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THE EVERGREEN

PART IV.—WINTER

1896-7

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THE EVERGREEN

A NORTHERN SEASONAL

THE BOOK OF WINTER

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THE BIOLOGY OF WINTER

ARGUMENT.—I. An appreciation of the full biological import of Winter is not altogether easy for us, here and now. We must think of peoples with less artificial environment, of more wintry regions, and of Glacial Epochs. II. The Sagas of the Biology of Winter are to be found in such stories as those of the Sleeping Beauty and Balder. III. The astronomical facts bear out our vaguer impressions. IV. Reactions to the cold and scarcity of Winter are very variable:—flight, concealment, colour-change, and so on. V. Hibernation in its varying degrees is a common solution. VI. Yet to many death is inevitable, Winter is the time of intensest elimination. This affects not only individuals, but races. The tree of life grows, but it is also pruned. The only biological consolation is that the fruition of the tree has improved.

I

A TRUE judgment as to the biological import of a Northern Winter is not altogether easy for us, here and now. It is not easy for us, who are cunning and far-sighted, clothed and fire-making organisms; it is not easy here, for, in spite of our grumbling, a British Winter is usually a mild affair; it is not altogether easy now, for our worst winters are but far-off echoes of the Glacial Epoch, when Winter not only conquered Summer, but remained victorious for Ages. Thus it is evident that to do Winter justice we have need to question the Lapps and Samoyedes and other dwellers in the Far North, or, where they have not voices, explorers like Nansen and

Peary; we must think of the Polar Regions, of Alpine life above the snow-line, or of that dark, silent, plantless, intensely cold world—the Deep Sea—where the spell of Winter is unrelieved and perennial; and we must let our imagination travel back to the Ice Ages—the Ages of Horror—during which whole faunas shuddered. Unless we make some such efforts, which we can only now suggest, we are likely to estimate the power of Winter too lightly, and fail in seeing to what degree it casts a spell, often a fatal one, upon life.

II

A true appreciation of Winter was long since expressed in the story of the Sleeping Beauty. She was richly dowered, we remember, with vigorous beauty and joyous grace, but all her gifts were shadowed by the foreboded doom of early death. Yet by a friendly fairy in reserve, to wit, the residual beneficence of Nature, the doom was transmuted into a kinder spell, which bound her to sleep but not to dying. All care notwithstanding, the spindle pierced her hand, she fell into deep sleep, whence at last the Prince's kiss served for her awakening. Various commentators apart, the meaning seems plain: the Princess was our fair earth with all its glow of life, her youth was Summer—often shadowed—the fatal spindle was the piercing cold, the spell-bound sleep was Winter's long rest, the kiss that awakened was the first strong sunshine of Spring. The beautiful old story is literally one of the 'fairy-tales of Science.'

In the same way, though there is doubtless much else in the myth, we can have no doubt that Balder the Beautiful represented the virility and vitality of the sunny Summer, and that the twig of gloom, the Mistletoe, which flourishes and fruits in Winter, was the emblem of the freezing cold which so often brings sudden death or the quiet peace of sleep. A similar interpretation holds for the not less subtle allegory of Proserpina.

III

But let us turn from fancy to fact! The astronomers tell us of the general law that on either hemisphere 63 per cent. of the total heat of the year is received during Summer, and 37 per cent. in Winter; but we feel that this statement, fundamental as it is, hardly expresses the full force of the case. First of all, the astronomers are thinking, and, from their point of view, rightly, of a year with only two seasons; therefore, as we are dealing with four, we must refer part of the 37 per cent. received in Winter to late Autumn and part to early Spring, leaving Winter poor indeed. The same authorities also tell us that the length of Summer and Winter is variable; thus we have now 186 days of Summer, and 179 days of Winter (in the two-season sense), while it is but a geological yesterday since in the Ice Ages the Summer lasted for only 166 days, while 199 lay in the grasp of Winter. This is again very important, for the total amount of warmth received has obviously to be divided by the number of days in the season, to give us a numerical expression of the mean daily sun-heat at any given time. Yet finally, this must not hide from us the commonplace of experience that it is not the average temperature which, so to speak, says yea or nay to this or that form of life; it is rather the occurrence of certain maxima and minima, a terrible heat-wave or a week of fatally frosty nights.

IV

To the cold and scarcity of food which Winter involves in this and more northerly latitudes, there is great variety of reaction on the part of organisms. Of this variety we can only give a few illustrations. Thus most of our birds, emblems of freedom, escape the spell by flight, and, though death is often fleeter still and overtakes them by the way, there can be no doubt that the migration-solution is an effective one. Among those

who are hardy enough, or foolhardy enough, to remain with us, the rate of mortality is often disastrously high.

Other creatures, unequal to the long and adventurous journeys of the birds, retire into winter-quarters, in which they lie low, awaiting happier days. Thus the earthworms burrow more deeply than ever, the lemmings tunnel their winding ways beneath the icy crust of the Tundra, the pupæ and cocoons of insects lie inert in sheltered corners, the frogs bury themselves deeply in the mud, and the slow-worms coil up together in the penetralia of their retreats.

Others, again, such as the Arctic fox, the mountain hare, the ermine, the Hudson's Bay lemming, and the ptarmigan, face the dread enchantment, but turn paler and paler under the spell, until they are white as the snow itself—a safety-giving pallor. It seems likely that a seasonal colour-change of this nature is, in the formal language of the schools, a modification, induced by the cold, but superposed upon a constitutional variation or hereditary predisposition to change. Thus it is well known of Arctic fox and mountain hare, for instance, that the degree of whiteness varies from year to year with the intensity of the Winter. As for its utility, this is at least twofold—the white dress is of service alike in the chase and in flight, while on the other hand it is the warmest dress when the external temperature is less than that of the body.

Man, himself, gets inside other creatures' skins, and bids defiance to weather, or, having in his cunning tapped one of the earth's great stores of energy, sits by the hearth gloating in the warmth of a larger sun than that which now sends him too little cheer. His indifference is, however, in part artificial, as a prolonged coal-strike shows; in part, a privilege of the few, as a glance at the tattered and torn suffices to prove; and in part, merely local, as a short journey northwards convinces us; and he, too, like the birds, often migrates even from our British mildness to a sunnier South, and knows, like many a beast, of winter-refuges, whether in Scottish poor-house or Mentone 'pension.'

V

To many organisms, both of high and low degree, the alternative comes,—to sleep or die. The spindle cannot be escaped, the cold shall pierce like a sword:—but sleep! and it may be well. Of this sleep there are indeed many degrees, from the mysterious latent-life of frozen seeds and animal germs, to the almost equally mysterious true hibernation of marmot and hedgehog. Often, too, it must be confessed that what began in slumber ends by becoming sleep's twin-sister, Death. Yet, we understand so little of any of these more or less dormant states in their relations to one another, or, indeed, of any one by itself, that we may avoid an analysis which would be inappropriate here, and think of Winter as the sleep-bringer.

The great hypnotist lifts his hands, and the sap stands still in the tree, and the song is hushed in the bird's throat; he makes his passes, and growth ceases in bud and seed, in cocoon and egg; he breathes, and sleep falls upon marmot, hamster, and hedgehog, upon tortoise, frog, and fish, upon snail and insect; he commands—his voice is the North Wind,—and the water stands in the running brooks, and the very waves of the fiord are still. Even in our own mild country, is not the freezing of Loch Fyne upon record?

Apart from the state of latent life—in which a paste-eel, for instance, may lie neither living nor dead for fourteen long years, and seeds for many decennia—there is no form of sleep so near to death as this to which the Wizard of the North commands the true hibernators. Somnolence penetrates to the deep recesses of the creature's being, as the histologist well knows, who tells us of the minute structural changes observed in the cellular elements of the sleeping hedgehog.

The heart beats feebly and intermittently, breathing is at long intervals and very sluggish, the food-canal is empty, income is almost at zero, and expenditure but little more. The sleeper may be immersed in water for twenty minutes, or subjected without apparent result to noxious gases. The fat, accumulated

in days of plenty, is slowly burnt away, sustaining in some measure the animal heat. Yet temperature falls very markedly, to a degree which in ordinary life would be fatal; irritability wanes to a minimum; the ordinary reflexes are at most faint; and the creature steadily loses weight. The wonder is that it keeps alive.

The slumberers differ much in the soundness of their sleep. Thus there are light sleepers, like the dormouse, the harvest mouse, and the squirrel; and heavy sleepers, like hedgehog, hamster, and marmot, or like the tortoise, whom the crack of doom would scarce disturb. Quaint is the somnolence of the mother polar bear, who, after awaking in her snowy couch to give birth to her two cubs, sets them a-sucking, yawns, and falls asleep again. But she, and even the seven sleepers, must yield to the snail who overslept himself so far that when he awoke it was in a case in the British Museum wherein he bore a ticket already many years old. There was another Rip van Winkle snail who awoke to find himself an extinct species, but that, as they say, is another story!

After we allow for the tendency cold has to produce coma, of which Alpine travellers have told us tales; for the drowsiness which is said—let us hope it is true—to take the edge off starvation; for the sleepiness induced, e.g., in church or lecture-room by confined atmosphere, of which no proof is required, there seems to be need of further physiological explanation. It has been suggested, and wisely it seems to us, that the retention of waste-products induces a state of 'auto-intoxication'—a drugging or poisoning of the system with its own excretions, a banking-up of the fire of life with its own ashes. It seems plausible that this will tend to keep the sleepy sleeping, and the idea may be hazarded that one of the reasons why plants are not more wide awake is just this retention of nitrogenous waste-products. For it is well known that plants do not get rid of these. The same is in a measure true of the sea-squirts or Ascidians, which in their adult life are notoriously plant-like and sleepy animals.

The general import of hibernation is in most cases plain. Life saves itself by ceasing to struggle, by retiring within its entrenchments. Death is baffled by a device in which activity virtually ceases without life itself being surrendered. Yet there are other aspects of the Winter's sleep. To some it is a time of repair—a long night—after the nervous fatigue of a longer day. Thus, it is not difficult to understand that, quite apart from the weather, it is good that the queen humble-bee should sleep through the Winter, just as it is well for the fisherman that he should weep after the storm. In short, we return to our main thesis, that life is rhythmic, and that the seasons punctuate it.

To others the sleep is in some measure a preparation for a new day. Thus in the seeds which slumber in the earth, each a young life, there is a rotting away of the husks which the delicate embryo could scarce burst, and later on there are processes of fermentation, by which the legacy of hard, condensed food is made available for the young plant. That it is not merely the unpropitious weather and the hard soil which make it necessary for the seeds to sleep may be proved by experiment, and is also shown by the fact that not a few normally lie dormant for several years. Similarly, within the cocoons there lie the chrysalids, quaintly mummy-like and inert to all appearance, but slowly undergoing that marvellous transformation, the result of which is the winged butterfly—the Psyche.

VI

It seems a true paradox that one of the great facts in the Biology of Winter is the Frequency of Death. Not that there is any season when Death is not busy, or any opportunity which he does not seize; he winnows among the newborn weaklings of the early Spring, he lays pitfalls for the adolescent, he thins the ranks of Summer's industry, he puts in a full stop at the limit of growth, he forces open the door which love seeks to

keep closed, he harvests in Autumn; but it is in Winter that his power is most felt. It is the time of the least heat, least light, least food; and life hurries on the downgrade to death. The influence on plant-life is most obvious and direct; a large fraction of the income of radiant energy is cut off, the water-supply is also reduced, and there is further risk that the frost cause bursting of cells and vessels within the plant just as in our houses. The diminished vigour of plant-life means less food for the animals, and on them too the relative lack of warmth and light has a directly disastrous effect. Given

> 'A winter such as when birds die
> In the deep forests, and the fishes lie
> Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
> Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
> A wrinkled clod, as hard as brick,'

the decimating influences are perceptible on every side. Thus of the mortality during the hard winter 1894-95 we have eloquent statistical evidence from moor and forest, lake and seashore. Winter is indeed a time of rest and sleep, but as truly of elimination and death.

Death always means the irrecoverable cessation of bodily life, but it has so many forms—violent, bacterial, and natural,—each, again, with its subdivisions, that we cannot without inquiry say for any particular case that the rate of mortality is greatest in Winter. Yet the general induction appears safe that in our latitude Winter is the time of severest elimination. Thus the season which is apt to seem dull to the field-naturalist is full of interest to the evolutionist. The hedgerows are bare, and the woods silent, the pools are clear and apparently devoid of life, the shore is comparatively barren, even the sea has lost much of its wonted abundance. And, though much of this scarcity is only apparent—life lying low, or asleep, or on a journey—we must allow that it is often altogether sped. Proserpina has gone down to Hades. Balder is dead. We have, in short, to face the inexorable process of natural selection, whereby the

relatively less fit to the conditions of their life tend to be eliminated, i.e. tend to die before the normal time, and to leave behind them less than the normal number of offspring. Winter is the time when the tree of life is most rigorously pruned. In our study of the decadence of Autumn, we spoke of the death of individuals and of the consolation which is offered in the persistence of the race, but we cannot think long over such matters without recognising that the race itself may perish. We need only reverse the hands of the geological clock a few seconds to be convinced of this. We need only go back to the more recent ice-ages—the ages of Winter's tyranny—which are not long past, as time goes. Indeed, we need not leave human or even modern history at all to find sadly abundant illustration of lost races.

Keeping, however, to recent animal history, where are the bears who had their dens in Athole, or the wild boars of the great Caledonian forest, or the busy beavers who cut their logs in the Pass of Killicrankie, or the white bulls who wallowed in the dark waters of the hidden tarns, or the wolves with which Wales paid her tax to King Edgar?

Or, again, where are the early companions and rivals of our forefathers in Britain—the cave-lion, the cave-bear, the cave-hyæna, the shaggy mammoth, and the woolly rhinoceros? Do we know of them at all except in so far as our inheritance includes some of that hardihood, wisdom, and gentleness which they and others helped to work out in man?

Or, going much further back, where are the delicately beautiful graptolites, the quaint trilobites, the great sea-scorpions, the ancient heavily-armoured fishes, the giant amphibians, the monstrous reptiles, the dragons, the toothed birds, the old-fashioned mammals? The most powerful, the most fertile have not been spared, even those which seem as though they had been built not for years but for eternity, have wholly passed away. This is no mere case of leaves falling from off the tree, it is a lopping of branches.

For some of these lost races, competition was doubtless too

keen—they outlived their prosperity and went to the wall; for others the force of changing circumstances was too strong—they were not plastic enough to change; for others, perhaps, over-specialisation or feverish activity was fatal; for others it may be that their constitution was at fault, and that they went down to destruction, as Lucretius finely phrased it, 'hampered all in their own death-bringing shackles.' We cannot console ourselves with any vague notion that such disappearance is a misnomer for transmutation into some nobler form; that may be true of certain species, but it is not true of the wholly extinct races. Nor is there consolation in the notion that the atoms which were once wrapped up in that whilom bundle of life known as the Ichthyosaurus may now be part and parcel of us; for we feel that those particular combinations which we have called lost races—those smiles of creative genius,—have gone, gone as utterly as the snows of yester year.

Thus from the elimination now observable around us in this wintry season our thoughts naturally pass to the great world-wide process, continuous since life began, which embraces us also in its inexorable sifting. It does not indeed explain us, nor the organisms we know, any more than the pruning-hook explains the tree; but given life and growth, we cannot understand their history apart from elimination. In short, we need our Winter to explain our Summer, and this perhaps is the only consolation which the biologist can suggest to the discontented—that the history of the world as a whole is the history of a progressive development. The fruition of the tree improves. Perhaps the impersonality of this consolation is the reason why he who was a very Gallio in Summer becomes a religious man in Winter.

J. ARTHUR THOMSON.

A COTTAGE IN A WOOD

BY JAMES CADENHEAD, R.S.W.

HARE K

A WINTER SONG

THE wreath is faded from the reveller's brow,
Never a flower remains!
Where is the beauty, where the gladness now—
The lip the vintage stains?

Fled as a dream! But, by my dying fire,
As I sit here alone—
The snowflakes spotting all her dusk attire,
Enters a wrinkled crone:

'Cottage and hall alike must ope to me,'
Quoth the unwelcome wife;
'I come, uncalled, to bear you company,
And leave you but with life!'

GEORGE DOUGLAS.

IMPRESSIONS OF WINTER[1]

I

A BLEAK day in the beginning of winter which has come over the land with showers and fitful gusts. With a sudden whistling sound these showers and gusts make themselves heard, dying away again with long-drawn, rasping soughs, like the falsetto tones of an old worn-out singer. The sky is greyish blue, with here and there a wandering cloud, which borrows a yellow glare from the sun's glory.

On the horizon a faintly undulating line denotes the limit of a mass of violet-grey clouds. In this deep bed the tempests go to rest after their distant raids, when they have chased before them the last stricken leaves; raised in yellow nebulous whirls the sand of the downs to a fearful height; swept the foam of the sea like a snowstorm of large, bewildering flakes; and ruthlessly whistled through the branches of the trees which shiver in their nakedness.

Now, however, the fury of the wind, that, after the calm death of autumn, rode on the wings of the tempest to sway sky and earth, has spent itself. Yet, every now and then, swelling gusts, like the last breathings of an exhausted wrestler, gasp through the air, curling the while the steel-blue water into gentle ripples.

[1] Translated by the author from his Dutch originals.

Over the river the sea-gulls are flapping their wings; or, with stiff stretched pinions skimming the surface, they glide slowly into the water. Some of them for a while soar in stately circles through the sky until they suddenly shoot down, their bills stretched forward, describing a slight perpendicular in the air. Their hoarse shrieks mingle with the groanings of the wind as from time to time it rises.

But at nightfall birds and gusts are hushed, and the water is lying in dead calm under the deep red glare of the sinking sun.

II

The sun has burst forth. By the intense glow of his pomp of rays he has in the morning overcome the cold, pale hosts of nebulæ and triumphantly entered the high-roads of the sky which open in blue splendour for his jubilant march. Now, ruler of the skies, he casts his dazzling brilliancy upon the hoary snow-sheets of the earth.

The sky is streaked with long-drawn feather clouds like unto the tender down on a dove's neck. Layers of them glide over each other and lie in a rising undulation on the dull blue, like great palms of peace.

A subtle, tremulous, transparent haze appears on the horizon. Without absorbing the forms, it pleasantly softens all sharp outlines in its dreamy embrace.

The cart-ruts, glittering in the sunlight, run in two parallel lines over the hard trodden road; and on either side, from the tops of the trees, in the silence of the calm, and the splendour of the gently loosening sun, small white flakes of rime slowly descend.

The row of gradually undulating hills, sloping away into the distance, bright in places with grey uneven snow-plots, looms in the shadowy violet dimness against the sun-drenched haze.

Before the walker's feet small crested larks, plump and tame, hop about, every now and then flying short distances and boring into the hardened layer of snow. Greedily they peck

with their little bills, these tiny town-marauders tamed by winter.

The steam-tram, with a hollow rattling, rushes along the glittering rails. For a considerable time its crest of steam remains hanging in the white net of branches, entangled in them like a flimsy cobweb veil. The impetuous bound of its course sends a short shudder through the tawny, withered oak-groves by the roadside, startling them for a moment from their rigid repose.

III

A hazy sun-blot, dimly shimmering like tarnished brass, is lingering still in the western sky. Beneath it stretches a narrow band of yellow-red, whose hues gradually fade and dwindle, passing on either side into pale grey. On the lower skirt of the sky, descending to the earth, is seen a purple-grey pile of clouds, upon which the trees of the horizon—faint, spectral skeletons, misty like the images of a dream—raise their lank shapes.

On the left, by the side of the fading edges of the bright band, there appears, only just perceptible against the almost equally tinted sky, the ridge of hills ascending and descending in even slopes. The hills themselves have a more compact, purplish-grey tint.

Further down, interrupted here and there by a projection, and grooved with ditches, which glare yellow-light in the monotony of the white expanse, like tramrails lit by the fiery eyes of the engine, a great white plain extends as far as the main road. The bark of the birches, at other seasons so glittering, appears sallow and dull amidst the snow accumulated around the tree-roots, and their overhanging, hairy boughs, delicately twined against the grey-blue upper sky, move with a faint quiver.

At some distance stands a grove of fir-trees, those harps of the winter wind, when with a wailing rustle he sweeps through their stately branches.

Toy-like, as if a child at play had placed them at random, white-roofed cottages far away lie scattered.

And, in the foreground, close to the road, the faint gleam of the dying sun, wearily descending into a pile of clouds, glides over the silent, velvety snow-field.

IV

Brightly the sun has its play on the blanched plain; when the radiant sunlight meets the crystals, thousands of diamonds sparkle up out of the white monotony. Then their facets glitter in lustrous splendour like the clear touches of the sun on a sheet of water, and all the wide white surface is alive with a tremor and gleam of radiance which seems to shoot up and hover in the air, filling all the broad expanse of ether with an aureole of crystalline scintillation.

In some places a broad stream of golden light flows over the snow-field, while the shadow of a slight cloud suddenly passing over it dims, as if suffused with a breath, the dazzling splendour of white and crystal. And round the blue-grey range of hills on the horizon, above which the sun spreads its lustre, a golden band runs like a diadem around the head of some stern old king.

The snow crackles under the feet, and the winter wind sends its low-moving gusts over the landscape. On every side, as far as the eye reaches, snow, snow, snow. Everything is white except part of the trunks of the trees, and the walls of the farm-houses standing out like dark blots of shadow between the sparkling white of the snow and the sparkling blue of the sky.

So, surrounded by winter's jubilee, inhaling the cold, dry, subtle air, and crushing the frozen snow under my feet, I proceed. The snow creaks and crepitates, and, after my treading it down, remains flat on the ground with a last half-groaning sigh, as if it would reproach me with violating its white smoothness and disturbing its icy repose. My cheeks feel the pure, ice-cold breeze, the blood-strengthening, nerve-bracing exhilaration, the fresh essence of winter.

