

From Atlantis to Thames

an Epic Drama by

W. P. Ryan

Author of "Eden and Evolution"

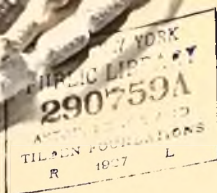


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*From Atlantis
to Thames*





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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LORD BEECHENMERE

FELICIA *His daughter, late of Girton.*

UNCLE MOON *A Publisher.*

AIDAN DELVIN, B.A. *Poet and Pressman.*

DONAL MACALPINE
MARK ALLCUP } *Colleagues of Aidan.*

KENNETH KINROSS *A Reviewer.*

MR. TOPTON *A Night Manager.*

ANGUS OF THE ISLES *A Pioneer of New Avalon.*

THE ANCIENT SHEPHERD-
KING *A being on another line of
evolution.*

SCENE.—*Fleet Street, etc., London; Surrey; and the
haunted wold, castle, and heights of Beechenmere.*

FROM ATLANTIS TO THAMES

OWLS, OLYMPUS AND THE ANCIENT SHEPHERD

Time, 1.30 a.m. Scene, the spacious sub-editors' room of the London daily newspaper, the "Shield." All the strenuous work of the night is over, and only one sub-editor remains, his being the simple duty of watching for a late "story" that might form a "Stop Press" note, or (very doubtfully) a "sensation" that would mean the opening of a page of the Late London Edition and "replating."

At the moment all is still in the large room, the news tape-machines along the end-wall are silent, no telephone-bell rings, no messenger-boys from the news-agencies appear; but the boom of printing machines is heard from the basement a couple of floors below.

The long side-walls are "decorated" by large pen-and-ink and pencil sketches, some betraying a certain exuberance of fancy. One of the largest shows a company of owls around a table, blue pencils over their ears and foaming tankards before them. This is entitled "Our Real Selves." Facing it on the opposite wall is a larger sketch, "Deus Loci," with the sub-title "Sir News-Nose." The only distinguishable features of the "god" are small, piercing eyes and a huge nose gradually tapering to a note of interrogation. For hair, series on series of congested interrogation marks; the rest is nebulous.

AIDAN DELVIN, B.A., the sub-editor on late duty, is seated at the long central table, looking thoughtfully and ruefully at the manuscript sheet before him. It contains six lines of poetry and half a seventh. He has failed to fare further . . .

At last he puts the sheet in his locker, and with it a few books which have lain on the table near him: one is on radium, one on the subliminal self.

He is about thirty, tall, dark, thoughtful, somewhat romantic-looking.

AIDAN (*as he rises and looks towards the silent tape-machines*)

E'en Reuter is at rest : Can Fate know sleep ?

The ends of earth an hour without a thrill !

Five continents as calm as cloistered nuns ;

No Balkan broil, no Bolshevik alarm,

And not a fable out of Helsingfors :

We'll lack a " Stop Press " story, sure as dawn.

(An Exchange Telegraph machine starts ticking. He goes over and scans the tape.)

A contradiction of the Yankee yarn

Of film-star's holidays in Arctic wastes,

Riding for exercise a Polar bear—

O weary wires, stuff-saddled at the morn !

(He throws away the message. A Central News messenger boy comes in and drops a long envelope on the table.

AIDAN opens it.)

Ha ! Easter Island, lately lost to sight—

Deep drowned or merely playfully a-dive—

Is, with her idols, safely back again !

'Tis timely " fudge " in more than Fleet Street sense.

(He hastily puts the story into a few lines and sends it up a pneumatic tube to the case-room, marked " Fudge "
—Stop Press News.)

In smoke-foul train and workman's car betimes

That vague far isle will loom aloft for those

Who heed no more the magic of their Thames ;

'Twill be as " live " in myriad British minds,

For twenty seconds, as a sporting tip,

Sea-prodigo! returned—O blithe news-game !

MARK ALLCUP, chief reporter, and DONAL MACALPINE chief sub-editor, come up the stairs from without, talking in high and serious tones. DONAL, who is something of a giant, with a grimly brooding expression, throws open the door, and holding the diminutive,

quaint-faced MARK by the shoulder, stands in a dramatic attitude.

DONAL. (*In a deep voice, with great solemnity.*)

Upon the burning deck of sense and style
The good boy, Aidan Delvin, stood and cried :
" O Father Thought, there's nothing left of thine,
Not e'en a ' fill ' on our obscurest page.
My comrades at the Last Edition fled,
And now are drunk and garrulous at the club.
There's nought for me but just to fizzle out
Amid the blazes of inanity."

(He bursts into laughter, releases MARK, and comes forward.)

No new sensation since we sought the club ?
I knew it—never 'phone disturbed my glass.
And so since midnight we have drunk in peace
And spiced philosophy with calumny.
We've left no editor a character
And chained the Devil fast in Downing Street.
Yet Mark is sober as the Woman's Page,
His weird subconscious Mermaid Tavern closed.
You know what famous literary ghosts
Habitually haunt him in his cups—
To-night he might be watch-dog at " The Times."

MARK. (*Gloomily.*)

The world seems all a monstrous, deep-drained cup
And I the dregs below. The more I drink
The more the great ghosts shun my yearning sight,
Or if they come they are incongruous pairs.
With my last drink old Omar took an arm,
The other Mistress Hemans ! Picture me
Of such a twain the host ! What can portend
From once-inspiring ale such irony ?
Ah ! nights there were when with the second glass
Old Johnson hailed me from the Cheshire Cheese,
Or Keats from Highgate hurried to my side
And nightingales responded in our talk.

The third brought Shakspeare to the Mermaid door,
 Among the roaring wits to welcome me.
 To-night a dozen left my mind's domain
 Tame as a tram-car taking Brixton Hill,
 Dry as a dragon, slipt from Spenser's page,
 That sought romantic prey on Southend sands.

AIDAN.

Ale has its failures then? But building news
 Is always failure: worshipping mirage;
 A modern Mystery whose Hierophant
 Is Ignis Fatuus. Here *we*, slave-owls,
 Have brought to birth an epic since the dusk;
 It grows waste-paper ere the turn of noon;
 And we shall start the stress anew at eve
 And build again aglow—for Nothingness.
 We shall be serious as the hosts of Troy,
 The Red Branch heroes or King Arthur's Knights.
 And all our art's fruition shall achieve
 • The immortality of wind and cloud.

*(The proof of the "Stop Press" story comes down the tube.
 He glances at it, makes a slight correction, and sends
 it back.)*

And so the fever flows from night to night,
 And we are lovers, zestful, multiple:
 Sweet vanities we woo and win and wed,
 And at the dawn our meteor brides have flown.

MARK.

O Brother Delvin, how I wish my brain
 Were mixed and merry as your metaphors!

DONAL. *(To AIDAN.)*

You mock in vain; for wonder-work is ours.
 We Protean artists in the Wizard Street
 Distil from murders, booms, and burglaries,
 From shocks and comedies of continents,
 From fright and folly, politics and pain
 Most piquant essence. Deftly do we limn
 A quaint and crazy picture of the world;

And this the fancy-fatted multitude
 Accepts in faith as sheer reality.
 Yea, all magicians, with no magic, we :
 Weird makers of the millions' mental sphere.

AIDAN.

I wonder how it seems as seen within
 By Self or spirit from illusion free.
 Are we a force or farce, when all is said ?
 A tragedy, a jest, an irony ?
 A horde half-baked between the hosts of toil
 And chosen authors, ministers of thought ?
 Would Plato with the sophists set us down,
 Or Dante with the scorned of Heaven and Hell,
 Tame souls who won nor infamy nor praise ?
 Or are we wights of tawdry half-romance—
 We chevaliers Sir News-Nose drives at will ?

MARK. (*Looking up to the picture, "Deus Loci."*)
 Sir News-Nose ! Well they name the press-owl's god,
 The king of idiot-magic, seamy scents.
 Sir News-Nose ! Scandal-monger, slimy, sleek,
 Yeasty romancist, devil's advocate,
 Adventure boomster, crawling realist,
 Yet with a hint of Quixote and of clown,
 And touch of siren to his daily slaves.
 Alas, how fashions in the gods decline—
 Upon Olympus now nought but a Nose !

DONAL.

I'm still too sober for mythology
 Or flashes from the lower psychic sphere.
 The masters of the Press are bosses bland
 Who lure and lead the yeasty multitude
 (The human scribes who serve them scorn their game).
 Sir News-Nose is a crude, uncertain Jove :
 Who ever gives him thought in working hours
 As men gave thought to gods of Ind and Greece ?
 He only rises on a tide of drink
 (As Aphrodite on a tide of joy).

He looms before the crime-surfeited 'sub.,'
 Who after club hours sees the moon a-dance;
 He scares the tired reporter in his cups;
 He drives the taxis of night-editors
 When wine half-slumber woos, the last mad mile.
 But when Whitefriars in its short-sleeves slogs
 Remote, unrecognised as Style is he.

AIDAN. (*Half-ironically.*)

You jest. Sir News-Nose o'er each press-house looms
 Compared with him King George is but a shade.
 He keeps news-editors on tenterhooks,
 Spurs them to farce or fever as he wills,
 Scatters reporters far and wide like sheep,
 Fills up a million note-books in a year,
 Makes wires delirious, gives spice to crimes,
 Lashes far surges with sea-serpents' tails,
 Roars from the craters of volcanoes old,
 And gives Homeric zest to new rat-wars.

DONAL.

I know there's madness in the Street of nights
 None would believe in Kew or Camberwell,
 E'en I have spells of doubt on cold grey morns.
 I blame it on some freakish fiery force
 Fanned into flame in our subconscious selves
 Whose depths, did we but know them, heavens and hells
 May hold, securely closed to common ken.
 I'd rather leave them, lest I might unlock
 Terrors more dire than News-Nose and his imps.

AIDAN.

And I'm athirst to win the witchery
 Of vision past our little plot of life.
 Be *there* or ecstasies or things of awe
 I burn to make them comrades of my thought.
 At times in reverie transcendent gleams
 Flash o'er me from across the borderland.
 How grand it is to think the Street may ope
 Some night of nights on Being sempiterno!

DONAL.

I dread all weird adventures of the Self.
Enough for me, this side of Acheron,
The roads that Chaucer went or Reuter goes ;
And, after all the fevers of the night,
The magic cooling of the foaming glass.
Enough !—I came to haul you for a spell
Where owls are wits and songsters, bowl-attuned.
The club's hilarious ; you are finished here ;
The Last Edition's booming like great guns ;
Bundles and blasphemy the warehouse fill.
Come back with us ; forget the tears of things.
Sir News-Nose now has put his night-cap on
And sleeps till sinners of our "evening" sheets
Wait on his will a little after dawn !

MARK. (*Gaily.*)

The club's the word ! My fatted fancy wakes,
Ay, starts a-dancing. Revel-thirsting ghosts
Rise from old regal Londons of the heart.
A faery Fleet Street singing goes to press
Where Chaucer, Goldsmith, Dickens, Keats are subs.

DONAL. (*Turning to go out.*)

Ha ! now upon his ale-dark sea comes up
A fleet of news-knights out of wonderland.

AIDAN. (*Smiling.*)

No club for me to-night. My study calls.
An hour ago imagination flamed :
I felt the fore-notes of the master-song
Which many seasons has eluded me,
The Song that is my being come to flower,
The Song whose singing is my destined task.
But here is scene unmeet for elfin wings,
I want the peace of Surrey nigh the dawn.

DONAL.

More lays ! Why blithesome ballads born of you
Are now abundant as great editors.
Long as I've known you, like a muse a-dance

You've sung the spice and glamour of the Street,
 The freaks of News-Nose in the blatant night,
 Owls that at last in their drained tankards fall,
 Legends of sober printers, sweet, shy loves
 Of Attic Graces in our libraries,
 Till all have loved our foolish, faery realm
 And felt a sense of Chaucer, flushed with Keats,
 Where else were seen but grim gods' ironies.

AIDAN.

All that was weeds——

DONAL.

Weeds grown in fairyland,
 And turned to flowers ere they crossed the Thames.

AIDAN.

They lack enchantment, but the Song I seek
 Has Nature's breath of life ; 'tis such she croons
 In tenderest moments to her children's souls.

DONAL. (*To MARK, shaking his head resignedly.*)

Away ! The owls must leave the nightingale.
 He'll wake, a poor mad hatter, in the morn !

DONAL and MARK go out. *When they have gone the big room seems curiously lonely to AIDAN. He struggles against a mood of reaction, a feeling of dissatisfaction and futility, which he attributes to his failure to capture the Song of his dreams. The stars and Surrey peace will aid him. He puts on his hat and turns off electric lights, the growing darkness bringing an almost eerie feeling. As he goes to the last light the Reuter tape-machine starts ticking.*

AIDAN.

Whate'er old Reuter sends is now too late ;
 On us at least his wordy lore is lost.
 He keeps queer budgets for the wee small hours :
 Explorers' tales of Afric jungle-deeps,
 Obscure revolts of tribes on empire's edge,
 Dark hints of crises in dim capitals——

(*With a swift shrug of his shoulders.*)

His message—or my mood—goes dismally.

The torrential rain of a summer storm suddenly lashes the windows. Realising that he must wait a little, AIDAN sits down at the long central table. His loneliness deepens. A tired feeling, after all the night's stress, comes over him. He recalls with a start that he had dreamed of such a sudden storm, with similar inner and outer circumstances, on the previous night, and, as in the dream, a sense of the futility of his years oppresses him. He murmurs :

To what a life of drab dust-piling Fate
 Condemns each heated Sisyphus of us !
 No wonder when my heart is tuned to peace
 She grows accusing spirit, calls me back
 To Nature from our impotent mirage,
 To Nature cloistral, clement, sanctified.

Suddenly, as weariness and depression increase, and he begins to doze in spite of himself, a vivid picture of far-extending garden heights, rich in plants and flowers and watered by singing streams, dominates his consciousness. An ANCIENT SHEPHERD, majestic of mien and serene of face, whose head bears a crown and whose staff is covered with blossoms, stands on the highest slope. AIDAN, on the borderland of sleep, recalls that the self-same inscrutable and stately figure had been dominant in his dream, but he has ceased to wonder. The words he murmurs strike him oddly as those of another individuality than himself :

O dear plant brethen, shining floral friends,
 Who would not be re-made and grow with you
 And win the first simplicity of earth
 When gods were glad to take your tiny forms
 For their creative tasks by God designed ?
 O—Ancient—Shepherd,—bid—me—bloom—with—
 them !

The vision of the plants and flowers and the ANCIENT SHEPHERD grows dim. . . . He drops entirely to sleep. . . .

