIDH the king. The king is  
clad in a leathern hunting dress,  
with a cleft helmet surmounted by  
a dragon in pale fndruiney

EOCHAIDH

[*Stopping abruptly*

Sir, I am glad. I had not thought to see  
One here.

DALUA

[*Taking off his cap, and sweeping it low*  
The king is welcome here.

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

The king?

How know you that the king is here? Far off  
The war-horns bray about my threatened  
Dûn.

None knows that I am here.

DALUA

And why, O king?

EOCHAIDH

For I am weary of wars and idle strife,  
Who have no joy in all these little things  
Men break their lives upon. But in my dreams,  
In dreams I have seen that which climbs the  
stars  
And sings upon me through my lonely hours  
And will not let me be.

DALUA

What song is that?

EOCHAIDH

The song . . . but who is he who knows the  
king  
Here in this dim, remote, forgotten wood,  
Where led by dreams and visions I have come?

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

Those led by dreams shall be misled, O king!

EOCHAIÐH

You are no druid: no knight in arms: none  
Whom I have seen.

DALUA

I have known camps of men,  
The minds and souls of men, and I have heard  
Eochaidh the king sighing out his soul in  
sighs.

EOCHAIÐH

Tell me your name.

DALUA

I am called Dalua.

EOCHAIÐH

*[Ponderingly]*

I have not heard that name, and yet in dreams  
I have known one who waved a shadowy  
plume  
And smiling said, "I am Dalua." Speak:  
Are you this same Dalua?

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

I have come  
To this lone wood and to this lonely mere  
To drink from out the Fountain of all dreams,  
The Shadowy Fount of Beauty.

EOCHAI DH

*[Eagerly*

At last!

The Fount of Beauty, Fountain of all dreams!  
Now am I come upon my long desire!  
The days have trampled me like armed men  
Thrusting their spears as ever on they go,  
And I am weary of all things save the stars,  
The wind, shadows and moonrise, and strange  
dreams.

If you can show me this immortal Fount  
Whatso you will is yours.

DALUA

*[Touching him lightly*

You are the king,

And know, now, whence you came, and to  
what end?

EOCHAI DH

*[Confusedly*

The king? The king? What king?

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

You are the king?

EOCHAIDH

A king of shadows, I! I am no king.

DALUA

And whither now, and whence?

EOCHAIDH

I am not come  
From any place I know of, and I go  
Where dreams and visions lead me.

*[Suddenly a fountain rises in the mere,  
the spray rising high in the moon-  
shine*

DALUA

Look, O king!

EOCHAIDH

*[Staring eagerly, with hand above his  
eyes*

I cannot see what you would have me see.

*The Immortal Hour*

DALUA

*[Plucking a branch from a mountain-  
ash, and waving it before the king's  
face*

Look!

EOCHAIDH

I see a Fountain and within its shadow  
A great fish swims, and on the moveless wave  
The scarlet berries float: dim mid the depths  
The face of One I see, most calm and great,  
August, with mournful eyes.

DALUA

Ask what you will.

EOCHAIDH

The word of wisdom, O thou hidden God:  
Show me my star of dreams, show me the  
way!

A VOICE

*[Solemnly*

*[Return, O Eochaidh Airemh, wander-  
ing king*

EOCHAIDH

That shall not be. No backward way is mine.  
If I indeed be king, then kingly I  
Shall cleave my way through shadows, as  
through men.

*The Immortal Hour*

A VOICE

*Return!*

EOCHAIDH

Nay, by the Sun and Moon, I swear  
I will not turn my feet.

A VOICE

*Return! Return!*

EOCHAIDH

*[Hesitating, turns to look at DALUA,  
who has swiftly and silently with-  
drawn into the wood*

*[Silence*

There is no backward way for such as I!  
Howbeit—for I am shaken with old dreams,  
And as an idle wave tossed to and fro—  
I will go hence: I will go back to where  
The quiet moonlight spills from the black  
brow  
Of the great hill that towers above the lands  
Wherein men hail me king.

*[DALUA'S laughter comes from the  
wood*

DALUA

Follow, O follow, king of dreams and sha-  
dows!

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

I follow. . . .

[*Exit*

SCENE III.—*The rude interior of the cabin of the huntsman, MÁNUS. He is sitting, clad in deerskin, with strapped sandals, before a fire of pine-logs. Long, unkempt, black hair falls about his face. His wife, MAIVE, a worn woman with a scared look, stands at the back, plucking feathers from a dead cockerel. At the other side of the hearth, ETAIN sits.*

MÁNUS

I've seen that man before who came to-night.

[*He has addressed no one, and no one answers*

I say I have seen that man before.

MAIVE

Hush Mánus

Beware of what you say. How can we tell  
Who comes, who goes? And, too, good man,  
you've had  
Three golden pieces.

MÁNUS

Aye, they are put by,  
That comforts me: for gold is ever gold.



*The Immortal Hour*

MAIVE

One was for her who stays with us to-night  
And shares our scanty fare.

*[Making a curtsey*

Right welcome, too:

The other was for any who might come,  
Asking for bite or sup, for fireside warmth.  
The third. . . .

MÁNUS

Yes, woman, yes, I know: for silence. Hush!

*[A moan of wind is heard*

There comes the rain.

ETAIN

*[Rising and going to the left doorway,  
pulls back the hide. Shuddering,  
she thrusts it crosswise again, and  
returns*

It was so beautiful,  
So still, with not a breath of wind, and now  
The hill-wind moans, the night is filled with  
tears  
Of bitter rain. Good people, have you seen  
Such quiet eyes fall into stormy nights  
Before?

*The Immortal Hour*

MÁNUS

Who knows the wild way of the wind :  
The wild way of the rain? They come, and go :  
We stay. We wait. We listen. Not for us  
To ask, to wonder.

MAIVE

They're more great than we.  
They are so old, the wind and rain, so old,  
They know all things, Grey Feathers and Blind  
Eyes!

ETAIN

Who? . . . Who? . . .

MÁNUS

. . . the woman speaks of Wind and Rain :  
Blind Eyes, the dreadful one whom none has  
seen,  
Whose voice we hear : Grey Feathers, his pale  
love,  
Who flies before or follows, grey in rains,  
Fierce blue in hail, death-white in whirling  
snows.

ETAIN

Does any ever come to you by night?  
. . . lost woodlander, stray wayfarer from  
the hills,  
Merchant or warrior from the far-off plains?

*The Immortal Hour*

MÁNUS

None.

MAIVE

We are so far away: so far, I think  
Sometimes, we must be close upon the edge  
Of the green earth, there where the old tales  
say  
The bramble-bushes and the heather make  
A hollow tangle over the abyss.

ETAIN

But sometimes . . . sometimes. . . . Tell me:  
have you heard,  
By dusk or moonset have you never heard  
Sweet voices, delicate music? . . . never seen  
The passage of the lordly beautiful ones  
Men call the Shee?

MÁNUS

*[Rising abruptly*

*We do not speak of them.*

MAIVE

Hark!

*[A stronger blast strikes the house.  
MÁNUS throws more logs on the  
fire*

*The Immortal Hour*

MAIVE

Hark! a second time I've heard a cry!

*[All listen. Suddenly a loud knock is heard. MAIVE covers her head, and cowers beside the fire, behind ETAIN, who rises. MÁNUS seizes a spear, and stands waiting. The heavy knock is repeated.]*

A VOICE

Open, good folk!

MÁNUS

There is no door to ope:  
Thrust back the skins from off the post.

*[The ox-fell is thrust aside, and EOCHAIÐH enters. He stops at the threshold, staring at ETAIN]*

EOCHAIÐH

Good folk,

I give you greeting.

*[A pause]*

Lady, I bow my knee.

*[ETAIN bows slowly in return.]*

*EOCHAIÐH comes a few steps forward, stops, and looks fixedly at ETAIN. He says slowly—*

You have great beauty.

*[A pause]*

*The Immortal Hour*

I have never seen  
Beauty so great, so wonderful. In dreams,  
In dreams alone such beauty have I seen,  
A star above my dusk.

ETAIN

Sir, I pray you  
Draw near the fire. This bitter wind and rain  
Must sure have chilled you.

*[She points to her vacant three-legged stool. As ECHAIÐH slowly passes her, MÁNUS slides his hand over his shoulder and back*

MÁNUS

*[With a strange look at MAIVE*  
He is not wet. The driving rains have left  
No single drop!

MAIVE

*[Piteously*  
Good sir! brave lord! good sir!  
Have pity on us: sir, have pity!  
We are poor, and all alone, and have no wile  
To save ourselves from great ones, or from  
those  
Who dwell in secret places on the hills  
Or wander where they will in shadow clothed.

*The Immortal Hour*

MÁNUS

*Hush*, woman! Name no names: and speak  
no word  
Of them who come unbidden and unknown.  
Good, sir, you are most welcome. I am  
Mánus,  
And this poor woman is Maive, my childless  
wife,  
And this is a great lady of the land  
Who shelters here to-night. Her name is  
Etain.

ECHADH

Tell me, good Mánus: who else is here, or  
whom  
You may expect?

MÁNUS

No one, fair lord. The wild  
Gray stormy seas are doors that shut the world  
From us poor island-folk. . . .

MAIVE

We are alone,  
We're all alone, fair sir: there is none here  
But whom you see. Gray Feathers and Blind  
Eyes  
Are all we know without.