And, walking on, I come to an orchard whose trees are wholly white, the trunks painted white by human hands, the branches

and twigs hoar-frosty by the work of winter, so prodigal of white. One of them is strangely formed, like a hunch-backed dwarf, with its fantastically distorted, undergrown trunk, and its branches horribly wrenched and twisted, like the massive white skeleton of some wondrous monstrosity which has lost itself and wasted away in a winter garden of fairyland.

And with every strong gust of wind a shower of white, tiny flakes comes down from the trees. First they hover hesitatingly in the air, hanging 'twixt heaven and earth, then slowly descend and quietly settle down on the ground.

Heavily thundering over the groaning rails, a long railway train is with violent puffs of steam just slowly passing by the barrier. First the steam shoots straight up into the air like a nebulous geyser-spout, a fountain of sun-golden mist, whose extremities, hued with fire-yellow topaz, encircle a nucleus of dull amethyst. And, suffused with light, slowly the steam-cloud extends, but continues lingering over the dark train, that, with grim grinding of axle-trees and perches, creeps slowly along.

V

Faintly blows from afar the winter wind, with long-drawn breathings, that cause an idle flapping of the withered leaves against each other as they whizz among the sere-leafed shrubs. Slowly the rime-laden branches of the fir-trees, stretched out like solemnly blessing arms, are moving up and down.

Upon all the country the thick winter fog has settled, weighing down everything with its mass of moisture, vaporising the distant trees, and absorbing the thin extremities of the branches in its densely clinging veil. Dreamily the white roofs of the farm-houses dwindle in the mist. Cold grey, the sky vaults the tawny land.

Leaning against a hill, and looking like grotesque giant-crests, the black-green pine-trees stain dark tints in the white. The slender entwined twigs of the hedge, set with pure rime, resemble a broad lace garniture fringing the snow-covered

ground. And beyond there is everywhere the close mantle of snow, uneven with trees and slightly waving stems, decked with wind-blown, fine, white-feathered plumes, clothing the ribbed bands of the earth.

In a fallow field, working the hard frozen soil, men come into sight. With long-drawn strokes of the mattock one of them sturdily loosens the stubborn glebe. With their spades others are throwing the sandy lumps in heaps, and darkly they stand out against the whitish background like dim magic-lantern shadows, cast by a faintly burning wick. Under the fog, which dims the objects and penetrates them with its chill, wet breath, everything lies hushed and quiet.

EDWARD B. KOSTER.

WINTER

THIS is no weakling pale
Driven before the gale,
A strong one he, as giant Ophero
Who bore the wayfarer upon his shoulder,
His shoulder mighty as a mountain boulder,
And from happy shore to shore
Carried him safely o'er
The turgid torrent, even so
Doth sturdy winter come and go,
Serving feeble things that wait
To cross a strait,
And landing them where they may run
To overtake the sun.

The bridge of his great arm
Rescueth from harm,
His freezing grip
Warmeth the blood,
The kiss of his cold lip
Is good
For stinging vital sparks to fire,
And wholesome in a frail world is his despotic ire.

Winter, with limbs bare and brown,
A furred skin on his shoulders thrown,
Driving the gales he hath come swiftly down
Behind the sea-gulls that have landward flown:
Music from his mouth
Blowing, north to south,
A leash of whirlwinds in each ruthless hand
To let loose o'er sea and land.
Good ships, fear ye him
When days are short and dim,
Demons of the air,
All baleful things and grim,
Of him beware,
The purifier,
Of him, the thurifer
With thurible of frost and fire,
Scattering the seedlings of a white desire
As swift he goes
Amid his frosts and snows,
Keen of eye and strong of limb,
Cleansing the world with righteous wrath no poison
can withstand.

His dark head white starred with frost
Moves amid the racked and tost
Boughs of the disgracéd trees,
Suffering mysterious penalties
For sins of which the legend is long lost,
For he hath them in ward
And doth their secret guard,
He hath stripped them of the royal cover
Summer gave
When each brave
Tree of the forest was her lover,
And the gold
Flung to them by autumn's grace

He will take and hold
Down in a dark place,
For he hath got the key
Of the earth's treasury.

Hid within the deeps
Of Nature, where she keeps
In long unconsciousness her darling rose,
The pear that golden grows
When the sun hath found it
With reddening leaves around it,
Hath with delight caressed it
And for sweet uses blessed it.
Far down in the darkness where the seed sleeps,
And into which the long rain weeps and creeps,
Doth winter hoard up gems,
Coronals and diadems
For beauteous daughters that will yet be born
On many a radiant morn
Winter will never see
When the queen Summer shall
Hold her high festival,
Ruling by love a raptured world on flowery hill and lea.

When the ascending sun
Signalleth his race is run,
Whither goeth he?
Folding up his tent of snow,
Taking the mountain tranquilly?
Where?
Lifting his bugle once to fling
On the air
A silver call to waken Spring?
Doth he straightway go
Out amid the stars from yonder peak,
Still offering his service to the weak

In spheres we do not know,
Where things faint to death,
Languish for his ice-cold breath
Bringing vigour to their veins?
With his hand upon the reins
Of the storm-wind he will come
Back to us when woods are dumb,
When our summer glory
Is departed, when the story
Of the nightingale is told,
And no more is autumn gold,
In the misty morn
We shall hear his lusty horn
Blowing, and our eyes see fain
Ice-tents glittering in the plain.
Then shall hearts be glad, and say
The roses have another day
To live, for lo, the strong one 's at his mighty work again!

ROSA MULHOLLAND.

A WINTER HARVEST

BY A. G. SINCLAIR

E

FANTASIES

I

A YEAR AND A DAY

ONE November day, when they had been married about a twelvemonth, there came to the door a strange-looking girl and asked the master if they were in want of a servant.

The mistress had just had her first baby and was still weak, though her heart was good, and the master, after asking the girl a few questions, said to the mistress, Well . . . he thought they might engage her.

'I don't altogether like her look,' said the mistress; for the girl's peaked face was so white and still that, if it hadn't been for her eyes, one would have taken her for a corpse.

'I can sew and knit, and there isn't a bit of housework I can't manage, and I can milk and make butter with the best,' said the girl.

And the master remarked again that he thought they might try her; she seemed to be strong and willing, for all she looked so pale.

'And I love children,' added the girl, glancing wistfully at the baby; 'I can quiet them however fretful they may be.'

The infant in the mother's arms had been crying lustily for a minute or two, either from wanting the breast or for some other reason, and hush it as she might the mother couldn't quiet it.

But now the girl fixed on it her great, mournful eyes and began to hum softly some old-world lullaby; and almost as soon

as her lips began to move the little one blinked and closed its eyes, and there it lay peacefully asleep.

That settled the matter as far as the mistress was concerned.

'Well, I'm willing to engage you,' said she to the girl.

But the master said nothing. He was watching the girl strangely out of the corners of his eyes.

'If you engage me,' said the girl, 'it must be for a year and a day.'

'Very well,' said the mistress, who was admiring the baby sleeping so peacefully in her arms; 'and what wages will you want?'

'Oh, I don't want money,' said the girl carelessly. 'Let me have anything that may take my fancy on the night I'm leaving.'

'Very well,' said the mistress, 'I'm agreeable to that.'

'You agree to it too?' asked the girl of the master.

'Yes . . . I agree to it . . . if the mistress does,' said he. And all the time he couldn't take his eyes off the girl. 'What's your name?' he asked her, watching her closely.

'Piggy-widden,'[1] said the girl.

'What a ridiculous name for a servant,' said the mistress. 'I shall call you Peggy,' said she to the girl.

The girl glanced at the master; but the latter held his tongue: so Peggy she became without further protest.

Peggy proved a perfect treasure in the house: early and late she was scouring and cleaning, and it was impossible to find fault with her in a single thing.

Or, at any rate, so the master thought. But the mistress thought the girl looked too often at the master (who had been a bit wild in his day, though he had sobered down since his marriage), and though the master said nothing, she was not far wrong.

Go where the master would the girl's eyes followed him. Yet she never addressed him, unless compelled to do so, and made

[1] Piggy-widden=little white pig, is in Cornwall a term of endearment for the last-born in a family.

no attempt to attract his attention. Always sparing of her speech, and always with that deathly pallor on her countenance, the girl moved about as noiselessly as a ghost: her great, mournful eyes apparently fixed on vacancy (unless the master happened to be near), and all her faculties seemingly sunk in torpor, except for the mechanical needs of the moment. Yet the master seemed oddly attracted towards her. His eyes sought her still, white face persistently, whenever he was anywhere where it was possible to get a glimpse of her; and when their glances met, the girl would hold him with her eyes with a control so uncanny that the master would shiver chilly, as if ice were in his blood.

At last the term of the girl's engagement drew to an end: on the morrow she would have served them a twelvemonth and a day.

As she sat by the big turf fire in the evening, playing with the baby that crowed upon her lap, the wife began to speculate, with languid indifference, on what the girl would ask for her wages. Would it be clothes, or china, or goods from the linen-chest? Or perhaps it would be the baby's silver christening-cup, which she had once or twice seen the girl examining when she was cleaning it? Well, anything, even the cup (though she would be loth to part with this), would be cheap as payment for the girl's services, for a better servant, as far as work was concerned, she could never hope to get. And with that she proceeded to give the baby the breast, and lazily dismissed the subject from her thoughts.

On the morrow came the girl's last day at the farmhouse; and it was All Souls' Eve, and a wild day to boot.

'A poor day for the end of your engagement,' said the mistress; 'where are you thinking of going to when you leave us?'

'To my home,' said the girl.

'And where is that?' asked the mistress.

'Maybe you 'll be coming there one day,' said the girl. 'I think I 'll keep its name as a surprise for you,' said she.

'Oh, very well; as you please,' said the mistress. 'And what do you want for wages?' she asked her presently.

And at that moment the master entered the kitchen.
'Only a kiss from the master,' said the girl.
'You bold young hussy!' cried the mistress furiously. 'Get out of my house this instant, or I'll sweep you out with the broom!'
'I have served a year and a day for my wages,' said the girl, 'and the master will pay them honestly'; and she held him with her eyes.
'He sha'n't!' cried the mistress, rushing between them.
'He will,' said the girl, in her dull, lifeless tones.
And immediately the master thrust his wife aside and kissed the girl on her unresponsive lips.
'Now, he's mine!' cried the girl exultantly: her white face turning to the colour of clay.
The mistress fell back from her with a look of horror; but the master stood still, staring in her eyes.
'Are you Eileen, then?' asked the master, shuddering.
'When the time came I thought you would know me,' said the girl.
'But Eileen died. . . .'
The girl fixed her eyes on him steadily.
'And who says that I am not dead?' asked the girl.
And at that moment the windows and doors began to rattle, as if unseen hands were busy with their fastenings.
'My year and a day is up: I am wanted,' said the girl. And she held out her cold, white hand to the master.
The man took it mechanically, and his face began to pale.
'Come!' said the girl, and the door flew open; a sudden icy gust blowing through the kitchen so that the lights went out and the child began to wail.
'It is cold,' muttered the master, as she led him to the door.
'It will be colder where we are going,' said the girl.
'It is dark.'
'It will be darker where we'll have to sleep together.'
And out they went into the wild, mirk night.

II

AN ODD COINCIDENCE

ONE moonlight night, as Abe Chynoweth and his comrade Joe Branwell were whiffing for mackerel between Treen Dinas and the Runnelstone, Abe Chynoweth, in a struggle with a powerful conger, unfortunately overbalanced himself and plunged headlong into the sea.

The sullen waters closed over him with an angry growl, as if the old Sea Mother had gotten her prey at last and snarled her satisfaction as she savagely dragged him down, and Abe, with the waters sounding in his ears, as though the world were drifting, drifting away from him, felt the solemnity of death fall suddenly on his thoughts.

The next moment, however, he was surprised to find himself flung violently on the strand, the huge waves grumbling and rumbling as they sullenly recoiled from him.

As he rose to his feet he perceived a large black boat beached on the sand about a dozen yards away from him; and the oddity of her appearance at once set him wondering.

To his eyes—but perhaps it was the salt water still smarting in them—she seemed like a monstrous black coffin, fashioned precisely on the same lines as the latter, and as sinister and gloomy in the memories she awoke. To add to the strangeness, she had a stunted mast carrying a square black sail, and in her bow stood a lean, dwarfish figure, with a face whose pits and hollows were so extravagantly accentuated that it resembled nothing so much as a skeleton's.

While Abe stood gaping at the boat with a strange shivering, which he found it quite impossible to control, he could hear the bell on the Runnelstone tolling solemnly as the heaving surges swung it sullenly to and fro, and on the beach the waves moaned eerily all the while.

Suddenly the odd little figure in the bow of the boat put a horn to his mouth, and blew a long, wailing blast.

A sound more drearily mournful Abe had never heard; it was as though the weepings and sobbings of unnumbered generations were concentrated in their sorrow in that long, deep wail.

As the last dreary note died away mournfully, Abe was aware of a string of shadows descending to the cove through the deep, black cutting that led up the cliffs.

Strange indeed was the procession; its like Abe had never seen. The thin, misty shadows, as tremulous as wisps of vapour, yet with their lifelong identities wrought into them indelibly, appeared to be filled with the most agitating sorrow, to judge by the wild abandonment of their gestures, yet from the long procession winding down the beach not a single sound rose into the air. It was all as silent as if Abe had been looking at a picture, and the terror of the dumb scene chilled him to the bone.

In the throng of shadows Abe scanned the faces curiously, but with the curiosity of a terror that oppressed him like a nightmare, and his heart seemed to swell and ache as he scanned them.

One after the other, and still in silence, the figures entered the boat, wringing their hands helplessly, and Abe watched them with the blood congealing in his veins.

Suddenly he perceived among the gliding throng an ashen-faced, wet-eyed, frightened little child, her tiny feet showing beneath her long white night-dress, and her wee hands clutching at the skirt of a woman in front of her; a great, dim terror evidently bursting her little heart.

In an instant Abe recognised his own wee daughter, and with the great and mighty cry of a parent's anguish—so loud, so deep, so appallingly poignant that even the lean white figure in the boat started visibly—Abe darted forward to clasp the little maid.

But it was too late.

Just at that instant the figure at the bow of the boat uttered another long, deep wail through his horn, and the ghostly procession drifted into the boat: drifted into it so rapidly that Abe, rushing after them, found the last thin shadow already in the boat and the latter floating outwards into the grey immensity at the very moment that he arrived at the edge of the water.

Across the side of the boat his little daughter leaned imploringly, her blue eyes entreating and full of the agony of separation—her dumb appealing cutting him to the heart.

Into the waves Abe rushed, regardless of their depth, following the retreating boat with passionate despair.

Up crept the waters to his waist, to his shoulders—up to his neck, to his chin, to his mouth—till at last he was struggling chokingly in the flood, his hands thrown up and the waters deepening above his head.

. . . 'All right agen, Abe?' a voice called to him suddenly; a voice from somewhere out of the depths of his past, dead life.

Abe opened his eyes feebly, and saw Joe bending over him as he lay in the bottom of the boat with the water streaming from his clothes.

'So close a shave as that I never seed!' said Joe. 'Thee went down like a stone. Thought I should never git 'ee aboard agen. Thee 'rt lookin' whisht,[1] sure 'nuff. Feelin' all right?'

Abe sat up with an effort, and gazed around dazedly: his eyes sweeping the horizon in every direction.

There was nothing to be seen except the headlands black in the moonlight and the shimmering track of silver across the water; and nothing to be heard but the weary rumour of the waves, and the slow and heavy tolling of the Runnelstone bell.

'Feelin' all right agen?' Joe repeated.

'Iss,' said Abe slowly; 'iss, b'leeve I am.' Then shaking the water from him, with his tanned and bearded face looking ghastly in the moonlight, he remarked to Joe, 'I must go

[1] Mournful, or melancholy.

ashore, you; caan't haul anawther line to-night for the life o' me.'

Joe tried to argue with him, but it was quite useless. Abe protested that ashore he must go at once. Good catch or bad catch, he couldn't help it: he must go.

In the end, Joe began to suspect that his comrade had had his nerves unstrung by his sudden plunge overboard; so he submitted to the inevitable with the best grace he could, and, hauling in their lines, they rowed ashore.

Immediately the boat's bow grated on the beach Abe jumped out into the shallow water. Splashing through the frothing edge of the waves, he hauled the boat high and dry on the pebbles almost before Joe could collect his wits. Then waving his hand, with a shouted 'Good night, you!' he strode off grimly, with his head on his breast.

As he laid his hand on the latch of his little thatched cottage, one of the neighbours came out of her house and hurried towards him.

'Beer up, Abe, for the sake o' thy wife!' said the grey-haired gossip, eyeing him anxiously.

'What es it? Wha 's wrong?' Abe articulated hoarsely.

'She 's gone, li'l dear! Falled ovver cleff, playin' weth her dolly.'

The crabber abruptly turned his face away from her. For a minute, perhaps more, he fingered the door-latch . . . it was lifted from within, and he passed silently into the house.

J. H. PEARCE.

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 moon is dying
I have heard a crying
Where the brown burn slippeth thro' the hollows 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!

FIONA MACLEOD.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

IT was night in the little thatched house by the roadside. The last cart had creaked on its homeward way, and silence had fallen on the house, silence broken now and again by the sharp cry of a child in suffering.

A group in the kitchen gathered around the smouldering turf-embers, and talked in subdued voices. Over all these lay the hush of expectation that comes before a death. The neighbour women had been in and out all day, but now as the time grew shorter they had left the mother with the child, alone but for her old mother, who sat on a creepy stool by the hearth and watched both with eyes of suffering.

When the child cried the young mother drew a sharp breath as though she endured intolerable suffering in silence. They were saying down in the kitchen that the baby was too young to have laid hold upon her life, but to her he was as much a human personality, loving and understanding her as though he were a man and old.

'Oh,' she said, when once again the child cried, 'if he is not to live would I keep him to suffer? Oh, why must he suffer, he who has never known sin?'

The old mother made no answer to the unanswerable question. 'Pray, jewel,' she said; 'there is great power in prayer. Many a child have I seen given back that was farther gone than he.'

'If prayer could keep him I should never do anything but pray again,' said the child's mother, but no spark of hope lit up her hopeless eyes.

'Whisht, dearie, whisht! Pray that the will of God may be done in regard to him.'

'I cannot pray. What am I to say to Alick when he comes back and asks me for his son?'

'He will comfort you, and love you better because of what you suffered without him.'

'I was alone in the terror before he was born. I was alone in my agony, but afterwards I had the child. Now I shall be more alone than any woman in all the world.'

The old mother winced.

'You have your father and me. You were our darling before you ever laid eyes on Alick M'Carthy and his fine red coat.'

The girl did not seem to have heard her. She was watching the tiny face on which the shadows were growing darker.

'He is easier, I think.'

'The pain is leaving him, acushla,' said the old mother, her eyes full of a deeper pain.

'His breathing is easier. Oh, what it would be if he could live! I think I should die of joy.'

'Pray, child!'

'Mother, God is powerful and kind. Do you think if I could give Him the child up that He would give him back to me?'

'If He saw it was good, child. He can do better for him than you can. If He takes him, it is in love.'

'But He cannot want him as I do. I would rear him to be a good man.'

Her eyes prayed for hope to be given her. The old mother came out of her corner and looked at the child.

'Give him to me for a bit, and do you go to the altar in the other room and pray. Rest if you can, child. I am troubled about you, for 'tis only a few weeks since you left your bed. Give him to me; I will call you if there is any change.'

The young mother let the child be taken from her knee. He

still lay quietly without a moan. In the dark room adjoining one little star of light quivered. It was the lamp before Our Lady's Altar.

The statue glimmered whitely above it. There was a handful of flowers set on each side in poor little vases. The arms of the figure were outstretched benignly, and the head was bent a little forward.

A sense of rest and quietness came over the young mother. She knelt at the foot of the statue, and rested her cheek against the linen altar-cloth. In the whitewashed wall a death-watch was ticking monotonously. She put her hands to her ears to shut out the sound, and began to pray.

Now that the suffering child was no longer before her, she prayed with passion. She reached out her hand and clutched at a fold of the statue's garments as though it were a living woman.

'You saw your Son die,' she cried, 'but He was with you three-and-thirty years. You nursed and fed and washed and clothed Him. You had all that joy. Ask Him to spare me mine,—if it is His will, if it is His will.'

She added the words with difficulty, hardly as if her heart were in them, but she felt that if she did not say it her prayers would have less chance. She lifted up her head and prayed with exaltation. She lay at the statue's foot, and prayed with anguish. She was so still that the old mother in the next room said to herself—

'The Lord has sent her rest and sleep to strengthen her against what is coming. Blessed be His Name.'

How long she prayed she knew not. Once, when the silence in the other room had lasted long, the thought came to her that the child was dead.

She thought in a strange, stupefied way of how Alick would hear it. Would it be at night in the barrack-room with the ribaldry and jests going on about him, or would it be in the morning as he came from parade all gay with the soldierly smartness she loved in her hero? Would he think she had

been careless of the child and let him die, or would he wish he had married that other girl who was noisily full of health and life, and would have given him strong children? She was paying the price of her delicate, nervous prettiness, which had made her a pet with the officers' wives, and something infinitely precious and perdurable to her young husband.

Then another cry broke the silence, one thinner and more feeble than before. Her heart came out of its sluggish lethargy, and she would have sprung to her feet and gone to the child, but a strange thing happened. 'The arms of the statue had closed about a baby, and the baby was her own little one that lay dying a few feet away.'

A moment, and she went back to the cradle-side, and stretched her arms mutely for the child.

'Bear up, acushla,' said the old mother; 'he's going fast.'

'I wouldn't keep him,' she said, 'now that I know what he's going to.'

Her voice was low and intense, but so new a tone was in it that the old mother looked at her with alarm. Then she nodded her head, reassured.

'The grace of God has strengthened you,' she said.