He wakes up refreshed and eager. At first he does not realise where he is. Gradually memory reasserts itself. He turns on electric lights, looks at the clock and starts when he notes the hour. Then he finds with surprise that he holds a pen in his hand. He sees a writing-pad on the table before him. The writing is his own ! He reads :

*" I cry : to Nature I would turn me home,
And rest for ever in the peace she breathes.
And be a brother of the ' simple ' flowers.
Oh, wild the day-dream and the fantasy !
For where, without, within, lies Nature's peace ?
And where is ' simple ' flower below the stars ?
Now that the veil of common earth and day
Is lifted, and another sense is mine,
Showing a lustrous world within the world,
I know that never cometh rest or peace,
But things that more enchant than rest and peace.
Here all are labouring beings ; myriads
Within the plants and flowers build up and tend
Those forms of beauty while they sing and shine.
Their tones and colours are an alphabet
In a supernal language dim to me
But crystal-clear to them as sweet they work.
Beyond those Nature-beings archetypes
And radiant auras other ends attain :
Oh, I could worship in my wonderment !
I miss their meaning, yet I seem a part
Of all that work and sing, attuned to them.
And now, O rapture, one I know and love !
The Ancient Shepherd-King comes all aglow.*

*" O Ancient Shepherd-King, you've driven your flocks
Of thoughts creative—fathers of the flowers,
Of woodland witchery, of jocund streams—
On other planets that preceded earth.
Old were you when you brought the primal buds
To young Atlantis : old—nay sempiternae ;*

*Behind phenomena God-regent you.
And when I speak of 'simple' flowers you smile
'Yea, simple is Eternity!' you say.*

*"You seem a guardian of my buried soul;
You woo me from the waste of daily life
To potencies august, rare inner lands:
A globe that is pure being, thought and joy,
Where bide those wonder-workers of the Light,
Our all-illumined understanding Selves,
Infinites that tower as gods above
Their crude embodiments on outer paths.
Oh, through those dreams we know as 'nights' and
'days'*

*I play at trifles alien to the soul.
My songs are bubbles born of laughing waves,
The sport of fellow-children of an hour.
Yet I am sailor on eternal seas,
Who in my folly will not bend and face
The inspiration of their depths divine."*

AIDAN. (*In a tone of wonder as he lays down the writing.*)

*Is this the deeper sequence of my thought?
Have I—the inner Watcher—woven it
The while the weary brain and body slept?
Tired, haunted by the mystery of myself,
Which like a tide returns when toil is o'er,
Infrequently I bring my thought to form.
And lo! the Self brings it to birth in sleep—
Is sleep a wondrous waking of the Self?*

He examines the writing again. He broods over the concluding passage, on the waste of daily life, the neglect of deep sources of inspiration—

*"I play at trifles alien to the soul.
My songs are bubbles born of laughing waves."*

Disturbed and chastened he turns off the electric lights and goes out.

A FRIEND FROM NEW AVALON

On the Thames Embankment below Whitefriars AIDAN DELVIN awaits an "all-night" electric car that will bear him towards his home in Surrey. The scene is almost deserted. The air is fresh and serene after the storm. Dawn in the east.

AIDAN. (*Looking on the river.*)

I wonder if an essence in the Thames
 Feels kindred being in the brightening land,
 Has sense of Nature's ancient memory.
 Mind may have myriad modes, unending grades;
 The worlds of water, air, and earth may know
 Untold sweet fraternisings night and morn,
 While we, self-titled lords of life, remain
 Outsiders to their million mysteries.

A lithe, tall man, rhythmically twirling a long staff, his action curiously suggestive of ease and poise, comes along the Embankment from the west. Something in the figure stirs old memories in AIDAN, and he scans the newcomer keenly. The latter stops suddenly.

THE NEWCOMER.

By all the seas that sainted Brendan sailed
 Ere men grew stale and sick for money-bags,
 'Tis Aidan Delvin of the Street of Owls,
 Old friend and lover of my wild sea-yarns.

AIDAN. (*Joyously.*)

Pentreath, "Land's-Ender," "Angus of the Isles,"
 Depressed reporter in the garish day,
 Who wove at night fair tales of Avalon,
 We feared a distant sea beat round your bones:
 For seven long years your track in night we've lost.
 Oft o'er the morning glass old stagers sigh:
 "No, 'Angus of the Isles' returns no more."

ANGUS.

And I have pitied that old barbarous Street
 Where I was crossed and choked for twenty years.
 Its sham sensations seemed but circus thrills

What time I battled with Atlantic storms.
 By turns a sailor, farmer, fisherman,
 I've carved out gladsome life in lonely isles.
 Of old I would romance of Avalon,
 Green paradise, Glasinis in the west ;
 Often ye called me "Angus Avalon."
 Now real, many-isled my Avalon :
 Azores, and far Ascension in the south,
 Tristan da Cunha, names of melody,
 Peaks of the lost Atlantis standing yet,
 The lost Atlantis that will rise again.

AIDAN.

Atlantis rising o'er the waves once more !
 You nurse a wonder-dream in sober years.

ANGUS.

In cycles continents arise and fall.
 Old Europe's marked for doom or soon or late.
 Great races in Atlantis will evolve,
 Mayhap to fall as her old races fell
 Who turned their powers occult to selfish ends.
 Our human legions bear a restless curse,
 All prone to close the Edens in themselves.
 Still, some will surely guard their Eden-gates
 What time the new Atlantis is aflower.
 In our Atlantic isles are groups of seers
 (Disguised as common men) who build high hopes
 Upon the coming race Atlantean.
 They weave great soul-work and essay to win
 Supernal knowledge by analysis
 Of psychic radiations from those orbs
 Where natures more evolved lead lustrous lives.

AIDAN. (*Smiling.*)

Sweet madness, surely, such a flight of dream.
 For men still robed in bodies of our clay !

ANGUS.

A novice in the wonder-working, I
 Am far from secrets that the masters know.

I think their bodies have more subtle grown
 Than those of mortal kind, from fasts and rites
 And Mysteries they follow on the heights
 (Like the Green Mountain in Ascension Isle).
 And wondrous is their speech of sister globes
 That intersect our own, unseen of us.
 Linked rôles of mine, ay, chains of sequent lives,
 May pass ere I have vision such as theirs.
 But peace I have ; 'tis sweet to toil and wait
 Our inmost nature's flowering : " Be calm
 And trust the universe," the masters say ;
 " Our planet's but a bud of million buds
 On one young tree amid unending trees.
 Unbounded is the life to ope in us ;
 When we can sense the Forest we are gods."

AIDAN.

Romance or truth, this new-found Avalon
 May fire imagination to a flame.
 You'll bide with us a spell and give old friends
 Bright sense of all this magic of the seas.

ANGUS. (*Starting.*)

Cold Europe's life were now a prison-house !
 Back from a journey in the East I haste
 To island duties. London holds me not ;
 I sail from Tilbury before the noon :
 My soul is all a-hunger for the sea.

*As he raises his staff a little AIDAN is attracted by the
 figures upon it : a sun-disc, an ark, a serpent, a
 cross. ANGUS, noticing his interested gaze, hands it
 to him as he continues :*

From hoary relics of our isles it comes,
 And grey traditions have around it grown.
 Great hands, they say, have held it in old years.
 A master's gift to me before he passed—

(*An exclamation from AIDAN. He seems to gaze,
 fascinated, into vacancy.*)

AIDAN. *(In a dreamy chant, and as if he were communing with himself.)*

A sea sky-reaching
Of haze all-lucent,
Divides before me.
O'er the great vista,
'Twixt the high-piled haze-banks,
I gaze—O rapture!
At the end arises
A mount more lucent.
A palace crowns it,
A palace rounded
By floral gardens,
With gleaming fountains
In sunlight playing.

* * * *

A central fountain
Four daughter-streams sends
In beauty downward
To a moat irradiant
That the palace ground rings.
From this still downward
Four kindred streams flow
Through a garden city
To a moat whose shining
Meseems ringed starfire.
Then a garden city,
To the first a sister,
Four new streams water
And a new moat enter:
A sun-ring glowing.

* * * *

In the garden cities
Agleam the houses;
Their colours lustrous;
O'er all high towers
With domes sky-pointing.

FROM ATLANTIS TO THAMES

In all their courtyards
 Are fountains playing.
 In vantage places
 Colossal temples,
 Stupendous pyramids,
 Rise o'er the houses.

* * * *

From the central temple
 File forth majestic
 And priestly figures.
 Who is he that leads them?—
 We have met aforetime.
 We have met, I mind me—
 Yea, the Ancient Shepherd!
 The courtyard's centre
 They reach—why start they?
 Why pales the neophyte
 Behind the Shepherd?
 His form, his features,
 My own in seeming!
 Like star from sea-mist
 A lightsome maiden
 Has left a side-shrine.
 She glides atoward them;
 The Ancient Shepherd
 His right hand raises;
 As he bids her backward
 His face flames lightning. . . .
 Walls, domes and waters
 All seem to quiver
 And thrill and mingle,
 A mass unmeaning.
 And now comes darkness.

(Half unconsciously he hands back the staff to ANGUS.)

ANGUS.

Yours is a gift to many a sage denied:
 I know from those rare pictures you have limned.

AIDAN.

Oh, more than pictures! Was it wonderland,
Or gleam from Eden of the ancient earth?

ANGUS.

Great dynasties she buried as she forged
Her cyclic course long hundred thousand years
Ere Hindu sages wove their Vedic lore
Or Celts or Greeks had left the parent home.

AIDAN.

O shrine of sacred waters, golden domes,
Would I could win your secrets out of Eld—
Nature's vast memory mine illumining.

ANGUS.

You've seen the City of the Golden Gates,
Called eke the City of the Waters, famed
Long ages as Atlantean capital.
Some 'midst our sages dateless records know
That tell her fortunes and her final fate.
This staff belonged to deeper earlier seers
Who could evoke past life in lustrous gleams,
And oft they brooded on Atlantean truths.
Some have the gift, by handling of the staff,
To see or much or little that they saw:
Psychometry 'tis by the bookmen named.
'Tis not for me, except in feeble wise;
But you are richly dowered—thank your stars:
You ought to bide among us in our isles!

AIDAN.

But who was she, the radiant maid I saw?
Her form will haunt me all the years of life,
Although her face half-turned sore cheated joy,
Giving but glimpse where sight would feast on
all.
And who was he, that Ancient Shepherd—King
Or Hierophant? He held and haunted me,
Lord in another vision ere the dawn.

ANGUS.

I know no more. We walk in wonder-ways
From life to life, and vast the worlds that ring
Our little knowledge-fringe of Now and Past.
Here must we part, good Aidan ; far I go.

AIDAN.

But I would keep you for a year of days ;
You've touched unsounded music in my heart
And given it hunger of a hundred quests.

ANGUS.

Our parting is but seeming if our minds
Are set on kindred ways interior.
In mental mastery forth-faring I
Shall send you thought-waves from our brooding isles
And you will answer as the spirit wills.
Thus fruitfully we fraternise within.

AIDAN smiles sadly as he holds the hand of ANGUS in a long parting clasp.

When ANGUS has gone he stands by the low wall of the Embankment, looking over the river in a reverie.

AIDAN.

Oh, had I held him ! He has gleamed and gone
And left me groping for a wonder-key.
And yet perchance 'tis nearer to myself
If I could open e'en one outer fold
Of mine own mystery in time and tide.
Atlantis ! City of the Golden Gates !
I've heard, but dimly marked, the mystics' tale
Of that great continent, its pride of power
An æon antedating Plato's isle.
If such there was its essence somewhere lives ;
All being, all existence, leave their trace
Had we the subtle faculties to sense
The thought and movement that can never pass
To nothingness where life was once aglow.
But I a pilgrim with Atlantis linked !
Yet were it stranger than my link with Thames ?

Whence came the spirit? If of God a thought
 It waited not unveiling of the worlds.
 God's thought is gleaming of eternity;
 Thus spirit is no fact of start or end;
 The life or body-robe, or cyclic lives,
 It weaves on earth, or o'er a million earths
 Or subtler globes, are still but phase and dream.
 But where is waking to Reality?
 Where? Where?

I've burned to sing a master-song,
 The full and inmost flowering of myself!
 Was it a child's dream in the larger Dream?

*The sound of an approaching electric car breaks his musing,
 and he turns to it as it draws up.*

WEEK-END WITCHERY

Saturday night. Moonlight abroad. AIDAN DELVIN is seated at a table in his little study. Bookshelves by all the walls. A general air of simplicity and taste. A back door is open to a long, narrow garden. At the end of the garden is a road that winds round a slope towards a Surrey height. In the night-light the scene is idyllic and charming. The open door connects the study with the outer freshness and fragrance.

AIDAN'S manuscript-book of ballads and lyrics, quaintly entitled "*Owls and Tankards*," lies before him. Most of the pieces, many times copied or type-written, are well-known to co-workers and kindred spirits. They are all expressive of character, mood, and adventure year by year in the familiar realm of "*Press-owls*."

AIDAN now regards them in an austere critical spirit. They seem to him to have little or none of the enchantment and revelation, on the verge of which he feels so often—the magic which will suffuse the high, mysterious Song that it is somewhere in his nature to sing.

AIDAN. (*Wearily.*)

All day my soul has slept and will not wake.
O irony, that leisure finds me spent,
Cold, silent, in Creation's orchestra!

He broods over the Song that has been haunting him ever since the morning, but which time and again has eluded him. Suddenly he starts

Is this the deadly secret of my state?—
I hunger for a spiritual sight,
A gleaming vision of realities
Beyond the symbols of the world of sense;
And this authentic wonder I would weave
In song—all lesser song allures me not.
But do I crave the vision and the song
For their high sake alone? Were I content
To see, to sing, as selfless spirit would?
Or lurks there in my heart insidiously
The hope of wondering auditors and fame?
And does this ultimate thought corrupt the quest,
And make it vain?—as sure opposed it stands
To secret, subtle spiritual law?

He walks up and down the room slowly. His whole mentality seems to grow divided and discordant, in ironic contrast to the peace and unity which appear to pervade the world without and beyond him. He is tantalised by another thought.

This weird new messenger of destiny
That came with Angus from the seas afar
Disorders all the simple schemes I wove,
And moves me like a fate both loved and feared.
The wise would mock me for a dreamer dazed:
Haunted by lost Atlantis and a face
Forgot of Time these hundred thousand years!

Troubled and weary he goes out and down the long garden among the flowers and trees.

Presently his friend, KENNETH KINROSS, reviewer on the daily newspaper, the "Record," enters the study

from the interior of the house. His face is kindly, sensitive and intellectual, but he looks tired and over-worked. Not finding AIDAN, he turns to the bookshelves, and glances through volume after volume, some scientific, some philosophical, others occult.

KENNETH.

His tastes arcane intrigue me more and more—
Thrice-Greatest Hermes or the Buddha's self
Were but a little odder in the Street.

(He catches sight of "Owls and Tankards" on the table.)

But this is human artistry. Its fame
Will fire ambition, save him from himself—

(He turns page after page. . . . Suddenly AIDAN returns, his face serene and shining.)

AIDAN.

Ah, Kenneth! Have you waited long? I went
O'erwrought, distracted, 'mid the flowers and trees,
After a vain and unillumined day—
How could I know the wonder that was nigh?

KENNETH. *(Smiling.)*

Your "owls" have brought me gladness, glamourie,
So tuned am I to hear your wonder-tale.

