

DREAMS.

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“ We are such stuff as dreams are made on.”

“ There was a naughty boy, and a naughty boy was he,
He would not stop at home, he could not quiet be,
So he followed his nose to the North, to the North,
He ran away to Scotland.”

So Keats wrote about himself, and he further goes on, “ He ran to the mountains, and the fountains, and the ghostes, and the witches.” Probably he had grown tired of the tediousness of conventional life, and being young and in revolt fled, full of vague unrest and the glamour of youth, to the wilds, to the mountains and the heather, and to the great stretches of moorland, where he could be free from the ugliness of murky and sullen cities and the babble of his fellow-men.

In those days the beauties of nature appealed to only very few people, but Keats was one of them, and at an earlier date so also was Shakespeare. To them wide open stood the door, revealing the rich splendour of all Nature's world. Their joy in the proud promise of Spring, in Summer's sovereign garb, and in the golden days of Autumn, rings out like merry bells; with them fancy plays—

“ As wanton winds do shake the darling buds of May.”

Where can we find odes more haunting than Keats's “ Ode to a Nightingale,” or “ Ode to a Grecian Urn ”? and nowhere exist sonnets so exquisite as those of Shakespeare. Beauty with them exists everywhere, not only in all living things, but in everything created. In the “ Ode to a Grecian Urn ”

“ Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

In the sonnets—

“ Truth and Beauty shall together reign.”

A priceless heritage these two great minds have left us;
we are looking through—

“ Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

or,

“ Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.”

Many years passed away after the death of Keats before the Highlands were often visited. Yet fortunate are those who wandering there can find the Beauty that will reveal itself to those who can understand. For it is a land wild, mysterious, with great open spaces, rushing rivers, lonely lochans, forests of twisted pines, and glens where the birch trees droop, and the burns laugh as they leave the dark corries, whilst far away on the west solitary islands lift their heads out of a sapphire sea, and the long, gleaming beaches of ever-shifting sand keep guard against the onslaught of the hungry waves that—

“ Rise and fall and roar rock-thwarted under
Bellowing caves, beneath the windy wall.”

A land with as many changing moods as the white mists on the mountains, or the fleecy clouds weaving strange pageants athwart the azure sky. A land now glad with the soft kisses of the sunshine, now sad with the gloom of dark clouds and the memories of times gone by. A land of mystery, a land of the Heart's Desire.

If in the days of one's youth one is able to wander free in such a land, one should be grateful to the jealous gods. For youth is of the Spring Time, with all the glorious promise of the month of May, when full of life and gladness youth dreams dreams of perilous things and of the happenings of the days to come. With covetous hands, therefore, should youth win from that Tyrant Time such spoils as he may “ while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” Yes! We must gather rich plunder before those evil days

come. Happily, however, should the gods permit, though our Spring-time passes, before us our Summer and Autumn yet remain. Far distant lies that time of year when the stormy gusts of Winter's day make wail in—

“ The bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.”

With summer a richer gold greets us with new and more subtle entrancements. The song of the wilds is set to a different tune than that of “proud-pied April.” In the supreme sovereignty of our summer days we no longer owe fealty to the Gods of Spring; our worship is offered at other shrines. Summer comes a full-robed queen to welcome the Sun God as he floods with his glory the hills, the glens, and the far-off islands. Colour finer than Art can fashion flames on the rose-coloured clouds of dawn, when—

“ Lo, in the Orient the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head.”

All day, as the long hours hasten by, the errant clouds, the lights and the shadows play an endless rhythm. Idly one listens to the song of a bird rising out of the heather, greeting the day with glad notes, or the drowsy hum of the wild bees; the melancholy cry of the curlew and the plover are heard far away. Some young grouse come out into the open and disappear again. A faint scent of the bog myrtle drifts by. Perhaps there may be a small stream with pools of clear amber water flowing over the many coloured pebbles; a few ferns and the branches of a small rowan bend down to the unruffled surface below, and near moss-covered rocks the yellow trout feeding on the gravel at the bottom of the pool. Irresistible is the charm of these small moorland waters—

“ Clear and cool, clear and cool,
By laughing shallow and dreaming pool.”