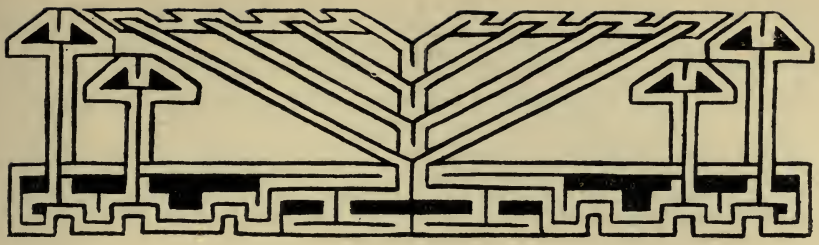
'Yes, the grace of God,' said the young mother, coming to the child as if he were but sleeping.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST. JOHN

BY ANDREW K. WOMRATH

G



SYMBOLS

SPLENDOUR of dawn on the hills, in the rose-coloured
blossom of morn;
Splendour of moonlight unmuffled and glassed in the
shimmering sea;
Splendour of melody rolling on surges of harp and
of horn:
But the splendour of sunset on cloud is the symbol of splendour
to me.

Glory of legions embattled, with wind-blown banners for
wings;
And of brows that are laurelled and lit with the vision of glories
to be;
Glory of birth, and the blazon of heralds and triumph of kings:
But the glory of grass on the grave is the symbol of glory to
me.

Beauty of noon in the cloudless blue and the full-blown flower;
Beauty of minds that are pure, and beauty of souls that are
free;
Beauty of woman unveiled in the bloom of the Lesbian bower:
But the beauty of love in the bud is the symbol of beauty to
me.

Sorrow of hopes unfulfilled in the blight of unholy desire,
And voices of love that are hushed in the shade of the churchyard tree;
Sorrow of sins that grow black in the flame of the cleansing fire:
But the sorrow of wasted youth is the symbol of sorrow to me.

Mystery of wings that are furled in the flesh of the grovelling worm;
Mystery of wisdom that slumbers embalmed in the cell of the bee;
Mystery of fragrance and colour congealed in the core of a germ:
But the mystery of life from the dead is the symbol of mystery to me.

W. J. ROBERTSON.

FROST

QUIETLY the snow fell, in large soft flakes which floated in the still air. Janet stood at her window and looked helplessly at the stealthy narrowing of the familiar horizon. The oppressive stillness of the clouds had waked her early; and, as she dressed, she watched the drifting flakes. Now they fell faster, thicker. The grey veil gradually drew its folds over hill and valley till the girl's outlook was narrowed to the garden wall with its irregular line of trees. The desolation of the scene sank deeply into her mind, and intensified her despondency. The grey outer world with its obscure horizon, its immediate limitations, seemed to symbolise her own life, to echo her present mood. Janet turned and surveyed the sombre comfort of her room wherein she had lived so much of her twenty-two years. Familiarity had dulled her perception of her usual surroundings; but, to-day, the unloveliness of her room, of the whole house, jarred on her nerves acutely. Greyness, she realised with a shiver, was the prevailing tone in her life, despite her many resolutions, her fitful efforts to colour it afresh, to make it fuller and more vital. No prince, alas! had kissed her sleep into throbbing wakefulness. Yesterday's lurid sunset had aroused afresh her flagging determination to control the tenour of her life, and no longer to be the slave of her environment. This morning, the remorse-

less snowflakes wove a pall over her starved hopes, and froze them into inanition.

'Janet,' a gentle old voice cried from the staircase, 'your breakfast will be cold if you do not come!' and the girl, quitting her window with a sigh, entered upon the day's routine.

It was in an old manse, in a quiet northern strath, that Janet lived with her grand-parents. Her grandfather had ministered to the scattered souls of his parish for over fifty years, in his life illustrating the love of God, and preaching of the wrath to come from his pulpit. The children born in the old manse settled elsewhere, and Janet's parents had sent her from India to her grandmother's fostering care when she was five years old.

As a child she ran wild about the garden, in fields and woods, and by the rocks on the river. But as she grew out of childhood, the requirements of social decorum were laid upon her by an instructress who strictly debarred her from the companionship of her cotter playmates. Conventional restrictions sowed seeds of dreariness early in her young life, whose imposed boundaries narrowed in proportion as she grew old enough to understand the increasing needs of her nature. Her home, once her kingdom, became her prison; and she hailed with joy the day that saw her conveyed to a boarding-school in the nearest town. Here, at least, she gained companionship; at least she saw an aspect of life different from that in the familiar strath. Here, too, was new ground whereon to raise castles in the air; here were new materials, in part furnished by her companions, wherewith to build. The future surely held enchanting possibilities and adventures in keeping for her. India, at all events, was a promised land of vaguely remembered brightness to which she should return.

But with the ending of her schooldays came the first crumbling of Janet's dreams. An epidemic of cholera robbed her of both her parents and of her sojourn in that ardently longed-for land of sunshine and of love.

The grey old manse in the north-east of Scotland was henceforth to be her home, varied only by visits to schoolfellows in

Edinburgh, or to an aunt in the bewildering city of London. Her dream, too, of being a painter was shattered by her grandfather's unconquerable prejudice against the preparatory student life away from home control. 'Paint by all means, child, if it amuses you; but paint here. I have heard dreadful tales of student life in London and Paris, and dare not take so great a responsibility on my conscience, or allow you to run such terrible risks.'

So the weeks passed in an ever-growing monotony; and the young life began to falter for lack of vital nourishment. The prevailing silence, broken only by the sound of a cart-wheel or the lowing of a cow, or rendered more audible by the sudden cawing of the rooks, weighed on Janet's spirits. The lack of young companionship depressed her; the inadequacy of her daily duties rendered them distasteful to her; the lack of mental outlook and stimulus starved her intellectually.

Springtide brought fresh hope, fresh vigour; the summer, with its flowering beauty of field and hill, fresh joy. With autumn came the sportsmen, and for a short season the countryside was gay. Janet utilised the warm bright days in trying to find a way of putting upon canvas her impressions of green summer and ruddy autumn, for a solace throughout the long winter and a promise of the spring to be. But with the fall of the year her ardour waned, her courage dissipated. The dull quiet, the chill greyness of winter with its steely sunshine, ate into her life and robbed her of all impulse. Against the winter lethargy she fought fitfully but unavailingly.

Janet's breakfast greeting on this snowy January morning was of a kind she little expected.

'Well, dearie, here 's news for you—for granny and I have quite made up our minds about the matter. You have been ailing all winter, and now an unlooked-for chance has come to make you well again.'

The girl's heart leapt, and the colour rushed into her pale face. Any change would be an unspeakable relief to her.

'Your aunt has written to tell me that she and your cousin are

going to Rome for three months, and she is quite pleased that you should go with them. Three months in Italy ought to make a strong girl of you; and you will come back to us in April with the spring flowers.'

. . . . . .

Every incident of the journey was an excitement. Dreamland, hope, desire, lay before her. The morrow was no longer a barren waste bounded by a narrow horizon. Her way lay now through the unknown, whose sign-posts she could discern faintly in the flooding sunshine. The minor discomforts of travel Janet welcomed, for they suggested a practical aspect of dreamland to which she had never given a thought.

Genoa was the first halting-place. Genoa, the great amphitheatre of Ligurian prosperity, with its tier above tier of Oriental-looking houses flanking the tree-clad hills, and separated from the crescent bay by its white marble quay.

The great cool palaces; the luxuriant foliage dotted with pendent oranges and warm-red roses, and pierced by feather fronds of palm-trees or the spiky growth of cactus and of aloe; the great harbour with its shipping, the blue-green waters alive in the sunlight;—these things awoke in Janet's brain forgotten memories and mental pictures of an Oriental city girt by its great harbour, rich, too, in colour, and full of strange forms and features that long ago, in early childhood, had been familiar to her if then unnoted.

Rome was reached in the early morning, and the girl's first vision of the great city was from the terrace roof of her room high above the Spagna steps. There she stood motionless, breathless almost, as she watched the delicate dawn-mist float away and reveal countless domes and spires, and beyond these the Alban and Sabine hills, as the sun rose above the Apennines and turned the quiet twilight into the radiance of morning.

Day by day the beauty and effluence of the southern winter awoke a deep and eager response in Janet's nature. She became conscious of new needs, new desires. Already the

cramping influence of familiar parochial life was melting in the cosmopolitan breath of the eternal city. Janet scarcely recognised herself as the old landmarks vanished; she felt happy in this sun-swept, but, to her, pathless land. Her ignorance appalled her; her insular and Puritan prejudices were perpetual stumblingblocks which met her with fatiguing monotony. The artistic side of her nature, however, expanded joyously in the congenial environment. So keen was her pleasure, she did not realise how the outward tenour of her sojourn resembled that of every ninety-and-nine tourists to whom Bædeker is an infallible guide. To Janet, Rome was a newly discovered country, and she found herself full of unrecognised possibilities. Ruins, galleries, churches, were visited in due course. Much as these interested her, she loved best of all to escape alone to the Pincio and gaze over its ilex-shaded parapet at the city below; to watch the endless coming and going of smart carriages, or the strings of collegiates, in their distinctive soutanes and hats, wind along the pathways; or to saunter towards the Porta del Popolo and feast her eyes on the moist greensward and the fresh foliage of the exotic trees which make a summer of the Roman winter. And how beautiful, too, in the early mornings was the Piazza di Spagna, abloom with sprays of early blossoming shrubs—wattle, with its perfumed golden balls; eucalyptus, with its thin, scimitar-shaped leaves; roses and violets and narcissi, till the fountain in the centre seemed to spring and sparkle from the heart of a flower-garden.

The churches with their wealth of mosaics and paintings, their coloured trappings, their strange, picturesque ceremonies, attracted yet repelled Janet. Her sensuous impulses rebelled desperately against her religious convictions, trained as she had been in the severe Calvinistic atmosphere. The harsh unloveliness of the little strath kirk had always been distasteful, though she loved the austere purity of her grandfather's teaching. Here, in Rome, the æsthetic attractions of the great churches affected her profoundly by their subtle

suggestiveness, by their repose; but their religious appeal left her unmoved, or frankly hostile.

In the hotel she made few friends. The girl's natural shyness, increased by the remoteness of her home, was a constant barrier to social intercourse. At table her position between her sociable aunt and cousin relieved her, she felt, of the necessity of continuous talking, and leisure to watch and listen unheeded.

The three months at length drew to a close, the longest and most eventful of her life. As Janet stood on the terrace roof for the last time, and watched the sun set in flaming crimson and orange, against which the dome of St. Peter's stood outlined in sombre purple, she sighed farewell to the mysterious Campagna beyond, to the ancient city at her feet. She knew that her regret would grow into an ever-deepening longing as time drifted her further away from this flowering oasis she had chanced upon in the colourless desert of her life.

* * * * * *

The elation that Janet had brought back with her from Italy lasted throughout the ensuing summertide. The beauty of the summer, the rich fruition of tree and flower, the mantling green, gold, and purple of hill and vale, Janet saw through eyes wherein lingered the glamour of the southern land she had left. Nevertheless, it was a shock, on her return to the old sleepy manse, to find neither stick nor stone out of its accustomed place, to see nothing altered in any one or anything that answered to the wonderful change she felt in herself. Nothing differed: the same voices, the same routine, the same daily remarks, just as she remembered them ever since her childhood. Yet not quite the same. A curious shrinkage seemed to have taken place. The greater world outside this familiar daily life made the smaller world grow smaller still, showed it by comparison to be antiquated, asleep, left behind by the great wave of extension and expansion.

Losing sight of the warm human hearts that beat in the little strath, of the equality of suffering it shared with the rest of the world, Janet felt herself chilled to the heart by its parochialism,—

in other words, by the absence of any definite outlet for her unsatisfied and untried possibilities. The even tenour of her life had been abruptly confused by her visit to Rome. An angel had stepped into the quiet pool and had troubled it; but alas! the waters were gradually settling once more into stagnation. Would no lasting good remain?

One by one the autumn sportsmen and their visitors left the neighbouring hills, and the strath resumed its normal uneventfulness. Was there no escape? Should she not go back to Rome, or even to London, and learn to paint? She was of age, should she not choose her own course of life? But whenever this suggestion created an alluring picture in her mind, it was immediately effaced by another—that of two wrinkled, pathetic faces, of two frail old bodies awaiting the close of their tired lives. This picture seemed to Janet to leave her no alternative. Clearly she realised her present duty, and accepted it; but the blight of bitter regret and futile longing withered the delicate tentatives of her heart.

Autumn faded into barrenness; the leaves lay brown and sodden in the strath. Here and there a straggling bunch of mountain-ash berries gleamed scarlet among the skeleton branches; ruddy haws presaged a severe winter. Early frosts turned the low grey clouds into falling rain, and the enshrouding mists hung above the river, and were shredded against the pine-trees on the banks.

The uneventful days crawled on, and, as the year waned, Janet felt herself paralysed by an inertia that robbed her of all power of adapting her environment to her own ends. Since she could not shape her destiny, she had to suffer; since she could not attune herself to her surroundings, she had to endure.

One December afternoon, after a windless, brooding morning, Janet stood at the parlour window disconsolately watching the little eddies of wind which whirled the dust into spirals, and here and there shook down a ragged, tenacious leaf that circled reluctantly to the ground. Suddenly a large, loose snowflake drifted past the pine branches, and this all at once was

followed by a cloud of other flakes, which melted as they fell.

'Ah! winter has come!' she said, with sharp indrawing of her breath. She stood spellbound while the snow fell faster, finer, till at last the ground was hidden by the soft white covering.

'Winter has come,' she sighed again. Then, turning abruptly, she pushed her easel aside impatiently, thrust her paint tubes and brushes into the old oak chest, and took the household workbasket from the chimney corner. Drawing a chair before the fire, she began with nervous fingers to darn some fine napery. 'Yes,' she repeated wearily, 'winter has come indeed.'

ELIZABETH A. SHARP.

BETWEEN THE AGES

GONE is the spirit of old
With the thirst for the strife;
Gone is the fierce and the bold
From the midst of our life;
Gone is the spirit of old.

Hushed is our wild battle-cry,
Feared anear and afar;
Never the forests reply
To loud pipings of war;
Hungered the dun eagles fly.

Where are the gods that were ours,
Iron Odin, and Thor?
Fled this soft region of flowers
That their souls must abhor?
Where are the gods that were ours?

Vainly I murmur and moan
For their dances and feasts.
Seated upon their high throne
Are the Babe and his priests,
Claiming the world as their own.

Psalms from the penitent cells
    Fill the indolent day;
Tolling of numberless bells
    Calls for ever to pray.
Rudely my spirit rebels!

O for the pipe and the sword,
    And the banners of fight!
Weary their chants and their Word
    That I know not aright!
Thor, give me Thor for my lord!

Better to strive in the field
    Ere all war-pealings cease;
Better to die than to yield
    To a Child-king of Peace,
Better to die in the field!

NIMMO CHRISTIE.

IL NEIGE

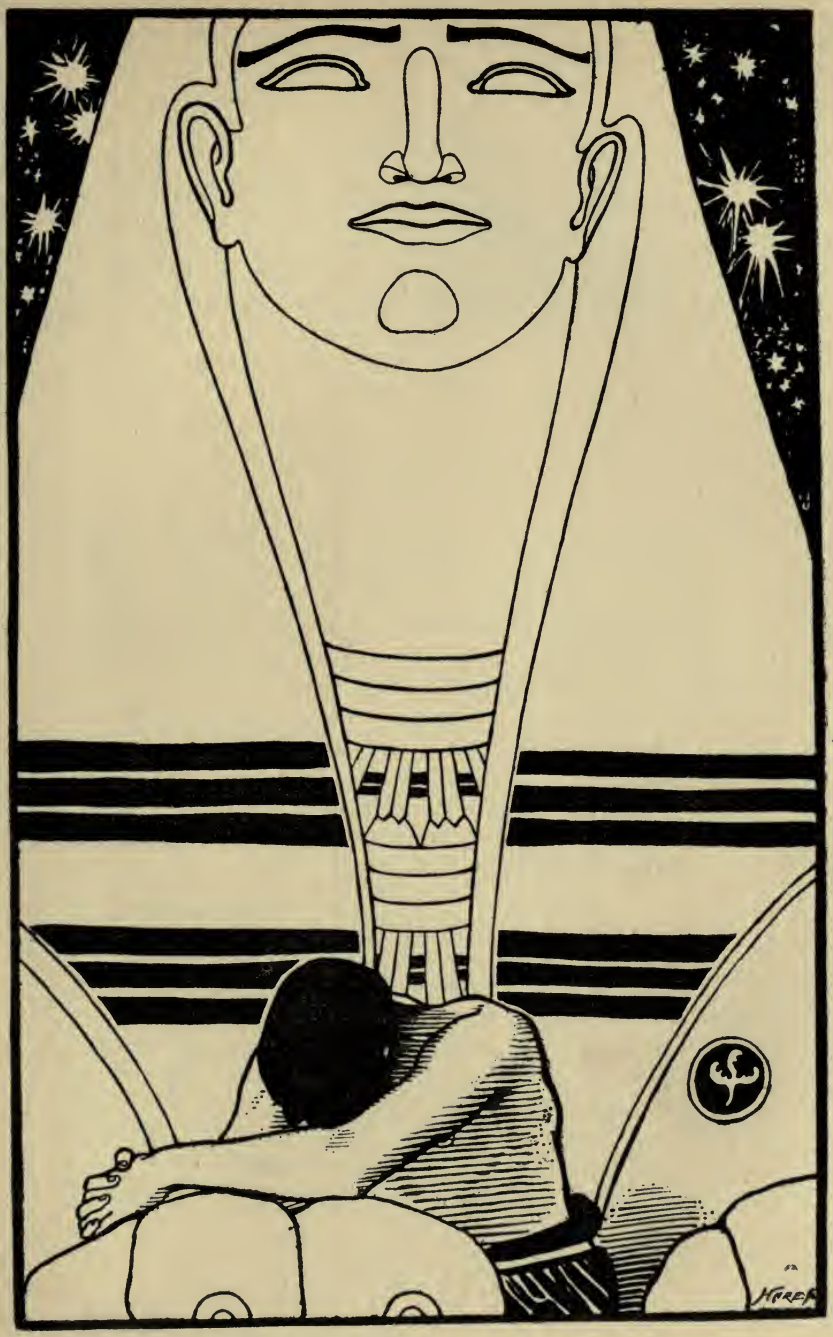
IL faut allumer les lampes dans les chambres closes. Une nuit blême, étrange, qui devance l'heure, ensevelit la lumière du ciel. C'est que la neige est en suspens, là, tout près, dans cette nuée ouatée où mon regard s'enfonce et se perd. La neige hésite: elle a peur de quitter cette molle nuée où elle dort, pour traverser l'air sombre en flocons seuls, frissonnants, tout de suite dessous en boue hideuse et en pleurs. Elle hésite devant sa destinée. . . . Tout à coup, un premier flocon se décide. Du nuage où se cache sa naissance indiscernable, il se laisse tomber, duvet de cygne, tournoyant à chaque souffle. Il se pose sur le bord de plomb de ma fenêtre: à peine l'a-t-il touché, qu'il expire. Plus rien; c'est un flocon perdu.—Mais un autre se risque; sa frêle étoile de diamant tombe tout près de la place où le premier s'est évanoui. Une seconde, il demeure, puis s'éteint. Un autre voltige et se pose, à la même place, deux secondes. Le plomb terne du toit commence à briller de larmes, là où les premiers flocons, isolés, ont expiré. A part ces larmes, rien n'en reste: ils s'étaient trop hâtés. . . . Mais alors d'autres, nombreux, puis plus nombreux et pressés à la fin, se précipitent ici, là, plus loin, dans les profondeurs de l'air. Le mouvement silencieux de leur vol ajoute du silence au jardin immobile. Sur le rebord du toit, ils se rejoignent, ils s'associent: chacun prête à chacun sa fraîcheur. Et, ainsi unis, ils résistent à l'air jaloux. Bientôt un bourrelet de cygne continu, sans souillure, éblouissant, épais, couronne toute la maison, toutes les branches nues des arbres, toutes les noirceurs des choses. La blancheur, doucement, l'a emporté, elle triomphe de toutes parts, elle règne. . . . En ce même moment, je m'étais arrêté d'écrire, par lassitude, non des doigts, mais du cœur. C'était une de ces heures grises où se brouillent en nous les raisons d'espérer et d'agir. L'image du monde contenue en une pensée fuyante; la volonté qui me fait sauter du lit le matin, je sens que dans peu de temps elles ne seront plus; elles périront avec moi, et ne seront pas reprises par un autre. Ce que je veux ne triomphera pas. . . . Mais à temps, tu m'as rappelé à la vérité, ô neige parfaitement pure, muette et douce, ô frêle et fluide, ô patiente et jamais découragée!

PAUL DESJARDINS.

THE SPHINX

BY JOHN DUNCAN

'As the waters fail from the sea,
And the flood decayeth and drieth up,
So Man lieth down, and riseth not
Till the Heavens be no more.'



I

THE DREAM

I DREAMED at dawn that the world had spring,
And the wild woods broke into blossoming.
The primrose peeped in the hedge half seen,
And the crocus burst from its sheath of green,
The Lent-lilies sprang from the soft wet mould,
And the cowslips burned in their coats of gold—
And there came through the mist of the golden hours
A song that I knew for the Song of the Flowers.

'O Soul that hast suffered and grieved full sore,
Be glad, for lo! thou shalt grieve no more.
In Death's soft sleep thou shalt dream, and we
Make lovely the earth that covereth thee.
No god of sorrow, as mortals fear,
Is Death, who hath nor smile nor tear.
A peace more deep than of Prayer he gives,
And more than the peace of him that lives ;
A hush like the hush of the hills at noon,
Of a tideless mere 'neath a frozen moon.
No world-rumour fraught with any despair
Shall pierce thy grave, to disturb thee there.
Thou shalt not know, in that chamber lone,
The shuddering sense of the sick man's moan—

No clamour of sword nor hammer of steel,
Nor hustle of tempest and thunder-peal,
Nor bay of hound nor blast of horn—
But the Calm that was thine ere thou wast born.'