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

Who are these others?

MÁNUS

The woman speaks, sir, of the Wind and Rain.  
These unknown gods are as all gods that are,  
And do not love to have their sacred names  
Used lightly: so we speak of him who lifts  
A ceaseless wing across all lands and seas,  
Moaning or glad, and flieth all unseeing  
From darkness into darkness, as Blind Eyes:  
And her, his lovely bride, for he is deaf and so  
Veers this way and that for ever, seeing not  
His love who breaks in tears beneath his wings  
Or falls in snows before his frosty breath—  
Her we name thus, Grey Feathers.

MAIVE

As for us,  
We are poor lonely folk, and mean no wrong.  
Sir, sir, if you are of the nameless ones,  
The noble nameless ones, do us no ill!

EOCHAIDH

Good folk, I mean no ill. Nor am I made  
Of other clay than yours. I am a man.  
Let me have shelter here to-night: to-morrow  
I will go hence.

*The Immortal Hour*

MÁNUS

You are most welcome, sir.

EOCHAIDH

And you, fair Etain, is it with your will  
That I be sheltered from the wind and rain?

ETAIN

How could I grudge you that ungrudged to  
me?

*[MÁNUS and MAIVE withdraw into the  
background.. The light wanes, as  
the logs give less flame. EOCHAIDH  
speaks in a low, strained voice*

Etain, fair beautiful love, at last I know  
Why dreams have led me hither. All these  
years  
These eyes like stars have led me: all these  
years  
This love that dwells like moonlight in your  
face  
Has been the wind that moved my idle  
wave.  
Forgive presumptuous words. I mean no ill.  
I am a king, and kingly. Ard-Righ, I am,  
Ard-Righ of Eiré.



*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

And your name, fair lord?

EOCHAIDH

Eochaidh Airemh.

ETAIN

And I am Etain called,  
Daughter of lordly ones, of princely line.  
But more I cannot say, for on my mind  
A strange forgetful cloud bewilders me,  
And I have memory only of those things  
Of which I cannot speak, being under bond  
To keep the silence of my lordly folk.  
How I came here, or to what end, or why  
I am left here, I know not.

EOCHAIDH

Truly, I

*[Taking her hand in his*

Now know full well.

Etain, dear love, my dreams  
Come true. I have seen this dim pale face in  
dreams  
For days and months and years; till at the  
last  
Too great a spell of beauty held my hours.

*The Immortal Hour*

My kingdom was no more to me than sand,  
Or a green palace built of August leaves  
Already yellowing, waiting for the wind  
To scatter them to north and south and  
east.

I have forgotten all that men hold dear,  
And given my kingdom to the wheeling  
crows,

The trampling desert hinds, the snarling  
fox.

I have no thought, no dream, no hope, but  
this—

*[Kissing her upon the brow*

To call you love, to take you hence, my  
Queen—

Queen of my Heart, my Queen, my Dream,  
my Queen!

ETAIN

*[Looking into his face, with thrown-  
back head*

I too, I too, am lifted with the breath  
Of a tumultous wind. My lord and king,  
I too am lit with fire, which fills my heart,  
And lifts it like a flame to burn with thine,  
To pass and be at one and flame in thine,  
My, lord, my king! My lord, my lord, my  
king!

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

The years, the bitter years of all the world  
Are now no more. We have gained that  
which stands " "

Above the trampling feet of hurrying years.

*[A brief burst of mocking laughter is  
heard*

EOCHAIDH

*[Turning angrily, and looking into the  
shadowy background where are*

MÁNUS *and* MAIVE

Who laughed? What means that laughter?

MÁNUS

*[Sullenly*

No one laughed.

EOCHAIDH

Who laughed? Who laughed?

MAIVE

Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes.

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

*[Wearily*

None laughed. It was the hooting of an owl.  
Dear lord, sit here. I am weary.

*[MÁNUS and MAIVE withdraw, and lie  
down. EOCHAIDH and ETAIN sit  
before the smouldering fire. The  
room darkens. Suddenly EOCH-  
AIDH leans forward, and whispers*

EOCHAIDH

Etain!

Etain, dear love!

ETAIN

*[Not looking at him, and slowly sway-  
ing as she sings*

How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers  
And their breath is wind  
That blows over grass  
Filled with dewy clover.

*The Immortal Hour*

Their limbs are more white  
Than shafts of moonshine:  
They are more fleet  
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad  
And are terrible:  
When their lances shake  
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are  
How beautiful  
They lordly ones  
In the hollow hills.

*[Darkness, save for the red flame in  
the heart of the fire.]*

END OF ACT I



## ACT II





## ACT II

SCENE I.—*A year later. In the hall of the Royal Dûn at Tara. The walls covered with skins, stag's heads and boar's heads, weapons: at intervals great torches. At lower end, a company of warriors, for the most part in bratta of red and green, or red and green and blue, like tartan but in long, broad lines or curves, and not in squares, deerskin gaiters and sandals. Also harpers and others, and white-clad druids and bards. On a dais sits EOCHAIÐH the High King. Beside him sits ETAIN, his queen. Behind her is a group of white-robed girls.*

HARPERS (*strike a loud clanging music from their harps*).

### CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!  
Hail, Eochaidh the High King of Eiré, hail!  
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

*The Immortal Hour*

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS, AND MINSTRELS

*Hail!*

DRUIDS

*Hail!*

WARRIORS

*Hail!*

EOCHADH

Drink from the great shells and horns! . . .  
for I am glad  
That on this night which rounds my year of  
joy,  
In amity and all glad fellowship  
We feast together.

[*Turning to ETAIN*

Etain, speak, my Queen.

ETAIN

[*Rising*

Warriors and druids, bards, harpers, friends  
Of high and low degree, I who am queen  
Do also thank you. But I am weary now,  
And weary too with strange perplexing dreams  
Thrice dreamed: and so I bid you all farewell.

[*Bows low. Turning to the king adds*

To you, dear love, my lord and king, I too  
Will bid farewell to-night.

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

[*Lovingly*]

Say not farewell:

Say not farewell, dear love, for we shall meet  
When the last starry dew is gathered up  
And loud in the green woods the throstles call.

ETAIN

Dear, I am tired. . . . Farewell!

EOCHAIDH

No, no, my fawn—

My fawn of love: this night, this night I pray  
Leave me not here alone: for under all  
This outer tide of joy I am sore wrought  
By dreams and premonitions. For three  
nights  
I have heard sudden laughters in the dark,  
Where nothing was; and in the first false  
dawn  
Have seen phantasmal shapes, and on the  
grass  
A host of shadows marching, bent one way  
As when green leagues of reed become one  
reed  
Blown slantwise by the wind.

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

I, too, have heard  
Strange delicate music, subtle murmurings,  
A little lovely noise of myriad leaves,  
As though the greenness on the wind o' the  
south  
Came traveling to bare woods on one still  
night:

[*A pause*

I, too, have heard sweet laughter at the  
dawn,  
Amid the twilight fern: but when I leaned  
To see the unknown friends, no more than  
this  
I saw—grey delicate shadows on the grass,  
Grey shadows on the fern, the flowers, the  
leaves,  
Swift fitting, like foam-shadows o'er a wave,  
Before the grey wave of the coming day.

[*A pause: then suddenly*

But I am weary. Eochaidh, love and king,  
Sweet sleep and sweeter dreams!

[*ETAIN leans and kisses the king. He stoops, and takes her right hand, and lifts it to his lips. Warriors raise their swords and spears, as ETAIN leaves, followed by her women.*

*The Immortal Hour*

WARRIORS AND OTHERS

The Queen! The Queen!

HARPERS (*strike a loud clanging music from their harps*).

CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!  
Hail, Eochaidh Ard-Righ of Eiré, hail! hail!  
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS, AND MINSTRELS

*Hail!*

DRUIDS

*Hail!*

WARRIORS

*Hail!*

EOCHAI DH

[*Raising a white hazel-wand, till absolute silence falls*

Now go in peace. To one and all, good-night.

[*The warriors, bards, minstrels troop out, leaving only the harpers and a few druids, who do not follow, but stand uncertain as a stranger passes through their midst and confronts the king. He is young,*

*The Immortal Hour*

*princely, fair to see; clad all in green, with a gold belt, a gold torque round his neck, gold armlets on his bare arms, and two gold torques round his bare ankles. On his long curling dark hair, falling over his shoulder, is a small green cap from which trails a peacock-feather. To his left side is slung a small clarsach, or harp.*

MIDIR

Hail, Eochaidh, King of Eiré.

EOCHAIDH

*[Standing motionless and looking fixedly at the stranger*

*Hail, fair sir!*

MIDIR

*[With light grace*

Sorrow upon me that I am so late  
For this great feasting; but I come from far,  
And winds and rains delayed me. Yet full  
glad  
I am to stand before the king to-night  
And claim a boon!

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHADH

No stranger claims in vain  
Here in my Dùn, a boon if that boon be  
Such I may grant without a loss of fame,  
Honour, or common weal. But first, fair sir,  
I ask the name and rank of him who craves,  
To all unknown?

MIDIR

I am a king's first son:  
My kingdom lies beyond your lordly realms,  
O king, and yet upon our mist-white shores  
The Three Great Waves of Eiré rise in foam.  
But I am under *geasa*, sacred bonds,  
To tell to no one, even to the king,  
My name and lineage. King, I wish you well:  
Lordship and peace and all your heart's desire.