Undefined, they laugh and play, not knowing that they must lose themselves in the great rivers, where on black and sombre pools the lost foam flakes wander ceaselessly to and fro, sadly remembering their joyous dancing in the sunlight on the open moorlands. Far away on the uplands lie the

lochans with their beauty of still waters, fringed with water lilies and rich weeds. The wild duck and the sea birds know them; on their islands the nests are hidden in the grass and the heather, whilst at night on their dark waters the moon and the silent stars are gently mirrored amongst the rushes. Wonderful is that early summer time. The new life playing and rioting over the whole land. Masses of yellow gorse in the sunshine, patches of broom flash like gold against the new green of the grass. Primroses and violets and small blue flowers hide almost unseen amongst the herbage, the tall iris nods slowly in the wind, whilst the white and red blossoms on the wild briar proclaim that the end of summer's reign is not far distant.

“ And summer's lease hath all too short a date.”

So in our summer time may we gladly rest content with the rich gifts offered to us, woven by summer from out the shining threads of the passing hours. When the soft winds gently pass across the moors, when the sun is kind, when the hills and the glens are asleep, then can one idly lie in the heather and dream as the hours decline. Images of great mountains and blue lakes with islands and old ruined towers can be seen in the drifting clouds. Memories of bygone days pass ghost-like through one's mind; sad thoughts of the old Clans, full of tragedy and gloom; how in a struggle that was worthy of a better cause they fought nobly to the bitter end.

One sees once more the Great Marquis and “ the plaided Clans come down through wild Lochaber's snow,” we hear again the pibroch and the savage song of the claymore, and the clash of shields in that fierce fight by Inverlochry's shore. The great precipices of Glencoe silently watch, where on that winter's night the butchers from Glen Lyon fell upon the doomed McLans, and all were put to the sword. The rushing waters of the Garry, and the weeping birches, forever mourn the dead Dundee, “ when in the glory of his manhood, passed the spirit of the Graeme.”

Still dreaming, legends of older and more distant days drift across one's mind. To Ossian, the Orpheus of the Gael. How he married Niamh of the golden hair, a daughter

of the Fairy Folk, and how with her he journeyed to the world's end, to Tir nan Og, the Land of Youth; and the story goes on, after what seemed to him only a few days he returned to his native land, finding that the world had grown old, and that Fion and all his comrades were dead three hundred years, and those he had loved were beneath the turf. But to St. Patrick he told the tale of the heroes of his youth, and of the free and joyous life they led in the woods and the glens. Where can we find a more beautiful legendary story than the one that tells of the great love of Deirdre and the Sons of Usna. Deirdre, fairest among the daughters of Erin. It was in the glens and forests of wild Loch Etive that they lived and hunted. Dun Scaith in Sleat sends one's thoughts back to the greatest of all the old Celtic tales—the Saga of Cuchulain, son of Lugh the Sun God. From his youth, when he learnt the art of war from Sgathach the warrior-queen of Skye, to his death after seeing the “Washer of the Ford,” the story marches with high-sounding tread that falls not far short of the greatest of epics, the story of the Siege of Troy. If in Deirdre we see the counterpart of Helen, in Cuchulain, the mightiest hero of the Celtic race, may be found a parallel with Achilles. In the great battle at the Ford, Ferdia's death is as sad as the death of Hector, and the divine help to the Greeks is the same as that afforded to Cuchulain by his father, Lugh.

In one's wanderings, many are the great standing stones and stone circles that can be found scattered over the land, left by the Druids in those prehistoric days, gone long before the dread rovers from Lochlan swept in their birlinns down through the Western Isles, and the whirling swords shouted in triumph to the waves, crimson with the blood of the slayers and the slain. Only the stones are there. When were these silent monoliths, hoary with age, first lifted from the brown earth? What were the old beliefs? Who were the now forgotten Gods in whose honour these stones were raised? Their megalithic builders are unknown, but they have left an imperishable record. Their buildings remain far flung across the world. From Western Europe to Egypt, Java, the islands of the Pacific, in Peru, and Mexico,

they still point silently to the skies. Who were they? If Plato's account in the *Timæus* is to be believed, the artificers of the Great Pyramid were but a remnant from the lost island of Atlantis. It may be that some of the old Celtic myths of Lyonesse, Hy Brazil, and Tir nan Og, the Land of Youth in the western seas, are but a recollection of the perished Atlantæan continent, the garden of the Hesperides.