AIDAN. *(After a deprecating glance at the manuscript-book.)*

I sat beneath the trees, beyond the flowers,
And as I dropped to sleep, perplexed and worn,
A deeper self, unslumbering, rose in me,
And gazed—it was no more the wonted world.
I saw the gleaming of such garden-heights
As though 'twere Eden manifest again.
Then from a golden opening in the south
The Ancient Shepherd like a king came forth
And raised his blossomed staff, and as he spoke
Each word seemed singing light, inspired, ensouled:
"Come, for your place is in our Orchestra,
Come, o'er the holy ways of sacrifice.
Entomb the whole that you have known as self,
Crush all the golden serpents that are coiled

*In sense-affections, toys, friends' eulogies,
 Most poisonous in the Promised Land of fame.
 Cease idle singing, born of outer days
 And fancies, tares that choke the golden grain
 Which seeks fruition in the Spirit's fields.
 Full many a self you must unshrinking slay
 Before you reap the harvest of the Self,
 And be full-fitted for our Orchestra."*

Then all the wonder went like wind: I woke,
 My gaze upon the garden that I know.

KENNETH.

That eager dramatist, your latent self,
 Did service which deserves both praise and blame.
 I love the beauty that for you he spread.
 As Ancient Shepherd I denounce his art.
 I ban him, I condemn his sophistry
 On golden serpents and on "idle" songs.

AIDAN.

He is no dream, no guise the self assumes,
 But some weird mentor, haply demigod,
 Who has his cycle in an inner world,
 And true his warning that my songs are waste.

KENNETH.

Your songs enshrine a blithe humanity,
 Make humour march with magic as a friend,
 And charm and fancy breathe around our lives.
 And now a message for your muse and you:
 You've met my uncle, dear old Harvest Moon,
 So nicknamed for his round and beaming face—
 Most sleek, most sly, most sane of publishers.

AIDAN.

I once was with you in his Temple home;
 He quoted Horace: called himself a hog
 Of Epicurus' herd; loved Virgil, too,
 But thought him saddened by the maiden-life
 Of fleet, inconstant, unremaining Spring,
 And the sweet, swift-fading flower of human dream.

KENNETH.

Yes, learned fancies often grace his days
As flowers his table. Now he laughs and lauds
Your "Owls and Tankards" that I typed for him
When you were timid or too critical.
Go, see him : soon we'll revel in the Book !

AIDAN.

I shrink : those songs are all too near myself
And yet unworthy of the Self I seek.

KENNETH.

So say true poets ever. Is the sun
Distressed on rising that his noon is far ?
I'll tell good Uncle Moon, on Monday morn
We *both* shall see him. Of the songs and you
He chatted to his friend, Lord Beechenmere,
That racy spirit from colonial wilds,
Your chairman of directors. What a glad
Gay irony betimes to find your muse
At home in Mayfair just as round St. Bride's !

AIDAN. (*Laughing.*)

You think in moonshine. Steeds and dividends
Engage our chief director, Beechenmere ;
Our owl-life is a realm beyond his dreams.
Withal I'll think upon this bold Book scheme—
Though something tells me it were taunt to Fate.

KENNETH.

Then taunt it twenty times, and master it !
Had I your gifts and rosy round of life
I'd flash a merry front on London's frost.

AIDAN.

My rosy round ! So might a jailer jest
At some poor prisoner sighing for the hills.

KENNETH.

Ye who your service to Sir News-Nose give,
With all his frenzy of fatuity,
Have still your zest of nights, your mental play,
Your blithe companionship, your vivid rooms,

Reporters' wars and printers' racy wrath,
 Olympian outbursts of great editors.
 Whitefriars is a seething commonwealth,
 Now rage, now raciness, an April world,
 And wit and wisdom voluble at bars.
 But we, review-slaves, following Fiction's feet,
 Repeat the futile fate of Sisypheus.
 O mazy, madding, moonstruck is the way!

AIDAN.

But ye have day-long contact with new art,
 And pen your judgments in suburban peace.
 Ye dwell each hour in some fair realm of thought,
 High passion, bold adventure, hero-zeal.
 A dozen heroines attune each day
 To glowing heights unknown to Gael or Greek
 Till nearer gods than lovers ye must grow.

KENNETH.

Much nearer dotage or delirium!
 Oh, what a fall from dawning manhood's dreams!
 Sweet books were then my world: my fields and
 flowers,
 My mountains and my stars. They spread and shone
 A nearer, dearer Nature all whose ways
 Were linked with kings time ne'er would see un-
 crowned,
 With loves just whispered, yet immortal grown,
 With old adventure newer than the morn,
 With laughter ne'er to pall, song ne'er to cease.

AIDAN.

But those great masters are immortal still,
 Their lore as old and new as Sirius.

KENNETH.

Now books are wares to "cry" like merchandise,
 And e'en Parnassus has become a shop.
 Reviewing is the last of treadmill trades.
 With every honest book fall fifty score
 That have no meaning in the Muses' eyes.

And seldom e'en the honest tome's a fire
Lit at the pure flame of a kindred soul,
But cold is as a creed o'er-formal grown.

(He rises suddenly.)

Enough of books and bonds and vanities !
Come out, and through the moonlight let us stroll
To Donal's home of week-end revelry.

AIDAN. *(Looking out.)*

Ay, *all* ways wend to wonderland to-night.
Some sweet ambrosial sense anoints the air.

*(They go out, and pass slowly down the garden, en route for
DONAL'S home beyond the hill.)*

KENNETH.

How grand the scene ! We might be leagues on
leagues

From London, and an æon from our age.

Fair night is ever mystical to me,
Inward illumination answering hers.

Then I am brother of the master-minds

Of all the ages. They arise again

And would embody their creative thought

Through my obedient intellect and brain

(No longer spoiled by maudlin modern books).

'Tis strange to think that Plato, and his peers,

Now lacking bodies and brain-vehicles,

But having still a message for our world,

May burn to utilise or you or me.

AIDAN.

No, *we* must be Ourselves, our own thought till.

The great who passed or one or many lives

Upon our planet's side may now be far

As satellites that course round Regulus,

Or labour on some lucent inner plane.

The rounds and reaches of the pilgrim soul,

When out of time and tide it wings its course,

We know no more than songbirds know the life

Of constellations million light-years far :

Our quaint supposings are as children's toys.
 And that the truth will e'er on brain-mind break
 Is fantasy as sheer as though we dreamed
 Capella bent in wooing of a rose.

KENNETH.

But brain-mind is of spirit vehicle,
 The vehicle will grow : some small nerve-change,
 A slight new convolution in the brain,
 And wonderlands we never recked may gleam :
 The spirit pouring magic on the sense
 Through ether-rills out-ranging trillion-fold
 (In "frequency" beyond the pale of thought)
 Those in our ken as light and beauty now.

They pause at the garden-gate. A motor-car comes along the road that leads past the garden and turns to a side-road which winds up the slope and over the hill. Suddenly at the turning, a little beyond the garden-gate, AIDAN catches a glimpse of the side-face of a lady in the car. He starts, and the next moment leaps lightly over the gate, speeds across the road and up the slope, in a straight course shorter than the somewhat arc-like way which the car has to take. When he reaches the top of the slope, at a point where the road dips for a space, the car has sped past and away. He throws himself upon the grass.

KENNETH watches in astonishment from the garden-gate below.

AIDAN.

Oh, Fate hath faery humour. What a gleam
 Out of the wonder that environs life !
 Her face half-sighted o'er my being brought
 The self-same wave of rapture that I knew
 When one half-hidden face was beauty's flower
 Within the Golden-gated City's glow
 What time the staff of Angus rapt I held.
 Yet strange, most strange, 'tis past my power to say
 If those soul-haunting faces seemed the same

(With spirit, not the sense, methinks I gazed).
 But true it is, whate'er the mystery,
 Mine inmost nature made the same response
 To-night as in the dawn beside the Thames.
 Like mist are all the certainties of time,
 And pale the starry lustre, set against
 That flaming recognition of the soul.

KENNETH *comes out and up the slope.* AIDAN *returns towards him.*

A HOSTAGE TO FATE. A WARNING FROM THE ISLES

A sultry early afternoon. AIDAN DELVIN is seated in the garden adjoining his dwelling. A new manuscript-book is on his knee, but, tired and pensive, he writes nothing.

Some weeks have passed since the publication of his "Owls and Tankards," issued by KENNETH'S uncle. Kindred "Owls" have hailed it; the literary and general organs have ignored it.

AIDAN.

A little book of song cast on the world,
 A simple act, ay, haply commonplace,
 As if one dropped a blossom in a stream,
 And yet my very soul seems all upturn,
 And sore distracted is my universe.
 A sense of sin and wrong is haunting me :
 Yet how by song sincere can I offend ?
 Friends laud the frolic and the fantasy,
 Find, too, a spirit sensitive, aloof,
 Imagination like a nymph adream.
 Yet all their praise is hurtful to my heart.
 I start, and shrink ashamed for having bared
 Of intimate soul so much, uncovered moods
 That now too sacred seem for confidence.
 Yet who am I that would the miser play
 With moods and thoughts : lone with my little hoard ?

They craved the light, those simple buds of self
 They hungered for the general air and sun :
 They may have fragrance yet for other hearts—
 Traitors to struggling kin soul-hermits are . . .
 And yet, and yet, this sense of sin and wrong !
 O Self, O Nature, where is guilt of mine ?

(He reflects for a while.)

Ah, grim and sheer the truth ! Too reckless I—
 I should have thought and wrought, obscure ~~long~~
 years,

To reach a purer air and consecrate
 My singing self for that evangel-voice
 Which is of destined Singers dower and joy.
 Oft, like a murmurous, unsighted sea,
 I hear the music of an under-life.
 It haunts me, thrills me, and is part of me,
 Yet ebbing, flowing, dwells in night apart.
 Oh, could I know its essence I were king
 In glad command of mine authentic Self :
 I were a worker in the spirit's realm,
 A chosen servant of Eternity.

*(KENNETH KINROSS comes from the house and sits
 himself in a garden chair opposite to AIDAN. He
 looks weary and somewhat depressed.)*

AIDAN.

You seem a pilgrim dubious of the way,
 With e'en less sunniness of heart than I.

KENNETH.

The sham and shame of bookland wound my heart.
 Your lyrics' fate is index of its worst :
 Such sunny labour should be path to fame—

ADIAN.

I've had a glad escape ! My book might well
 Have been examined, noticed, weighed : and then
 My crime were patent to the thinking world.
 Most happily my sin has gone unseen
 Save by good comrades who will pardon me.

KENNETH.

Your sin ! Enigmas overtax me now.

AIDAN.

Ah me, a burning sense of guilt is mine.
In sending forth that lyric play of soul
Reckless I've been, and worse, have broken faith
With some diviner partner who would wait
A riper harvest in the days afar.

KENNETH.

O irony of art between two worlds !
The artist's troubled by the grain Unreaped,
And mocked for what he reaps.

AIDAN.

Not so my fate :

The whole wide world is kindly : I am left
The cloaking charm of glad obscurity.
No danger threatens save my comrades' praise.
(KENNETH *laughs, a little grimly.*)

KENNETH.

Ay, comrades praise—Snow-cold the highbrows loom.
My chief frowns out a notice of the songs.
Like icicle on art's high peak he says
No thinkers want to hear of news-owls' moods.
His haughty kindred book-page autocrats
All think as he ; cult-conscious they disdain
The tribe of merry newsmen, they who live
With such glad human riot in your strains.

AIDAN. (*Wistfully.*)

Not human ! None are human on our globe.
We can but counterfeit Humanity,
Whose thought and deed are epic and divine.
Long since the Human tribes, evolved, elect,
Reached lustrous planets where true living glows
(*He leans back wearily in his chair.*)

KENNETH. (*Sadly.*)

Heart sinks and vision fades ! Such doom I feared.
Oh, falter not, although your due's denied.

For what is born of insight and the heart
Can *not* be lost. Your day is but delayed.

AIDAN. (*In a tired voice.*)

I sang too gaily, sounding not myself;
Dear trifles mock the wonder of the world.

KENNETH. (*Settling himself more restfully in his chair.*)

No, no! The mocker is your own tired mood.
Dear trifles essences elect may hold.
Eternity is mother of the buds
E'en as of suns and souls; and yonder phlox
(*Pointing to those hard by.*)
Are darling children of the infinite—
(*He pauses and smiles.*)

The heat affects my fancy like a drug.
(*He leans back lazily.*)

AIDAN. (*More languidly.*)

The Devil, lover of all laziness,
Robbed *me* of fancy ever since the morn,
And drowns me now in waves of drowsiness.
(*Sleepily.*)

And yet I seem to sense a borderland
Where sweet Ideas take the form of nymphs
And breathe a lucent chorus as they dance!

KENNETH. (*Nodding.*)

A lucent chorus!—in—yon—cherry—tree—
The—birds—have—turned—reviewers—at—a feast!
Both smile whimsically and their eyes droop. They gradually succumb to the heat and drop to sleep. . . .
When KENNETH awakes drowsily he sees that AIDAN has his manuscript-book again on his knee, and, with his fountain pen, is writing steadily. Yet his eyes are closed and he seems asleep.

KENNETH watches with fascinated interest. After a while he arises and, standing behind him, lays his open palm across AIDAN's eyes. AIDAN goes on writing as regularly and clearly as before. KENNETH reseats himself. . . .
When AIDAN awakes and sees the writing before him he

looks in a half-questioning, half-startled way at KENNETH.

KENNETH.

Yes, when I woke I thought that still I dreamed.
Eyes closed, face calm in sleep, you wrote and wrote
Serenely as a timeless spirit might.
The work you wove was rare if, as I trow,
The magic of your thought has matched your peace.

AIDAN. (*Reading from the pages before him.*)

*"How short the step from shadow to the light!
What Nature-beings work within the flowers!
What glory where I thought a garden spread!
Yon trees are living, and they pillars seem
Of some supernal mansion. Lo! the door
Opens like Thought a gleam. The Shepherd-King
Comes forth. His eyes are grave. He holds my book.
And now it drops, dim dust, from out his hand.
'Ah foolish growth of surface-mind,' he says.
'All unsubstantial in the real world,
And yet a heavy hostage given to Fate.
For She has heard, and heeds the vanity,
And outer flame approaches outer flame,
Ere either knows the strength that baffles doom,
Ere either tames and tunes the passion-self
And brings the spirit to the tasks of time.'
He turns. A golden Book he opens now,
Full of mine own authentic song the leaves!
'I've heard the chanting of your secret soul,
And here I've penned it. Do you lack the will,
To take your own and share it with the world?'
I burn to clasp it—just one step away!—
I leap, I run—O running weird and sweet!
O little step whose end is past the stars!" . . .*

KENNETH. (*As AIDAN hands him the writing.*)

In sooth a wonder-story. Light all dark!

(*He reads to himself, slowly and thoughtfully.*)

Now, who is "She," if out of dream her path?

AIDAN. (*Smiling.*)

Mayhap yon flowers have tidings sealed to me.

(*A little girl comes out from the house and hands AIDAN a letter, which has just been received. The handwriting stirs a dim memory. He opens it, reads a little, and utters an exclamation of surprise.*)

AIDAN.

A note it is from Angus of the Isles.

He penned it as he reached the grey Azores :

Through fateful waves of late his barque has ploughed—

Oh, here is wizardry the wildest yet !

“The teachers tell me of your songs,” he says.

“They bring me back strange music of the Street.

But list ! the teachers hint of deeper songs

Though none will bring you such a trial-day ;

The book is bound with fate in sweet disguise ;

Your crisis comes ; curb sense, and look to soul :

Thus speak they darkly though the words be plain.