EOCHADH

Fair lord, my thanks I give. Lordship I have,  
And peace a little while, though one brief year  
Has seen its birth and life: my heart's desire—  
Ah, unknown lord, give me my heart's desire—  
And I will give you lordship of these lands,  
Kingship of Eiré, riches, greatness, power,  
All, all, for but the little infinite thing  
That is my heart's desire!

*The Immortal Hour*

MIDIR

And that, O king?

EOCHAIDH

It is to know there is no twilight hour  
Upon my day of joy: no starless night  
Wherein my swimming love may reach in  
vain

For any shore, wherein great love shall drown  
And be a lifeless weed, which the pale shapes  
Of ghastly things shall look at and pass by  
With idle fin.

MIDIR

Have not the poets sung  
Great love survives the night, and climbs the  
stars,  
And lives th' immortal hour along the brows  
Of that infinitude called Youth, whom men  
Name Oengus, Sunrise?

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I too have been  
A poet.

MIDIR

Within the Country of the Young,  
Whence I have come, our life is full of joy,  
For there the poet's dreams alone are true.



*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

Dreams . . . dreams. . . .

*[A pause: then abruptly*

But tell me now, fair lord, the boon  
You crave.

MIDIR

I have heard rumour say that there is none  
Can win the crown at chess from this crowned  
king  
Called Eochaidh.

EOCHAIDH

Well?

MIDIR

And I would win that crown:  
For none in all the lands that I have been  
Has led me to the maze wherein the pawns  
Are lost or go awry.

EOCHAIDH

Sir, it is late,  
But if I play with you, and I should win,  
What is the guerdon?

MIDIR

That—your heart's desire.

*[A pause*

*The Immortal Hour*

MIDIR

And what, O king, my guerdon if I win?

EOCHAIDH

What you shall ask.

MIDIR

Then be it so, O, king.

EOCHAIDH

Yet why not on the morrow, my fair lord?  
To-night the hour is late; the queen is  
gone:  
The chessboard lies upon a fawnskin couch  
Beside the queen. She is weary, asleep.  
To-morrow then . . .

MIDIR

*[Drawing from his green vest a small  
chess-board of ivory, and then a  
handful of gold pawns*

Not so, Ard-Righ, for see  
I have a chess-board here, fit for a king—  
For it is made of yellow ivory  
That in dim days of old was white as cream

*The Immortal Hour*

When Dana, mother of the ancient gods,  
Withdrew it from her thigh, with golden  
    shapes  
Of unborn gods and kings to be her pawns.

EOCHAIDH

*[Leaning forward curiously*

Lay it upon the dais. In all my years  
I have seen none so fair, so wonderful.

*[Both lie upon the dais, and move the  
    pawns upon the ivory board*

HARPERS (*play a delicate music*).

A YOUNG MINSTREL

*[Sings slowly*

*I have seen all things pass and all men go  
Under the shadow of the drifting leaf:*

*Green leaf, red leaf, brown leaf,*

*Grey leaf blown to and fro:*

*Blown to and fro.*

*I have seen happy dreams rise up and pass  
Silent and swift as shadows on the grass:*

*Grey shadows of old dreams,*

*Grey beauty of old dreams,*

*Grey shadows in the grass.*

*The Immortal Hour*

SCENE II.—*The same.*

EOCHAIDH

[*Rising abruptly, followed by MIDIR  
more slowly*

So, you have won! For the first time the king  
Has known one subtler than himself. Fair sir,  
Your boon?

MIDIR

O king, it is a little thing.  
All that I ask is this, that I may touch  
With my own lips the white hand of the  
queen:  
And that sweet Etain whom you love so well  
Should listen to the distant shell-sweet song,  
A little echoing song that I have made  
Down by the foam on sea-drown'd shores to  
please  
Her lovelier beauty.

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I would that boon  
Were other than it is: for the queen sleeps  
Grown sad with weariness and many dreams:  
But as you have my kingly word, so be it.

[*Calls to the young minstrel*

Go boy, to where the women sleep, and call  
Etain, the Queen.

*The Immortal Hour*

[*The minstrel goes, to left*

HARPERS (*play a low delicate music*).

[*Enter ETAIN, in a robe of pale green,  
with mistletoe intertwined in her  
long loose hair*

EOCHAI DH

Welcome, fair lovely queen.

But, Etain, whom I love as the dark wave  
Loves the white star within its travelling  
breast,

Why do you come thus clad in green, with hair  
Entangled with the mystic mistletoe, as when  
I saw you first, in that dim, lonely wood  
Down by forgotten shores, where the last  
clouds

Slip through grey branches into the grey  
wave?

ETAIN

I could not sleep. My dreams came close to  
me

And whispered in my ears. And someone  
played

A vague perplexing air without my room.

I was as dim and silent as the grass,  
Till a faint wind moved over me, and dews  
Gathered, and in the myriad little bells

I saw a myriad stars.

EOCHAIDH

This nameless lord  
Has won a boon from me. It is to touch  
The whiteness of this hand with his hot lips,  
For he is fevered with a secret trouble,  
From rumour of that beauty which too well  
I know a burning flame. And he would sing  
A song of echoes caught from out the foam  
Of sea-drown'd shores, a song that he has  
made,  
Dreaming a foolish idle dream, an idle dream.

ETAIN

*[Looking long and lingeringly at  
MIDIR, slowly gives him her hand.  
When he has raised it to his lips,  
bowing, and let it go, she starts,  
puts it to her brow bewilderingly,  
and again looks fixedly at MIDIR*  
Fair nameless lord, I pray you sing that song.

MIDIR

*[Slowly chanting and looking steadily at ETAIN*  
How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

*The Immortal How*

They have faces like flowers,  
And their breath is wind  
That stirs amid grasses  
Filled with white clover.

Their limbs are more white  
Than shafts of moonshine:  
They are more fleet  
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad  
And are terrible;  
When their lances shake  
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,  
How beautiful,  
The lordly ones  
In the hollow hills.

[*Silence. ETAIN again puts her hand  
to her brow bewilderedly*]

ETAIN

[*Dreamily*]

I have heard. . . . I have dreamed. . . . I,  
too, have heard,  
Have sung . . . that song: O lordly ones that  
dwell

*The Immortal Hour*

In secret places in the hollow hills,  
Who have put moonlit dreams into my mind  
And filled my noons with visions, from afar  
I hear sweet dewfall voices, and the clink,  
The delicate silvery spring and clink  
Of faery lances underneath the moon.

MIDIR

I am a song  
In the Land of the Young,  
A sweet song:  
I am Love.

I am a bird  
With white wings  
And a breast of flame,  
Singing, singing.

The wind sways me  
On the quicken-bough:  
Hark! Hark!  
I hear laughter.

Among the nuts  
On the hazel-tree  
I sing to the Salmon  
In the faery pool.



*The Immortal Hour*

What is the dream  
The Salmon dreams,  
In the Pool of Connla  
Under the hazels?

It is: There is no death  
Midir, with thee,  
In the honeysweet land  
Of Heart's Desire.

It is a name wonderful,  
Midir, Love:  
It was born on the lips  
Of Oengus Og.

Go, look for it:  
Lost name, beautiful:  
Strayed from the honeysweet  
Land of Youth.

I am Midir, Love:  
But where is my secret  
Name in the land of  
Heart's desire?

I am a bird  
With white wings  
And a breast of flame  
Singing, singing:

*The Immortal Hour*

The Salmon of knowledge  
Hears, whispers:  
Look for it, Midir,  
In the heart of Etain:

Etain, Etain,  
My Heart's Desire:  
Love, love, love,  
Sorrow, Sorrow!

[ETAIN *moves a little nearer, then stops. She puts both hands before her eyes, then withdraws them*

ETAIN

I am a small green leaf in a great wood  
And you, the wind o' the South!

[*Silence. EOCHADH, as though spell-bound, cannot advance, but stretches his arms towards ETAIN*

EOCHADH

Etain, speak!

What is this song the harper sings, what  
tongue

Is this he speaks? for in no Gaelic lands

Is speech like this upon the lips of men.

No word of all these honey-dripping words

Is known to me. Beware, beware the words

*The Immortal Hour*

Brewed in the moonshine under ancient oaks  
White with pale banners of the mistletoe  
Twined round them in their slow and stately  
death.

It is the Feast of Sáveen.<sup>1</sup>

ETAIN

All is dark  
That has been light.

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back, O love that slips away!

ETAIN

I cannot hear your voice so far away:  
So far away in that dim lonely dark  
Whence I have come. The light is gone.  
Farewell!

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back! It is a dream that  
calls,  
A wild and empty dream! There is no light  
Within that black and terrible abyss  
Whereon you stand. Etain, come back, come  
back,  
I give you life and love.

<sup>1</sup> Samhain. The Celtic Festival of Summerend  
Hallowe'en.

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

I cannot hear  
Your strange forgotten words, already dumb  
And empty sounds of dim defeated shows.  
I go from dark to light.

MIDIR

*[Slowly whispering*

*From dark to light.*

EOCHAIDH

O, do not leave me, Star of my Desire!  
My love, my hope, my dream: for now I know  
That you are part of me, and I the clay,  
The idle mortal clay that longed to gain,  
To keep, to hold, the starry Danann fire,  
The little spark that lives and does not die.