I woke 'neath the morn with its grey chill face,
And knew I must live and endure for a space.

HUGO C. LAUBACH.

THE FULFILMENT

In Memoriam H. C. L.—'Obiit, Dec. 14, 1895.'

WE knew him, as a Stranger come from far
Who moved among us, full of friendly glee;
Yet held not all his thoughts—mountain and star
And distant Voices called him ceaselessly.

So was he with us for a little while—
Eager of spirit, yet a traveller guest,
Flushed with the ardours of day-dream and toil:
Then Nature summoned him to Come and rest!

W. M.

SANT EFFLAMM AND KING ARTHUR.[1]

ON a far-off day, a day in the shadow of forgotten time, a great king reigned in Inisfail, the Isle of Destiny, whence, later, the holy Columba sailed towards Iona in his frail coracle. This king had a daughter whose hand he was fain to give in high marriage. Her name was Enora, and she was more fair to see than the fairest princesses of her time. When men looked upon her, it was as though they beheld the woman of their dream. Many young lords there were who paid homage to Enora, but of these one only found favour in the sight of the king; and this was Efflamm, the son of a mighty monarch who ruled a distant land. This Lord Efflamm was young and fair. So it came to pass that Efflamm and Enora took the marriage-troth before God and man. Now the brave knight, ere he had quitted his father's kingdom, had vowed a vow. Therefore it was that on the marriage-night, when all slept, he did a strange thing: for a strange thing it was to leave the bridal chamber and the sleeping Enora, and stealthily to quit the palace, followed only by his faithful hound.

Straight to where the waves lapped the shore he went, but when he reached the rocks he gazed in vain for the galley which was to carry him thence: no boat could he discern, because of the darkness which lay upon the moaning sea. As he peered into the night the moon rose, and it was borne

[1] This rendering of the Breton legend 'Sant Efflamm hag ar Roue Arzur' is based upon the ballad of that name given by the late Vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqué in the Barzaz-Breiz.

in upon Efflamm that he must follow her track across the waters. While still he pondered, his gaze chanced upon a little chest tossing forlornly from wave to wave. Drawing it shoreward, he made ready to commit himself to this frail and perilous craft, but first a prayer sped from his lips along the moonway: 'God of the sea, of the moon, and of the human clan! guard me, for henceforth my life is Thine: guard me, for my boat is small, Thy sea is vast.' Thereat the tiny craft began to move, and soon was a dim shadow swallowed up in the drowning darkness. Before the yellow track paled with the coming of day, Efflamm neared the coast of Brittany.

At this time many wild animals roamed through the forests and over the waste lands of Armorica; and there were dreaded haunts whence fierce and terrible dragons devastated the land, and wrought ruin and terror among the poor folk. Nowhere did the curse lie more heavily than on Lannuon: Lannuon of the Islands, which has been called the Venice of Brittany; Lannuon the Fair, where the lads dance the daintiest steps in all the country of Landreger, where the damsels are so beautiful that an unloved maiden is as rare as a star shining in full daylight, or a blossoming rose when winter has come. Of the dragons, whose victims were to be counted by tens of hundreds in Armorica, the great King Arthur had killed many; but even the sword of this mighty hero had been powerless against the Terror of Landreger, the fiercest of a fierce band.

Landreger is sheltered from the blasts of the Atlantic by the chain of the Black Mountains. Far as the gaze can reach green valleys stretch westward, in spring starred white and yellow with violets and primroses—milk-flowers, the children call them. The winding lanes are bordered by hedges of hawthorn and privet, over and amid which interlace the branches of the wild rose and the honeysuckle. Here, as seldom in Kerne or Leon, the air is clear and wind-swept, the sky blue. Hamlets nestle on the slopes, half hidden among rich foliage, and rolling purple heathlands meet the blue of the sky. Smoke rises from the steadings, and the lowing of kine,

the bellowing of bulls, and the barking of dogs break the silence.

But it was not springtime when Efflamm the Holy first saw this fair country. Then, over hill-slope and valley, over moorland and plain lay the white peace of winter. The chain of Black Mountains might well have been a bank of cloud against the horizon, so shining white were they. Yet beneath the peace Efflamm discerned the green sleeping life, he heard the breathing of Nature our mother, with the unborn spring like a child wrapped close to her brown breast beneath its soft garment of snow. He knew that fair would be the land whereon he stood when once the south-west wind blew its bugle over forest and lea.

Soon all other thoughts were merged in one; for he beheld stains of blood on the snow. These Efflamm traced to their source; and thus it was that he found King Arthur stretched prostrate on the ground. By the king's side lay his charger, wounded to death; and over the hero himself stood a furious monster, with one blood-red eye glaring from the centre of his forehead, and green scales, so thick that spear had never pierced them, protecting his shoulders. Gigantic and savage he was, fiercer than a bull with the red rage upon him. His huge scaly tail writhed like a serpent, and in the mouth that stretched from ear to ear were sown broadcast great tusks more terrible than those of a boar.

From sunrise to sunset, and all through one night, king and dragon had fought; throughout the following day and night the conflict continued, the monster as fierce, the knight as courageous, as at the onset. It was now the end of the third day, and the strength of King Arthur was spent.

'For the love of Mary a cup of water, good pilgrim, to cool my parched lips!' cried the stricken champion as he saw the stranger approach.

'By the grace of God I will help thee, and gladly,' answered Efflamm. As he spoke he struck thrice with his staff the mound whereon he stood. Over the white country passed a tremor:

the face of the snow was tinged with faint green; and in the heart of King Arthur hope was reborn. For a moment there was silence, while the gaze of Efflamm rested on that of the warrior, and over the eyes of the beast a film slowly spread.

Then water sprang from the rock—cool, clear water. As King Arthur drank eagerly, his strength came back to him. Throwing himself on his adversary, he plunged his sword into the monster's throat; to the very hilt it sank, and with one cry the Terror of Landreger fell dead, and the body rolled over the rocks into the sea. The blood from the wound left gory pools on the snow, and down the white cliff was a blood-red track where the beast had fallen.

King Arthur and Efflamm now stood alone upon the height. Each looked at the other wonderingly. At last the king spoke: 'Follow me, I pray thee, to my palace. I would make thy future prosperous and happy.'

But Efflamm answered: 'Red as the gore at thy feet is my past; white as the snow on yonder cliff I have vowed my life shall be. Henceforth my days shall be spent on this hill. It may be that as the sun melts the snow, and springtime succeeds to winter, the good God will smile upon me, and my heart shall be green once more.'

At that King Arthur bowed his head, and silently went towards his palace, leaving Efflamm alone upon the hill.

In the stillness of the marriage-night Enora awoke from a dream. 'Efflamm, my hero,' she murmured, ere her eyes opened to the darkness, 'Efflamm, my hero, my king!' But a moment thereafter the silence was broken by the weeping of the lonely bride. She knew that none save herself breathed in that silent chamber, and a strange fear crept over her. It was long before the first whisper of sunlight ran across the frontiers of the morning; long, at least, it seemed to Enora, who, in bewildered grief, sat at her window gazing towards the east. Her hands were locked, and ever and again her lips moved in prayer.

'Whither has my lord Efflamm fared?' was the question that she put to all, when once the new day was come. And as each made the same answer, 'The good God only can tell that thing,' Enora turned away, and the pain at her heart became yet fiercer. All that day she sat on the seashore. 'Perchance he has gone a-fishing, and his boat has been caught in a storm,' her lips said; but in her heart was a dread silence. 'Or mayhap he is on the hills tracking the deer,' she muttered; yet the pulse gave no answering leap. Thus the hours of light passed; and throughout the darkness Enora watched and wept.

For many weeks thereafter she was alone in her gloom. The roar of the sea, the soughing of the wind, the drip of the rain which fell unceasingly, were all the sounds that pierced to the silence of her soul.

At last one night, when for the third time the moon was at the full, weary with sorrow, she fell asleep and dreamed a dream. Efflamm stood by her side, radiant as the sun at noon; a glory was about him: 'Follow me, Enora, my bride.' Each word healed an open wound; sweet was the sound of his voice as the cooing of the doves at dawn. 'Follow me into the solitude, that thy white soul may become yet whiter. White it shall be as the snow ere it descends from heaven.'

Is it not a hearthside tale how angels came to carry Enora over the wide stretch of sea between Ireland and Brittany; and how they laid her on the threshold of the hermit's cell?

When she awoke she knocked thrice on the door—

'Efflamm, Efflamm! I am Enora, thy wife. God has borne me hither. In my heart there is joy.'

Efflamm had spent his days in prayer. Each morning the first words on his lips had been, 'May Thy peace fall as morning dew upon Enora'; every nightfall he prayed, 'May Thy cool hand rest on Enora in the gloom.' Every hour of the day it was for her soul he travailed with prayer and fasting. When he heard the voice at his door, Efflamm knew that God had answered his prayers.

Winter had passed, and springtime had come in the country of Landreger; fresh and green was the grass of the hillside; but of the meeting on that lone spot no man knows aught, though folk say that thereafter it was as if the wind and the sun were comrades.

By the side of his cell Efflamm built a hut for Enora; and thus the two saints lived for many a year. The wonder of the miracles that they wrought was passed from lip to lip, and each day the sick were healed at the touch of Efflamm, and young mothers sought the blessing of Enora.

There came a night when the fishermen, idly at rest where their boats lay becalmed, saw the heavens open, and heard a strange, wild music. On the morrow a poor woman, unable to suckle her child, toiled up the hill. She knocked at the door of Enora's cell many times, but no voice bade her enter. When she looked through a hole in the wall, a glory filled the hut. It came from the fair body of the saint, who lay dead on the earthen floor. Near her knelt a little lad robed in white.

Startled with awe, the good woman ran to the cell of Efflamm; but he, too, lay in the white sleep which comes to all when the pulse in the heart is weary.

EDITH WINGATE RINDER.

ALL SOULS' DAY

(November the First.)

MY grief, my grief for Una bawn,
My grief for Mairgread Rue,
Who danced to right and left of me
In last night's dew.
I kissed your gold cool, Una bawn,
Your cool with sagans set,
But I kissed you not, my sorrow,
Red Margaret.

Long since I gave you, Una bawn,
A gift of yellow flowers.
Now your grave 's gold with goldilocks
In sun and showers.
I never gave you any gift,
Yet, Mairgread, back with you
To your grave when you tired of dancing
My heart went too.

I did not hear my father call,
Nor see my mother's eyes,
As we danced down by the river
Where the mists rise.
I held the hand of Una bawn,
And yet I only knew
That your white soul was holding mine,
My Mairgread Rue!

O light 's my grief that Una bawn
Sleeps soundly night and day,
Until the Eve of Apples calls
The ghosts away
To dance amid the gentle folk
And all ill dreams forget.
And dear do I find the dancing,
Yet on me lies the fret
That I may not sleep beside you,
Red Margaret!

NORA HOPPER.

WINTER

BY W. G. BURN MURDOCH

WINTER

POURQUOI DES GUIRLANDES VERTES À NOËL

A Edimbourg.

LES gaz fumeux déversés par mille tuyaux se sont amoncelés en un ciel épais, gris sur gris. Il a neigé. Les toits blancs tranchent sur les fonds violacés. Au premier plan des maçonneries noires alternent avec des puits d'ombre, et l'on voit des tours juchées en des fossés. L'horizon se hérisse de clochers, tourelles et obélisques. Des cheminées d'usine se profilent en minarets. Çà et là quelques fenêtres s'illuminent, la pierre semble devenir transparente.

. . . . . .

En un des nombreux cottages, ainsi nommés, qui font à la ville de si charmants entours, on mettait la dernière main aux préparatifs de la fête: joyeux repas avec des parents et amis, un arbre chargé de cadeaux. On chanterait et on danserait. L'ancienne année prendrait fin dans la joie, la nouvelle commencerait dans le plaisir. Le grand-père s'appuyait tendrement sur l'épaule de Fiona, comme s'il en eût eu besoin, se délectait à sa gaillarde verdeur, à sa naïve et intelligente simplicité.

'Dis, grand-papa, pourquoi l'on a pris pour l'arbre de Noël un petit sapin de la forêt? Et pourquoi toutes ces branches de houx et de génevrier? Et pourquoi l'on a mis du gui en haut de la porte? Et pourquoi l'on s'embrasse dessous? "Sous le gui, sous le gui!"'

. . . . . .

Mademoiselle Pourquoi, il va vers la nuit, n'est-ce pas?—et toute la journée il a fait brouillard. De soleil, il n'y en avait plus. Manière de parler, car tu sais que si le soleil venait réellement à s'éteindre, notre pauvre Terre ne serait bientôt plus qu'un glaçon perdu en un océan de ténèbres. Pendant ces dernières semaines le pauvre soleil, le cher soleil, semblait malade; on eût dit qu'il n'en pouvait mais, il se traînait de défaillance en défaillance. Parfois il se montrait encore, et l'on voyait un grand pain à cacheter, soit rouge, soit jaune, soit blanc, mais sans lustre ni brillant, pâle, toujours pâle. Sans doute il était beau, comment ne serait-il pas beau? mais on le voyait triste et souffrant. De vingt-quatre heures en vingt-quatre, les nuits se faisaient plus longues et froides. Et plus haut que nous, plus haut que les Shetlands et les Orkneys, les semaines, les mois, se passent en une longue obscurité, et les malheureux Inoïts sont obligés de se tenir blottis en un trou dans la neige, où ils se réchauffent à une lampe.

Mais en ce moment même, tandis que nous parlons, par delà l'obscurité de notre nuit, le soleil ne cesse de marcher: il chemine silencieusement. Depuis quelques heures il a déjà touché le point extrême de sa course descendante. Aucun des trois-cent soixante-cinq jours de l'année n'aura reçu moins de chaleur, moins de lumière, et pour les gens de notre hémisphère n'aura été plus pénible et plus ennuyeux à traverser. Ce matin, notre ciel pleuvait la suie, et vers midi il suintait la neige. Mais à minuit, le soleil gagnera force et vigueur; lentement d'abord, très lentement, mais sûrement; avec lui la Terre revivra. Revivre n'est pas trop dire. Car le soleil est le réservoir d'énergie dans lequel puisent nos organismes. Si, fatigué de la course qu'il accomplit depuis des millions de siècles, il venait à s'éteindre au coup de minuit, ah, la catastrophe! Admettons que notre globe ne fuse pas du coup, ne se dissolve pas en gaz et poussières, n'éclate pas comme un obus, te le figures-tu, flottant de ci, flottant de là, banquise allant à la dérive dans les eaux d'une immense mer glaciale?

Il fait bon fêter Pâque et la Pentecôte, les frondaisons printa-

nières et les floraisons estivales ; il fait bon fêter la moisson et aussi la vendange dans les bienheureux pays où le raisin vient ailleurs que dans les serres ; il fait bon se réjouir avec ce que l'on peut voir, ce que l'on peut toucher et même savourer. Mais Noël, la nuit de Noël n'a que la froidure et l'obscurité, Noël ne peut donner que l'espérance, et encore à ceux là seulement qui l'ont déjà en eux. Pourquoi la célèbre-t-on au jour le plus triste et le plus noir de l'année, sinon parce qu'elle est la fête des forts, des courageux, des endurants ? 'Le plus dur est passé,' disent-ils, 'nous verrons le bout. Puisque nous ne sommes pas morts encore, vivons aussi longtemps et aussi joyeusement que faire se pourra !'

Que certains ornent leur table de bouquets exotiques, que ce soir ils se réjouissent à la vue de gardénias et d'orchidées, de lilas blancs et de roses rouges, à merveille ! mais ce plaisir est en dehors du grand programme. Le vrai Noël n'a point de fleurs. Mais Noël peut encore donner des feuilles et des baies rouges, ramasser les frondaisons des arbres et des arbrisseaux toujours verts.

. . . Mais ne restons pas toujours en place, et rapprochons-nous du sapin de Noël.

. . . . . .

Des arbres toujours verts, la grande majorité en nos climats sont les Conifères,—tu les connais bien,—parmi lesquels les genévriers, les ifs et les cyprès, les cèdres, les pins et les sapins, dont un jeune plant, très modeste, fait notre arbre de Noël.

Cet arbre de Noël, on pourra te dire une autre fois comment on a voulu qu'il représentât, pour les enfants, l'Arbre de Vie qui croissait au milieu du Jardin d'Eden, et l'Arbre de Vie dans le Paradis Céleste. En Allemagne tu pourrais voir des arbres de Noël tout autrement gros que le nôtre, des arbres apportés en charrette. Dressé au milieu de la salle, le sapin semble un grand chandelier, une grandissime girandole ; l'abondance des chandelles, la surabondance des bougies figurent un ciel de cristal, étincelant de lumière incréée. Il porte en sa sombre

ramure des fruits abondants autant que variés : toupies, sifflets, trompettes, noix dorées, noisettes argentées, pommes rouges, figues de Smyrne, oranges parfumées, bananes exquises, coucous, rossignols, chevaux, vaches, et moutons. Des fleurs en mousseline, toute une volée d'anges et de chérubins en sucre rose s'éparpillent sous un Enfant Jésus en sucre blanc ; toutes magnificences que l'on finira par croquer.

A ce propos, on pourrait te dire les imaginations des paysans tyroliens et bavarois qui prétendent qu'au coup de minuit,—le temps de dire Crac !—les fontaines coulent du vin, les bêtes parlent, et les bœufs se disent en l'étable les secrets de l'année qui vient. Toutes ces belles choses ne durent qu'une seconde, rien qu'une seconde, mais pendant une seconde, le Bon Dieu est descendu parmi nous, la paix règne sur la terre et la bonne volonté parmi les hommes. Chaque année on jouit de cette félicité suprême, un peu plus longtemps que la quatre millième partie d'une heure, c'est autant de gagné.

. . . . . .

Nous disions donc qu'en nos climats la majeure partie des arbres verts sont des Conifères. Dans toutes les langues, le mot de verdeur implique les notions de force, de vigueur et de santé. Par contre, l'arbre dépouillé de ses forces a partout signifié quelque chose de triste. 'Feuille tombée,' vie close, 'feuille jaunie,' vieillesse et décrépitude, 'feuille toujours verte,' jeunesse persistante. Comme la plante, ainsi l'homme et la femme, ainsi l'humanité.

L'Hiver est la saison pendant laquelle on a faim, pendant laquelle on a froid, où ceux qui ne trouvent pas à manger, qui ne trouvent pas à se réchauffer, où ceux qui sont trop fatigués tombent et meurent. Pendant ces tristes semaines, la Mort se montre, et la Vie se cache, se fait humble et petite.

Les Conifères n'ont pas de feuilles proprement dites, comme tu le sais sans doute,—n'empêche, rapprochons-nous du Sapin, regardons les branches : on dirait qu'elles portent des paquets d'aiguilles, n'est-ce pas ? Les feuilles de la plupart des autres arbres tombent chaque année au vent d'automne, mais les

aiguilles des Conifères tiennent pendant plusieurs saisons sur l'arbre auquel elles sont piquées, c'est la coutume des Conifères. Mais le Mélèze, il y en a un chez le voisin d'en face—mais le Mélèze a dit: il vous plaît ainsi, mais à moi, qui suis pourtant un Conifère, il me plaît de changer mes aiguilles tous les ans. Et le Mélèze a fait comme il a voulu.

Aiguilles caduques ou non caduques, ce qui distingue les Conifères entre les autres espèces végétales, c'est leur admirable vitalité. L'énergie de leur constitution les met à même de résister aux froidures violentes, aux chaleurs excessives. Dès qu'on vient à parler de cette superbe famille des Conifères, le nom du Cèdre vient à l'esprit. Le jeune Cèdre, il est vrai, n'a rien de très original; comme tant de garçons autour de toi il est quelconque. Mais on ne voit pas un Cèdre parvenu à son entier développement sans admirer la noblesse de son architecture et la majesté de son attitude. Le beau Cèdre est une des belles choses du monde. Bonne écolière comme tu le fus, tu penses en ce moment aux cèdres du Liban, aux cèdres que le roi Salomon fit abattre pour la construction de ses palais et du fameux temple de Jérusalem. Cette forêt du Liban, très vantée naguère, est morte ou à peu près; on l'a exploitée, on l'a gaspillée; il faut dire aussi qu'elle avait fait son temps et que des châtaigners ont pris sa place. Le sol qui porta des cèdres pendant des cent et des mille années, demande à porter autre chose. Comme les campagnards font leur rotation de cultures, ainsi la nature fait succéder bois à sylve; après les pins, les bouleaux, puis les chênes, les hêtres, comme cela vient. De la gloire des cèdres bibliques héritent maintenant les sequoyas de la Californie et les cèdres de l'Himalaya, jusqu'à ce que nos industriels soient parvenus à les abattre, afin de les transformer en crayons et allumettes. Le cèdre dit du Liban est d'aspect grandiose, mais sévère et sombre, tandis que le Déodara, ou cèdre de l'Himalaya, unit la grâce à la force; il a un charme singulier qui réveille l'idée de la beauté et le sentiment de la tendresse. Remarque, Fiona, qu'en parlant de l'arbre, nous disons 'il,' parce que nous pensons à sa vigueur, à

sa taille et à sa majesté. Mais les Latins, nos ancêtres intellectuels disaient 'elle,' par rapport à sa maternité, c'est à dire aux fruits qui naissent aux branches.
Ce 'Pinus deodara' des botanistes, les Indous l'appellent 'Deva Daru,' autrement dit l'Arbre des Dieux, car ils le tiennent pour sacré. En ces régions du Pamir, les Shins, les Dardes et les Galtchas portent leurs hommages à un arbre de cette même famille: le 'tchili' ou 'juniperus excelsa.' . . .
. . . Mais ne restons pas toujours en place! Si nous allions vers la Polymnie qui rêve au dessus du piano? Des guirlandes de genévrier qui l'entourent détache un bourgeon—et mâchonne-le entre tes dents.