I know no more, nor can the riddle rede,

But send the warning in affection’s name.”

KENNETH.

A riddle, truly : “Sweet disguise” and “fate” ;
 “Curb sense, and look to soul” : it seems to hint,
 E’en as the warning of your wonder-king,
 Of dark romance. Yet not a note of love
 Has fluttered in your lays.

AIDAN. (*A little abstractedly.*)

Or in my heart.

No Grace yet turns my coldness into fire.

But who has carried down Atlantic seas

The knowledge of my songs ? No book has gone

To isle or Angus, and his mentors weird

Are dim to me as ghosts of vanished worlds.

KENNETH.

The world is weird : You are a sage in sleep ;

I saw the wonder with my waking eyes :

So wonder not at wonder from the seas.

AIDAN *re-reads the letter slowly and wonderingly.*

THE COMING OF FAIR FELICIA

2 a.m. DONAL MACALPINE returns from the club to the sub-editors' room of the "Shield" on his way home. All the electric lights save one are turned off. In the dim light AIDAN DELVIN walks slowly up and down the room. He seems oblivious of his surroundings.

DONAL. (*As he turns on lights.*)

This brooding after work in eerie light
Is tempting ghosts. The club would think you
crazed.

(AIDAN starts out of his reverie.)

You should have come long since where wits were
warm.

AIDAN. (*In a strange voice.*)

My thought was with you. All the lights but one
I had put out, when on a sudden came
The ticking of melodious tape-machines
Where at yon end-wall ours had silent stood.
I looked: the room was bathed in rosy light.
Here at the tables radiant beings worked.
E'en as we work, but rapt with inward joy.

(DONAL throws out his hands, and then sits down.)

A psychic apparatus each "machine"
Seemed to my sight, and all their messages,
Concerned an inner world beyond our ken.
In some strange way their sense was known to me,
As if an inner self had come to light.
The work went on, and on, till I appeared
Part of that realm of power beyond our thought.
The psychic journal gravely wrought apace
Was lucent labour and its own reward.
But ardour ebbed; those weird news-artists grew
To toil and tidings cold and critical,
And many hungered for a deeper realm.
But doubters banned the thought of further sphere.
Some, warm in faith, sighed that the Path was barred;

Some thought the very quest was peril-set,
 And more that nothing mattered save the quest.
 They argued till a being came who seemed
 Etain or Déirdre grown divinely wise—

DONAL.

'Twas all some holiday of plastic thought.
 We dramatise our wishes into worlds.

AIDAN. (*In the same unwonted voice.*)

'Twas real as ourselves. I've learned a truth :
 There are no bounds to being ; every plane
 Brings hunger for another deeper yet.
 The gods, the powers occult, are pilgrims, too,
 E'en as ourselves : within them or without
 Is never rest or end. Infinity
 Is of infinity still son and sire.
 The great illusion is the sense of goal.
 In time with bodies we enrobe ourselves
 And in eternity with sequent souls,
 But changeless Father Spirit never wakes
 Out of the glory of his action-dream.

DONAL.

A night with tape-machines and scares and crimes,
 And talk of Father Spirit toward the dawn !
 You are the strangest wight Sir News-Nose drives ;
 That quaint god keeps you here in irony.
 In Middle Ages you'd be alchemist.

AIDAN. (*Abstractedly.*)

I seek no secrets of the alchemists,
 But oh, the quest of Her allures my heart.

DONAL.

What quest ? whose quest ? On silly quests all days
 Reporters race, but never owls like us.

AIDAN. (*In a dreamy strain.*)

The being of my vision I would seek.
 I know the sister of my soul at last.

(*Wisfully.*)

But can she be embodied east or west
In this grey world? Is it too vain to dream
The Lords of Life can spare her for our earth?

DONAL.

Come, come! You must not head for madness thus.
I like a touch of faery fantasy
When tapes are quiet, and the club itself
Is like a drained decanter. Life were grey
If souls could never sport; but lunacy
Were worship of the goddess of a dream.

AIDAN.

No dream, but soul-sight. The Beloved came
And calmed the fears of those who questioned there
On that interior plane of wonder-work.
And when they worked again, with calm and joy
She turned to me; with hers my soul seemed fused;
Of thought and bliss we were a unity,
Till came the Ancient Shepherd, in his eyes
What seemed the ghosts of tears, and all the scene
Grew mist and murmurs . . . then you broke the spell.
Now, missing her, all ways I wend are dark.

DONAL. (*Resignedly.*)

If she is more than dream she dwells apart
In psychic inlands sundered from our lives—

AIDAN.

If I, embodied, could that realm perceive
So might her outer self be part of ours.
Yet hard to conquer is the searing dread
That she, in this our life, walks not on earth.
(I first beheld her in Atlantean light
The morn the staff of Angus wonder woke.)
Ah, dire existence when the Heart's Desire
Goes her sweet way unknowing on a plane
Beyond the reaches of our tides and days!

DONAL.

You may be fated for a million lives
Before your journeys coincide again!

Bear not so vast a burden on your back.
 Come, make the most of earth. I hear your book
 Has caught some Bigwigs' fancies after all.
 'Tis rumoured in the club its fame has gone
 As far as Mayfair, and that jewelled dames
 Dream of the Street as racy wonderland
 And hunger for the sight of owls grown seers.
 So you are coming to your own apace,
 For when the titled talk the toadies heed.
 The big reviews will call you genius now.
 Remember when those eagles take you up
 That we, dark news-owls, have acclaimed you first.

AIDAN.

You jest, or play with fancy : kindly game,
 But unavailing. Dead as dust the book.
 I mourn it not ; I scarce recall the freak.
 And now my fate had grown too strange for song.

DONAL. (*Laughing.*)

'Tis well you are so likeable when sane,
 Else never would we bear your lunacy.
 Come out and see the stars, or seek the club.
 Your work is past, and waiting is a waste.
 A drink will drown the witching of your dream.

AIDAN.

Talk not of drink and dream this night of fate.

(MR. TOPTON, *the night manager, a rosy-faced, cheery little man, opens the door. He is eager, almost excited.*)

TOPTON.

Two here ! what luck ! I feared late subs were brimmed
 As Bacchus at the club. Lord Beechenmere
 Is, with his daughter, in the warehouse now ;
 She craves to see the haunt where news has birth—

DONAL.

Out, jester ! Try your joke on younger owls.
 Wise Beechenmere has hours of dreamland now.
 He was a jolly farmer years ago ;

Roughing it long in dim Dominion wastes
He formed plain habits. For the ways of owls
Our chairman of directors has no use.
He knows the board-room ; *we* may touch his thought
As things upon the dark side of the moon.

TOPTON.

His daughter, home from Girton, lured him here,
Leaving the ball at Lady Norbury's.
She wants to see the wights that Aidan sings,
Sir News-Nose and his merry servitors.
The foundry and the roaring underground
They've "done" with zest. I'll bring them up
again.

(He hastens out.)

DONAL. *(To AIDAN, who has been more or less startled out of his dreamy mood.)*

Your songs have touched an heiress, lucky dog !
I hear the fair Felicia's quite a peach,
But deemed eccentric by our Upper Ten,
Quotes all our ironists, and has no faith
In any institution England owns.
How will dim owls face such a nightingale ?

AIDAN. *(Severely.)*

With cold politeness. Curiosities
Are we to those New-Rich who buy the Street.
I'll take them as I take news-envelopes,
Spicing indifference with dignity.
'Tis barbarous that drones who think in cash,
And in ideas see insanity,
And want democracy to walk in mud,
Should be the masters of our mental fate,
Our firesides and our bread. Way is there none
By which we news-owls and the toiling hordes
Could grow the masters of a mighty Press,
And, linked with kin in all deluded lands,
Serve truth and freedom and make news-work art,
Part of the Life Creative, long a dream ?

DONAL.

When Quixote lives again, and seeks the Street,
Such mission may engage his burning brain.
What joy to see him as an editor !
London might stand him for perchance a week.
No, friend, you dream in vain : King Dividend
Is, under News-Nose, master of our fate.
But Beechenmere has human twitches yet,
And rumour fair Felicia gives three lives :
A blend of madcap, sceptic, problem-play.

MR. TOPTON *returns, with LORD BEECHENMERE and his daughter.* LORD BEECHENMERE is middle-sized, with a figure that suggests a jockey, and a face which would pass for that of a homely and somewhat jolly farmer. His daughter is rather tall, slender, very graceful. Her features are of beautiful Greek type, and though she is superficially saucy of expression, her eyes suggest reserves of thought and passion.

As MR. TOPTON introduces the parties DONAL is profusely genial. AIDAN adopts an air which is meant to be at once casual and dignified. FELICIA glances round the room with an expression of surprise.

FELICIA. *(To herself.)*

I've never seen it. Yet familiar seems
The scene as some long-trodden garden-path !
(AIDAN starts when he comes face to face with her.)

FELICIA. *(Again to herself.)*

This gardener has tended faery flowers—
(She turns abruptly as her father speaks.)

BEECHENMERE. *(Glancing towards AIDAN.)*

We've read such racy tales of printers' imps,
Of comps. who sing and swear with equal zest,
Of fun that mellows art by foundry fires,
Of subs who, blithe magicians all night long,
Renew the Mermaid Tavern ere the dawn,
That, finding Court and Fashion autumn-hued,
We seek a sense of this gay human spring.

We thought to find a dozen sages here,
 Ardent as Plato's self and Socrates,
 Resolving, when Sir News-Nose had withdrawn,
 A hundred subtle knots of souls and stars,
 Even as "Owls and Tankards" sings the tale.

DONAL.

A few weak souls have slunk to home and bed,
 The club delights the rest—all save myself
 And this our poet.

(Touching AIDAN's shoulder.)

BEECHENMERE.

Lucky we in both.
 Ye know the secrets of the Brotherhood,
 And one has sung the magic into fame.

(With an air of penitence.)

I'm shamed to think that never in my term
 As chairman of directors have I dreamed
 Beyond the board-room lay so rare a world.

FELICIA. *(Ironically.)*

We thought the "Shield" a dividend-machine,
 And eke a pillar of our god, Prestige,
 A power the Premier dared not overlook,
 Playing the greasy game of Downing Street.
 Its human makers we have held as dear
 As coal-lords hold the miners underground.

BEECHENMERE.

The fault's their own; they hid their racy selves,
 The magic and the music of their nights,
 Till, like full moon, rose "Owls and Tankards" up,
 Revealing all the glamour of Whitefriars.

FELICIA. *(Playfully.)*

And yet that moon intriguing mysteries
 Leaves on the landscape yet. How can such wits,
 Such realists, such thinkers, stuff the folk
 With Mayfair mixture and Belgravian blend
 That were too naïve as fairy-tales for sheep?
 Gravely as deans they drone about our freaks

And incense in our courtly noses throw.
 They give verbatim our prolixity
 That else were buried in the House of Lords.

(BEECHENMERE *smiles drily.*)

While Windsor's modest due they ne'er deny
 They know the world revolves round Beechenmere.
 How can soul-bearers dip their pens in slush
 To write for idiots and the Idle Rich?

BEECHENMERE. (*Smiling.*)

My plight behold : a daughter in revolt
 Who waves the Red Flag in her father's face !
 Her Girton guile is coming to a head,
 And Mayfair scents a scandal in its midst.

DONAL.

'Twill make a spicy "special" for the "Shield"—
 By News-Nose, appetising breakfast-fare
 At once for duchesses and democrats !

BEECHENMERE.

Oh, ruthless wights who turn our wounded breasts,
 Our darkest secrets, and our sacred sighs
 To "stories" that intrigue the multitude !
 But come ! Your nature has a nobler side.
 Yours is romance that never Mayfair knows,
 And we are pilgrims hungry for the shrine—

FELICIA. (*Gaily.*)

Shrine ! 'Twere a workshop for the best in me.
 (AIDAN *looks up in surprise.*)

BEECHENMERE.

Ay, we are pilgrims hungry for the shrine ;
 Then deem us comrades, aid our stumbling steps
 Atoward the magic that our poet sings.
 (He bows genially to AIDAN.)

AIDAN. (*Who has been thinking on FELICIA's last remark.*)

My lord, it must be lived from night to night ;
 The heart must hear it in the lino's song,
 Find in tape-tales a hint of sibyl leaves,
 E'en in old Reuter sense the Soul of Earth,

And feel, with all our muddles and our mists
We still are servants of eternity.

(Smiling.)

Your daughter and yourself should join our team!
News-artists here soon were the secret yours.

BEECHENMERE. *(Laughing.)*

Alas, too toilsome such ascent for me;
Too old am I to learn so rare an art.

FELICIA. *(Blithely.)*

"Age" is a malady you catch too soon.
You may be youthful in your hundredth year
If you but keep your will unbowed and bold—
I hope to go for centuries full sail.

(Reflectively.)

I've had my dreams of such a life as this
Ere "Owls and Tankards" limned its wonder-glow,
And ever since it lures me like a spell.
'Twould charm me through my merry growing years:
At ninety might I leave it for fresh fields.

BEECHENMERE. *(To the others.)*

So brave her brood of fads that Mayfair pants
In its vain race to realise them all.
This fad of age-long living shocks it most—
Save haply her weird sense of former lives,
That notes our poet sings intensify.

FELICIA,

We'll have no Mayfair in a hundred years
(When I from girlhood's morn have turned to noon).
A world of workers with deft hand, bright brain,
Will be the potent masters of the lands.
But good King Now is richest Lord of Life
And we must grasp his treasures as he flies.

(After a pause.)

I've been an airy scribbler since my teens,
In school and college journals shocks I've sown,
Yet oft the cloud upon convention's brow
I scattered with a burst of faery fun

Or feat of fancy frisking like a lamb—
I were no tyro where Sir News-Nose reigns.

DONAL. (*Gaily.*)

Most heartily we'll hail you when you come.
Opening a sovran epic of our realm
Destined to dazzle far historians' eyes.

FELICIA.

Out irony! Nor jest nor freak is this;
The life had long allured me from afar;
But "Owls and Tankards" makes it part of me,
And links it subtly with the Life arcane,
Mayhap with lives the Self has lived of old.

BEECHENMERE. (*To AIDAN.*)

Not mine the blame! I little recked to see
Such comedy the sequel to your song.

(*To FELICIA.*)

Well, put it to the proof next month, next week.
'Twill startle Mayfair, please democracy—
Work by a daughter of those "Idle Rich."

(*To AIDAN and DONAL.*)

Now from adventure and the poet-shrine
We must descend; though both soul-gladdened go,
Bearing a rare reflection of the Gleam.
And ye, good friends, soft be your meed of rest—
If ever servants of Sir News-Nose sleep.

FELICIA. (*As they go out.*)

My going is but seeming. Here I've made
A mental home already. Blithe is fate:
A larger meaning comes to shine through life.

MR. TOPTON, *pleased with himself and everything, shows*
LORD BEECHENMERE and FELICIA *down the*
stairs to their motor-car.

DONAL. (*To AIDAN.*)

Oh, what an hour! A witching madcap she
Who soon will wake your muse to human strains.
Now, why so grave? A-dance you ought to be.

AIDAN. (*Half to himself.*)

An hour ago she raised my soul to hers
In that sheer vision of an inner world—

DONAL.

What! *She*? Beware! You'll soon be nought but
dream!