ETAIN

Old, dim, wind-wandered lichens on a stone  
Grown grey with ancient age: as these thy  
words,  
Forgotten symbols. So, Farewell: farewell!

MIDIR

Hasten, lost love, found love! Come, Etain,  
come!

*The Immortal Hour*

ETAIN

What are those sounds I hear? The wild  
deer call  
From the hill-hollows: and in the hollows sing,  
Mid waving birchen boughs, brown wander-  
ing streams:  
And through the rainbow'd spray flit azure  
birds  
Whose song is faint, is faint and far with love:  
O, home-sweet, hearth-sweet, cradle-sweet it  
is,  
The song I hear!

MIDIR

*[Slowly moving backward*

Come, Etain, come! Afar  
The hillside maids are milking the wild deer;  
The elf-horns blow: green harpers on the  
shores  
Play a wild music out across the foam:  
Rose-flusht on one long wave's pale golden  
front,  
The moon of faery hangs, low on that wave.  
Come! When the vast full yellow flower is  
swung  
High o'er the ancient woods wherein old gods,  
Ancient as they, dream their eternal dreams  
That in the faery dawns as shadows rise  
And float into the lives and minds of men

*The Immortal Hour*

And are the tragic pulses of the world,  
Then shall we two stoop by the Secret Pool  
And drink, and salve our sudden eyes with  
dew  
Gathered from foxglove and the moonlit fern,  
And see. . . .

*[Slowly chanting and looking steadfastly at ETAIN*

How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,  
And their breath is wind  
That stirs amid grasses  
Filled with white clover.

Their limbs are more white  
Than shafts of moonshine:  
They are more fleet  
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad  
And are terrible:  
When their lances shake  
Every green reed quivers.

*The Immortal Hour*

How beautiful they are,  
How beautiful,  
The lordly ones  
In the hollow hills.

ETAIN

Hush! Hush!  
Who laughed?

MIDIR

None laughed. All here are in a spell  
Of frozen silence.

ETAIN

Sure, sure, one laughed.  
Tell me, sweet Voice, which one among the  
Shee  
Is he who plays with shadows, and whose  
laugh  
Moves like a bat through silent haunted  
woods?

MIDIR

He is not here: so fear him not: Dalua.  
It is the mortal name of him whose age  
Was idle laughing youth when Time was  
born.

He is not here: but come with me, and where  
The falling stars spray down the dark Abyss,  
There, on a quicken, growing from mid-earth

*The Immortal Hour*

And hanging like a spar across the depths,  
Dalua sits: and sometimes through the dusk  
Of immemorial congregated time,  
His laughter rings: and then he listens long,  
And when the echo swims up from the deeps  
He springs from crag to crag, for he is mad,  
And like a lost lamb crieth to his ewe,  
That ancient dreadful Mother of the Gods  
Whom men call Fear.

When he has wandered thence  
Whether among the troubled lives of men or  
mid  
The sacred Danann ways, dim wolflike shapes  
Of furtive shadow follow him and leap  
The windway of his thought: or sometimes  
dwarfed, more dread,  
The stealthy moonwhite weasels of life and  
death  
Glide hither and thither. Even the high gods  
Who laugh and mock the lonely Fairy Fool  
When in his mortal guise he haunts the  
earth,  
Shrink from the Amadan Dhu when in their  
ways  
He moves, silent, unsmiling, wearing a dark  
star  
Above his foamwhite brows and midnight  
eyes.



*The Immortal Hour*

Come, Etain, come: and have no fear, wild  
fawn,  
For I am Midir, Love, who loved you well  
Before this mortal veil withheld you here.  
Come!

In the Land of Youth  
There are pleasant places:  
Green meadows, woods,  
Swift grey-blue waters.

There is no age there,  
Nor any sorrow:  
As the stars in heaven  
Are the cattle in the valleys.

Great rivers wander  
Through flowery plains,  
Streams of milk, of mead,  
Streams of strong ale.

There is no hunger  
And no thirst  
In the Hollow Land,  
In the Land of Youth.

How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

*The Immortal Hour*

They play with lances  
And are proud and terrible,  
Marching in the moonlight  
With fierce blue eyes.

They love and are loved:  
There is no sin there:  
But slaying without death,  
And loving without shame.

Every day a bird sings:  
It is the Desire of the Heart.  
What the bird sings,  
That is it that one has.

Come, longing heart,  
Come, Etain, come!  
Wild Fawn, I am calling  
Across the fern!

[*Slowly* ETAIN, *clasp*ing his hand,  
*moves* away with MIDIR. They  
*pass* the spell-bound guards, and  
*disappear*. A sudden darkness  
*falls*. Out of the shadow DALUA  
*moves* rapidly to the side of  
EOCHAIDH, who starts, and peers  
*into* the face of the stranger

*The Immortal Hour*

EOCHAIDH

It is the same Dalua whom I met  
Long since, in that grey shadowy wood  
About the verge of the old broken earth  
Where, at the last, moss-clad it hangs in cloud.

DALUA

I am come.

EOCHAIDH

My dreams! my dreams! Give me my  
dream!

DALUA

There is none left but this—  
*[Touches the king, who stands stiff  
and erect, sways, and falls to the  
ground*

DALUA

. . . . . the dream of Death.

THE END



THE HOUSE OF USNA

---

A DRAMA



## NOTE

Concobar MacNessa was King of Ulster and Ard-Righ or High-King of Ireland at the beginning of the Christian era. By some chroniclers his reign is said to be synchronous with the mortal years of Christ.

Concobar had founded the knightly order of "The Red Branch"—the forerunner, though on a more epical scale, of the Round Table of the Arthurian Chivalry—and by his force of will and the power of his nation (the Ultonians, the people of Uladh, or Ulster) had become not only High-King of Ireland, but dreamed to make of its nations one nation, and that he and his sons and his son's sons should be its kings. In this he disregarded both the prophecies of the seers and the will of the gods; for he had long schemed, and at last accomplished, a deed of evil and treachery upon three of the champions of the Alban or Scottish Gael, Naysha (Naois) and his two brothers, the sons of Usna, though the hero Usna had been allied to him and was bond-brother in war and courtesy.

The period of this drama is about four years after the elopement of Deirdrê, as told in the old tale of Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna: a retold version of which, from Gaelic and other sources, has already appeared in the Old World Series of reprints. More explicitly, the actual period is the year following the triumph of Concobar's inveterate hate in his treacherous murder of Naysha (Naois) and his brothers Ailne (Ainnle) and Ardan, because of Naysha's love of Deirdrê (the High King's ward and most beautiful woman of her time, and by Concobar destined to be his queen, despite the prophecies at her birth) and of Deirdrê's for Naysha. Because of broken kingly honour, and the slaying of the sons of Usna and the death of Deirdrê, Cormac Conlingas, Concobar's son and heir, with other champions, seceded and joined the dread enemy Queen Meave, then advancing against the Ultonian Kingdom from the middle provinces and the west.<sup>1</sup> Conaill Carna and the youthful Setanta (already famous as the Hound (Cù), or Cuchulain, the Hound of

<sup>1</sup> As the names have everywhere been anglicised. . . e.g. Medb or Medbh into Meave, pronounced Mave; and Naois into Naysha . . . I need add only that Cuchulain is pronounced Coohoolin, and Eilidh Eily.



## *Note*

Chulain) were among those who in their loyalty remained with Concobar to fight with vain magnificent heroism against the will of the gods.

It is at this juncture that Cormac Conlingas, suddenly deciding to return to Uladh to re-join Concobar and the Red Branch, is seduced by his great love for the wife of Cravetheen the Harper, and, while with her, is burned to death by Cravetheen.

When the drama opens, Concobar (already, as was presaged, brought to the verge of madness by his thwarted and inconsolable passion for Deirdrê, and by his unkingly and treacherous revenge and its outcome) does not know that this new evil is come upon him and his house and nation, though in truth the end is at hand when the star of Ireland shall set in blood from the north to the south and from the east to the west.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CONCOBAR MACNESSA. *King of Ulster and  
High-King of Ireland.*

DUACH. *A Druid.*

COEL. *An Old Blind Harper.*

CRAVETHEEN. *A Harper of the Kingship of  
Cònairey Mòr.*

MAINÉ. *A Boy.*

*and*

ULTONIAN WARRIORS.

UNSEEN: *Mourners passing through the forest  
with the charred bodies of Cormac Con-  
lingas and Eilidh the Fair.*

*Chorus of Harpers.*

## SCENE I

*Open glade in a forest of pines and oaks, with the silent fires of sunset on the boles. Confused cries are heard, but as though a long way off. A dishevelled savage figure, clad in deerskin and hide-bound leggings, slips forward furtively from tree to tree. His long dark locks fall about his misshapen shoulders: his left arm is in a sling: in his right hand he carries a spear. He stands at last listening intently.*

*Starting abruptly he lifts his spear, but slowly lowers it as an old man, blind, clad in a white robe, with fat gold cirque about his waist and an oak-fillet round his head, comes forward leaning on a staff.*

COEL

Who is it who is near me? I hear the quick breath of one who . . . of one who hunts . . . or is hunted.

CRAVETHEEN

Druid, I am a stranger. Where am I? Tell me your name?