. . . . . .

Je reprends. A cause de ce culte rendu à un arbre, les Shins sont appelés les Infidèles ou les Réprouvés par leurs voisins qui leur reprochent de ne pas être musulmans. A l'entrée de leurs villages, un junipère ou genévrier se dresse au-dessus d'une pierre, où l'on sacrifie des béliers trois fois par an, soit aux fêtes des saisons. On le dit l'Arbre de la Pureté ou de la Sainteté, ou de la Santé, ou de la Fécondité; on l'apostrophe sous le titre de Shiri Badjertham, ou de 'Roi, Fils des Grandes Fées.' Le Shin qui ne se sent pas en état de grâce s'enferme dans une chambrette où brûlent lentement de ces rameaux verts qui dégagent une âcre fumée. Quand le pécheur a été fumigué d'importance, sa conscience est satisfaite, personne n'a plus rien à lui reprocher.
Le Tchili est aussi l'Arbre de Mariage, les fiancés se donnent la main sous son ombre, et les conjoints qui auraient cessé de se plaire prononcent le divorce en cassant une de ses branches. Les mariés satisfaits lui adressent leurs actions de grâce; de temps à autre allument de ces branches, sautent sur la flamme, dansent dans la fumée comme les jeunesses d'Europe au-dessus des feux de la Saint-Jean. Le Tchili, patron du village, est particulièrement fêté aux trois fêtes des Saisons. Tant pour honorer le noble étranger qui se présente, que pour se mettre à l'abri des malinfluences qu'il pourrait émaner, on

porte devant lui un chaudron où brûlent et fument des tisons de tchili, toujours du tchili.

Mets-toi dans la tête que tous les Conifères possèdent en propre quelque résine ou goudron, quelque colophane ou térébenthine, quelque huile essentielle, tout au moins quelque parfum qui dans les journées chaudes flotte au-dessus des branches. L'Epicéa que nos voisins ont devant leur porte doit son nom d'Abies epicea à la 'pix' ou poix dont son bois est imprégné. Rappelle-toi le cottage des Sanderson tout construit et meublé en un 'pitch-pine' si joli à voir, si agréable à sentir. Pense aux boucauts de résine qui nous arrivent des Carolines ou des Landes françaises. D'autres arbres congénères nous donnent des colophanes et térébenthines, des laques et sandaraques, des vernis, baumes, et encens. Avant nos chimistes et industriels, les magiciens et sorciers exploitaient ces diverses substances pour en faire des onguents et pharmaques, des parfums, à odeur soit suave soit infecte, tantôt pour évoquer l'amour, tantôt pour s'en débarrasser, tantôt pour rappeler les génies, tantôt pour expulser les démons. Il fallait que les torches qui éclairaient le cortège des époux fussent en pin, et les Siciliens appellent encore le sapin 'Caccia diavuli'—nous dirions 'chasse diables.' Les cèdres du Mont-Liban donnèrent leur nom à l'encens. Nos pharmaciens et parfumeurs n'ont pas tous oublié l''oliban.' Les étymologistes te diront que dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine le mot de Thuya fut comme celui de 'libanon' intimément lié à l'idée des parfums et des sacrifices.

De ce Thuya, dit aussi Arbre de Vie, bien que ou quoique on lui fasse orner les cimetières, de ce Thuya on tire la sandaraque. D'autres cèdres, d'autre pins distillaient dans les temps jadis une matière visqueuse dans laquelle vinrent s'engluer de malheureux moucherons, matière qui sécha et durcit, devint jaune et transparente. Par l'effet des bouleversements incessants qui se produisent sur notre globe, les arbres autour desquels voltigeaient les insectes vinrent à être engloutis aussi par la mer. Et voici que le flot de la Baltique rejette maintenant

sur ses dunes des morceaux d'ambre que les orfèvres taillent en broches et vous apportent. As-tu daigné regarder une de ces bestioles qui mourut si misérablement, et qu'immortalisa son trépas ? Pauvre petite âme légère ! Quelle durée immense pour si fragile chosette ! Et combien différents les deux mondes, celui où palpitèrent ses ailes, celui dans lequel la poitrine qu'elle orne palpite à son tour !

. . . . . .

Soit parce qu'il est pénétré par une substance résineuse, ou parce qu'il a crû lentement, le bois de la plupart des Conifères dure longtemps, résiste indéfiniment aux vers et à la pourriture. Comme exemple de son inaltérabilité, on cite les portes, en cyprès, de l'ancienne basilique de Saint-Pierre à Rome. Quand, pour plus de luxe, on les remplaça par du bronze, on les trouva parfaitement conservées, malgré un service de onze siècles. Les anciens renfermaient leurs manuscrits en des écrins de cyprès, les vernissaient avec un extrait de cèdre. Platon demandait qu'on gravât les lois de la République sur des tablettes en cyprès. Symbolisant la durée indéfinie et même l'immortalité, le cyprès s'employait aux statues sacrées et tout spécialement au sceptre de Jupiter. Suivant la légende persane, le prophète Zoroastre voulut qu'un cyprès fût planté à Nischmer pour durer autant que sa doctrine. Ce fut afin de conserver la mémoire des citoyens morts pour la patrie qu'on déposa leurs restes entre des planches de cyprès, et que leur tombe fut ornée d'ifs, thuyas et congénères qui devinrent ainsi les arbres funéraires par excellence ; d'autant plus que leur feuillage est sombre, en même temps que toujours vert. Ne les voyant que dans les cimetières, nous pensons, en Europe, que leur aspect doive exhaler la tristesse, tandis que les Orientaux font du cyprès, notamment, le type des belles tailles 'droit comme un cyprès, droite comme un cyprès,' hommage très apprécié. A ce propos, il ne te sera pas indifférent d'apprendre que les amants d'Alsace s'entrecajolent par l'appellation de Holder Stock ; comme qui dirait la 'Belle Pousse' ou la 'charmante Tige.' Et n'oublions pas de te dire que les Mylitta et les Astarté, que

les anciennes déesses de la Nature, de l'Amour et de la Beauté, furent adorées sous la forme des cyprès, cèdres, térébinthes et autres arbres toujours verts.

Ce culte était idolatre, certainement, mais non point absurde, puisque quarante ou cinquante siècles après, ce soir, vous avez mis partout de leurs frondaisons verdoyantes, de leurs couronnes et guirlandes feuillues. Il me semble entendre un Syrien d'autrefois :

'Après la saison des fruits, la plupart des arbres sont fatigués,' dit-il. 'Voyez leurs feuilles perdre leur lustre et leur élasticité, jaunir et roussir, devenir vieilles et décrépites. Elles n'en peuvent plus et pour se reposer voudraient mourir. Les gelées en font massacre, le vent d'automne les balaie, de leurs cadavres jonche le sol des forêts. Mais tout à côté, voici une frondaison qui tient bon contre les bourrasques et tempêtes, contre les gelées et les frimas, qui semble ne pas se soucier des neiges ni des glaçons.'

Cette frondaison est en particulier celle des Conifères et analogues ; arbres que l'on revoit cette année-ci, comme on les vit l'année dernière, sauf qu'ils ont grandi et se sont allongés à chacune de leurs extrémités. Cyprès, pins et sapins, cèdres et genévriers, qu'ont-ils donc que n'ont pas les autres? S'ils résistent mieux aux rigueurs de l'hiver, c'est qu'ils sont doués d'une vitalité plus énergique et mieux résistante, qu'ils possèdent une force—une substance peut-être—dont les autres sont dépourvus. . . . Quelle chose cela peut-il être? On chercha le secret. Pourrais-tu deviner la raison qu'ils trouvèrent?—Oui, tu la devines, ma Fiona, tu la devines ; je le vois à tes yeux qui brillent. . . .

—Mais, grand-papa, ne disais-tu pas tantôt que les Conifères exsudent des résines?

—Oui, ma fillette, ils distillent des résines, et des huiles, et des baumes, et des parfums, et des essences, et de l'encens. Si le bois des Conifères résiste à la putréfaction, s'il ne se laisse point entamer par l'humidité, pensèrent les anciens, s'il brûle joyeusement, avec pétarades et détonations enthousiastes, c'est

qu'il est ami du feu. Il a la sève ignée, disait-on. C'est du feu condensé que ces bitumes, poix et goudrons, que ces résines qui sont opaques ou transparentes, selon qu'elles contiennent un feu pur ou un feu impur. Effluve igné, lui aussi, le goût âpre et brûlant des baies du genévrier. Feu encore le parfum que dégagent l'encens, les feuilles froissées du cèdre et les molécules de l'ambre que les anciens appelaient 'electron.' Cette vertu de l'electron, dont nos modernes ont fait l'électricité, il n'eut pas fallu presser les gens longtemps pour leur faire dire que cette aura subtile était l'âme même de la Nature.

Et l'on s'imagina que l'on pourrait capter le fluide igné. Et l'on pensa que si on parvenait à le boire, à le faire couler dans ses veines, le faire arriver à son cœur, on jouirait de l'éternelle vie, et que si on le logeait en sa cervelle on gagnerait l'omniscience et la toute Sagesse. Sitôt que l'humanité eut gagné, d'une façon bien superficielle encore, la connaissance des effets et des causes, nous voyons les Aryas se passionner pour le Soma ou l'Eau de Feu, comme l'appellent les Sauvages. Leurs dieux ne pouvaient se rassasier de ce divin nectar qui leur assurait l'éternelle jeunesse. Après le Soma et le Haoma, on crut avoir trouvé la liqueur ignée dans le grain d'orge, le jus de raisin, le miel fermenté, dans les vins et hydromels, dans les cidres et bières, les sapinettes et les genévrettes. Les grands esprits du Moyen Age, les Alchimistes, jetaient des regards chargés de désir sur la résine si diaphane, la résine d'une si belle couleur d'or qui semblait de l'or végétal, et même mieux que cela, un feu solide, une concrétion de lumière. Dans l'or potable, ils cherchaient le mystère des métamorphoses et de l'incessante renaissance des êtres. Quand ils eurent inventé la distillation, débarrassé le vin de ses éléments aqueux, et découvert ce qu'ils appelèrent 'l'Eau de Vie,' ils pensèrent boire enfin le breuvage d'immortalité. Mais l'élixir suprême se déroba encore à leurs efforts. Le grand secret n'était pas encore trouvé, bien que d'aucuns eussent cru faire merveille en ajoutant des grains d'or à leur eau de vie, en la parfumant avec les baies distillées du genévrier, obtenant ainsi le gin,

dont s'enorgueillit l'Angleterre, et dont nos voisins de Hollande lui disputent la gloire.
Le gin dut sa haute fortune à son parfum agreste et à sa piquante saveur; il la dut aussi au nom qu'il porte: gin de genévrier, et genévrier, de juni-per,[1] ou le Toujours Jeune. A noter que les noms issus du gothique le qualifient de Vivant et de Remuant;[1] ce qui est la même idée sous un autre aspect.

Parmi les végétaux le Conifère, et parmi les conifères le junipère ou genévrier se distinguent par la résistance et la ténacité, par ce que l'on appelle la force de caractère chez les hommes. Acceptant la chaleur et s'accommodant du froid, supportant stoïquement la misère des sols maigres et ne dégénérant point en terrain fertile, le genévrier se montre égal à son destin et supérieur à sa fortune. Bien pris dans sa taille—celle d'un géant ou celle d'un nain—il a toujours la physionomie intéressante, même l'aspect noble et fier, à le regarder de près. En nos pays septentrionaux, il n'est qu'un arbrisseau le plus souvent, un modeste, bien modeste arbrisseau, mais il se sent d'héroïque lignée. Interroge le tiers et le quart, demande quel est le plus bel arbre du monde?—Non pas tous, mais plusieurs te répondront: 'C'est le cèdre.'—Hé bien, parmi les cèdres, le junipère de l'Himalaya porte le noń d'Oxycèdre. Alors il est magnifique et superbe, nul ne peut le voir sans l'admirer. Je l'ai vu dans les Alpes frigides, sous un abri de roc, aux extrèmes limites de la végétation, haut de quelques centimètres seulement: un vrai Poucet, tortu, rabougri, ramassé sur lui-même. Un nœud simulait le tronc, quelques protubérances globulaires représentaient les rameaux en guise de feuilles; il avait des épines fortes et courtes, autant de poignards. Il buvait la neige, suçait la glace, croquait du gneiss et digérait le granit, vivait dessus maigrement, combien maigrement! Mais il respirait l'air subtil des hauteurs, se nourrissait de lumière, absorbait les plus purs

[1] Grimm expliquait déjà juni-per par junius, juvenis, jung, jeune. Il rapprochait Wachholder, de wachen, vigilare, to be awake, Machandel, de Wachandel. Cf. Quickbeam, Queckholder, quickborn, quicksilver. Le jeu de mots: he lives and kicks.—Reckholder, de regen, mouvo

rayons du soleil et des étoiles. De ces genévriers-là, une femme eût pu emporter toute une forêt sur son dos. Pourtant, ce chicot dur comme bronze, hérissé d'aiguilles d'acier verdâtre, ce ragotin est un arbre, un arbre vieux de quelques siècles, peut-être. Verdoyant l'été, verdurant l'hiver, il permane d'année en année, il perdure de génération en génération. De tempête en tempête il voit le roc, rongé par les autans, fondre lentement et lentement s'écouler dans la plaine, mais lui, il ne cesse de durcir ; insensiblement s'atténue le profil de la montagne, mais il continue à croître, milligramme par milligramme. 'Chi la dura la vince !' dit-il à l'Alpe. Et se tournant vers le ciel, réservoir de foudres : il pense en lui-même : ' Je maintiendrai.'

Nous en avons dit assez. Mets une rose dans tes cheveux, Fiona chèrie, et passe-moi un brin de genévrier à la boutonnière, —là ! rien qu'un tout petit brin. Allons au groupe qui rit là-bas.

—Mais grand-papa à ta petite fille, tu n'as rien dit encore du gui que voilà, ni de ces houx qui ont aussi la feuille verte en hiver ?

—Hé bien, nous pourrons en parler à la Noël prochaine. Tâchons de vivre jusque-là.

ELIE RECLUS.

CHRISTMAS ALMS[1]

IN old times there was a married couple living near Cauher-na-mart,[2] in the county Mayo. They had seven of a family, but God sent them worldly riches, and they wanted for nothing but God's charity.

The man was generous and good and kind to the poor, but the heart of the woman was as hard as the heart of a block of a tree; there was no mercy in her, and she gave no alms to wanderer or outcast, and after refusing the poor 'tis what she would insult him. If a person able to do work came to her to ask alms of her, she would say to him: 'If you weren't a lazy vagabone, you wouldn't be here asking alms and bothering me with your talk'; but if an old man or an old woman came to her, 'tis what she would say: 'What right has the like of ye to be alive? ye ought to be dead long ago.'

One Christmas night it happened that there was great frost and snow out, and the ground was thick covered with it. But in Patrick Kerwan's house—that was the man's name—there was a good fire, and the table was laid. Patrick, his wife, and his family were sitting at it, and ready to go in face of a good supper, when they heard a knock at the door. Up got the wife and opened it. There was a poor man outside, and she asked him what he wanted.

'I'm wanting an alms in the honour of Jesus Christ, who was

[1] The following story, of which I here give a translation, is no doubt largely due to the vivid imagination of some itinerant mendicant working in his own interest.

[2] Westport.

born on this feast-day, and who died for the human race on the cross of passion.'

'Get off with you, you lazy old guzzler!' said she; 'if you were one-half as good at doing work as you are at saying prayers, you wouldn't be coming looking for alms this night and bothering decent people,' and with that she slammed the door out in his face, and sat down at the table again.

Patrick heard a little of the talk she gave the poor man, and asked who was it was at the door.

'A lazy old rap that was asking alms,' said she; 'and if it wasn't an idle "sgraiste" that was in it, he wouldn't be coming looking for alms from people that are earning their own livelihood hard enough, but he'd sooner be at his old prayers any day than do an honest stroke of work for a bit of food.'

Up got Patrick: 'It's a bad turn you did,' said he, 'to refuse any man for food, and especially to refuse him of a Christmas night. Isn't it God who sent us everything we have; there is more on the table than will be eaten to-night, and how do you know that we shall be alive to-morrow?'

'Ara, sit down,' says she, 'and don't be making a fool of yourself; I don't want e'er a sermon from you.'

'God change your heart,' said Patrick, and with that he seized the full of his two hands of bread and meat, and out with him to follow the poor man, pursuing the track of his feet in the falling snow as quick as he could, till he came up with him. He handed him the food then, and said he was sorry for his wife's refusing him; 'But I'm sure,' says he, 'she was angered.'

'Thank you for your food,' said the poor man. He handed Patrick the food back again, and said: 'There, you have both your food and your thanks; I am an angel out of heaven that was sent to your wife in the form of a poor man to ask alms of her in the honour of Jesus Christ, who was born this night, and suffered the passion of the cross for the human race. She was not satisfied with refusing me, but she insulted me as well. You shall have a great reward for your alms; but as for your wife, it will not be long till she is standing in the presence of

Jesus Christ to render Him an account of how she spent her life in this world; she has not much time for repentance, and urge her to make a good use of it.'

The angel went away, and Patrick returned home. He sat down, but he could neither eat nor drink.

'What's on you?' said the wife. 'Did that vagabone do anything to you?'

'My grief,' says Patrick, 'it was no vagabone that was in it, but an angel out of heaven, who was sent to you in the shape of a man to ask alms of you in honour of Jesus Christ, and you were not satisfied with refusing him, but you must go and abuse him also with bad names. Your time on the world is not long now, and I beseech you to make a good use of it.'

'Hold your tongue!' says she. 'I think you saw a ghost, or that you lost your senses; and may God never help you nor any one else who would leave a good fire and a good supper to go running out in the snow after a lazy rogue. But the devil a much sense was in you ever.'

'Unless you take my advice, you'll repent when it'll be late,' said Patrick; but there was no use for him to be talking.

When Little Christmas came, the woman was not able to get dinner ready; she was deaf and she was blind. On Twelfth Night, she was not able to leave her bed, but was raving and crying, 'Give them alms, alms, alms, in the name of Jesus Christ! give them everything in the house!'

She remained for a time like that, between life and death, and she without her senses. The priest came often, but he could do nothing with her. The seventh day that the priest came to her, he brought the last oil with him to anoint her.

The candles were lit for him, but they were immediately quenched. They tried to light them again, but all the coals that were in the county Mayo would not kindle them. Then he thought to anoint her without a candle. But at once the whole place was filled with great smoke, and it was little but the priest was smothered. Patrick went to the door of the room,

but he could get no further. He heard the woman crying, 'A drink, a drink, in the name of Christ!'

She remained like that for two days, and she alive, and they used to hear her from time to time screaming, 'A drink! a drink!' but they could not come near her.

Word was sent for the Bishop O'Duffy, and at last he came, and two old friars with him. He was carrying a cross in his right hand. When they were come near to Patrick's house, a host of vultures swept down on them with one swoop, and it was little but they picked the eyes out of the three of them.

Then they came to Patrick's door and lighted the candles. The bishop opened his book, and said to the friars, 'When I begin reading the prayers, do ye give the responses.' Then he said, 'Depart, O Christian soul——'

'She is not a Christian soul,' said a voice, but they saw nobody.

The bishop began again: 'Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of the all-powerful Father who created you, in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered the passion for you, in the name of the Holy Spirit, that was poured upon you——'

Before he could say more there came peals of thunder and lightning, and they were all deafened with the sound, and the house was filled with smoke. The lightning struck the gable of the house and threw it, a deluge of rain came down, and the people thought the end of the world was there. The bishop and the two friars fell to their prayers again. 'O Lord, according to the plenitude of Thy mercy, look mercifully upon her,' said the bishop.

'Amen!' said the friars.

There came a little calm then, and the bishop moved over to the bed. Poor Patrick came to the other side of the bed, and it was not long till the woman opened her mouth, and there came out of it a host of dar-daels.[1] Patrick gave a screech, and ran for

[1] The 'dar-daol,' or 'daire-daol,' is the most universally loathed and feared of all the insect tribe. It is a kind of black beetle (the 'göevius olens' of the naturalists, I think) of a dull black, with a cocked tail, said to be full of venom. Hands festered by the prick of a thorn, or the cut of a reaping-hook, are believed to have done so because a dar-daol

fire to burn them. When he came back the woman was dead, and the dar-daels were gone.

The bishop said prayers over her, and then he himself and the two friars went away, and Patrick went out to get women to wash the corpse, but when he came back there was no corpse to be found either here or there. There was a purse of gold hung at her neck, and the purse went with the body, and there was no account of either of them from that out.

About a month after this the speckled disease[1] broke out amongst the children, and they all died. There was very great grief on Patrick. He was alone by himself, without wife, without children; but he said: 'Welcome be the will of God.'

A short time after that he sold all he had and went into a monastery. He spent his life religiously, and died a blessed death. May God give us also a good death, and the life that is enduring!

DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D.
(An Chraoibhin Aoibhinn.)

had walked on the thorn or hook. This foul and terrifying insect, of which countless legends are related, is invariably burned, not trodden on, when found in a house. In English it is always called in Connacht a 'crocodile.'

[1] Small-pox, 'galar breac.'

BY THE BONNIE BANKS O' FORDIE

BY CHARLES H. MACKIE

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.'

'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 disdain.
'Here, here,' she whispered low, 'here on my mouth
The swallow, love, has 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;
And well he knew that in a shadowy place
His own wraith stood, and with a moonwhite face
Watched its own shadow laugh and shake its spear
Far in a shadowy dell against a shadowy deer.

FIONA MACLEOD.