AIDAN.

But in the vision she was spirit pure,
And here she laughs, lures, thrills, intoxicates,
A siren form, of sex-enchancement full,
And all unconscious of her deadly spells.
Alas that spirit should be doomed to wear
Such treason-vesture in the world without!

DONAL.

Hush, owl! Your fancies will unnerve me soon.

AIDAN.

I would I had no foes but fancy's hosts,
The butterflies of mind, its summer's sign.
But now I reach a deadly ford of fate—

DONAL.

You reach enchantment, and you call it dread.
'Ware lest you tire the fortune-sending gods.
Come out and take the gladness of the stars:
I go to Surrey, you to wonderland!

AIDAN.

Barred is the way back to my wonted world.
(DONAL groans. *They go out.*)

WONDER-HUNTERS

LORD BEECHENMERE and FELICIA in their motor-car.

BEECHENMERE.

How long and winding is our morning way
From Thames to Mayfair! Does the driver dream?

FELICIA.

All things are dreams ; and dullest of all dreams
Are Mayfair's. Suddenly to-night we rose
Into this higher dream, in play begun,
Why make descent unneeded all too soon?—

BEECHENMERE.

Descent ! We seem ascending some strange hill
Too high for London—

FELICIA.

I have heard that seers
Say hills, meads, trees are spirit time-arrayed,
As iceberg water is in other guise.
How strange to think we speed o'er spirit now !

BEECHENMERE.

You spin weird fancies in the witching hours,
But I seek home and sleep.

FELICIA.

You woke to-night.
You found a new life-angle. Never lapse
To that old Mayfair of the mind again.
Press on like Life that never tires or sleeps.

BEECHENMERE. (*Looking out.*)

Another height ! No houses ! London lost !

FELICIA. (*Smiling.*)

'Tis safe, but far behind us. Calm your fears !
I bade the driver turn to Beechenmere,
Craving the peace and magic of the wold ;
This morning Mayfair were a jail to me.

BEECHENMERE. (*Resignedly.*)

Then sleep must wait. This comes of interviews
With magic "owls." You caught the wizardry—

FELICIA.

The wold and wonder often call yourself ;
In vain you would disown life's wizardry ;
You've had your dreams and seen a share come true.

BEECHENMERE.

And coming true they but new hunger brought.
 Thus dreams and life for ever tantalise.
 And mock me with the pathos of success.

(After a few moments' reflection.)

A younger son, in far Colonial wilds
 I sought out fortune as a Golden Fleece,
 And grey it was when at the last it came.
 And then the turn of years and toll of death
 Brought me the heritage of Beechenmere.
 I came to find myself a personage,
 But never difference in sun or moon,
 In summer's incense or in winter's lash
 Nothing in Nature seemed to recognise
 That I had commerce with a coronet.
 And worse, a certain meanness in myself
 Spied like a dour detective on my pride.
 My Home seems ever far beyond my homes,
 My goal my fleetest racehorse may not reach.
 Yet trunk of disillusion as I am
 I'd still put forth green leaves—

(He stops abruptly.)

My thought grows mixed?

FELICIA. *(Smiling.)*

E'en Nature takes a long way to the dawn.
 I see your drift like hers.

BEECHENMERE.

Out irony!

I mean your "owls" have made me dream again.
 To-night—last night—from long familiar stairs
 I stepped—to what? A strange, intriguing world,
 As near as dukes and tramcars yet as far
 From me and Mayfair as Titania's Court.
 I felt some spell enwind me while we talked.
 I feel it still. But is it doomed to pass
 Like other spells and gains, and leave me lorn,
 Still hunting for the wonder of the world?

FELICIA.

Keep hunting ! I am hunting wonder, too.
I caught a gleam to-night, but know not yet
If 'twas the shining of her golden wings
Or but a fancy flashing in myself.

BEECHENMERE.

Are those young men rare units of the race,
Whose inner kingdom has a light not mine ?
Is one a master-singer in his morn ?—
He moved me more than e'en his joyous book.
Would I enrich, inspire, exalt myself
By aiding and acclaiming such a soul ?
(A peer can still be poet's minister,
Widening in courtly wise his muse's sway.)
Would I by genial service of his cause
Come up at last with magic ere old age,
And, tending art from spring to harvest sheen,
Feel, as its patron, it was part of me ?

FELICIA.

I think our poet's nature is a sea
That laves some isles of gold, and some of gloom.
Intrigued am I to quest his spirit's home.

BEECHENMERE. (*Starting.*)

Ah, you are woman, you would complicate
My quest, my plans ! You, child of Eve, would play
With heart, with passion, spoiling song and soul.

FELICIA. (*Laughing.*)

In sooth a novel rivalry you sense !
But melodrama warps your vision still.
I feel such tides and forces in the maze
Of life and Nature—subtle, sweet, elect—
The heart is less to me than wayside pool
'Mid all the lucent glamour of the morn.
I seem a pilgrim in a lustrous land
Of treasure-cities, ardours, ecstasies.
My part as idler and observer pains

My secret nature which has heard the call
To tune itself to some entrancing task.

BEECHENMERE.

I trust you know yourself, and yet I fear
Eve-mischief mixes with your ecstasies.

*(He grows thoughtful. Soon the car enters an avenue
through the ancestral wold.)*

THE WOLD OF BEECHENMERE

A soft Saturday evening. Sunset. A lawn at the rear of Beechenmere Castle, a quaint, rambling, old-fashioned building in the country, miles from London. A wood environs Castle and lawn, and extends far up the height that rises away beyond the Castle's front. Behind this height are higher hills.

At a table on the lawn, after tea, sit FELICIA, AIDAN, DONAL, and KENNETH. They are chatting gaily, and the pressmen are smoking.

FELICIA.

How simply, strangely
We find our soul-friends
'Mid all the chances
Of earth-existence !
A few weeks merely
I've been your comrade
In Fleet Street farings,
And seem already
A seasoned news-owl :
At home with flimsies
And rambling Reuter
And all the tape-thrills
That star an evening.
But more electric
The mellow magic
I sense around me :
In kindred news-owls
Who weave an epic

While London revels
Or sinks to slumber.
There *must* be soul-bonds
Occult between us.
Co-workers were we
Full oft aforetime,
Blithe souls embodied
In divers earth-nooks?

DONAL.

I doubt, dear lady,
The gods could spare you
Oft-times for earth-work.
On nobler planets
Than this of Terra
Your lustrous *rôle* is.
The Fates have sent you
Thus once among us
To star an æon,
To sow enchantment
In hearts of news-owls
And spread a glamour
As of Helen or Déirdre
Or Béatrice
In dim Whitefriars,
Till rise rapt lyrists,
Blithe story-weavers,
E'en epic-builders
(Plus sighful lovers)
Along your light-way.
But, once well-woven
Your fateful magic,
We may not claim you,
Nor dream to hold you.
The gods will need you
For ministration
In orbs auroral,
In distant splendours.
And we, your chosen,

Now proud and envied,
 Shall drop from magic
 To moil and muddle,
 The same old news-owls.

AIDAN. (*Airily.*)

Avaunt, the gloom-view !
 Great Nature wills us
 Abounding beauty,
 Unbounded wonder,
 And no return asks
 Save adoration.

Her flower-strewn earth-ways
 Are realms of faery ;
 Her star-strewn heavens,
 O'erwhelm with glory.

So for our spirits,
 Were we responsive
 Infinite banquets
 Are ever waiting.

A Grace, her daughter,

(*Bowing to FELICIA.*)

Her magic-bearer,
 Illumes our lone ways,
 Attunes our soul-spheres.
 And lo, we murmur :

(*Looking reprovingly at DONAL.*)

" 'Tis meteor glory,
 We may not hold it,
 We bonded pilgrims
 Far from our home-heights."
 Avaunt, unreason !
 The witching vision
 We keep for ever.

FELICIA. (*Gaily.*)

Ah, could I credit
 These gay laudations
 Then here were Hellas,
 The heart's life Summer.

But much I fear me
 Ye mourn this visit
 As wasted week-end,
 (*All make high protest.*)
 And pine in secret
 For favoured revels
 With kindred sages
 In cosy club-house,
 Or by friendly hearth-stone,
 With wit and wisdom
 Between the pipe-puffs,
 With every bowl-sip.
 'Tis hope's romancing
 To dream a moment
 Your Mermaid Taverns
 Would bear transplanting
 So far from Thames-side.

KENNETH.

Ah, gracious lady,
 If not ironic,
 With airy art you
 Idealise us.
 Our week-end revels,
 Our late-night magic,
 Are sorry soul-play
 Of wasted bond-slaves.
 We owls and crime-hounds
 And dulled reviewers
 Are dolent outcasts
 From art and beauty.
 The Dream within us
 Is mocked for ever
 By rounds unreal.
 Yea, we are fate-penned
 As Dantesque captives.
 Our springtide stirrings
 Make crude advances
 Toward life creative.

But all ends baldly
In drink and ashes.
Yet hope hath whispered
A new age opens,
That peerless Woman
Will change our owl-life
To soul-spiced ardour
And hero-purpose.
Yea, lustrous lady,
E'en now the change opes,
A bud of wonder.
Lead as you will it !
Ever your servants
Follow your leading.

FELICIA.

Ye featly flatter,
Cast poesy-fragrance
Ever about me
To charm my senses
And send my fancy
On mazy romping.
But I, all earnest,
A Gleam would follow.
I'd light our "Shield" life
All nights in London
With zest and ardour,
With style and beauty,
Until our pages
Would link the people
With joy and soul-fact,
And all their spirits
Inspire with vision
Of growth romantic :
An England flowering
With life fraternal,
In joyous tune with
Wales, Eirinn, Scotia,
And gracious far lands.

And here of week-ends,
 Or leisured mornings,
 Our scribes and artists,
 Our racy craftsmen
 Of case and foundry,
 Would rest or ramble,
 As they were owners,
 Of glade and woodland.
 Yea, schemes more spacious
 Intrigue my fancy
 They might be *dwellers*
 Below the hill-slope !
 For there I picture
 A garden city
 For all our workers,
 Be ye but willing.
 A dream first showed me
 This garden city ;
 We all were builders
 And buoyant tillers,
 With lucent bodies
 And starry faces.
 My father tells me
 I grow enchanted ;
 But, joyous-hearted,
 The plan he praises.

DONAL.

The age of visions
 Is back full cycle,
 With elfin features
 In eld undreamt of.
 But fancy staggers
 At golden feathers
 And sylvan glamour
 For owls of Thames-side !

FELICIA.

Our " owls " of Thames-side
 Are potent spirits,

Immortal pilgrims,
But tamed and timid.
Oh, would they waken
And quest right proudly,
And dig full deeply !
'Tis weird and glorious
To sense the forces
In Nature round us
When storms are raging
When night is ghostly,
When summer's choral,
When science shows us
Or atom sphere-laws
Or super-magic
Of Radiant Matter.
All these are sign-posts
To nameless secrets,
Transcendent treasures
In Nature's bosom.
'Tis ours to draw them
And vast new meaning
Give all existence.

KENNETH.

You flame my vision !
I feel already
My spirit shelter
In our to-morrow's
Fair garden city.

FELICIA.

Now twilight gathers,
Come ramble onward
And see the fair site,
And feast in fancy
On homes and hearth-stones,
On art a-flowering,
In high days coming.

*(They arise and stroll to a gate that opens on a by-road
leading amidst tall trees to the hill-slope.)*

DONAL.

The wold aforetime
Had weird traditions.
The old folk feared it
I heard in boyhood.
And now with twilight
Its spell comes o'er me.

FELICIA.

Its deeps and shadows
Have oft oppressed me.
O were whole acres
Swept clear for ever,
For human dwellings,
And merry craftsmen!
Our ghosts and gloom-deeps
Are truly conquered
By life creative.

AIDAN. (*To himself.*)

Has Fate grown gracious?—
Or but ironic?
Like tale enchanted
Her plans and promise.
Yet twilight haunts me
With more than shadows.

(DONAL, *noting his thoughtfulness, slaps him gently on the shoulder.*)

DONAL.

Think, owl, the beauty
Your ditties bring us!
Had you not sung them
And made Whitefriars
The Muses' home-haunt
Our Grace had never
Or known or found us.

(AIDAN *smiles but makes no reply. He grows more thoughtful. An eerie murmuring, which seems to float from distant depths of the wold, arrests and*

tantalises him. He feels unaccountably drawn to it, but tries hard to keep up with, and fare onward with his friends.

At a bend of the by-road he steps aside and inward to avoid a large overhanging bough of an ancient tree, which he touches with his hand as he veers round. Strange lights and pictures dazzle him. Suddenly he finds himself on a by-way between tall trees. He hears the voices of his friends in the distance, but they seem to rise from different directions. He calls, but no answer comes.)

A WEIRD INTERLUDE

Moonlight. AIDAN comes out from under tall trees to a small circular opening in the wold. He is tired and dazed.

AIDAN.

Where are my people? Where my wits and soul?
I've wandered, till I find the world grown grey,
Amid the wildering voices of the wold,
And meet no vestige of humanity,
Nought but elusive shapes 'neath sighing trees
And echoes that have grown delirious.
Once on the margin of a moonlit pool
I thought an ancient people called to me.
But when I hailed him who had seemed their king
They changed to weeds and willows on the brink.

(Singing from among the trees on the further semi-circular fringe of the opening.)

Oh, 'tis her voice, the singer that I love!

(He hurries over. When he reaches the trees he sees an opening that leads to a rugged hill. A figure that at once suggests FELICIA, though in most respects unlike her, is standing on a ledge some distance above. The difference in face and form conveys no sense of strangeness. He knows it is no other than FELICIA.)

FELICIA. (*Airily.*)

How long you linger in the fold below
As if you were a sheep that loved the grass !
When hand in hand with me the joyous height
You might be scaling, Luna smiling down,
As she has loved to smile uncounted nights
On all the happy partners of the world.

AIDAN.

I've groped and searched, bewildered in the wold,
Seeking my people—æons lost they seemed—
Seeking in vain the meaning of myself,
Until your singing brought me back to love.
I hunger for my buried race no more,
I want you, living wonder of the world !
(He holds out his arms.)

FELICIA.

Then bury deep your idle quests and dreams,
And rise and take me, if you can and dare !

(She leaps to a higher ledge. AIDAN tries to follow, but stumbles and falls. FELICIA laughs lightly and bursts into a merry strain of song whose words he cannot distinguish.)

AIDAN.

I am a-weary with life's toils and falls,
But oh, my heart is hungry—wait for me !

FELICIA.

You've groped too long in ruins of the world,
Athirst for traces of departed times,
Trying to picture old Atlantean days,
As if Atlantis mattered more than love.

AIDAN.

We loved in old Atlantis, you and I ;
Have I not vision of our vows and joys
My lore arcane and all my might of will
Tuned by your magic to sweet energies
Far in the City of the Golden Gates ?

FELICIA.

Who cares for vows and joys of ancient lives ?
Who cares for learning with Atlantis lost ?
Are not our forests fair, our Druids wise ?
Is life to-night not as the starlight sweet
From Cantion vales to distant Mona's isle ?

AIDAN.

Our isle were lovely if your love were mine.

FELICIA.