*The House of Usna*

COEL

I am Coel the Druid. . . . Coel the old blind harper.

CRAVETHEEN

I, too, am a harper, though I am no druid. I am Cravetheen the Harper. I am warrior and chief harper to the great king Cònairey Mòr. I crave sanctuary, Coel the Harper! I crave sanctuary . . . quick! quick!

COEL

From whom?

*[The confused cries are louder and grow louder, then cease.]*

CRAVETHEEN

*[Shaking his spear]*

From *them*.

COEL

You are safe here. Tell me this, you who are called Cravetheen: where is Cormac Conlingas, the son of the High-King Concobar? Does he hasten north to the side of his father whom he deserted, because Concobar the king slew the sons of Usna, and because Deirdrè died of that great sorrow, Deirdrè, the wife of Naysha, the pride of the house of Usna?

*The House of Usna*

CRAVETHEEN

*[With savage mocking*

Ay, a great king truly, Concoabar, the son of Nessa! From childhood he kept the beautiful Deirdrê to be his queen, but Naysha swooped like a hawk and carried her to the north, because each loved each and laughed at the king. And then did the great Concoabar track him through Eiré to Alba? No! Did he force the sword upon him, Deirdrê's beloved? No! For three years he lay like a wolf on a hill-side staring at a far-off fold. . . . and then with smooth words he won Naysha and his two hero-brothers, and the beautiful Deirdrê, and gave kingly warrant to them. . . . and then, ha! then was the noise of swords, then were red streams of blood, where the House of Usna fought the fight of three heroes against a multitude . . . and their shameful glorious death . . . and then Deirdrê, wonder of the world, did Concoabar win her at the last? No! No! She fell dead by the side of him whom she loved, by the body of Naysha, the son of Usna! A true queen, Deirdrê the Beautiful!

COEL *[Raising his staff*

Who are *you*? Who are *you*? No sanctuary here for the foe of Concoabar the king!

*The House of Usna*

CRAVETHEEN

*[With a loud, wailing, chanting voice*

I am the voice of the House of Usna. I am the voice in the wind crying for ever and ever "Kings shall lie in the dust: great princes shall be brought to shame: the champions of the mighty shall be as swordsmen waving reeds, as spearmen spearing the grass, as men pursuing and wooing shadows!" (*A moment's pause.*) Ay, by the sun and wind, Coel the Blind, I am the broken spear to slay them that foully slew the sons of Usna . . . the spear to goad to madness Concoabar the king!

COEL

*[Angrily*

Tell me, mad fool, do you fly from the wrath of Cormac Conlingas, the son of Concoabar?

CRAVETHEEN

*[Laughing mockingly*

Cormac, the son of Concoabar! Cormac Conlingas, Cormac of the Yellow Locks! No, no, old man, I do not fly before the wrath of Cormac the Beautiful! Nor shall any man again fly before him, before Cormac the Beautiful, Cormac the Prince, Cormac the son of Concoabar!

*The House of Usna*

COEL [Angrily]

What! is the king's son dead . . . is he slain?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Coming close, and speaking low, in a changed voice*

Old man, there was a woman of my people as beautiful as Deirdrê. She loved an Ultonian, that had for name Cormac. . . . Cormac Conlingas. Cònairey Mòr was fierce with anger at that, and sent him away, but against her will, and gave her to *me*, who loved her, though she hated me. So I took her to my Dùn. But this Cormac came there and found her . . . and I . . . oh, I, too, came back suddenly, and learned that he was there!

[*A long wailing chant is heard*

COEL

Hush! What is that?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Still leaning close, and speaking low*

That? . . . That is the wailing of those who carry hither to Concoabar the dead bodies of Cormac his son and Eilidh the Fair. [*Suddenly springing back, and crying loudly.*] For I set fire to the great Dùn, O, Coel the Blind, and I laughed when the red flames

*The House of Usna*

swept up to where the sleepers lay—and they died, Cormac and Eilidh, to the glad death-song of me, Cravetheen the Harper! Two charred logs these mourners carry now—Ah-h-h!

*[As he cries a spear whirls across the stage from left to right, then another, then a third, which strikes the ground at Cravetheen's feet. Wild cries are heard—a rush—and six or eight Ultonian warriors leap forward, crying as they seize him*

WARRIORS

Death to the Harper!—death to Cravetheen the Harper, who has slain the king's son!



## SCENE II

*In the background, vague in the moonlight, the walls of a great Dûn or ancient fortress, half obscured by trees. To the right, in deep shadow, an oak. Conco-bar, wrapt in a white robe, with a fillet of gold round his head, leans in silence against the oak. In front, in the moonlight, the boy Mainé, clad in a deerskin, lies on the ground looking towards the king, and playing softly upon a reed with seven holes in it.*

CONCOBAR

Hush.

*[Mainé ceases playing .*

CONCOBAR

*[Coming slowly forward*

Where is Deirdrê?

MAINÉ

*[Unstirring, plays softly*

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

*[Slowly advancing, till he stands above  
Mainé, and looks down at him, in  
silence*

Where is Deirdrê?

MAINÉ

*[Taking the reed from his mouth, in a  
low, prolonged, chanting voice  
Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

CONCOBAR

It is the voice of my dreams.

MAINÉ

*Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

CONCOBAR *[Muttering*

Duach the Wise. . . . Where is Duach the  
Wise? These were his words: "In the  
whisper of the leaf by night, in the first moan-  
ing air of the new wind, in the voice of the  
wave, that which has been is told, that which  
is to be is known." O, heart of my heart. . . .  
Deirdrê, my love, my desire!

## The House of Usna

### MAINÉ

[Rises and goes silently over to the oak,  
and leans against it, lost in shadow

### CONCOBAR

Heart of my heart, Deirdrê! Love of my love, desire of all desire—can no voice rise to those red lips, red as rowans, in that silent place? There is no sadness like unto the sadness of the king. Dream of dreams, I trampled all dreams till the hour of my desire, and in that hour you were stolen from me: and in his heart the king was as a swineherd herding swine, a helot, a slave. Was it I who put death upon Naysha the Fair? Was it I who put death upon the sons of Usna? It was not I, by the Sun and the Moon! It was the beauty of Deirdrê. O, beauty too great and sore! Deirdrê, love of my love, sorrow of my sorrow, grief of my grief! I am old, because of my sorrow. There is no king so great that he may not perish because of a woman's love. She sleeps: she sleeps: she is not dead! I will go to the grianân, and will cry *Heart o' Beauty, awake! It is I, Concoabar the King!* She will hear, and she will put white hands through her hair, like white doves going into the shadow of a wood: and I

*The House of Usna*

will see her eyes like stars, and her face pale and wonderful as dawn, and her lips like twilight water, and she will sigh, and my heart will be as wind fainting in hot grass, and I will laugh because that I am made king of the world and as the old gods, but greater than they, greater than they, greater than they!

MAINÉ

*[Chanting slowly from the shadow  
Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!]*

CONCOBAR

*[Slowly turning, and looking towards  
the shadow whence the sound came]*

Who spoke?

*[Silence]*

CONCOBAR

Who spoke? (*Turning again.*) It was the pulse of my heart. They lie who say that Deirdrê is dead. The sons of Usna are dead. May the dust of Naysha rot among the worms of the earth. It was he who was king, not I! It was he whom Deirdrê loved. . . . Deirdrê, who was so fair, the most beautiful of women; my dream, my love!

*[A long wailing cry is heard. Con-  
cobar lifts his head, and listens.]*

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

It is Duach. The Druid has deep wisdom. I will ask him to tell me where Deirdrè is. There is no woman in the world for me but the daughter of Felim. Her beauty is more terrible than day to the creatures of the night; more mysterious than night to the winged children of the noon.

*[The boughs dispart, and a tall, white-haired man, clad in white, with a gold belt, and with a wreath of oak leaves, enters from the left*

DUACH

Hail, O king!

CONCOBAR

I heard the howl of the grey wolf, but now you come alone. Where is the wolf?

DUACH

There was no wolf. It was an image only of your own mind. It was but your own sorrow, O king.

CONCOBAR

Tell me, Duach, who lives in yonder great Dùn?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

*[Looking at the king curiously, then  
slowly*

Concobar the king; with the comrades of the king, and his guards; his harpers and poets; the women of the household.

CONCOBAR

Can you see the grianân, Duach?

DUACH

I see the grianân, Concobar mac Nessa.

CONCOBAR

Nessa . . . yes, I am the son of Nessa. . . .  
Nessa, who was so fair. Tell me, Duach; in  
her youth was she so beautiful as the harpers  
and poets say?

DUACH

She was so beautiful that few looked at her  
untroubled. In her eyes youths dreamed; old  
men looked back. To all men Nessa was a  
light and a flame.

CONCOBAR

Was she fair, as Deirdrê is fair? Was  
she beautiful, as Deirdrê is beautiful?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

Deirdrê, whom you have slain, is dead.

CONCOBAR

*[Calling*

Deirdrê, dear love, come! I am here! I wait!

DUACH

From that silence where both are, their names only may come back like falling dew.

CONCOBAR

There is none so beautiful as Deirdrê.

DUACH

She sleeps by Naysha, son of Usna.

CONCOBAR

*[Furiously*

You lie, old man. Naysha is dead.