In an ancient Gaelic chronicle there is a legend of "four sunken cities of a world that was," Falias, Finias, Murias, and Gorias. Were these also of that "land of old upheaven from the deep, to sink into the abyss again"? From Falias, so it is believed, came the dark stone on which all the High Kings of Ireland were crowned at Tara. In the 6th century Fergus the Great, King of Scotland, begged it from his brother Murtagh MacErc, King of Ireland, and in 1297 Edward the 1st took it from Scotland to Westminster, where it still remains the Coronation Stone. Even in those days, when man contended for his right to live, the mysteries that surrounded him in Nature were not altogether hidden. All the old Celtic Deities were Nature Gods. Lugh is the great Sun God. Angus Og, Lord of the Spring Time, and Love and Song. Mananan, God of the Sea, whose horses are the sea waves. Dana, the Earth Mother. They all represent man's early efforts to find in the sky, the earth, and the sea, something, he knew not what, but something that was above him and around him. Are these desires only vain enchantments? Unreasonable and rebellious? Is this hidden Beauty only something that common sense disowns? But reasonable or unreasonable, this gesture of discontent finds a home in all living things. Man throughout the ages has always rebelled against what he is; always has he dreamed strange dreams to help him during the short period of his earthly days. These vain enchantments may after all be shadows, but they are shadows of great worth and beauty. This vague shadowy land of the Gael in which he sees beauty everywhere is now almost a thing of the past. Fewer and fewer are the Highland folk who can repeat the ancient lore, or who now use the rites and customs of their

fathers. The beautiful Blessings, Invocations, Charms, and old songs are being forgotten. Still, however, a few folk remain in whom the old spirit lives. An aged crofter who could say—"Every morning I take my bonnet off to the beauty of the world," or the old woman, throwing sticks into the sea—" 'Tis sorrows I am throwing away," they have the knowledge. It was this knowledge that enabled the Gael to give such poetical names to the birds, the flowers, and the glens. "Coire an Uaigneis," the corrie of solitude, the dandelion is "Dealán Dhé," the wee flower of God, and the Curlew "Guilbhron," the wail of sorrow. This love of all earthly things by the Gael is a precious gift; he is a friend of the glens and the green pastures, and a brother to the open spaces and the many-sounding sea.

There is a Canadian boat song, more than a hundred years old, sung by the Highlanders banished from their native land:—

"From the lone shieling on the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas—
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

A cry as bitter as the wail of lost birds driven far from their home by cruel winds across a waste sea, whose waves storm-tossed cry—

"Væ, Væ, Væ, habitantibus in terra."

The sea foam flashing on the grey shores, the woods, the crofts, and the lone shielings will see them no more, but under the shadowy rim of the Gaelic rainbow a fairy gold lies hid, more precious by far than the dross coveted and fought for in the marts of the world—

"The road to peace—missed by the young men and the old,
Lost in the strife for palaces and powers,
The axes, and the lictors, and the gold."

Although the old life in the Highlands has nearly passed away, the remnants of all that was beautiful in those old times shine with sunset splendour, with all the glory of Autumn leaves decay.

If one wishes to see the Highlands ablaze with colour,

the Autumn is the time when the whole land clothes itself with a garment rich and stately, fit for the palaces of kings. In the Gaelic, September is called "the month of peace." Then the mountains sleep and dream in the sunlight, as they rise out of the marshlands and the purple-brown moors, with long, curving slopes that lead to the corries and the dark precipices above, little troubled by the affairs of men. The rivers with hurrying waters wind through the glens amidst forests of flaming birch and rowan, and dark pines that keep guard over the deep pools, and the falls where the silver salmon leap. These clear waters, whose murmurings are like the sound of bells crying on the wind, have heard the raven's croak and seen the great eagles circling in the sky, they have spoken to the timid deer in the glens, and all the wild life on the far-flung moors hails them with welcome voice, bidding them God-speed on their journey to the great ocean. In the glowing splendour of those Autumn days the isles lying low down in the west are as jewels set in the diadem of the pale sea; lonely, faint blue against the sky, they dream all day, while the restless waves, pure beryl in the sunlight, lap against the weed-covered rocks, whispering to the sandy bays old strange sagas of the yellow-haired rovers from Lochlan, or wandering only to be lost in the seal-haunted caverns, by man unknown.