DERMOT'S SPRING

THE young king of Tir-Cullen, bright in his feasting apparel, sat upon his throne, welcomed his many guests with a joyous air and the clapping of hands, and bade the bondsmen serve supper. He was twenty-two years of age lacking a month, and his wedding-day was fixed and drawing nigh. He was said to be the handsomest youth of his own nation, and the most expert in all manly exercises. He was brown-haired and rich-complexioned, with eyes bright and black, and keen of sight as an eagle's. There was peace in all his country, and he was deemed by many to be the happiest and most prosperous of territorial kings. There was no high king over Leinster at this time; he was servant only to the King of Ireland, and under his protection. It happened to be the 25th day of November in the year of our Lord 1133. Murchard O'Byrne was the young king's name.

All day, in a high wind, he had been making trial of his racing steeds, against the next great Fair at Loch Garman and the steed-contests of the I-Drona to be held there. Afterwards he had bathed and changed his clothes, and now sat his high seat in the great hall of his Dûn, and would entertain, like a king, his dependants and friends. His hostages were ungyved for the feast, but armed men stood behind them where

they sat. The wind rose as night fell, roaring mightily in the forest, and shook the strong-built Dûn. Within, a great fire blazed and many candles illuminated the hall, the pillars and side-walls with their racked or pendent weapons, and the instruments or trophies of the chase, and showed the many feasters, their gay attire and happy faces. The young king's face beamed as he contemplated the scene, and his eyes glistened: they were black and bright under a white forehead. O my sorrow, that this tale should be for me to tell!

An ancient man sat in the ingleside dispreading his hands to the blaze while he looked sideways with sightless eyes towards the company. One took him by the hand and led him to the king's table, and sat beside him and ministered to his wants. The man was not born blind, but made so by men's hands. They said that he too was once a king, but that his dominion had been of short endurance, troubles having arisen out of which he did not come forth with victory. But these things happened long ago. It was the first feast celebrated by the young king since his inauguration feast.

When all had eaten to their satisfaction, they betook themselves to drinking, and conversation, and merrymaking, while ever and anon Murchard would pledge one of his guests or chief men, calling him by his name with a clear voice. Seeing that all had been served to their liking, and the din of cheerful conversation sound around him, the king turned to an ancient lord who was of his council, and who sat beside him upon the right.

'How do thy timid counsels appear to thee now, Art, son of Bran? Are not my people obedient and loving in all the borders of Tir-Cullen? Nay, in all Leinster doth even a dog bark against that settlement of the Province which was made by the high King of all Ireland and his great council, who advanced myself, before that a plain lord, to be king of Tir-Cullen, as my ancestors have been before me, and thou alone of my council wast unwilling?'

'Mingle not business with pleasure,' said the lord so addressed.

'I have known kings who were grave at feastings and merry in the council-chamber. Do not resemble them.'

'Thy censure,' replied the king, 'is the one bitter drop in my cup. Yet the Clan-Regnant of Leinster is depressed past any recall. Men speak of the rule of the MacMurroughs as they do of ancient things. And this Dermot is the satisfied king of a small realm, like myself, and is obedient to the King of Ireland, keeping his peace and following his war and rising-out to all his occasions. He consorts with ecclesiastics and learned men. He doth not rejoice in the chase or in the ale-feast, and is not said to be skilful of his hands or to show any of the signs which mark out young men for future pre-eminence—a morose, unprofitable youth, according to the report of all. Moreover, I myself and all the kings of Leinster are under the protection of the King of Ireland, high and mighty.'

'Royal houses are not done away with and abolished on such terms,' replied the other; 'and not for an instant, by day or by night, is it forgotten by that youth that the sovereignty of Leinster is his. I saw him once in his hall at Ferns, and, though he smiled, I perceived the fell purpose — watchful, wary, biding its time. Beware the spring, O Murchard! And as thou wilt force me to speak, I like not thy manner of living, thy travellings slenderly attended, and thy Dûn at night with the bridge undrawn, and thy hospitable beacon-fire for all wayfarers. And the King of Ireland is far away on the other side of the Shannon, and this dour-faced and silent youth is not far off. Beware the spring, I say again, O Murchard!'

'Thou art a sour counsellor,' answered the king. 'I like not such. Should Dermot try conclusions with the King of Ireland, he would be no more than a sparrow in a hawk's claw.'

'I give faithful counsel according to my lights,' said the other; 'and there have been kings of Leinster who have beaten the army of Ireland, and youth is the season of hope and daring, and in the ear of that young king—believe it, dear son—ancestral voices for ever call.'

The storm was so loud now that conversation in general ceased.

Men looked to see the great Dûn unroofed or overthrown. The sightless, ancient man had been led to his place in the ingle-side by that other who waited upon him. His tankard of mulled ale was placed so that he might easily lay his hand upon it whenever he had a desire to drink. 'There was a storm then too,' he murmured as he bowed his fading head, while visions and memories of his glorious youth trooped thronging past before the inner eye.

'I love thee, and I like thee not,' replied the king to that counsellor.

Then he said to another—

'Iarbanel, thou art a wizard and prophet. Secret things of the Druids have come down to thee. Doth this storm portend aught?'

'There is danger coming nigh to this Dûn,' answered the prophet; 'and its nature is not shown to me, but I feel its coming as of a host of men with malignant minds.'

'Raise the drawbridge!' cried the king.

From without that self-same moment sounded a clamour, and one voice there that rang like a trumpet, and the clash of steel, and the stamping of mailed feet on the bridge.

A young man stood in the wide door of the Dûn, bright against the darkness. He was tall and great-bodied, and his aspect high and menacing. His battle-cap was of polished steel, scarlet his mantle, and for brooch he wore a pin of gold with a plain ring to it. Beneath his mantle he wore a battle-dress of steel rings. Armed men succeeded him. They swiftly surrounded the risen feasters and intercluded them from the walls of the chamber and their weapons hanging there. Soon the whole Dûn was filled with armed men. They stood steady and silent with fierce-glittering eyes under fixed brows.

The young man with the scarlet mantle strode up the hall alone. There was a battle-axe in his right hand. Like a Fate he came and stood before the young king.

'Who art thou?' said the king. 'And is it peace or war?'

The other looked terribly upon him.

'There was a friendly message and warning sent to thee,' he said, 'on the eve of thy inauguration and of thy swearing thyself man to the King of Ireland.

The other answered, 'Yea.'

'Then thy punishment be on thy own head, for never more shalt thou be king, duke, or lord in Leinster, and from this night forward thy lot and part in the high strife of captains and great men hath an end, and the Lord Christ shall be thy sole hope, for never again shalt thou see the sun or be eligible as a ruler in thy nation. I say it—I—Dermot, son of Murchard, son of Dermot Mac Mael-na-m-bo, high king of all Leinster and of the Danes.'

When he heard that word, Murchard, King of Tir-Cullen, ran forward to clasp the high king's knees.

'Slay me rather,' he cried, 'O king most merciful!'

But ere he could accomplish his purpose they seized and bound him, and by main force dragged him out of the hall, shrieking. After that there was a great silence. The high king stood where he had spoken, motionless, like a statue; but his lips moved, and thrice he invoked the name of Christ and thrice that of God Most High.

When Murchard was led back into the hall there was no word from his mouth, or cry. The high king flashed a candle close to his eyes and he did not wince. Then they led him by the hand to the ingleside, and caused him to sit down beside that other, the ancient one. He said one word only, and that was 'Christ.'

After that Dermot and his men went away swiftly into the country of the I-Murethi.

On that day and night, Dermot, or his officers, slew or blinded seventeen of the principal nobility of the Province which brought Leinster far under his hand. Also he seized the Abbess of Kildare, the comarb of Bridget, and caused her to be defiled, and he set another in her place.

STANDISH O'GRADY.

A DEVOLUTION OF TERROR

I

DROPPING the garment of reason, of logical induction, and of common-sense, and putting off the vestment of some consoling and comforting religious belief, let the helpless, quivering soul stand forth frightened and appalled before the cruel, inexorable unknown against which it must fight for its life.

It is hard for us of to-day—who expect a reason to be given for everything, and who have our ideas as fixed as the intervals on a piano—to sympathise with, or in any way to realise, the shifting fluidity of the early mind, with its floating, unstable melting of one concept into another. Far back in the nebula of time, before man and beast and earth and sky became sharply differentiated in the human mind, we must try to image forth to ourselves those who were the beginners of the man-tribe, here in the lower valley of the Rhône.

II

Plunged in the dark of a long autumn night, the males and females and little ones of a human pack are huddled together in a narrow-mouthed cave of the fantastic limestone peaks of the Aupiho: the Alpilles that overlooked the then great mephitic marshes of the Rhône and the Durance.

A fierce wind—the strong, cruel magistral: the mistral, the god-wind—beats into the forlorn shelter as the terror-stricken human brutes crowd close together for warmth and for companionship.

With the few words and signs at their command, the poor souls shadow forth their vague concept of the fearful unknown: narrowed for them to dreadful, reptile-like, man-devouring beasts, lurking in the fetid, wide-spreading morass. They hint at the awful horrors of the swamps, and the agony of their uncomprehending terror is like that we can divine in the eyes of a dog in mortal fear.

Who knows if the terror have not devoured the day? As the good warm sun fell down, a huge black dragon (for there were dragons in those times) crouching on the mountains caught him—and suddenly the sun was not, and all around was bathed in a sea of blood, and blood was splashed up above along where went the sun's path. A naked savage stammers out shudderingly how he saw the great black beast grow and swell and vanish in the dark. The women burst into a keening wail for the dead sun, and cruel fear clutches at all their hearts. Who knows, who knows if the beast be not coming now? if the rushing wind be not its breath? if the whistling roar be not its voice, as it howls and raves outside? Who knows? Who knows?

In the black darkness an old man rises to his feet and bursts forth into a strangely modulated chant. The strident ululation rises and falls more like the howling of a wolf than a human voice. Suddenly a long note of triumph breaks into the whining howl, and ends in a wild shout of victory as the full moon springs up over the distant crags and floods the land with light. Lean, gaunt, naked, with rough shock of white hair and beard, the old man stands pointing with a finger as crooked as a bird's claw. The poor brutes grovel at the feet of the far-seer, the fore-teller, who has brought the light once more to them. The terror of the marsh and the howling wind are forgotten—and all is peace.

III

This early people lived and died; and other peoples came and lived and died; and time went on and on and there was no one to count the days nor to note the changes. The tribes of those we call Kelts drifted down to the Rhône valley, and as time flew by they mingled with the early peoples of the land and the memory of the ancient terror sank into their souls.

Some of these Kelto-Ligurians settled themselves near where now the tenth-century romanesque chapel of Nosto-Damo-de-Castéu stands high up on its rocky eminence not far from Tarascon. They learned to build unto themselves 'bori'—shelters of stone safely perched on the 'bau,' the precipitous rocks, of the Alpilles. They made themselves weapons with which to kill game and to defend their homes; and pottery, shards of which are still found in their ancient haunt. They made tools wherewith to till the land, and in time they had flocks and herds for clothing and for food: so life was made easier for them, but fear stayed with them ever.

Again a long autumn night is slowly passing, and a cowering group, huddled together for warmth and companionship, crouches over a smoky fire. The black master-wind roars and tears at their rough shelter; and as it howls outside, the wolf-like dogs crowded in with their masters rise growling, and with bristling hair snarlingly show their fangs.

Men and women and children press still closer together, and in low tones, with fearful backward glances, talk of the terror of the marsh: the multiform horror that never dies, but has lived on from all time.

With more or less definite concepts in his mind, and with more or less clear-meaning words in which to express them, a man tells how, while hunting in the marsh, he caught a glimpse of a huge scaly creature gliding through the mud and slime. Another tells how at times the awful beast shows as a great curly-fronted thing like a bull. An old man tells how his son, now sick unto death, was caught by the darkness and kept night-

long in the swamps. His son did not see the beast whose breath is devouring fire that eats into the bones and slowly burns out the life of man; but he must have passed close to its lair, for his life is going out of him in burning flame.

All are silent as the mistral pounds and tears and rattles stones at the hut; while down the ravines the 'rouans,' the foam-fronted, glistening-horned water bulls, charge bellowing to join the great 'rouan,' the Rhône—bearing with them on their wild plunge to the sea the millet harvests swirling along with the drowned harvesters, and leaving behind them desolation and awed despair.

'Oh,' wail the women, 'will we never be delivered from the ancient terror!'

Then rose up certain astute men, and said: 'We who are the elders of the people, we will deliver you.' And these men drew themselves apart and went into dark places, where they took the terror of the people and (either of themselves entirely, or because of the strangers that had passed through the land) fashioned it into a god and showed it forth in a symbol.

They called the people together and said: 'The ancient terror is an awful god, and greatly to be feared; but when served as he should be, he will watch over and protect his own tribe, his chosen people. We the elders, the priests, are the servers of him.' Then the people fell at the feet of the servers of god and worshipped there.

In time, the god shone forth in a ghastly stone whereon was seen the scaly lizard, with gaping jaws (crocodiles lived in the Rhône even unto our own time), or a raging bull, or a devouring lion, or even man—so shifting are the attributes of a god. Then the priests set up this terror-god, this tarasque, in the different habitats of their tribe: a Kelto-Ligurian tribe known to the Romans as the Desuviatici. The people brought precious gifts to propitiate, and bloody sacrifice to placate, the terror-god.

Life grew better as time went on, and fear sank down out of sight in the hearts of the people.

IV

It is very hard clearly to make out all this far past: through the Phœnician, Keltic, Greek, and Roman waves that have flowed over the land. It is still harder when the tide of Christianity sweeps in from the East and churns all this confusion into strange currents, refluent on themselves in whirlpools that suck down the new creeds and cast them up again mingled with the old beliefs.

From our vantage-point of to-day, aided by the search-light of true science, we can look out over these troubled waters. We see the old gods and the new, the ancient rites and the modern ceremonies, all mingled in an inextricable confusion. We see how the ancient terrors lose their power, and are degraded; either vanishing utterly or else changing in nature. But here and there we can clearly discern some fixed points slowly surging up in the mind of man.

We see the Roman Marius who delivered the land from the northern barbarians, and with him is Martha, the Syrian prophetess. Martha seems to detach herself from Marius and the Romans, and—possibly because of her taras, or tarascon—becomes the saving deity of the people near Tarascon, whom she delivers from danger.

In the dark ages, and the early middle ages, when reason was not and truth barely existed, again comes confusion; for the monkish records tell that St. Martha of Bethany (whose legend says she came to this land from Palestine), as the price of conversion to Christianity saved the people from a frightful river-monster, the tarasque. In the whirl of time this tarasque has become in many minds but a symbol of conquered paganism, whose simulacrum is led meekly in a pious procession still held at Tarascon in honour of St. Martha's victory. The priests of the Roman Church carry on high in this procession the miracle-working relics of St. Martha; before which the tarasque, the humbled and fallen terror of the past, makes three clumsy jumps in token of submission.

In dim remembrance of old times the people of Tarascon go, in

blossoming May, up to the deserted heights of Nosto-Damo-de-Castéu in gay pilgrimage to honour an ancient image of the Virgin Mother there enshrined. A pilgrimage full, though the people know it not, of strange memorials of their far past.

V

King René of Anjou, the laughter-loving Count of Provence, seeking to divert the melancholy of his beloved wife, Jeanne de Laval, turned the old-time Keltic terror into gay new fêtes: the games of the tarasque. These games still are played. The tarasque—a monster of wood and canvas, a plaything and a joy-producer—now goes through the sunny streets of Tarascon curveting to the most rollicking of airs set to very ancient words.

With rockets shooting fiery breath from its black nostrils, the old-time terror plunges viciously into the laughing crowd of onlookers, who scatter in fright—that may not be all pretence, as the nerves thrill down to long-buried fears. And under the rock on which towers King René's castle is pointed out the creature's old lair.

The people of Tarascon to-day are fiercely, if somewhat shamefacedly, proud of their tarasque, and many of them have a kind of unconscious loving dread of it. In this very year of the Lord 1896 they could be seen crowding to touch, and to make their children touch, la Tarasco—la maire-grand, the grandmother, as they call it—for that touch brings good luck.

The old god has fallen to be an amusement for the crowd and a study for the antiquarian. His image found at Tarasconnet (Noves) sits harmless in the museum at Avignon; and another, from Les Baux, lies broken in an antiquarian's garden at Eyragues. Cornfields and vines are green
where were the dark morasses in which he lurked,
and the god is dead save in the poet's song and
the tales whispered furtively at twilight.

CATHARINE A. JANVIER
'Sòcio dóu Felibrige.'

ASLAVGA'S KNIGHT

BY ROBERT BURNS

GRIERSON OF LAG

SIR Robert has risen at break o' day
In the spring time o' the year,
He has belted his sword upon his thigh,
An' mounted his guid grey mear.

An' he 's gathered his men in the mornin' licht,
To the hunt he has a mind,
Yet never the tod or the fallow deer
Is the game he thinks to find.

The merle has piped to the risin' sun,
As oot at the yett he gaes;
An' the heather-bleat has called his mate
By Maxwellton's bonny braes.

An' they ride ower hill an' they ride through dale,
An' doun by the dark Wolf's slock;
An' aye Sir Robert rides at their heid,
Wi' een for the puir hill-folk.

An' they 've catchit a laddie wi' een like the sky,
His hair 's like the gowden sheen;
An' Sir Robert has speired if aucht he kens,
Or auld Tam Glen has seen.

They 've questioned him baith lang and sair;
  But he daurna tell the truth:
For weel kens he o' auld Tam Glen—
  An' his hert is in his mouth.

An' the laddie lookit as through a mist,
  For his een the saut tears gem:
'I 'se tell ye noucht o' my faither's friend,'
  He says to him an' them.

Deep breethit the Red Wud Laird o' Lag;
  An' he sweers he 'll gar him say,
Or he 'll drap him doun in the linn's red flood
  Whaur the rocks mak nicht o' day.

An' the laddie's tongue is thick wi' tears,
  An' he prayeth them on his knee:
'Hae nane o' ye weans o' your ain at hame,
  That ye lat a bairnie dee?'

But he speaketh to ane that hath nae ruth,
  Nae qualms ever stirred his hert.
'Gin ye 'll no' tell me o' auld Tam Glen,
  Your soul an' you maun pairt.'

He 's grippit him sair by the red gowd hair—
  The laddie hears the red linn pourin'—
An' he 's speired him ower an' ower again—
  The laddie hears the kelpie roarin'.

Wild swirls the red linn's angry flood:
  There 's bluid upon the stane—
Sir Robert, he has an empty hand,
  His soul, a murdered wean.

He 's turned an' leuch to his troopers syne,
  But never a lauch gied they,
But grippit their swords wi' a fearsome look,
  But daurna mak them play.

Sir Robert has tryit anither lauch,
  Like a lost soul lauchs he now;
'Sweet are the pickins aff that whalp's banes
  The corbies sall hae, I trow.'

. . . . . .

A mither has fand a murdered wean
  In the pool at the red linn's fit,
An' the wound that straikit his bonny broo
  Wi' her tears she has washit it.

She 's rowed him in her airmis twa
  An' borne him till her hame;
She has straikit his limbs and kaimit his hair,
  An' ower him greets her lane.

. . . . . .

When the win's are still an' the linn's red flood
  Is fed wi' the beltane rain;
There rises a soun' in the howe o' the nicht
  Like a bairn that greets his lane.

W. CUTHBERTSON.

THE SNOW-SLEEP OF ANGUS OGUE

ONE day, among the hills, Angus Ogue lay in deep sleep. It was a fair place where he lay, with the heather purple about him and the bracken with its September gold in it. On the mountain-slope there was not a juniper tall enough, not a rock big enough, to give rest to a raven: all of gold bracken and purple heather it was, with swards of the paler ling. The one outstanding object was a mountain ash. Midway it stood, and leaned so that when the sun was in the east above Ben Monach, its gold streamed through the feather-foliage upon the tarn just beneath: so leaned, that when the sun was on the sea-verge of Ben Mheadhonach in the west, the yellow glow, lifting upward over leagues of golden bracken, turned the rowan-feathers to the colour of brass, and the rowan-berries into bronze.

The tarn was no more than a boulder-set hollow. It was fed by a spring that had slipped through the closing granite in a dim far-off age, and had never ceased to put its cool lips round the little rocky basin of that heather-pool. At the south end the ling fell over its marge in a curling wave: under the mountain ash there was a drift of moss and a cool, fragrant growth of loneroid, as the Gaels call the bog-myrtle.

Here it was, through the hot tides of noon, that Angus Ogue

slept. The fair god was naked, and was as a white flower there in the sunflood. His yellow hair lay upon the green loneroid, like fallen daffodils in new-mown grass. Above him was the silent sky, a suspended, unfathomable sea of blue. Not a cloudlet drifted there, nor the wandering shadow of an eagle soaring from a mountain eyrie or ascending in wide gyres of flight from invisible lowlands.

Around him there was the same deep peace. The wind was not. Not a breath stirred the rowan-leaves, or the feathery shadows these cast upon his white limbs: not a breath frayed the spires of the heather on the ridges of Ben Monach: not a breath slid along the aerial pathways to where, on Ben Mheadhonach, the sea-wind had fallen in a garth of tansils and moon-daisies and spread there his foam-white pinions, moveless as a lapsed wave.

Yet there were eyes to see, for Orchil lifted up her gaze from where she dreamed her triple dream beneath the heather. The goddess ceased from her weaving at the looms of life and death, and looked long at Angus Ogue—Angus, the fair god, the ever young, the lord of love, of music, of song.

'Is it time that he slept indeed?' she murmured, after a long while, wherein she felt the hot blood redden her pale lips and the pulse in her quiet veins leap like a caged bird.

But while she still pondered this thing, three old Druids came over the shoulder of the hill, and advanced slowly to where the Yellow-haired One lay adream. These, however, she knew to be no mortals, but three of the ancient gods.

When they came upon Angus Ogue they sought to wake him, but Orchil had breathed a breath across a granite rock and blown the deep, immemorial age of it upon him, so that even the speech of the elder gods was no more in his ears than a gnat's idle rumour.