DUACH

She sleeps by Naysha, son of Usna.

CONCOBAR

*[Troubled*

Tell me! When shall she wake?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

She shall wake no more.

CONCOBAR

Speak no lies, Druid. I heard her laugh a brief while ago. She came out into the woods at the rising of the moon.

DUACH

She will wake no more.

*[Silence*

DUACH

Hearken, Concoabar mac Nessa! That was an evil deed, the slaying of the sons of Usna. There were the noblest of all the Gaëls of Eiré and Alba.

CONCOBAR

*[Sullenly*

They are dead.

DUACH

They are more to be feared dead than when their young, sweet, terrible life was upon them. Their voices cry for vengeance, and all men hear. Women whisper.

CONCOBAR

What do they whisper?



*The House of Usna*

DUACH

*"Most fair and beautiful were the sons of Usna, slain treacherously by Concoabar the High-King."*

CONCOBAR

What vengeance is called for by those who cry for an eric?

DUACH

It is no eric they cry, but the broken honour of the king.

CONCOBAR

And what do the young men say?

DUACH

They say: *"He has slain the image of our desire."*

CONCOBAR

And what is the burthen of the sing the singers sing?

DUACH

*"The beauty of the world is now as an old song that is sung."*

[*Silence*

*The House of Usna*

MAINÉ

*[From the shadow of the oak, strikes  
a note, and, in a low voice, chants  
slowly*

*Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

CONCOBAR

Can dreams have a voice?

DUACH

They alone speak. It is our spoken words  
that are the idle dreams.

CONCOBAR

Dreams—dreams. I am sick of dreams! It  
is love I long for—my lost love! my lost love!

DUACH

It is a madness, that love.

CONCOBAR

Better that madness than all wisdom.

*[Silence*

MAINÉ

*[Playing a note or two, slowly, chants,  
from the shadow of the oak*

*Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

Duach, can dreams speak?

DUACH

The dead, old wisdom, the wind, dreams—  
these speak. All else are troubled murmurs,  
confused cries, echoes of echoes.

CONCOBAR

*[Stands with outstretched arms, staring  
towards the Dûn*

DUACH

Death and beauty are in his eyes.

CONCOBAR

*[With a sudden, passionate gesture,  
flinging up his arms supplicatingly*

Deirdrê, my queen, my dream, my desire!  
Death and beauty were in your eyes as a little  
child, oh, fawn of women, when I lit my  
dreams at your face before the House of  
Usna did me that bitter, bitter wrong! . . .  
that bitter, bitter wrong! O, Naysha, more  
terrible your quiet smile in death than all the  
armies of Meave! Deirdrê, Deirdrê, death

*The House of Usna*

and beauty are in your eyes, my queen, my  
dream, my desire!

*[With a sobbing cry he sinks to his  
knees, bows his head, and pulls his  
robe about him*

MAINÉ

*[Slowly advances from the shadow,  
softly playing on his reed-flute*

DUACH

Sing!

MAINÉ

*[Sings*

Dim face of Beauty haunting all the world,  
Fair face of Beauty all too fair to see,  
Where the lost stars adown the heavens are  
hurled,  
There, there alone for thee  
May white peace be.

For here, where all the dreams of men are  
whirled  
Like sere, torn leaves of autumn to and fro,  
There is no place for thee in all the world,  
Who drifted as a star,  
Beyond, afar.

*The House of Usna*

Beauty, and face of Beauty, Mystery, Wonder,  
What are these dreams to foolish babbling  
men—

Who cry with little noises 'neath the thunder  
Of ages ground to sand,  
To a little sand?

[*Concobar slowly rises. He turns and  
looks at Mainé*

CONCOBAR

Who made that song?

MAINÉ

Cormac the Red, the father of my father,  
and son of Felim the Harper.

CONCOBAR

Felim! . . . Felim the Harper—it was he  
who was the father of Deirdrê. He harps no  
more. [*Turning to Duach.*] Do you remem-  
ber when we went to the house of Felim the  
Harper in the days of my youth? Do you  
remember the birthnight of Deirdrê?

DUACH

Ay.

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

And the prophecy of Cathba the Arch-Druid?

DUACH

Ay: that before his eyes he saw a sea of blood, and saw it rise and rise and rise till it overflowed great straths, and laved the flanks of high hills, and from the summits of the mountains poured down upon the lands of the Gael in a thundering flood, blood-red, to the blood-red sea.

CONCOBAR

*[Troubled, and moving slowly to and fro*

Did Cathba see the end?

DUACH

He saw the end.

CONCOBAR

It was but the idle wisdom of a dreamer.

DUACH

That idle wisdom is the utterance of the gods. The dreamers and poets and seers are their voices.

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

What were the last words of Cathba the Wise?

DUACH

That Eiré, the most beautiful of all lands under the sun, should be the saddest of all lands under the sun. Blood shall run in that land till Famine shall make her home there, he said: and tears shall be shed for it in every age: and all wisdom and beauty and hope shall grow there: and she shall be a lamp, and then know the darkness of darkness. But before the end she shall be a queenly land again, and the nations shall bow before her as the soul of peoples born anew. For into all the nations of the world, he said, Eiré shall die, but shall live again. She shall be the soul of the nations.

CONCOBAR

Too many dreams . . . too many dreams?

DUACH

Cathba saw all that is to be.

CONCOBAR

If Felim the Harper were to come again. . . .

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

He would ask: Where is Emain Macha, the royal city, the beautiful city? Where are the sons of Usna? Where is Deirdrê, the most beautiful of women? Where is the glory of the Red Branch?

CONCOBAR

*[Confusedly*

The Red Branch! . . . The Red Branch!  
At least, at least, the Red Branch stands!

DUACH

What of Fergus? . . . what of Cormac Conlingas? They and a third of the Red Branch are gone from you: Fergus, the first champion of Ulla; Cormac Conlingas, the greatest of your sons, the king that is to be!

CONCOBAR

Conaill Carna is with me . . . and Setanta the wonderful youth, that is called Cuchulain.

DUACH

Yet neither they nor the gods themselves shall in the end prevail.



*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

*[With sudden passion*

Duach, win back to me my son Cormac, and I will give you whatsoever you will—yea, my kingship. Him only do I love of, all men, him only, my son who is so fair and proud and beautiful. He shall be High-king; he and he only is the son of my kingdom.

DUACH

That which is to be, will be.

CONCOBAR

*[Looking fixedly at him*

Shall not Cormac Conlingas be king after me?

DUACH

Have you forgotten, O king! Cormac mac Concobar is in arms against you. He and Fergus and a third of the Red Branch are with Queen Meave, whose armies gather to overwhelm you, to do to Ulla as the Great Queen has already done to Emain Macha, your proud city.

CONCOBAR

Cormac, my son, my son!

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

These were the words he sent: "For that which you did upon Naysha and the sons of Usna, and for that shame which you brought upon Fergus mac Roy, and because of the beauty of Deirdrê which is no more in the world because of you . . . the Sword and Sorrow, Sorrow and the Sword!"

CONCOBAR

*[Angrily and impatiently]*

I care not! I care not! He shall be king. Listen! Duach; I will send word to Cormac that I am weary of the kingship. He shall be Tanist, with all power. He shall be the Ard-Righ himself. He shall save Eiré. The prophecies of Cathba shall be set at nought. He shall be a great king. All Eiré shall call him king. All the Gaels shall call him Ard-Righ. His son's sons shall reign after him. Ireland shall be made one nation, because of this great king—Cormac, the son of Concobar, the son of Flachtna, kings and sons of kings!

DUACH

Beware, O Concobar, of the foam of dreams. It is only the great wave that will lift Eiré.

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

The great wave? Shall not that be the king?

DUACH

Through no king can Eiré become one nation and great, but only through the kinghood of her sons and daughters. In the end, when all are royal of soul, Eiré shall be the first of the nations of the world.

CONCOBAR

*[Confusedly*

In the end? . . . In the end? Of what do you speak? Cormac shall be king, he and his sons after him. The blood of the gods is in Essa, his wife.

DUACH

*[Leaning forward, and staring into the king's face*

Essa? . . . Have you not heard? Essa is dead!

CONCOBAR

Essa is not dead. I saw her and Deirdrê and Dectera, my sister, and my mother Nessa, walking in the wood at the rising of the moon.

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

[*Muttering*

Ay, that might well be. It is the hour of the dead.

CONCOBAR

[*Sadly*

Is she dead, Essa, daughter of Etain the Wonderful?

DUACH

She is not dead, being of the Divine race. But her body lies at Rath Nessa, where in the dream of death she can look for ever upon the Hill of Tara.

CONCOBAR

Hopes fall about me as old leaves. [*A pause.*] Nevertheless, I will send to Cormac at the camp of Queen Meave. There shall be no more war. Cormac Conlingas shall be king.

DUACH

Cormac is not there. He is one of the nine hostages at the Dùn of Cònairey Mòr, the king of the Middle Province. Meave marches against him.

CONCOBAR

Fergus was king no more because of Nessa: I am king no more because of Deirdrè. She is not here, the beautiful Deirdrè. She is here

*The House of Usna*

no more. I will go into the woods, and upon the hills. I am led by dreams and visions. Deirdrê, my dream and my desire!

DUACH

[*Aside*

The prophecy of the sting that was to sting to madness the King of the Ultonians! The gods see far!