The long moors with mysterious distances are lustrous with light and shade and colour, spread out like some rare Eastern carpet. The more delicate summer colour of the grasses and heather has changed to flaming gold, to warm browns, soft as velvet, or to the yellow of rich amber. In the dewy twilight when the sun is setting, the earth and the heavens are lit with orange and crimson, a furnace fire of splendour, and the mountains and the corries are bathed in delicate dim topaz and purple beneath the gold-dusted sky, indescribable and magnificent. Slowly the glory fades and "swart complexioned night" holds pallid sway. The crescent moon and the stars look down with cold, clear beams, and, quivering, the moonlight passes away in the distance over the waves, to die like a dream on the far horizon.

There are other times when storms sweep over the mountains, then a different and more subtle beauty reveals itself, when the rain falls, and the winds shout and wail over a grey land; when the streams gather, and the rock faces of the hills are streaked with white waters. Torn clouds, shadowy horses of the Valkyrie, tear in mad hunt along the ridges, wan gleams of light struggle and die away in the ruined corries, and the deep voice of the tide calling on the beach can be heard in the distance, its wild waves dashing against tall cliffs and barren shores. Sometimes when the winds are at rest, the mists come down and all is hidden in a garment of white stillness. The loneliness and silence is of another world. Strange thoughts wander through one's mind. The old mysterious tales of ghostly beings who haunt the wilds. There are places that one dreads, where one trembles and is afraid, one knows not why, and fears stand in the way. For the Sidhe have power over us and can weave strong spells of magic to our undoing, and there are others, the Great Lords of Shadow, the Herdsman of Dreams, the baying of the White Hound, the Washer of the Ford who weaves shrouds out of the moonbeams by the river of Death, and those unnamed ones who can entice the soul out of the body, driving it afar into the dark and madness. To guard one from the dominion of These there is an old Gaelic prayer—"Send God in his strength between us and the Sidhe, between us and the dread Hosts of the Air."

But listen! The faint music of a dainty feadan is heard, and then lost again; dream-like yet clear, plaintive and played on thin pipes of reed. The melody low, gentle as the winds of summer, then rising with the gladness of the lark in gay laughter it soars to the blue sky, then down and down with fluttering wings it sinks to earth and dies away, only to break out again with white notes cold as snowflakes falling, changed is the tune, sad, full of tears, mournfully lamenting the ruined gold of the Autumn, and woods helpless and torn by the stormy gusts of the dying year—

"And barren rage of death's eternal cold."

It is the age-long song of the Spring Time, and the lament

of age. It is the cry of youth throughout the endless years, that with all boldness seeks the Grail, for—

“ Nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence,”

rebelling against injustice of this world, and the thankless days of old age, and winter's dull decay.

Who then may this be who plays with honey-sweet appeal, and melody that is the wistful cry of all created things? Who is this God who makes sad moan? Faintly a voice answers—

“ I am God Pan, and I am sad to-day.”

Dreams, only dreams!

σκιάς ὕμαρ γ' ἀνθρώπου.

“ The shadow of a dream is man.”

Yet a wanderer's dreams are happy dreams. He should sacrifice often at the shrines of the Gods of the Wilds, for they are pleasing Gods when they whisper to one in the dusk. But the altars of the Gods of Wealth, the Gods of Power, and the Gods of the hurrying crowds of Cities he passes by. His Gods are those of the open sky and the mighty woods, the lakes, the rivers, and the mountains. It is they who send the memories of how in the early dawn all the tall flowers are a-swing in the wind blowing across the uplands, how in the dusk the trees—

“ Those green rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave.”

It is they who give remembrance of the great mountains towering upwards, snow-covered, stately and alone, gleaming in the sunlight; and of the winter storms, savage and cruel, that clothe them in dark, mysterious gloom, only to pass with the dying day, as the sinking sun weaves magic webs in the hurrying clouds, where “ the threads are purple

and scarlet, and the embroideries flame." To the Gods that
send these gifts be all the praise, and when—

" All our yesterdays have lighted fools
the way to dusty death,"

and

" Our sable curls all silvered o'er with white,"

the old memories from the dream gardens of our youth
return ; perchance it is only the Gods sorrowing have re-
lented, and are but giving back some of the gold that they
robbed from us in the days of long ago, when we troubled
not that the years were slipping silently beneath our feet,
and when, full of the alchemy of the Spring Time, we walked
in the land of the Heart's Desire, careless and unafraid.