'Awake,' said Keithoir, and his voice was as the tempestuous sigh of pine-forests when the winds surge from the pole.

'Awake,' said Manannan, and his voice was as the hollow booming of the sea.

'Awake,' said Hesus, and his voice was as the rush of the green world through space, or as the leaping of the sun.
But Angus Ogue stirred not, and dreamed only that a mighty eagle soared out of the infinite, and scattered planets and stars as the dust of its pinions: and that as these planets fell they expanded into vast oceans whereupon a myriad million waves leaped and danced in the sunlight, singing a laughing song: and that as the stars descended in a silver rain they spread into innumerable forests, wherein went harping the four winds of the world, and amidst which the white doves that were his kisses flitted through the gold and shadow.
'He will awake no more,' murmured Keithoir, and the god of the green World moved sorrowfully apart, and played upon a reed the passing sweet song that is to this day in the breath of the wind in the grass, or its rustle in the leaves, or its sigh in the lapping of reedy waters.
'He will awake no more,' murmured Manannan, and the god of the dividing seas moved sorrowfully upon his way; and on the hillside there was a floating echo as of the ocean-music in a shell, mournful with ancient mournfulness and the sorrow-song of age upon age. The sweet sound of it is in the ears of the dead, where they move through the grey glooms of silence: and it haunts the old time-worn shores of the dying world.
'He will awake no more,' murmured Hesus; and the unseen god, whose pulse is beneath the deepest sea and whose breath is the frosty light of the stars, moved out of the shadow into the light, and was at one with it, so that no eyes beheld the radiance which flowered icily in the firmament and was a flame betwixt the earth and the sun, which was a glory amid the cloudy veils about the west and a gleam where quiet dews sustained the green spires of the grass. And as the light lifted and moved, like a vast tide, there was a rumour as of a starry procession sweeping through space to the clashing cymbals of dead moons, to the trumpetings of volcanic worlds, and to the clarions of a thousand suns. But Angus Ogue had the deep

immemorial age of the granite upon him, and he slept as the dead sleep.

Orchil smiled. 'They are old, old, the ancient gods,' she whispered.

'They are so old, they cannot see eternity at rest. For Angus Ogue is the god of Youth, and he only is eternal and unchanging.'

Then, before she turned once more to her looms of life and death, she lifted her eyes till her gaze pierced the brown earth and rose above the green world and was a trouble amid the quietudes of the sky. Thereat the icy stars gave forth snow, and Angus Ogue was wrapped in a white shroud that was not as that which melts in the flame of noon. Moreover, Orchil took one of the shadows of oblivion from her mystic loom, and put it as a band around Ben Monach, where Angus Ogue lay under the mountain ash by the tarn.

. . . . . .

A thousand years passed, and when for the thousandth time the wet green smell of the larches drifted out of Winter into Spring, Orchil lifted her eyes from where she spun at her loom of life and death. For, over the shoulder of the hill came three old Druids, advancing slowly to where the Yellow-Haired One lay adream beneath the snow.

'Awake, Angus!' cried Keithoir.

'Awake, Angus!' cried Manannan.

'Awake, Angus!' cried Hesus.

'Awake, awake!' they cried, 'for the world has suddenly grown chill and old.'

They had the grey grief upon them, when they stood there, face to face with Silence.

Then Orchil put down the shuttle of mystery wherewith she wove the threads of her loom, and spoke.

'O ye ancient gods, answer me this. Keithoir, if death were to come to thee, what would happen?'

'The green world would wither as a dry leaf, and as a dead

leaf be blown idly before the wind that knows not whither it bloweth.'

'Manannan, if death were to come to thee, what would happen?'

'The deep seas would dry up, O Orchil: there would be sand falling in the place of the dews, and at last the world would reel and fall into the abyss.'

'Hesus, if death were to come to thee, what would happen?'

'There would be no pulse at the heart of earth, O Orchil, no lift of any star against any sun. There would be a darkness and a silence.'

Then Orchil laughed.

'And yet,' she said, 'when Angus Ogue had the snow-sleep of a thousand years, none knew it! For a thousand years the pulse of his heart of love has been the rhythmic beat of the world. For a thousand years the breath of his nostrils has been as the coming of Spring in the human heart. For a thousand years the breath of his life has been warm against the lips of lovers. For a thousand years the memory of these has been sweet against oblivion. Nay, not one hath dreamed of the deep sleep of Angus Ogue.'

'Who is he?' cried Keithoir. 'Is he older than I, who saw the green earth born?'

'Who is he?' cried Manannan. 'Is he older than I, who saw the first waters come forth out of the void?'

'Who is he?' cried Hesus. 'Is he older than I, who saw the first comet wander from the starry fold; who saw the moon when it was a flaming sun, and the sun when it was a sevenfold intolerable flame?'

'He is older!' said Orchil. 'He is the soul of the gods.'

And with that she blew a frith across the palm of her hand, and took away the deep immemorial age of the granite that was upon the Fair God.

'Awake, eternal Spring!' she cried. And Angus awoke, and laughed with joy; and at his laughing the whole green earth was veiled in a snow of blossom.

'Arise, eternal Youth!' she cried. And Angus arose and

smiled; and at his smiling the old brown world was clad in dewy green, and everywhere the beauty of the world was sweet against the eyes of young and old, and everywhere the pulse of love leaped in beating hearts.

'Go forth, eternal Hope!' she cried. And Angus Ogue passed away on the sunflood, weaving rainbows as he went, that were fair upon the hills of age and light within the valleys of sorrow, and were everywhere a wild, glad joy.

. . . . . .

And that is why, when Orchil weaves dumbly in the dark: and Keithoir is blind, and dreams among remote hills and by unfrequented shores: and Manannan lies heavy with deep sleep, with the oceans of the world like moving shadows above him: and Hesus is grown white and hoar with the frost of waning stars and weary with the burden of new worlds—that is why Angus Ogue, the youthful god, is more ancient than they, and is for ever young. Their period is set. Oblivion is upon the march against their immemorial time. But in the heart of Angus Ogue blooms the Rose of Youth, whose beauty is everlasting. Yea, Time is the name of that rose, and Eternity the beauty and fragrance thereof.

FIONA MACLEOD.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES

BY ANDREW K. WOMRATH

ST. SIMEON
STYLITES

THE CHIEFS' BLOOD IN ME

THE chiefs' blood in me
Heightened my head
When bowed to beg (for thee)
The islesmen's bread,
The chiefs' blood in me
Watched while one fed.

The chiefs' blood in me
Paced the lone hill
When my foe drank (to thee),
Drinking his fill,
The chiefs' blood in me
Drank at thy will.

The chiefs' blood in me
Turned no last glance
On my land left (for thee),
Field of thy chance,
The chiefs' blood in me
Smiled unto France.

SARAH ROBERTSON MATHESON.

THE STORY OF CASTAILLE DUBH

IN a hollow near the foot of the Athole hills there stand the ruins of an ancient castle. They have little beauty, these ruins; they are but high, thick, windowless walls with the remains of round towers at the corners, and the space within is filled with dark pine-trees. So old is Castaille Dubh, or the Black Castle, as it is now more commonly called, that tradition is almost silent as to its origin, though the villagers have much to tell of black deeds that were done in it, of the black fate which befell it, and of the curse that still clings to its very stones. Much treasure of gold and silver lies buried there, they say, but not the boldest nor the most covetous among them has dared to seek for it. The more timid will not venture to pass the castle by night; its name is spoken by them only to satisfy the curious stranger, or to terrify into obedience some wayward child.

The scene around is peaceful enough. About the castle lie cultivated fields with rich, black, loamy soil; a rocky height rises behind it, a range of low, wooded hills in front, and through the valley a quiet river winds. But the fertile fields were once a treacherous bog, and valley and hillsides were one dense forest with here and there a clearing, where men daily disputed the soil with the wild boar, and toiled hard to protect their families and their flocks from the wolves.

For the valley where this ancient castle stands was once the very heart of the great Caledonian Forest, 'dreadful for its dark, intricate windings, its dens of bears, and huge, wild, thick-maned bulls.' Within the dingy halls of the castle itself the first Earls of Athole lived in security, and with a certain squalid splendour. They oppressed their own people, it is true, but they protected them from the oppression of others: so their people loved them, and what they had to give they gave freely, even to their lives, for was it not their Chief who had need?

As generations passed, more and more of the land was reclaimed from the forest; the struggle of man against wild beast became less keen; of the weak man against the strong harder, more hopeless than ever. All Scotland was convulsed with civil war; the Highlands were harassed with petty feuds; the Earl of Athole forfeited life and lands, and the earldom was bestowed upon an alien.

The people now were the slaves, not the children of their chief. They had to give up their sons for the service, their daughters for the pleasure of a tyrant, to whom they were bound by no tie of kinship, no link of love.

The powerful High Stewards soon found Castaille Dubh too strait for them, and they left its use to one of their many base-born sons. One sore winter Sir Walter Stewart held high revel there with boon companions from the South. There was constant coming and going, and the people's scanty stores were rifled again and again to keep Sir Walter's larder well furnished for his guests.

With the New Year came one Uninvited Guest.

Quickly the news spread through the valley that the Sickness had come, and that in the castle men were dying almost unheeded by their panic-stricken comrades.

That night the heads of the villages met, as was their wont, in a secret hollow far up a rocky glen. There were a score of haggard, hungry, desperate men, and with them the grey-haired priest, a gentle old man whom little children loved. The snow lay thick around them; the wind blew icily overhead. A single

pine-torch, sheltered under an overhanging rock, threw its fitful light over the scene, showing gaunt, half-clad figures, shaggy, unkempt locks, faces wild-eyed and wan. Long and earnestly the men talked, giving free vent, in this new terror, to the pent-up bitterness of years.

'Why should we,' the bolder among them cried, 'why should we risk our lives to succour those who have made life so hard for us? Why should our wives and our little ones be sacrificed for men who have robbed some among us of both wife and child? What are these Southerners to us? They are no kith nor kin of ours.'

'Nay, my children, speak not so,' said the old priest mildly; 'are we not all sons of the same Mother Church? And Sir Walter himself—is not he of your blood? Was not his father's mother——'

'Ay, his father's mother!' broke in a dozen angry voices. 'Have not our mothers told us how she was dragged by the Earl's men, on just such a bitter night as this, from the very arms of the man she had but newly wed. That man was of our blood; his wrongs are our wrongs!'

The good priest pleaded, exhorted, commanded—all in vain. The only answer was a dogged 'Nay, father, let them die; we will not go.'

'Then I must go alone,' said the old man sadly. 'To-morrow at daybreak I will go, that, if these unhappy men may not live, they may at least make their peace with the Church before they die.'

Sullen and half-ashamed the men dispersed to their miserable homes, all but three, who lingered, and, standing close together, muttered low—

'He will go to-morrow: then we must go to-night.'

Silently and resolutely the three made their way down the glen and strode towards Castaille Dubh.

It was the 'wolf's month,' and, as they skirted the forest, they heard the howling of the hungry pack, but they heeded not.

As they passed not far from the edge of a hidden tarn, the

dread white water-bull bellowed from his lair, but even that could not daunt them then.

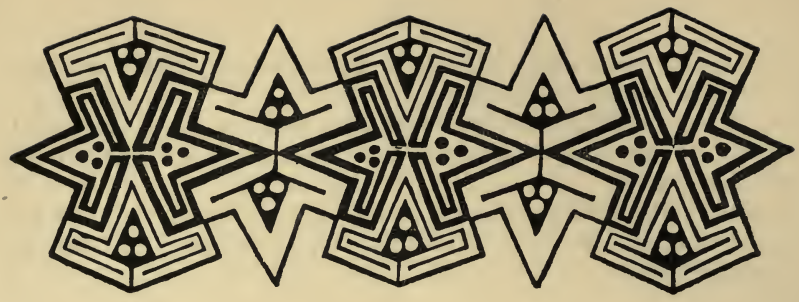
The thin ice crackled under their feet as they stepped on the surface of the frozen swamp, but they held on their way, treading warily.

At length the castle towered darkly before them, its gates all unguarded, for the sickness within left little room for thought of foes without.

. . . . . .

A red glow spread slowly over the sky and lighted up the dazzling snow. For a brief space the roar of the flames, the crash of falling masonry, and the shrieks of dying men mingled with the baying of the impatient wolves.

MARGARET THOMSON.



THE BLACK MONTH

IT is the Black Month—the Month of the Dead, the Month of those that do not come home, the Season of widows.

Out upon the furrowed sea the wind swings in gusts and lifts the waves back into a mist of drifting spray: on the beaches the sweeping tides eat into the sand with huge devouring rushes. Sometimes there is driftwood flung ashore; sometimes, where certain currents meet and run landwards, it is other than driftwood that is flung up, pallid and terrible, a wet shapelessness upon the stretching beach, a horror dropping from the lip of the sea. A great grey bay, circled with distant cliffs of granite and sandhills cushioned with the dull green of salty grass; a bay so wide and silent that one is lost in it, in the largeness of its desolate curve, in the levels of sand and dune and water, under the vast of overhanging sky. And between the long pale land and the advancing tide there stand the watchers—dwarfed, minuscule, infinitely small and impotent, mere points of blackness against the grey—waiting, where the currents meet and run landwards, for those that the sea brings home. For the Black Month has its harvest and these are its fruits.

Elsewhere there are others that watch and wait also.

Wherever a cross lifts its grey arms up from the bordering cliffs and overlooks the sea; wherever a stone face, drooping, looks sightlessly out upon the blind world below, and the

water-birds, wheeling and circling, keep voice with the winds; there are women who at this season come and go, who go and come again, or linger from long hour to long hour, kneeling on the stone steps in the pitiful helplessness of waiting. There are flowers laid humbly about the foot of the cross, there is the tinkle of chaplets passing between restless fingers; a prayer, ceaseless, monotonous, that is lost in the voice of the water and the singing of the winds, and the long dumb trouble of straining eyes. For it is the Black Month, the month that makes widows, and out yonder the sea is scarred with crossing paths, and ploughed by home-coming boats, and secret with the dim vessels, the soundless feet, that in all the to-morrows shall not come home.

There is not much speech amongst the watchers; black-clothed and white coiffed, like huge sea-birds alighted, they cluster about the foot of the cross, looking not at each other, but westward into the mist of waters. There is nothing to be seen in each other's faces but what they know is in their own; there is no word to be said which can hold the outcry of their speechlessness. There is only the habitual, mechanical consolations of the 'Hail, Mary!' the endless murmur that is scarcely prayer and yet is comfort. Sometimes the Curé comes and stands by them a little while in the wise silence that understanding has taught him; it will be time enough for him to speak, by and by, when the terror of suspense has sharpened into certainty. And sometimes there comes one who has known in her day the anguish of waiting but now has none left for whom to wait, and who turns her dim vision on those about her with the cold regret of age and slackened blood. But always the straining, burning, furiously-patient eyes peer westward through the mist of waters, and the restless fingers incessantly roll the tinkling beads:—

'Hail Mary! Full of grace . . .'

For the sea is secret and the way of the winds unsure, and the Black Month has come round again, the season of the

homeward boats and the making of widows, the Month of the Dead.

. . . . . .

And this is the Day of the Dead.

The clouds hang low in the sky—pale, tufted, and immovable; the trees stand on the slope of the cliffs and the landward edge of the sandhills bend to meet the winds that do not blow. Now and then a leaf falls with a jarring rustle athwart the stillness, and settles purposefully on the ground like a bird alighting. The sea heaves smoothly in its bed, lifting a large grey shoulder that is round and unrippled; the winds are silent in their quarters, and the upper air is empty. There are no birds anywhere. There is in all the poising stillness no sound but the tread of feet that come and go upon the path that climbs down from the inset village to the sea: the path that borders in its passing the little grey cemetery where so few have come home to lie. There is no need of much room there: there is place, and to spare, outside. . . .

And presently there is a sound of singing that comes nearer, a grave sweet singing that is small in the large environment of air; there is a huddle of black and white upon the stretching beach, the shining of taper, of swinging censer, of uplifted crucifix, and between the little burying-ground and the wide grey sea there is a kneeling crowd that prays for those that lie in either.

The night gathers early into an intolerable blackness: the wind stirs with a distant whispering, and the air is thick and wet without rain. There is no moon, no light babble of water breaking on the shore, no star answering star from sky and sea; there is no sound of life in all the small dark village, only a close unbroken blackness set interminably between earth and heaven. The people within the little houses have shut themselves fearfully and with prayers into their great enclosed beds; the evening-meal has been eaten in silence, the fire covered over and the lights put out; but the platters are not set away, nor the food lifted from the tables. All is left for

Those that will enter presently by the door which to-night stands open from dusk to dawn; when in the midst of darkness and at the unspeakable Hour, there comes the sound of feet, which are not feet, upon the causeway, and the touch of hands, which are not hands, upon the latch; when those that wake and pray and listen will hear about them the pale thin voices that chant the Song of the Dead.

The night comes up weeping from the East, and her cheeks are wet and dark; her shut eyes weep and her breath whistles between her lips; the blackness of the night is very black.

It is the night when the Dead walk, and there is no light anywhere.

The Dead have rent their tombs and have come out from them like breath from between the lips; they have come without sound, without shape, they are but a Blackness within the blackness of the night.

A Blackness within the blackness are the Dead; cover over the ashes on the hearth lest a flame burst out from them; cover them over and let the houses be dark as the encompassing night. O let no light wander, for the Dead are abroad; let no light stray, lest in it they should see themselves!

It is surely a very fearful thing that the Dead should be set loose, dumb and shapeless, an element within the elements; not even as a sigh in the whispering wind, not even as a tear in the weeping rain, but as a nothing at large in the midst of the world. O what a strait gate is the flesh when it is shut upon the spirit; and what a large thing beyond all largeness, is the Desire of God!

For the Dead are without sound and without shape and yet there is that which must be spoken, and who will say the words? They are voiceless, and yet they bear a message; oh! who will deliver it?

Let us gird ourselves and go forth, we, who are the poor and maim, we the poor and desolate; let us go out into the night to meet the Dead, that they may creep into us by our mouths and share the breath of our nostrils. Let us lend these miserable bodies, that by them the Dead may speak.

For years and for generations without number, our fathers have done this thing and the night hath not swallowed them up; for years and for generations without number, the Dead have spoken by them and they have not been consumed. Hervé the Saint went out with them in the days that once were and sang the Song of the Souls: and Hervé the Saint is not consumed, but is entirely blessed. Therefore be not afraid. . . .

The night is dark, surely the night is very dark, and our feet seek in trouble for their accustomed ways; where is the track of my footsteps that I may walk in it? And where are ye, my brothers, that I may hold your hands?

The wind is cold, oh! verily the wind is cold as the hand that gives no alms; there is a weight as of ice that lies about my heart. And what is this that meets me, that is blacker than the night, and colder than the north wind, and wetter than the sea? What is this that wraps me about with a smell as of the grave and a sickness like the coming of Death? Oh! what is this that breathes with my breath, and speaks with my voice, and makes of me a trumpet?

It is not we, the poor and maim, we the aged and desolate, who go from door to door in the midst of the night, but the Dead; it is not we who cry unto you, but the Dead. For the Dead are come into us and we are the Dead; O ye within the houses, wake and pray, for the Dead are at your doors!

The night is black, surely the night is very black, and the wind sings about the keyholes; the night is full of fingers that touch and feet that come and go, and of voices crying upon the thresholds. Blackness within the blackness, and the graves rent open. O ye within the houses, wake and pray, and hear the Song of the Souls.

. . . . . .

It is the night, and the hour of the night, when the Dead walk; and there is no light anywhere.

. . . . . .

And to-morrow the watchers will stand again upon the beach, in the great bay where the currents meet and run landwards, waiting for those that the sea brings home; and about the cross the women will gather and pray, peering westward into the mist of waters in the dumb suspense which is only less sharp than certainty. But there will be some who stay at home weeping, beside the empty chair that has been set back in the corner all the long Summer; weeping, because, in the black of the night, when the graves are rent open and the depths of the sea laid bare, there was one who came home that should come no more, and the word of the Dead was spoken. For this is the Black Month, the season of widows, the Month of the Dead.

NOTA.—In parts of Brittany it is the belief that on the Eve of All Souls, the Dead are permitted to return to the world; but that, being shapeless and voiceless, they enter into the bodies of the beggars who are called by the people the 'Children of God,' and in their form go from house to house, leaving on each a blessing. In the canticle of St. Hervé it is said that as a child he went out with such as these to 'Sing the song of the souls': and one or more versions of these songs yet linger. As All Souls is the day of the Dead, so November is the Black Month, the Month of the Dead: more especially upon the coasts where the fall of the year brings home the fishermen who have been away at Iceland or the Bank, and of whom, all the long Summer, there has been no news. Day after day through the early Autumn, the 'goëlettes' come in with every tide; but as the time passes, the waiting for those that delay grows more anxious and the home-coming less sure. And as every season there are many who do not come home, it is indeed true that 'November makes more widows than all the rest of the year.

M C. BALFOUR.

FELLING TREES

BY CHARLES H. MACKIE

③

THE BEST OF ALL

GIVE me wine of the ruby hue,
One sweet love, and a friend or two—
Wine and a Woman and one true Friend,
These are best, to the world's end!

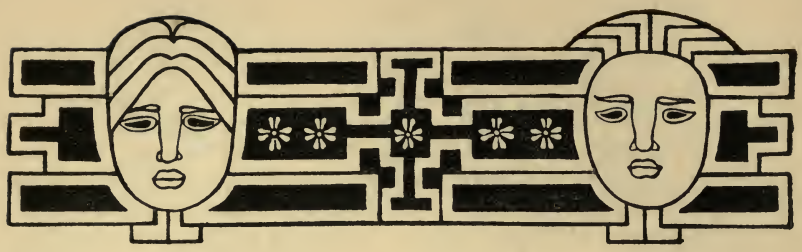
. . . . .

Then I drank of the wine-cup, rich and deep,
I drank like a god, and I fell asleep:
And out of the cup a serpent crept
And stung my soul, while my body slept.