CONCOBAR

[*Starting*

Who . . . what is that?

DUACH

I see nothing.

CONCOBAR

[*Pointing*

Look! . . . yonder . . . a white hound—a white hound, that moves through the wood! How swift and silent. . . see, his head is low . . . he is on the trail . . . is it Rumac?

[*An echo in the woods*

*Rumac! Cormac! Cormac!*

CONCOBAR

[*Moves backward a step*

What! Cormac! . . . Carmac? . . . my son Cormac!

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

*[Staring into the dusk of the woods*

I seen no hound. . . . Where is the white  
hound?

CONCOBAR

Yonder . . . under the oaks . . . he goes  
swiftly to the place where he was born.

DUACH

Who?

CONCOBAR

Cormac. Cormac Conlingas, my son. Is  
this evil fallen upon me because of the death  
of Deirdrê? Is this evil come upon me out  
of the House of Usna?

DUACH

The House of Usna is in the dust.

CONCOBAR

*[Distraught, loudly chants*  
*The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,*  
*the grey wind weeps;*  
*Dust on her breasts, dust in her eyes, the grey*  
*wind weeps!*

DUACH

The hound is gone.

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

*[Putting his finger on his lips*

Hush! do you hear the little children of the wind . . . rustling and laughing . . . the little children of the wind? Or are they the little white feet of those who come at dusk? Or are they the waves of the Moyle . . . tears, tears, sighs, oh tears, tears, tears, of Deirdrê upon the dark waters of the Moyle!

DUACH

Deirdrê is in that far place where your hound of old is . . . where Rumac bays against a moon that does not set or wane.

CONCOBAR

*[Calling*

Rumac! Rumac!

ECHO

*Coomac! Coomac!*

CONCOBAR

Cormac, my beautiful son! Cormac! come! come!

*[A sound of a harp is heard. Both start*

CONCOBAR

Who comes?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

Someone comes through the wood.

CONCOBAR

*[Drawing his sword*

It is Naysha, son of Usna. Night after night I hear him come harping through the woods. Sometimes I see him, standing under an oak. He calls upon Deirdrê.

DUACH

It is Coel mac Coel, the old blind harper—he who loved Macha the great queen, and was blinded by her because that he loved overmuch. He alone wandered free out of Emain Macha when the beautiful city was laid waste. He is not alone; there are the young bards and minstrels with him. For the last three nights they have come in the darkness, and sung before the Royal Dùn the song which Coel made of Macha and her beautiful city. Hark! They sing now.

*[The noise of harps and tympan. From the wood comes the loud chanting voice of Coel:*

O, 'tis a good house, and a palace fair, the Dùn of Macha,

And happy with a great household is Macha there:



*The House of Usna*

Druids she has, and bards, minstrels, harpers,  
knights ;

Hosts of servants she has, and wonders  
beautiful and rare,

But nought so wonderful and sweet as her  
face, queenly fair,

O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

[*Choric voices in a loud, swelling chant:*

O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

*COEL chants:*

The colour of her great Dûn is the shining  
whiteness of lime,

And within it are floors strewn with green  
rushes and couches white

Soft wondrous silks and blue gold-claspt  
mantles and furs

Are there, and jewelled golden cups for  
revelry by night :

Thy grianân of gold and glass is filled with  
sunshine-light,

O Macha, queen by day, queen by night!

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha, queen by day, queen by night!

Beyond the green portals, and the brown and  
red thatch of wings

Striped orderly, the wings of innumerable  
stricken birds,

*The House of Usna*

A wide shining floor reaches from wall to wall,  
wondrously carven  
Out of a sheet of silver, whereon are graven  
swords  
Intricately ablaze: mistress of many hoards  
Art thou, Macha of few words!

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha of few words!

Fair indeed is thy couch, but fairer still is thy  
throne,  
A chair it is, all of a blaze of wonderful yellow  
gold:  
There thou sittest, and watchest the women  
going to and fro,  
Each in garments fair and with long locks  
twisted fold in fold:  
With the joy that is in thy house men would  
not grow old,  
O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

Of a surety there is much joy to be had of  
thee and thine,  
There in the song-sweet sunlit bowers in that  
place;  
Wounded men might sink in sleep and be well  
content

*The House of Usna*

So to sleep, and to dream perchance, and  
know no other grace

Than to wake and look betimes on thy proud  
queenly face,

O Macha of the Proud Face!

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha of the Proud Face!

And if there be any here who wish to know  
more of this wonder,

Go, you will find all as I have shown, as I  
have said:

From beneath its portico, thatched with wings  
of birds blue and yellow,

Reaches a green lawn, where a fount is fed  
From crystal and gems: of crystal and gold  
each bed

In the house of Macha of the Ruddy  
Head!

[*Choric Voices:*

In the house of Macha of the Ruddy  
Head!

In that great house where Macha the queen  
has her pleasaunce

There is everything in the whole world that a  
man might desire,

God is my witness that if I say little it is for  
this,

*The House of Usna*

That I am grown faint with wonder, and can  
no more admire,

But say this only, that I live and die in the  
fire

Of thine eyes, O Macha, my desire,  
With thine eyes of fire!

*[Choric Voices in a loud, swelling chant:*

But say this only, that we live and die in the  
fire

Of thine eyes, O Macha, Dream, Desire,  
With thine eyes of fire!

*[Choric Voices repeat their refrains, but  
fainter, and becoming more faint. Last  
vanishing sound of the harps and tympan*

CONCOBAR

Is Emain Macha as a dream that is no  
more?

DUACH

Emain Macha, the beautiful city, is as a  
dream that is no more.

*[A moan of wind*

CONCOBAR

Wind, wind, nothing but wind!

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

Clouds cover the moon. Let us go, O king.  
To-night, dreams: the morrow waits, when  
dreams will be realities.

CONCOBAR

Dreams, dreams, nothing but dreams!  
[*Slowly Concoobar and Duach pass through  
the darkening gloom. The Dûn becomes  
more and more obscure. From the dark-  
ness to the right a single flute note, where  
Mainé lies*

MAINÉ

[*Chanting slowly, unseen  
Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

### SCENE III

SCENE THE SAME.—*Ultonian Warriors have brought Cravetheen the Harper—a misshapen savage figure, held by two warriors—before the king, so that Concoabar may decree what manner of death the man is to die, because of having murdered Cormac by setting fire to the Dûn, where he and Eilidh lay, and burning him and his love, and all that were within the Dûn.*

CONCOBAR

I have heard all. Let him go. What is death?

*[Cravetheen is released]*

CRAVETHEEN

Have you no mercy, O king?

CONCOBAR

Harper, you have your life. Go!

*The House of Usna*

CRAVETHEEN

Have you no mercy, O king?

CONCOBAR

What is your desire?

CRAVETHEEN

I have but one desire, Concoabar, King of Ulla.

CONCOBAR

Speak.

CRAVETHEEN

It is that I may know death.

CONCOBAR

*[Rising, and smiling strangely]*  
Brother, I, too—I, too, have that one desire.

CRAVETHEEN

You . . . the king. . . . *[Confusedly]*

MAINÉ

*[Lying under an oak, makes a clear  
not on his reed-flute, and chants  
slowly, with wailing rise and fall]*

*The House of Usna*

*Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!*

CRAVETHEEN

*[Muttering*

*Ah, now I know! Now I know! [Moving slowly towards the king.] That cry is the cry of the House of Usna! The gods do not sleep, O king. That cry is the cry of the House of Usna!*

CONCOBAR

*[With sudden fury, reaching out his arms as though cursing or abhorring the speaker*

*Take him away! To death! . . . to death! Away with him!*

CRAVETHEEN

*[Eagerly and triumphantly*

*I am the voice of the House of Usna, O king!*

CONCOBAR

*[Furiously*

*Tie him to the saplings! Let him die the death of the oaks!*



*The House of Usna*

WARRIORS

[*Shouting*

To the Death-tree! To the Death-tree!

[*They seize Cravethen and drag him  
away into the wood*

CONCOBAR

[*Staring about him confusedly*

Who spoke? [*Lower, in a hoarse whisper.*]  
Who spoke?

DUACH

O king, there is no evil done upon the world  
that the wind does not bring back to the feet  
of him who wrought it.

CONCOBAR

The wind! . . . The wind!

DUACH

O king, the gods abhor most the evil that is  
wrought unworthily by the great.

CONCOBAR

Who are the great . . . I have lost love,  
and my kinglihood, and my son, and all, all  
my hopes. Who are the great?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

O king, you have slain youth, and love, and beauty.

CONCOBAR

[*Wailingly*

Life. . . . Life. . . . Life for ever slays youth, and love, and beauty.

DUACH

Take not the brute law to be the divine law. O king, are prophecies idle ways of an idle wind? Long, long ago it was foretold that evil would come upon you and your house because of your uncontrolled desire, but what avail? Your ears were deaf.

CONCOBAR

Why do the gods pursue me? I am old, I am old.

DUACH

At the kindling of the light they look into the silent earth, and they behold the slain bodies of Naysha and Ailnê and Ardan, and a shade stands at their grave calling night and day—*I am the House of Usna!*

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

Druid, is there no evil done upon the world, is there no slaying of young men, is there no falling of heroic names into the dust, save what I have done?

DUACH

Because of your desire you slew your kinglihood.