Too late you take the dream of love and me,
Spent sage, you stumble on the hills I scale.
(She skips to a higher point. He tries to follow and falls again.)

AIDAN.

I've worn to leafless Autumn life with thought,
But love will make it bourgeon as the spring.
Yea, love already sets the sere a-bloom.

In vain you fly—ah, sweet, your flight's but feigned
And now my arms, that feel the zest of youth,
Shall bear the sweetest burden ever borne
Since we were lovers in the long ago
In our glad City of the Golden Gates.

(He leaps lightly up the height, and stretches out his arms to FELICIA, who no longer flies. He has a sudden sense of touching a tree, and looks round in surprise. He is walking with FELICIA, DONAL, and KENNETH, the three chatting in the twilight. He has just passed the overhanging branch, which he had turned to avoid ! With difficulty he represses an exclamation, then steps on in silence.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLLOW VALE

Late night. AIDAN rises after troubled and broken sleep in his room in Beechenmere Castle. As he dresses, he looks through the window over the lawn and the stately trees spreading

away in the moonlight. He has a profound yet unaccountable feeling of age-old familiarity with the scene. He broods over this but his mind is drawn back to his strange experience at twilight.

AIDAN.

The vision in the wold at twilight seen
Has shattered sleep and peace. It seemed a part
Or symbol of a life in Britain old
When though I hungered for Felicia's love
I was a dreamer and a scholar grave
And brooded deep on lost Atlantean life.
What fantasy! What playing in a dream!
And yet, who knows what life-roads we have ranged,
Or where the spirit started, where it ends,
Or whether "start" and "end" are idle thoughts?
And if our earth-spells are innumerable,
If destiny has subtler "nights" and "days"
Tuned to a mystic "time" past normal ken,
Is there some agent in the dateless Self—
The Dweller in the sequent body-garbs—
That can in any life flash startling gleams
From one or many which it lived of old?
Whate'er the secret, Fate mad music plays
For me within the wold of Beechenmere.

(He starts as, still looking down upon the lawn, he sees FELICIA walk slowly across to the trees and enter the wold. For a while he struggles with an intense desire to follow.)

At last he goes from the room, passes down a corridor, opens the door at the end, and glides across the lawn to the trees.)

Here is the hill-track; hither has she gone—
Where now? Intruding trees, ye are unkind,
More than the night; ye bring a monster veil
Between the moonlight and her loveliness.

(He hastens along the ascending hill-track. Presently, as he comes to a wide opening in the trees on his right he is almost dazzled by the sudden flow of moonlight.)

As soon as he sees clearly he notices that he is standing above a grassy slope. Below is a great hollow vale. like a deep plate in shape. Here is encamped a multitude of warriors in strange, ancient costumes. They have stood up, all exultant, as a woman appears in their midst.

She is unlike FELICIA, yet he feels intensely that it is FELICIA. She addresses the multitude in impassioned tones. He cannot grasp the drift of her words, but catches names that seem like "Ececi," "Cassi," "Coritani," "Trinovantes," while her voice is earnest and appealing; she speaks feelingly of "Boudicca"; she dwells on "Romani" in tones of passion and hatred.

AIDAN, in a maze, questions those on the outskirts of the camp. No one answers or even heeds him.

He walks round and round the great rim of the enclosure, with a growing sense of his own loneliness and helplessness.

Suddenly he realises that the scene has completely changed. He is in an open space in a forest, near a great palm, at sunrise. A woman is seated on a plant-like chair, looking towards the rising sun in a state of dreamful ecstasy. Again, though the form and features are strange, he has the profound feeling that the woman is FELICIA. She is chanting, melodiously and rhythmically, what seems some voice of Nature's own rather than anything in human language. Men and women, seated round her, are listening to every tone with rapt expression. All the faces, forms, and garb are foreign and antique. The plant-life in the environment is of tropical luxuriance.

Gradually, as the chant drops to a murmur, the scene grows less distinct, the faces and forms undergo change after change, till they are but dimly suggestive of humanity. Eventually they float away in a kind of fire-mist.

AIDAN has a growing feeling of languor and drowsiness, and gradually is overcome by sleep. . . .

*He wakes up in the peace and beauty of early morning,
He is sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree not far from
the lawn.*

*He has barely collected his senses and started to go back to
the castle when FELICIA, looking fresh and radiant,
comes out upon the lawn.)*

FELICIA. (*Surprised.*)

My pride is fallen. I deemed myself the first
To rise and take the wonder of the morn.

AIDAN.

'Twas weirdness and not wonder drove me forth.
Wild dreams, like evil spirits, broke my rest.
And then the moonlight and the trees conspired
To weave a witchery too mazed for thought.

FELICIA.

Oh, we must speed our plans and break old spells
That hold these wildering woods of Beechenmere.
Our garden city—but how pale you look !
I am a heedless hostess ! When you drink
And rest a little you will sense again
The other side the wold : toward wonderland !
(*She laughs and they go within.*)

THE TEMPTER IN THE TEMPLE

*Saturday night. UNCLE MOON'S study in the temple,
London. UNCLE MOON, bland and beaming, in a picturesque
dressing-gown, is seated in an easy chair by the fire, placidly
puffing his pipe at intervals. AIDAN DELVIN, looking older,
overstrained, and pale, in another easy chair opposite to him.
Decanter and glasses on a small table between them. The book-
cases on three sides of the room show softly in the mellow lamp-
light. UNCLE MOON has been glancing over a little sheaf of
visionary epic-ballads and sonnets, "Recognition and Crisis"—
the sequel to agitated hours and much mental and spiritual
questioning—which AIDAN has sent him recently. The visit is
ostensibly to hear his considered judgment.*

UNCLE MOON.

Your "Owls and Tankards" go from life to life.
The fifth edition in its dainty dress
Intrigues the town as if our citizens
Were children, and you came as Santa Claus
Adown their chimneys.

AIDAN.

How I loathe the news,
The book, its very name! The fatuous play
Is all a mocking memory. I burn
To live it down and give the world a work
Full freighted with the harvest of a soul,
A soul distraught yet rayed with ecstasies—
(*He glances anxiously towards the manuscript-sheaf.*)

UNCLE MOON. (*Turning over pages.*)

Ay, what a soul cries here! What freight it bears!
'Tis magical, but often weird and cold,
Like flowers that never felt or clay or dew,
But rose from stone at some enchanter's touch.
At times 'tis far from man's grey battleground
As radium murmuring in a reverie.
And yet so naïve its faery truth it gave
My dry Horatian heart a holiday,
Its end, for all the glow, is sacrilege,
So sheer its passion for a sexless world.
And yet 'tis but Desire in new disguise,
A serpent in the starlight half asleep.
'Tis but the desperation loved of Love,
In brief reaction of the lover's soul.

(*He refills AIDAN's glass and his own.*)

Your heart's dear story has more subtle guise,
The heart itself is clear as sunlit brook.

AIDAN. (*Impulsively.*)

You have some sense uncanny— (*He pauses.*)

UNCLE MOON.

Dear your fate
And fortune grow to my queer Quixote-heart.

I am the foster-father of your muse,
 And something in your nature warms my veins,
 Some aerial undisclosed affinity
 Intrigues me like a sense that music wakes.
 And so my dream to see you quaff your cup
 Of fame and bliss gives age a beam of youth.
 Nor is it strange : the self-same sense you stir
 In one more harnessed to the driving world.

(AIDAN looks at him inquiringly.)

You'd start if you could hear your praise outpoured
 As on this hearth I've heard, when wine and I
 Warmed up the heart of Brother Beechenmere.
 He calls you genius, knows your fame is sure,
 Would love to link your fortunes with his own.
 "Peers have grown dim and cheap," he sighs to me,
 "Lucky the lord who can distinction seize
 By finding chariot for a poet's sun."
 Enough!—your drama's end is palpable.

*(Again he refills AIDAN's glass and his own. He drinks,
 and then he looks over the manuscript-pages with a
 quizzical expression.)*

Now, what a problem for a publisher
 Who has his being in a shrivelled world !
 You *must* touch England on a loved weak spot
 Ere flaunting in her face your spirit's robe.
 She is an iceberg to the soulful muse
 Who's yet unwedded to a Personage.
 Did you grow Premier—or an heiress win,

(He pauses significantly, then continues airily.)

Bring blooms from coal-dust, solve the mystery
 That hangs about the private life of Mars,
 Your visions, yea, your fads, were merchandise
 In all our marts acclaimed. The hour's not yet.
 Too simple, uneccentric, and obscure
 Is still the personality you show ;
 You bear the fatal name of journalist,

Of all enchantment rude antithesis.
Men cannot link you with the thought of soul
Or vast adventure in an inner world.
To-day a lyrist from the common dust,
As singing son-in-law of Beechenmere
You were a prized possession of the realm,
Romance your trumpet and interpreter
Howe'er abstruse and mystical your song.

AIDAN. (*Smiling.*)

Your airy spirit and your vintage rare,
The mellow luxury of this Temple peace,
My heart's desire, my native vanity,
Conspire awhile to set me dreaming dreams
And bid me seek the soft romantic way.
But still a Watcher in the background stands
Who warns me that the whole I call myself
Is apparatus only, deftly wrought
By a Being out of time and tide and sent
To gather knowledge for its own far ends
On this grim plane of matter and desire.
So bliss and torment, gloom and ecstasy
Are one to it, sought for the light they throw
Upon the secret of the quest alone,
And then discarded. "We" who loom in time
Are tests and couriers, judged by how we serve
Our master-Beings in eternity.

(UNCLE MOON *again attends to the glasses, laughing
drily.*)

UNCLE MOON.

A rare philosophy, if kept apart
For use and sport in your poetic world ;
Shows how romantic is the bardic mind
Compared with stamp-collector's or athlete's.
A poet is exalting as a church
After the worldly round of working days.
But e'en as week-days lack the Sabbath sense
You cannot mix this poesy with your life,

Leaving the zest of love and wine and gold,
 Your Watcher and your Being dwell afar
 As Homer's heaven from your destiny.
 Did you for daily guidance turn to them
 Great Nature would dismiss you for a fool,
 As if electric light or mellow lamp
 You banned, and trusted to her distant stars.
 Between the sense-life and the soul she makes
 A sheer distinction ; you must make it, too.
 Disaster is the ending of the dream
 To tune the senses up to heights of soul.
 Let them be parallels or courteous friends
 As were Horatius and Vergilius.

AIDAN. (*Laughing.*)

Two courtly jailers on me lay their hands,
 And in a palace-prison set me down ;
 Ambition and an epicurean self
 These jailers are that seem such courtiers.

UNCLE MOON.

No jailers they. For poet's bodyguard
 Nature herself designs them. To her will
 You were a rebel did you bar them out
 From gentle service. Now I see with joy
 You come to terms with wholesome human traits
 Long starved and famished in your character.
 You stand upon the threshold of sweet life ;
 True fame will open with your wedding-morn.

(*Again attending to the glasses he starts on a rosy picture
 of AIDAN's future.*)

SPHAERA RADIOSA

*On the Monday after his Temple visit, AIDAN in his study
 reviews the moods of that night with mixed feelings. A letter is
 brought to him. He notes with a start that it is from ANGUS.
 He reads it with deepening wonder.*

"Upon my strangest voyage soon I sail,
Awed, joyed by tidings that my teachers bring.
Far in our ocean hath a continent,
A sphere all song and radiance, late arisen.
This *Sphaera Radiosa*, they reveal,
More lustrously than human aura gleams,
And by thought-beings is inhabited.
All it portends they know not, or conceal,
But hint a linking with the gathering fate
Of broken peoples in our olden world.
It may be refuge for great souls who fail
To find true station in the dying lands,
Or from it inspiration may be poured
To heroes battling in the body still,
Or be projection of an inner sphere
(One of the planes that intersect old earth)
With scant relation to our human life.
Who sees it, say the masters, feels a power
That ends all pathos of mortality,
As if he found the secret of the spring
Or sipped from sustenance that feeds the stars.
To selfless beings only comes the sight
Of its irradiant splendour o'er the waves,
And peril-set the quest to those earth-soiled.
And yet I dare the course. Who knows? Who
knows?
Here may be rapture, or the body's end . . ."

*(AIDAN reads the letter again and again, then walks
away in thought through the garden to the adjoining
hill.)*

AIDAN.

For weal or woe still Angus walks the way
The Gleam illumines. I, weakling, rise and fall,
Go forth, retreat, stand still; a dual self,
A seer of nights, a waverer in the morn,
A coward who will serve nor Flame nor clay.

(With bent head he goes onward up the hill.)

FLOWERS AND FURIES

A serene Saturday evening. LORD BEECHENMERE, FELICIA, AIDAN, DONAL, KENNETH, and UNCLE MOON are walking round the part of the wold and grounds deemed most suitable for the garden city. They discuss plans and details, including the motor services that are to link it with Fleet Street.

They come out from under the trees to a sloping circular glade. LORD BEECHENMERE, as they walk slowly downward, proceeds to recount strange traditions connected with it, and with adjoining reaches of the wold.

FELICIA, who is beside AIDAN, stops and seats herself on a fallen tree-trunk. AIDAN does likewise. The others go slowly on their way.

FELICIA.

Those stories were the dread of childhood eves.
 Their spell is past. Old spells need burial,
 To let us sense new glamour of the world.
 E'en *you*, I think, dwell much with ancient dreams,
 As if by dreaming we could sense old truth!—
 The devious way that man through æons marched—
 And if we could, what boots it? Eld was eld,
 Past lives are sheaves long threshed—and where's the
 grain?
 'Tis ours to tend to-day's wee harvest fields.

AIDAN.

Ah, happy they who know their harvest fields!
 Oft mine seems near and golden; but the grain,
 And e'en the field itself, deemed all mine own,
 Elude me, mock me, or dissolve in dream.

FELICIA.

You burn to reap too much and all too soon,
 As if the Lords of Life, who think in æons,
 Would hurry for desires of ours on earth.
 A life has little meaning in their thought:
 Bud, weed, in their illimitable fields,
 That must abide its modest laws of growth.

Now I am weed, and well content to blow
In any light, and wait some fairer phase,
Some finer transformation when they please.

AIDAN.

Calm suits the selves o'er-dowered in time and tide,
The favoured and the graced without, within—

FELICIA.

Out idle tributes ! You and I must face
Our world serenely through this crucial course,
Not as romancists or as flattery's slaves.
We see below the surface of our lives,
Yet know not where we started, where we tend.
I in Whitefriars play an airy part,
In Mayfair I am merely vanity.
Amid the witching of the wold I sense
A self that sometimes is too weird for thought,
That had uncanny rôles in other lives.
Long was I close to Nature's secret heart,
And then it seems, by some dire alchemy,
That savage traits were intermixed with mine.

AIDAN.

You dream in Beechenmere. Your fancy plays—

FELICIA.

No, here in wild and spell-set Beechenmere
Come intuitions, as if Nature spoke
From out her immemorial memory
And gave me tidings of my dateless self :
Ay, of a Self that underlies all selves
I've borne in life on life or near or far.
And some were nymph-like, some were passion-
brimmed—
Strange sequence, truly ; but their fruits remain :
I still am nymph, still might be passion's serf
Unless I hold my heart as in a leash.

AIDAN. (*Laughing, though the laughter has a hint of grimness.*)

And thus to hold your heart, unknown to you
May be death-sentence to a lover's dream.