I trusted my Love and I had no fear,
But gazed in her eyes that shone so clear:
And out of their depths the soul of Sin
Sprang like a fiend, and drew me in.

I loved my friend, and I knew not why,
I asked no token to love him by:
But only I knew him for my friend—
And that was good, to the world's end.

W. MACDONALD.



THE MEGALITHIC BUILDERS

I

WE crossed the loch, left our boat, and went up the glen. Passing the castle with its medley of new and old, we stopped at the little cemetery. A pair of tall standing stones, a linden avenue, then another pair of monoliths gave worthy entrance to the grove of rest, with its grassy mounds, its massive tombstones of a long dynasty of chiefs, and the many-stoned, almost cairn-built, tomb of their hereditary pipers. Castle and glen are empty now, and the pipes are silent; but here at least, after love and life, after labour and war, and the music of all these, the silence is of unsaddening peace.

We chose the right bank of the river (the road is on the left), and trudged on through pretty scenery of the familiar sort; hill in cloud and sunshine, river in ripple and race, birch and bracken, heather and pine, with every here and there a granite boulder among a group of stunted junipers. But a couple of hours up the stream a scene opened out, of which neither my painter friend nor myself had seen the like before. The trees grew less thickly, the heathery hill-side receded, and there lay before us broad park-like grassy levels with vast masses of evergreen, here in rounded masses, there rising into graceful spires. The first impression was almost that of park and

shrubbery laid out by a skilful landscape gardener of old for some unbuilt mansion, but as we came nearer, it was clearly a natural glade of gigantic junipers. Tall and massive, ancient and rugged, gnarled and broken, their green spirelets rose over deep caverns of shadow, filled with writhing arms breaking through vast lichenous growths, some of hoary dishevelled age, others in broad wrinkled overlappings of strange greens and lurid blues, a gorgeous ragged foulness like a witch's draperies. Outside these shadowed hollows the scene had the melancholy beauty of a cypressed cemetery in the East. And who might not one of those boulders cover? As we went on the sky was grey, and a sobbing linn settled into black pools of sorrow; we had passed the place of sighing, but here seemed the wells of the river of tears.

Soon we came to a rotting bridge, and crossed to a ruined mill, with tumbled stone heaps that not so long ago were cottages and byres; for though dramatic evictions are out of fashion, it remains more than ever the interest of any practical-minded laird (chief no longer) quietly to depopulate his glen, and as the old folks die out, throw their crofts into the forest. For the fewer the people the more winged and four-footed people, and the more rent his shooting-lodger will be willing to pay.

Yet in this desolation we found a single child, a quiet wee lassie, I suppose the gamekeeper's, playing alone. It was useless speaking to her, for the education code practically works so that the children nowadays lose their Gaelic without really learning English. She did not even lift her head to look at us, but went steadily on with her playthings—a gathering of rough stones. We stepped nearer to see what she was doing with them. A shudder of astonishment ran through us—the child had traced out a ruined sheepfold, and was building beside it a funeral cairn.

We could scarcely believe our eyes or our interpretation, but the thing was unmistakable, indisputable; and so leaving hamlet and its monument builder, we went on to the narrowing

of the glen. There the explanation broke upon us; at the opening of a new labyrinth of junipers was standing or rather slipping down, a moss-grown cairn, another and another, a group, a score, a hundred; each a recorded sorrow of the glen. The bairn with her stones was not inventing her ghastly game, but only reproducing her near and familiar impressions: yet, child historian, child artist, she had combined for us the story of a passing race, a megalithic people, the utter winter of their disappearance seemingly nigh at hand.

Of these ancient builders and their work much has been written, though no one book fully figures, still less interprets. Turning to books, one is soon bewildered among Picts' houses and brochs, vitrified forts and duns, for here in the North we have in strange confusion most of the ancient types of Europe, and some of our own—and we must wait for the general progress of archæology before we can unriddle this crowded medley of architectural fossils. But as we dig below the Græco-Roman culture, below the recorded dynasties of Egypt, to discover below these the primitive megalithic builders, we cannot but ask, What are our standing-stones but unhewn obelisks, what our cairns but unshapen pyramids? Are they survivals or degenerations from that archaic world? At any rate it is clear that we have to do with one of the oldest phases of civilisation. But (as with China) what we call the oldest people is of course really the youngest; so to say it is the most dead, is to recognise it also the most undying. So may we not find these vanishing cairn-builders reappearing elsewhere throughout the land? May we not find our child-builder grown up to express these traditions, to give play to this instinct (perhaps all the more surely if unconsciously), within this modern civilisation which absorbs us all? In this way, for an everyday instance, may we not explain that aversion to brick, that love of grey stone, that profuse massiveness of wall-building in cottage and mansion alike, which strikes even the most unobservant tourist from England or America? Of course it is not by Cyclopean stones that we can always know the mega-

lithic builder; neither the largest stones nor the means of moving them are always within his reach; the question here, as for our child, as in life generally, is of aim, of tendency, of ideal; does one do what in him lies? Let us go on with our journey, and we shall see.

II

As we return by the canal steamer to Inverness, the villas and shops, the hotels and railway stations promise no more than any other modern town to archæologist or interpreter. There seem no ancient buildings of interest, few modern ones of merit, yet on a second survey we had seen no small modern town in Scotland, hardly indeed in Britain or elsewhere, of more ambitiously monumental character. A modern castle crowns the hill; a modern cathedral stands by the river, and the towers and spires of new churches rise every here and there. Besides the weak romanticisms and conventionalities of all these, the business quarters are crowded with costly Philistinisms which would be the pride of many a larger town. In the centre of the town we have a showy Town House and fountain, the latter built over the prehistoric palladium of the borough, that fountain stone, 'Clach-na-cuddain' which is not only the familiar fetish and watchword of Invernessians at home and abroad, but gives the unnoticed key-note of the town's architecture too. From minor megalith to minor Victorian architecture indeed is not an unmixed art-progress; but this 'Capital of the Highlands' has still to become a capital: despite latent Highland elements, its realised ideals as yet are little more than those of the Scottish market burgh and the English garrison town.

Yet as the old language comes back to the dying, and as it is with our fathers we would sleep when dead, so the undeveloped and vulgarised megalithic city of the living is overlooked by the truer and nobler megalithic city of the dead—the Hill of Tomnahurich, crowded with cross and obelisk from base to

wooded crown. Here the ancient and latent art spirit is more developed, more emancipated, and so gives us one of the most characteristic, and in general effect one of the most beautiful cemeteries of Western Europe.

At this hill-foot again we found childhood at play; this time a group of merry boys, who, out of the rich variety of Northern games, which we were learning to decipher as survivals of past culture-phases, had fitly gone back to the megalithic game of Summer, as curling is obviously of Winter—'Putting the Stone.' As the girl in her silence, as the mourners in their sighing, so now the boys in their laughter. We are wont to say that only animals have instinct, and that man acts only by reason. Is there not sometimes a word to say for the opposite?

We are wont to receive and express our emotions for the most part audibly through music or words or tones, but the emotion of architecture is latent in us still; eye and hand can surely feel as well as tongue and ear. Emotion plays not with strings nor pipes only, but with things more massive and enduring also; to her Amphion-lute the very rocks range into order as sand-grains ripple to the violin-bow, and to her listening ear the Memnon statues sing. We speak of the rude stone ages as if they were ages of rude men, but how much is this because our tools, the machines, have mastered us, have dulled us to match their own finish? For elemental man, elemental feeling, elemental expression also; so youth, rejoicing in its strength, will ever toss the rugged stone, sorrow ever upheave her rude memorial. To feel the full depth of this ever primeval art, some modern instance must come home to us; and here by Inverness, is the spot of all Scotland. On Culloden Moor, there lies a gloom deeper than that of the Jacobite chronicles, a silence sadder than the songs; to these poor proud stones of the clans, landmarks of death and defeat, our heartstrings thrill as on no other stricken field.

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Now up Strathspey and over Ben Mhicdhui with its huge moraines, Cyclopean quarries waiting for giants; then down

Deeside, with its castles and modern cairn-capped hills, at length to Aberdeen, that most characteristic of our provincial capitals. Here as usual, progress and prosperity are plain and prosaic enough; yet one hears with wonder that the improving Town Council and University Court have decided to open their quiet College quad to the noise of the town, and give it a full view of the drapers' shops opposite, by knocking down their two main surviving historic treasures; one the Greyfriars Kirk, which might be so easily preserved and repaired as a local and concrete epitome of the history of university, city, and Northern Christendom alike; and the other the Byron house, the boyish home of the most notable European force of modern poetry and satire. Strange that this first of Celtic Bards should still have to suffer this crowning outrage of Saxon Reviewers! And where is the society for the protection of worthy buildings?

Wandering onwards, the proud name of 'Granite City' is undeniably justified; and we see that the doomed relics are insufficiently megalithic. In the perspectives of Union Street is there not a suggestion of Thebes and of Carnac? Kirk and Market, Bank and Insurance Company, Town-house and Salvation Army, each shows its unconscious megalithic instinct under the varieties of Victorian fashion. Here is the true inwardness of the churchyard colonnade, or of that colossal statue upon the huge piled cairn (which some may think the best of it). Here of course also lies the origin of that staple industry, the tombstone trade. Unarchitectural and unsculpturesque as these machine-made monuments are, all turning and polish, their business-artists defend them as good enough for export, for selling to and piling upon the Philistines. Yet the prediction is safe that before long some sculptor must humanise this notable local industry into art by teaching the right use of its noble material. As for marble the sculptor goes back to Greece, so for granite he must go back to Egypt; and thus, in clear demonstration of the Immortality, the Resurrection of the Social Soul, we shall have after thirty centuries the definite renascence of classic megalithic tradition.

Returning to Marischal College, we find that, despite the destructive orgie of the authorities, a true architect has already appeared. The tamely conventional modern perpendicular college has been reorganised as far as might be by a master hand. Porch and staircase, vestibule and antechamber, lead through long perspectives, as of a cathedral without transepts, say rather as of an Egyptian temple, into the noble Aula, walled with rose-coloured granite blocks and pointed with gold. And upon the former unaspiring tower he has piled another hundred feet of four-square precipice, from which there leaps and crystallises a spiry fretted crown of glittering pinnacles.

Here is one of these rare points of the modern world, where we may see the beginnings of a fresh phase of architecture. For here, and perhaps for the first time, a neo-megalithic builder has struck a new note of emotion and risen from sternness or solemnity into hope and cheer. Yet the spiritual continuity is none the less complete: looking down now into the quadrangle we see below us the initial keynotes of tradition; a modern obelisk of red granite, an ancient ice-worn boulder.

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Turning southward much might detain us, from the fanciful Frasereum of Arbroath to the sculptured stones of Meigle. As kindred outcrops of racial instinct, the quaint old Howff of Dundee, the ruins of St. Andrews, all lose their isolation, and gain fresh interest; nor here is it of small or unhappy augury, of merely local or individual sentiment, but a sign of the times, that the living Scotsman who most fully stands by the temporal and spiritual traditions of his ancient order, his university and church, should have begun not only deeply to investigate, but nobly to rebuild.

Nearer home the reader may easily follow up the clue. Thus Glasgow suffers from its smoke and rain, and from proximity to Edinburgh, yet is really one of the most well-built of British cities; while its cathedral with its uniquely vast crypt, its Necropolis bristling upon one hill, its university towering upon

another, are all in keeping; new and imaginative developments of architecture as well as of painting are also beginning. Of Edinburgh, people are wont to say that it is the glorious site that compels it to be the most monumental among modern cities, but the megalithic influence, vulgarised though it too often is, has silently been at work. In castle and churches, in old and new town, in the register-house or the university, in schools and hospitals, in museums and libraries, galleries or observatories, despite their medley of styles, the same impulse thrills. Thus it is not merely the geographical resemblance of site to site, it is neither the affectations nor the genuine associations of culture, which have placed those would-be Athenian buildings where they stand, but kindred architectural sympathies also; note in Glasgow as well as Edinburgh the preference for Doric, most massive and simple of the orders.

However as at Inverness, as everywhere, it is tomb and monument that express their builder's mind most clearly. A walk through old Greyfriars, another through the modern Dean, the briefest visit to St. Giles, will suffice for this; the Esplanade with its monoliths, the Calton with its monuments are before every eye. Most obvious of all in the main panorama of the city after the contrast of the castled old town with the modern boulevard of the new, is what dominates this boulevard—the Scott Monument, a statued cenotaph, in which suggestions as of cairn and pyramid meet and mingle in the spire. Here sits the singer and tale-teller, our Northern Wizard (himself a builder), master and inspirer of magicians, alike of Past and Future, of those who as archæologists or historians rescue and treasure the tradition of the dead, and those who as artists in word or deed, renew these traditions in ways fitting for the living.

At present of course it is mostly plate-glass and railway-stations that are building; well, even this is surely Cyclopean enough, even to its blindness. Even behind the plate-glass shop-windows, what best is there but old memories—old books, old tartans, old jewels (see how even the silversmiths are only

half Birmingham and half Celtic and Megalithic!). And what are these tourist stations for, but to bring people weary of the dulness of their present, eager to reach some fountains of the past?

III

Of future building too, let a word be boldly said.

In criticism it is the way of most to fasten upon defects, of some wisely to enjoy what good they can, but of too few to watch the march of things, to search the streams of tendency. But in architecture this is peculiarly necessary, and as the bad tendencies are before all eyes, and the good less obvious even when not altogether latent, it is for the latter that we must mainly seek. As a first instance recall how in Ruskin's 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting' he figured a then recent Edinburgh tower as the meanest of mortal productions hitherto, side by side with the great Campanile of Venice, for him as yet the supreme one. Well, this bitter critique enraged the Edinburgh Cockney at the time, but now the very fellow (not reproduction) of the Campanile is well above ground already. On the Mound that clumsy Doric Temple has more in it than the futile Art-School of Kensington; side by side there is at work what is probably the most living school of art and design in Britain, where the architect of the Campanile himself is heading the most strenuous youth of his city. With these, a new generation will soon begin.

For divining the future, as for recalling the past, there is the same rare yet open secret—of Sympathy. But this spell, as in the old stories, needs recasting three times, and each time in the right way. The first sympathy is with the best actual work which the men just nearing maturity and power are beginning to do; the second is with what the able youths of the next wave, the immature aspirants to governing and leading of all kinds, are learning and discussing, are doing and dreaming. But the third and rarest, is with what is sought and

dreamed and felt among the people themselves. Hence the ballads of one generation give the art poetry of the next; hence, for instance, the dominant wave of Scottish Literature of Locality has no reason for shame of its humble kail-yard origin, its beginnings in the Forfarshire popular press; so Scott learned as Stevenson began, with stories for boys.

No spell is ever completely found, the last least of all: but let him who would really build for his generation, and not merely for his client and his wages, go perseveringly on the quest. He will find here and there a clue to the secret, one at least in this old town of ours; one here, one there, now at home, and now abroad; but so far as the main theme of this essay is concerned, let any one who cares for it see what he can make out for himself not only of the history of Scotland, but of the life and thought of its People, from the speaking stones of Stirling, which he that runs may read.

PATRICK GEDDES.

WINTER LANDSCAPE

BY JAMES CADENHEAD, R.S.W

ENVOY

THERE are certain elemental forms of life, whose way it is after some solitary wandering silently to flow together, uniting their microscopic forces into a vague semi-fluent mass. This at first shows only that apparent quiescence which in life is needed for internal rearrangement, or at most some of those external symptoms which express an internal clearing up, though they may superficially suggest the opposite. By and by these associating lives awaken to the world without; they arouse to new activities, they rise into new forms, protean yet individual. These die in their turn—that is, float into new young life; much, it may be, to perish, but enough at least to germinate anew elsewhere.

Such is the life-history of our little group of townsmen and gownsmen, who for these ten years past have been quietly gathering themselves together among the nooks and byways, the ways and outlooks of our ever ruinous, ever renascent Old Town. From this grouping of studios and studies, from solitary cells and friendly meetings, there readily arises this or that collective effort; thus at length have developed a gathering-place, a scriptorium, even a publishing-house: whence, following the tradition of our old home and city, we may send forth things new and old.

Of this the 'Evergreen' has been the initial outcome. Be it good or bad, frankly experimental at least it has been, from cover to cover. As in the semi-collegiate group amid which it arises, there has been no central authority, still less constraint; without individual or continuous editorship, its artists and writers have been each a law unto themselves.

In such an unwonted mode of life and publication, the absence of mechanical order cannot but obscure, at least to many, the element of organic unity, not yet manifest in form and substance, but working in life and growth.

Not only in the old association of artist and man of letters, not only in the newer

parallelism of natural history and social studies, not only in the profound and renascent unity of local and regional survivals and initiatives with racial and cosmopolitan ones, but through all these together, an increasing purpose runs. Hence the association of all these in the 'Evergreen'; which has sought, however dimly, to express a certain conception of science, a certain associated view of life; not indeed a set of opinions, but a way of looking at things, that increasingly reveals the unity of science and literature and art. To see the world, to see life truly, one must see these as a whole; and only those who see this in movement do see it in whole. Our arts and sciences are but so many specialised and technical ways of showing and seeing the many scenes and aspects of this great unity, this mighty drama of cosmic and human evolution. The naturalist evolutionist then, like his artist brother, who would know this House the Sun Built, must follow its changes through the Seasons; and the social evolutionist (again with the artist) must see that human life, like simpler life, is in harmony and tone with these. An old truth, patent in the history of individual plant or animal or man, but latent in the evolution of family, variety, or species; patent through rustic life and labour, latent through urban life and thought; patent in the history and literature of locality, latent through the history and the philosophy of the world. Heredity and variation, survival and initiative, conservation and innovation, decline and renascence, each has its time and season; so Art and Science are but the following of Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and yet again of Spring, in Nature and in individual Life, in the wide World, and in the world of Home.

Our first season-cycle then is ended, and though its experience has made the possibilities and plan of a new series clearer, the time for this is not yet. The loosely grouped initiatives of this first venture have now to separate, to develop apart for a season. Naturalist and sociologist may thus re-elaborate their natural and their human biology of the seasons, while the Celticists listen alone to the elemental voices, or strengthen the surviving and renewing unity of Brython and Goidel; and so with each. Not in books only, but in life also, these separating activities may prepare for new reunions and new comradeships, new colleagueships and new collaborations: for science and history in outlook-tower and museum, for art in studio, in school, and exhibition, in building and decoration; for all in fresh gatherings and meetings, studious and joyous, Scottish or cosmopolitan, in new initiatives at home or afield.

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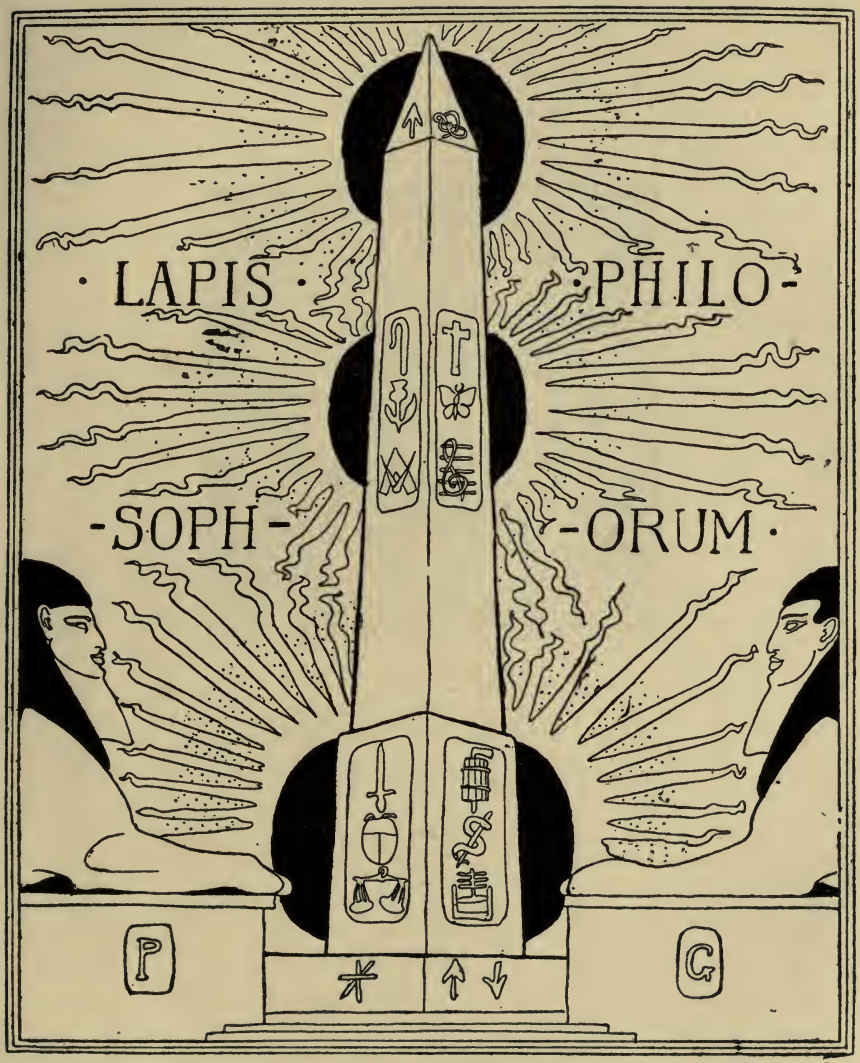
For a season then it is the turn of a different mood of thought, a different mode of action which needs its corresponding expression also—different from the 'Evergreen' and complementary to it.

This time, though the keynote is still of evolution, the standpoint is changed; no longer primarily cosmic and outward, but primarily human and inward; no longer primarily of material observation, but of moral interpretation and of action. In this way, too, some promises of the 'Evergreen' may, it is hoped, be more fully kept. Hence the 'Evergreen' sleeps for a season, and the 'Interpreter,' from his different outlook, will have his say for the time.

P. G.
W. M.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