CONCOBAR

My kinglihood?

DUACH

More terrible than the fate of Usna is the fall of royal honour. More terrible than the death of Naysha is the shame put upon those who blindly did your will. More terrible than the death of Deirdrê is the undoing of the great wonder and mystery of beauty. The gods call. . . . "*Concobar, Concobar, thy thirst shall be for shadows, and the rose of thy desire shall be dust within thy mouth!*"

CONCOBAR

[*Hopelessly*

It was because of love. . . . It was because of love.

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

Yes, O king . . . love of thine own love.  
[*Silence*]

CONCOBAR

Evil can be undone.

DUACH

Where are the sons of Usna?

CONCOBAR

I tell you, Druid, evil can be undone. I  
repent me of my evil. . . I repent me of my  
evil.

DUACH

Where are the sons of Usna? Where is the  
word of the king? Where is Deirdrê, the  
too great beauty of this evil time? Where is  
Emain Macha, the beautiful city? Where is  
the glory of the Red Branch? Where is Cor-  
mac, Cormac Conlingas, who was to be king?  
Where stands Eiré that was to be one nation?

CONCOBAR

[*In a hoarse whisper*]

Have all these evils come upon me because  
I was a king and because I loved?

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

Because you were a king and chose the un-  
kingly way.

CONCOBAR

[*Wailingly*

Good blooms like a flower that has its day:  
evil like a weed that endures, and grows and  
grows and grows.

DUACH

But the evil that is done of kings shall cover  
the whole land.

CONCOBAR

[*Starting, and furiously*

Enough! Enough, Druid! I have heard  
enough. I am the king. [*Raising his sword,  
and looking towards the Warriors, shouts.*]  
Ultonians, awake! I am the king. I am the  
Red Branch. On the morrow we march. I  
shall lead you, with Conaill Carna and with  
Cuchulain. The armies of Queen Meave shall  
be scattered like dry leaves. Fear not the  
gods! The gods follow the victorious sword!  
Before the new moon all the gods of the Gael  
will be on our side! *The Red Branch! The  
Red Branch!*

*The House of Usna*

WARRIORS

[*Clashing swords and spears*  
*The Red Branch! The Red Branch!*]

CONCOBAR

Up with the Sunburst! Up with the banner  
of the Sunburst!

WARRIORS

*The Sunburst! The Sunburst!*

CONCOBAR

[*Triumphantly*

The gods are with us! (*Lower, and turning to Duach, exultantly.*) The gods are with us. Druid, it is the will of man that compels the gods, not the gods who compel man.

DUACH

[*After a momentary pause, and laying his hand on the king's arm*

The gods *are* the will of man. For good and for evil the gods *are* the will of man.

*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

Stand back, Druid. I am weary of your subtleties. (*Shouts.*) Warriors, go! On the morrow I shall lead you—I, and Conaill the Victorious, and Cuchulain the greatest champion of Eiré!

WARRIORS

*[Go shouting, and after they have gone their voices are heard repeating the acclaim*

*Concobar! Concobar! Conaill Carna!  
Cuchulain! Cuchulain!*

CONCOBAR

*[Looking sombrely at Duach*  
Druid, go! I would be alone.

DUACH

I go. But truly, yea, truly, O king, you shall be alone from this hour.

CONCOBAR

*[Scornfully*

Enough. I am the king. I have great dreams. The gods are with me. They have forgotten, for they do not long remember the dead!

*The House of Usna*

DUACH

*[Meaningly, as he moves slowly away*  
The gods neither sleep nor do they forget.

*[A long pause. Silence*

CONCOBAR

*[Alone, exultantly*

I am the king. I have great dreams.

*[A wailing voice from the wood. The*  
*king starts, raising his sword.*

CONCOBAR

Who is that? . . . what is that?

CRAVETHEEN

*[Unseen, on the Death-tree*

It is I, Cravetheen, in my hour of death.

*[Silence. The king stands listening.*  
*Again a long wailing cry.*

CRAVETHEEN

The gods do not sleep, O king! . . . Farewell.

*[Slowly Concoabar lowers his sword.*  
*It falls with a crash to the ground.*  
*He stands as though spell-bound.*



*The House of Usna*

CONCOBAR

*[In an awed whispering voice  
It is the cry of the House of Usna!*

*[Silence. Slowly the king lifts his  
hand to his face, and bows his  
head.*

*From the wood the boy Mainé breathes  
three poignant notes on his reed-flute, and  
chants slowly with long rise and fall.*

*Deirdrê is dead. Deirdrê the Beautiful is  
dead, is dead!*

THE END



# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

By MRS. WILLIAM SHARP



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Into this book are gathered the poems—with a few exceptions—and the two finished dramas written by William Sharp under the pseudonym of “Fiona Macleod.” One or two early lyrics in the present volume were not reprinted in the posthumous English Edition of *From the Hills of Dream*, because that selection was made, but not arranged, by the author for a second and enlarged but not necessarily final edition of the verse of “Fiona Macleod.”

I have adhered as much as possible to a chronological sequence. The poems grouped in the sections *From the Hills of Dream*, and those marked elsewhere with \*, were written between 1893–1896 and published under that title in 1896 by Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, Edinburgh. In 1901 a selection from that volume, together with poems written between 1896–1900, was published under the original title by Mr. Thomas B. Mosher, in America. Those later poems are, in this Collected Edition, grouped together in “Foam of the Past” and “Through the Ivory Gate;” and those written subsequently, 1900–1905, form the sections “The Dirge of the Four Cities” (with the exception of Murias which was previously published as “Requiem”) and “The Hour of Beauty;” and form part of the posthumous English Edition of *From the Hills of Dream* issued by Mr. Heinemann in 1907. The subsequent poems, 1900–1905, together

## Bibliographical Note

with those herein marked with an O, were published under the title of *The Hour of Beauty*, by Mr. Mosher, in 1907.

I wish to express my indebtedness to Mr. Alfred Noyes for permission to reprint at the end of the volume, his Sonnet "To Fiona MacLeod," which appeared first in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1906, and in 1907 as preface to the American Edition of the tale entitled "The Wayfarer" (from *The Winged Destiny*) published by Mr. Mosher.

The two poetic dramas "The House of Usna" and "The Immortal Hour," were intended by the author to form part of a series of plays to be published collectively as *The Theatre of the Soul*, or *The Psychic Drama*. The names of these unwritten, though mentally cartooned poetic plays, by "Fiona Macleod," were "Nial the Soulless," "The King of Ys," "Drostan and Yssul," "The Veiled Avenger," "The Book of Dalua."

The two completed poetic plays appeared originally in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900. In the original manuscript the former bears the title "The King of Ireland's Son," though preference was given later to "The House of Usna," and under this name the play was produced by The Stage Society and acted at the Globe Theatre on the 29th of April, 1900, under William Sharp's direct supervision—when one or two only of the audience, other than the occupants of our stage box, knew that the author, "Fiona Macleod" witnessed the performance in the person of the President of The Stage Society. "The House of Usna" has not hitherto been published in book form in Great Britain, but an American edition was brought out in America by Mr. Mosher, in 1903.

## Bibliographical Note

"The Immortal Hour" was altered and rewritten several times. I cannot recall when it was begun, but my husband read it to me at Ballycastle, Ireland, in the summer of 1899. The original form, as printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, lacked the present opening, and finished with a short epilogue; this forepart was specially revised and printed separately as "Dalua," and thus described by the author: "A fragment, as 'The Immortal Hour' itself is, of the as yet unwritten *Book of Dalua* or *Book of the Dark Fool*, of whose fulfilment the author sometimes dreams."

"The Immortal Hour" was published posthumously in America by Mr. Mosher, in 1907, and in England by Mr. T. N. Foulis in 1908.

A word concerning the illustrations. The suggestive landscapes in volumes II, III, IV, V, VI—reproduced from drawings by the Highland painter and etcher, Mr. D. Y. Cameron—are glimpses of some of those Isles of the West that form the setting to so many of the "Fiona Macleod" Tales: Arran, with its picturesque hills; Iona, the Isle of Dreams, with its "Sundown Shores"; the Treshnish Isles, that lie further westward in the Atlantic; and Skye, the Isle of Mists, that fronts the stormy northern seas.

The portraits in volumes I and VII are from photographs of William Sharp that date to the period of the "Fiona Macleod" writings. That in volume I was taken in Dublin, in 1896, two years after the appearance of *Pharais*; that in volume VII was taken in Sicily, at Il Castello di Maniace, by the Duke of Bronte, in 1903, a few months prior to the publication of *The Winged Destiny*.

ELIZABETH A. SHARP.





## FIONA MACLEOD

*A spirit listened to the whispering grass,  
That shimmered with wet tints of human tears,  
And like a wandering wind the lonely years  
Dried them; the spirit heard that low wind pass,  
And cried THERE IS NO TIME: TIME NEVER WAS!  
Then beat it down and flew beyond the spheres,  
To where the immortal Face of Beauty wears  
That smile which earth sees darkly, as in a glass.*

*And now where'er the dews at nightfall glisten,  
Where'er the mountain-winds are breathing low,  
Where'er the seas creep glimmering to the shore,  
Some wanderer shall pause awhile and listen,  
And see i' the darkling glass a tenderer glow  
Whence that bright spirit whispers evermore.*

ALFRED NOYES.