FELICIA. (*Smiling.*)

You play ! Your thought is far from wounded hearts.
 You are of those to whom kind Nature gives
 A rarefied award of flesh and blood,
 But pours ideas with o'er-generous hand—

AIDAN.

Oh, mock me not ! My heart a furnace grows—

FELICIA. (*Smiling again.*)

Ay, furnace where is never hint of fire
 Save that from out the sweet-flamed heart of flowers.
 (*The others come back round the circular glade. FELICIA
 and AIDAN arise.*)

AIDAN. (*To himself.*)

Alas, the flowers to furies turn amain !

(*The others approach.*)

A STRUGGLE IN THE TOILS

The sub-editors' room of the "Shield." AIDAN DELVIN has just finished late duty, and seating himself at a side table takes some private letters from his pocket. He seems restless and undecided.

AIDAN. (*Turning over the letters.*)

They call for answers, yet it seems a waste ;
 They touch no currents of the spirit's world,
 All casual as the winds or daily news.

(*After a pause.*)

I would I knew the scene where Angus fares,
 And how to reach him with a message swift.
 Sheer need I have of deep discourse with him
 On this alluring venture I would brave.
 And something tells me he himself e'en now
 Is brooding on my plight fraternally
 And fain would stand as champion in my strife.

(*As he takes out further letters he finds a sheaf of press cuttings dealing with his now far-noted lyrics, "Owls*

and Tankards." He puts the cuttings back with some impatience.)

'Tis all distraction, irritant, half dream.
Kind were the cloak of old obscurity,
Beneath it spirit were as sunned rose sweet.

(He arises and walks up and down.)

How lightly did I lose an idyll-world !
I seem to have no secrets and no soul :
E'er hailed as lyric clown and laureate
Of outer glamourie and futile zest,
The feuds and flippancies of Flimsy-land.
They deem me now a chanting tape-machine,
Anon old Reuter with the cap and bells.
A mocking echo haunts me all my days,
A mocking echo—of a self outworn.

(He pauses for a few moments.)

A self outworn ! The self that struggles now,
Through passion and illusion back to peace
And joy creative, is a grim exchange.
Ah, fair Felicia, fateful double star
That lights to Wonder and to chaos lures !

(He sits down to go on with his letter-writing, takes up pen and paper, wavers, and seems uncertain how or where to begin. Presently he puts pen and paper from him.)

I lie in prison, but shall soon escape.
Never my jailer of my bondage knows—
Unless the Grace weird intuition hides,
For all her merry zest as here she works
From eve till midnight. What a fate is mine :
So nigh the lovely lure that draws my heart,
So far from her great Self my soul should seek !

(He reflects for a while, then rises again.)

Her form, her charm, her glow, her outer gifts
Are snares, are fires to sense, bliss-seeming bane ;
And yet are only garb and sheer disguise.
Could I behold her in the real world—

The Gleamland glowing 'neath the sensuous maze—
 Her natal Self's an aura passion-free,
 A flame of ecstasy its thought-life gleams.
 Oh, primal-pure it is, and shamed am I
 For this distortion my crude heart has wrought.
(With a note of sadness.)

And so, to serve unsoiled the immortal one,
 I seek strange seas and shores, where time may still
 The fever of my fierce mortality.

(MARK ALLCUP comes in from the club, a happy light in his eyes.)

MARK.

Ha, comrade, once you fraternised with stars,
 When tapes and editors had done their worst.
 Now are you somebody to clubs and cliques
 And Mayfair like a tonic takes your muse.
 Oh, what a falling from the firmament
 To that queer world of mud-pies boomsters know!
 Yes, you were brother of the morning stars;
 Now paragraphs your constellations beam—

AIDAN.

Ha! tankard levity affects your tongue.

MARK.

Yes, Brother Delvin, you and I are drunk,
 But you are drunk with fame and I with ale.
 And your poor world's uncertain as a cloud
 While mine is firm and fair as Lamb and Keats.
 A Spenser dragon from the club I rode;
 Police saluted, making way for me;
 And Shelley's skylark sang me up the stairs—
 Your fame is ashes, and my path is fire.

AIDAN.

You must be drunk, dire drunk, to think my "fame"
 Deludes me. 'Tis a penance and a pain.

MARK.

Deem me not drunk as "drunk" the vulgar know,
 But at the stage when all the grime of news

And all the crude conventions of the Street
Slip from me, and loved literary ghosts
Make me their playground and their medium.
The bards and novelists of great old days
Were noble drinkers, kings of revelry.
Their shades can ne'er revisit London's plane
Save through a mind like mine, steeped in their lore
And at the self-same time soft-steeped in drink.
Now bear I Chaucer, great Eliza's host,
Sam Johnson's squad, the Court where Keats is
king.

I carry taverns primed with intellect.
A cribbed reporter in the garish day,
Behold me, England's Helicon at night !
I am the earthly highway for great shades
That else would revel in old haunts no more.

AIDAN. (*With an effort at gaiety.*)

A psychic institution in your cups,
An earthly paradise of England's shades,
Who fill their bowls in you vicariously :
You stand—or stagger—of all owls the king,
The most romantic figure in the Street.

MARK.

'Tis wonderful to hear Will Shakspeare say :
" Now I shall leap into Mark Allcup's mind,
And have a ' Tempest ' night in London town " ;
Or Johnson shout, " Now Mark is Bacchus-brimmed,
Ready to bear us to the Cheshire Cheese " ;
Or Spenser, " Of enchanted woods he's full,
Where dragons roar and prisoned maidens call " ;
Or Keats, " He lures me like the nightingale."
And 'tis from such elect, eternal ghosts
Your fair Felicia thinks to tempt me far
To that trim garden city that she plans
Above the weary wold of Beechenmere !
O brother, tell your goddess that she dreams.

(MARK goes out singing.)

AIDAN.

His fancy grows in glamour with the nights,
 Sequel to toil and tipsy revelry.
 Wild flowering of the mazy mind in sooth,
 Of mind immortal growth unnatural.
 A better destiny might make him seer
 Or visioned singer. Now he dreams and raves
 And lurid magic turns to comedy,
 A wonder yet a jester to the Street.
 Oh, what delirium we make of life,
 We who, forth-acting from our starry selves—
 Where immemorial power a-sleeping lies—
 Were calm, creative ministers of heaven !

(KENNETH KINROSS *comes in.*)

KENNETH.

After late revelling at the club I come.
 I thought I'd find you here, where mind and muse
 Are oft ecstatic in the wee small hours.

AIDAN.

You find nor mind nor muse nor ecstasy,
 But fretful ghost that mourns an artist-self—

KENNETH.

Ungrateful. These glad days your artist-self
 Is favoured as a flower in the sun.

AIDAN.

Oh, hateful is the praise of cap and bells
 For I would sing the seeing of the soul.

KENNETH.

And young Romance has settled at your side.
 Felicia's fame runs like an elfin tune
 Along our erstwhile disillusioned Street.
 E'en eyes of ancient owls she sets agleam
 As Thames at midnight underneath the moon ;
 So well may *you* be grown too glad for song.
 And now her garden city plans grow ripe ;
 There, in the days our happy fortune brings,
 Can you not see life-harvests turn to gold ?

AIDAN. (*Sadly, and half to himself.*)

Had I not sent those idle songs abroad,
 Had I awaited some deep spirit-flow,
 Some noble human theme beyond the Street
 And my light daily self, I had not brought
 This ruin, for Felicia ne'er had come
 To fill my little cove of life with storm.
 Sheltered, serene, I might creator grow—

KENNETH.

So, still you tease yourself with fancied ill,
 And bring a crazy cloudland round your life.
 I thought I cured your weird insanity
 Last time we talked. 'Ware, lest you anger Fate
 By this unreason : querulous and cold
 Between Fame's bouquets and Felicia's smile !

AIDAN.

Club revels play your fancy merry tricks,
 Or in vain kindliness of heart you seek
 To laugh me from the thought of life awry.
 You know my plight, my pain, my irony,
 And how I've struggled—and the flight I've
 planned.

KENNETH.

I know that poets are self-torturers
 At times when love and soul seem ends opposed.
 But love is glowing victor at the last,
 And sweetly to his purpose woos the soul
 And ends the conflict in ecstatic song.

AIDAN

Love in our world is poison brewed in dream ;
 Who quaffs it, for a life-time leaves the Path.
 But I am tracked by yet another ill :
 Those visions like strange patches of old lives ;
 They warp and wear my fragile artist-self
 And leave me like a tangled mystery-tale.
 And so I break with all familiar life ;
 Strange seas, sheer thought, old silence may unwind—

KENNETH.

The strangest seas still bear us to the self.

AIDAN.

I seek out Angus and New Avalon—

KENNETH.

You weave a dream whole worlds from act
removed.

AIDAN.

No ; with the week's end it is dream no more.
I've penned already that last note I'll leave
On Donal's desk when Friday's toil is done,
And out I pass for ever at the dawn—
A wrench 'twill be, for well I loved the Street.
Keep dark the secret for these last few days.

KENNETH.

'Twill be a secret after twenty years.
The dream will bring a smile in mellow days
When fair Felicia's children grace your home.

AIDAN.

Not e'en dream-children.

(After a pause.)

Let us seek the stars
And find our morning way to Surrey's peace.

KENNETH.

And dawn will show your dream a thing of night,
A phantom with no stamina to face
The stern adventure of reality.

(As they turn to go out AIDAN stops abruptly, and draws a hand across his face. For a few moments he remains quite unmoved. KENNETH notes that he has turned pale, and that his eyes have closed. In alarm he tries to lead AIDAN back to a chair.)

Suddenly AIDAN opens his eyes, starts, and looks wonderingly at his friend.)

AIDAN.

Where, where is Angus?—

KENNETH.

In an isle afar,
Unless again a-wandering in the world
The humour takes him.

AIDAN.

He was here with me—

KENNETH.

Then he has magic cloak for nightly wear.

AIDAN. (*Looking round him.*)

Ah, now habitual recollection steals
Above the glory of that island sight.

(*After a pause.*)

We sat upon a green isle-mountain's crest
In summer splendour; in his hand a book
Of lays of mine, the best my heart had sung.
Some thrilled with tidings of far other spheres,
Some with the sweetness of Felicia's soul.
"Ah, friend," he said, "you ne'er such heights had
won
Had you succumbed to her dear daily lure.
You fled the shade to clasp the sempiternae.
You hold her now in truth e'en as you hold
Star-secrets that will change the dreams of men."
Then, like a joyous spirit, from the sea
And up the height I saw Felicia come.
But all a-sudden that wave-Eden went,
Swift as a bird affrighted from a bough.

KENNETH.

Flying Felicia, yet finding her—
The hidden mind may all a prophet be
Or just, alas, a yearning dramatist.
You're blessed—or cursed—by living overmuch
Beyond the limits of our bonded world.

(*They go out.*)

FLIGHT AND IRONY

Early Sunday evening. A small room which opens off the sub-editors' room of the "Shield." DONAL MACALPINE, seated at a desk, reads a letter with an air of wonder and worry.

He puts it down, and glances through the open door. Early sub-editors have already taken their places, a few at the long central table, at the head of which DONAL himself habitually sits. FELICIA and others are seated at small side-tables. Tape-machines are ticking at the far end-wall. Tape-boys are slowly pasting messages on sheets of paper.

DONAL broods gloomily for a few minutes, then rises and walks to and fro. FELICA leaves her place and comes over.

FELICIA.

Ere lost in worries of the night your wits
I burn to drop a burden from my mind.
I seek your trust and sunny sympathy.

(DONAL looks at her curiously, and then at the letter he had been reading. He places a chair for her near the desk, but remains standing himself.)

DONAL.

You and mind-burdens are ill-matched meseems,
Your nature's half of blossom, half of star.

FELICIA.

Alas, its glooms and mysteries it knows ;
And sometimes these affright me, and I plan
Emprises that will bear perennial light.
For in my heart I feel humanity
Could make a wondrous planet of our earth,
Could make a noble people of itself,
By labour deep, devoted, and divine :
But what that labour is eludes my dreams ;
My poor experiments grow dimmed and dun
After their little early morning glow.
So with my striving here—awhile so fair,

The zest is gone, and I must go betimes,
Must end my quaint adventure as an "owl."

DONAL. (*Starting.*)

You leave us! Oh, how irony leaps out,
Hot on the heels of tragi-comedy!

FELICIA. (*Smiling.*)

So tragi-comedy you deem my work!
The tongues of Mayfair not so ruthless seem,
They merely dub it fad or fantasy.

DONAL.

A wilful dreamer weaves the comedy!
Dear lady, *your* blithe genius ne'er could blend
With fad or fantasy or crudity.
Yet weeds of foolishness you cannot stop
From growing in the garden of your life.
And though the weeds are nowise part of you
They'll test your gardening and try your heart.
(*With a sudden change of tone.*)

A truce to metaphor and mental play!
Your greivous blow is yet ironical.
You go—when now your presence and your spells
Have driven a silly sheep from out the fold!

FELICIA.

My only sheep have fed in fancy's fields.
Whitefriars seems a little overgrown
To suit the shy soul of a shepherdess.

DONAL.

You've scared poor Aidan Delvin from the Street,
Or he is dazed and daunted by your glow.

(*FELICIA looks questioningly at DONAL, and sees that he is serious to very gloominess.*)

His note declares he cannot bide the life
Where you are laughing lure and airy charm.

FELICIA. (*Thoughtfully.*)

Yet if in weird affinity we're bound
His flight is vanity that binds the more.

All gleams of day, and night's o'erpowering peace,
Sharpen his amorous hunger as he flies.

DONAL.

You take it coolly as a Reuter tale,
That may be news or trash or blend of both
But quite beyond the kingdom of your heart.
Have you no pity for his plight and pain?

FELICIA.

Pity for plight and pain on earth is waste.
They follow some obscure interior law
As surely as the tides obey their own;
And till we find the law we work in vain:
If Aidan seeks it, lucky be his quest!
A link occult between his soul and mine
Meseems was forged in land and life afar.
I sensed it when we met. Of late it grew
Too dangerously dear: one reason grave
For my resolve to live an "owl" no more.
I yield no tribute to a mystery.

DONAL.

Your soul is frost that still withstands the sun.

FELICIA.

If love were like a story to be "subbed,"
With all the facts before us, and the close,
So that 'twere fitted for appraisement fair
Before we gave it scope, the game were just.
But swift surrender to its mystery,
And all uncertain sequel, were to launch
The soul's fair ship on wild uncharted seas,
With confidence of captaincy no more.
I want to fare behind the lures and lights,
The symbols and the dreams that sway the world,
And find the hidden meaning of my rôle.
I shirk my part until I understand.

DONAL. (*Gloomily.*)

Perchance 'tis meet and well that Aidan fled
For you would lead him but a hopeless dance.

FELICIA.

He has a touch of Nature's mystery,
Hence to be feared ; he sounds the secret seas,
And so has visions, ecstasies, alarms
That were but madness to the multitude.
His is a proud and lonely destiny.
While some of outer science make a god
The greater gods are inward. Man has come
In this our era to a haunting stage,
And more than one Columbus may be bound
O'er deeps occult to radiant spirit-shores,
And all shall wonder when those shores are won.
E'en I have urges inward to the quest ;
I brood on atom-worlds, electron-life,
On radio-activity's romance,
On ether-rills o'er circuits infinite :
Trying to sense the magic that abounds
In the weird body of our universe,
Until I shrink all startled at the thought
Of what soul-forces all this awe subserves.

DONAL.

Then you and Aidan are at heart akin :
This double flying double folly seems—
Why *must* I lose my choicest pair of owls ?

FELICIA.

Too much akin are we, and fostering Fate
Had made us fly, to find and keep our selves . . .
And now I've told my tale and bared my heart.

DONAL.

And more than ever 'tis obscure to me !

*(He shakes his head resignedly and gathers up his papers.
The sub-editors' room has grown more animated,
and he knows that the serious work of the evening is
due.)*

FELICIA.

I'll ask the chief to-morrow for release.
And then I'll rest a spell in Beechenmere.

I have a subtle subject for a book
That much intrigues me. You will deem it *mad*
So far it is from Thames and time and tide,
And all the dross that owls have idolised.

DONAL.

Alack, so dense, so dead, so damned are we
We lack the joyance of idolators.
Behind an idol an idea gleams—
Who with our owl-life an idea links?

FELICIA.

'Tis zestful, though it ever ends in dust,
Like motor-race upon a country road.
And now it palls and I must needs dismount.
I need seclusion for my subtle book,
And crave companionship of winds and waves.
My father plans long cruising in the "Gleam"—
(*Smiling.*)

Suppose we sight this latest Avalon!

(DONAL whistles softly, and then he lapses into gloom.)

DONAL.

Alas, our singer, and his foolish flight,
Alas, the crazy drama nicknamed life!
But now Sir News-Nose must be served full speed.
Though we were Hamlets and Antigones
We yet must calm our tempests, still our sighs
And pile owls' prey for Britain's breakfast mind.

(FELICIA laughs and returns to her work with an inscrutable air. DONAL proceeds to the head of the central table, looking like a man of fell designs and the gloomiest imaginings.)

THE BATTLE OF THE GHOSTS

Dawn. A ridge of the hill above the wold of Beechenmere. Higher hills away beyond. Far down in the midst of the wold is a view of the turrets of Beechenmere Castle.

AIDAN DELVIN comes out of the wold and looks from the

ridge to the higher hills. He is emaciated and pallid, but wears a calm and exalted expression.

AIDAN.

The nights and days that ghostly centuries seemed
Are gathered to 'Time's bosom peacefully ;
And now their exit after all the dread
Seems idyll-ending to a nightmare tale.
With this calm dawn comes dearer dawn of mine,
All life a fresh adventure soul-assigned.
I'll haunt no more the wold of Beechenmere,
Nor sleep within it when star-watching's done,
Or when the baleful tumult of desire
Has soiled and clouded my creative self.
This spell is o'er, this term of heaven and hell.

I hungered to be near Felicia's paths
A little while before I went for aye
Among the seekers in the silent isles.
Her glamour drew me, step by step anear,
E'en though I fled her : love so flies and feints.
And then the wold became a mocking world :
In vigils, fastings, agonies I drew
From Nature and from self appalling stores.
I seemed a hundred raging entities
'Twixt dusk and midnight, then a hundred ghosts
Gloomed in me from the midnight to the dawn.
And every ghost appeared a tortured " me "
All alien to my tried familiar self.
They fought, and still I knew not why they fought,
Nor what to them would seem or prize or peace.
For if I dared the desperate resolve
To crush all doubts and fears and fare to her
And cry that nothing mattered save her love :
Oh, soon that dear decree was torn to nought
By other powers within my wildered self
That craved Thought's hermit-lands arcane, austere
Where passion was not e'en a memory . . .

Ah, well ! the fever and the fight are o'er ;
Cold is the conquest after many days ;
The beaten ghosts less might than zephyrs wield ;
Who once was fond Felicia lures no more.
I might go back undaunted to the Street
And work beside her as beside a flower,
But that the Street, like her, has lost its lure,
And seems a desert rounded with mirage,
And all the larger London's glow a dream
Dimly remembered in a slow stark morn.
Ay, all is wakefulness and wonder now,
All that seemed life and self to rest are laid.

But whither shall I turn ? Afar and faint
Now seems the call of Angus and his isles,
As if while here I suffered they had veered
Atoward an alien planetary chain
Of life sheer sundered from my mind and mood.

Ay, whither shall I turn ? My folk's lone farm,
By Western waters, for a little while
Shone forth, late nights, a refuge in my thoughts.
I saw myself at toil, with dreams and songs
Weaving another world as in my youth.
Ah, madness ! such a growth as mine to dare
Transplanting in such simple soil again !
It draws my heart yet lies unreachable
As bird-life by the consciousness I bear.

And London's bookland : mazy, mountainous ?—
There, many be the " prizes," and the voice
Of fame is clamorous. I shrink ashamed
From all its raging unreality,
Its freaks, its sophists, and its market-life . . .
The State is all awry, unnatural,
With under-millions plundered or debased,
And sin and show and money-bags above,
And much vain zest about the ghosts of time,
And spirit but a fading legend deemed . . .

Scholastic ways? I left them for a dream,
 Deeming Press sirens voices Sibylline.
 My little well of learning, once a joy,
 Is all dust-choked and buried out of sight.

I am awake indeed! I've lost my dreams;
 The sinners and the shadows leave me cold;
 Love's lure is buried with the lure of fame;
 And vain the thought that such as I have power
 To right the wrongs of bonded under-men.
 And folly were the hope heart-songs of mine
 Could touch the ghouls who grind them or ignore.
 All must unwind their devious destinies
 Through myriad lives in deepening spirit-stress.
 The plans our peacock intellects upbuild
 Drop down like children's castles on the sand.

Now am I stranded on an orb awry,
 Now am I launched upon an alien age.
 Through some strange slip of Fate's old servitors
 Far out of my due place am I reborn.
 My spirit's music fits no orchestra,
 A stranger I on every road of life.

*(With bent head he walks away to the higher hills.
 As he passes over a further height, with his gaze set
 towards the brightening east, FELICIA comes out to
 the edge of the wold and peers along the ridge.)*

FELICIA.

A fool to heed a dream before the dawn!
 Yet wondrous was its vividness, its ruth.

(She walks slowly along the ridge.)

Here Aidan walked, and mourned his lonely fate,
 And I, who smiled at first, a-sudden woke,
 Whipped by a strange chastising of the heart.
 Oh, what a burden is a poet's love!
 Could goddess bear it? Yet one must be kind
 To fretful genius for the muse's sake—
 Nay, I dissemble! 'Tis for love alone

I dared his dangerous presence in the dawn
 ('Taskmaster Day a cold discretion brings).
 Awaking in the wizard peace of noon,
 Ere common light usurps the sacry globe
 That answered to the stars' old witchery,
 I am a being of an earlier world,
 A sea-nymph or a dryad of the prime,
 Athirst for magic that dun earth has lost,
 And I would race with love along the hills.

(She laughs airily.)

"Oh well," the brain says, "ill," the secret heart,
 "That Aidan on the hill was but a dream."

*(She pauses as she comes to a path that leads from the
 ridge to the higher hills.)*

Why do I tremble at this path? Methinks
 It leads to vantage-heights that take the sun
 In all his early glory like a god.

(She turns to walk upward.)

*The ANCIENT SHEPHERD-KING, carrying his flower-
 covered staff, appears on the path above her. An
 obscure feeling of antipathy seizes her, but when she
 looks into the SHEPHERD-KING's eyes a mysterious
 sense of peace steals over her.)*

FELICIA. *(To herself.)*

I was awake, yet now I seem as one
 Who walks in dream on heights beyond the world.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Late lives of yours have little waking known.
 Your greater nature has been sleeping long—
 In divers lands and time-spells you have known
 But moods and fevers of your outer self,
 Or else the proud ambition swayed your heart
 To shine as thinker; or again, you've made
 Fierce love the potent passion of your years.
 Both love and thought are well: as single flowers
 Fair blooming in the garden of a life

Amid the many flowers of equal worth
The spirit wills to grow in time and place.

(*He gently shakes his flower-covered staff.* FELICIA'S
eyes drop.)

FELICIA. (*Speaking as if spell-struck.*)

Ah, now a mind that widens as a world
Recalls old joys and tragedies and tears.

Have I been æons whirling in and out

Of this fantastic earth? From fate to fate?—

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Not *you*, but that deep Self beyond your self.

It once was free : in immemorial years

Were sense and spirit close as bloom and rose,

And from the grand Within you tidings brought

To kin whose denser clay had dimmed the soul.

(*He pauses for a few moments, and continues more
gravely.*)

But long, unrecked in inlands of the Self,

You've left the fount of feeling and the power

That made you vestal-soul on Nature's hearth

In far Lemurian and Atlantean days.

FELICIA. (*Musingly.*)

Lemurian and Atlantean days were dreams

Last night, last hour. And now they rise like ghosts.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Your soul was singer in the maiden choir

That tuned to magic of our inward earth

The noblest of the men who dreamed and wrought

Till poise and sweetness took their driving wills :

Such was your angel-service in the world

In that dear, wayward, plastic morning-time.

FELICIA.

Yea, now my memory, like a continent

Rising from burying seas, restores to me

Dim myriad marchings of old human years—

Stonehenge—and after-strife—Oh, tangled tales !

FROM ATLANTIS TO THAMES

(She looks in a mazed and dreamy way into what the SHEPHERD-KING knows is a panorama of the later past.)

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Stonehenge your sacred service long acclaimed;
A gleam of old Atlantean power returned
To light those earth-days of the soul you are.

FELICIA.

But how came feud and fire?

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

A later life,
Wild-starred on Britain's plains, in part you see:
Old Father Time might deem it yesterday
When you, the gentlest friend of Boudicca,
Were roused to hate and wrath by Roman wrong—
I saw your girlhood burning like a flame.
These later lives, e'en as your life to-day,
I read as flash and waste. Poor power you've won
In thought, in passion, in soft social arts,
But lost the Nature-magic once your joy.

FELICIA. *(Wonderingly.)*

Now gathers myriad-minded memory,
Like a weird mother lost long, long ago!
And strangely love is blended in the maze;
Now sought, now shunned, now ecstasy, now bane!

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Witless to burn for love or ban its beam,
As burning for a rose or banning dew.
'Tis one sweet bloom amid the vast of blooms,
One star in Being's boundless firmament.
Wise souls accept it, one of legion lights
Upon the way of Beauty, Truth and Good,
They master it, and love without desire.
This wisdom you have lost in many lives.
Too much or else too little you have sought
Its potency, e'en since Atlantean days.
And one whose fate was subtly bound with yours

You have delayed or mazed upon the Path.
 As teacher or accusing spirit I
 Have sometimes brought you spells of light and peace.
 But fleeting is all learning till it comes
 From stress and insight of the soul itself.
*(FELICIA seems to wake a little out of her dream-state.
 A shade passes over her face.)*

FELICIA.

Does Nature sport with souls no less than sense?
 Are we her playthings or experiments
 Through wildering chains of life in sphere on sphere?
 What madcap mind is hers? Could she not reach
 Her goal without these æon-wastes of toil?

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

I know not; and I know not if she knows.
 I tread a path of higher tasks and joys
 Than yours, and still I seem but neophyte.
 I serve the Shining Ones that men call gods,
 And they in turn are servants, learners yet—

FELICIA. *(With a touch of passion.)*

Too dark the problem for my lightsome heart,
 Too long the schooling—yea, it finds not end
 In any life or world. Why pile up lives
 When e'en the gods have sighted not the goal?
(She muses and looks longingly towards the height.)

I shun the quest, enamoured of the height.
 There would my heart do service to the sun
 And burn entranced in his first morning fire.
 Ay, like a part of me the height has called,
 Or like an altar, one whereon I'd lie
 And sacrifice myself.

(She looks more longingly to the height.)

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Ay, sacrifice

To fell illusion, fond delirium.
 Back would you lure a soul who wills to rise.
(FELICIA starts and looks at him wonderingly.)

Not yours the peace of love without desire,
 The will to make love servant of true life.
 Although your starry self begins to stir
 You still are tempted by the serpent, sense.
 The soul that anywhere an idol knows
 In waves of space lies in illusion's web.
 'Tis inward-turning eyes that ope to truth,
 And yours of late had glimpses of the Path:
 You planned a life of long fair centuries,
 Casting away conventions like old garb,
 Trusting the vision of perennial youth,
 Knowing that Nature has unbounded stores
 For servants who have faith in Life and her.
 Oh, well the fairy, intuition, led
 Your steps awhile to more than fairyland.

FELICIA.

Ah, sweet the magic of that forward look
 Awhile from Thames-side and from Beechenmere.
 But then the world was small, familiar, straight;
 And now 'tis vast, interminable, dread.
 A frightened pilgrim is the heart that sees
 The fateful marchings of infinity.

(She looks dubious and troubled for a while. Then her eyes brighten.)

Ah, true! a chain of wilful lives and dreams
 I've wrought till Nature coldly turned away,
 Unfitted for her service deeming me.
 Yet I would do her regal will again
 From life to life, from sphere to sister sphere,
 Nor ask reward in æon of them all
 Beyond her peace within the serving Self—
 Ah me! the Self's a slow, unrising star.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Sweetly it rises with the wakening will.

FELICIA.

'Tis buried 'neath the dross vain lives have brought,
 And passion's ashes that seem mountainous.

(THE SHEPHERD-KING smiles kindly. He shakes his flowery staff before her face. Charmed and lulled by the odour she bends and sinks gently to the ground. With a tired expression on her face, but a smile on her lips, she reclines on the grass and sleeps.)

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Be hers the slumber whence awakeneth
Not she who sank to sleep but one relate
More deeply to the starry Self within,
The Servant and the Seeker sempiternae.

(He walks up the higher hill where AIDAN has gone.)

THE VOLUME SEVEN-SEALED

On the crest of the higher hill AIDAN looks into the sunrise.
Ecstacy he does not understand possesses him.

After a while bodily weariness gradually overcomes him, though his mind is vividly alert. He reclines on the grass, still looking to the sunrise, while he tries to concentrate his thought intensely on the Divine Sun, the supernal light-essence, of which he knows the physical sun is a reflex.

He begins to doze, while his mind struggles at once powerfully and painfully against the growing physical exhaustion. At last a new thought stirs him.

AIDAN.

Let brain and body slumber if they choose !

They are but vehicle and instrument

Used by the soul upon this earthly stage.

My will, the real I, shall keep awake,

Letting the Outer sleep, the Inner watch,

And thus the souls of things behold at work,

Come up with Nature in creative stress,

Unshaded by her customary veil . . .

Ah, now I win ! Weak brain and body drop

Like garments from glad bather on the brink.

O wakeful Mind, here is thy brimmed reward !—

I breast the breakers of a shining sea
 Whose every drop is Being, whose every wave
 Glows with the essence of uncounted worlds.
 'Tis myriad-moded gleam and song and awe.
 'Tis Beauty with her legion harvesters
 Beyond her outposts that we call the stars.
 Oh, blind from birth was I, who now find light.
*(His looks for a moment reveal intensified wonder and
 rapture, but also intensified struggle . . . His eyes
 close. . . .)*

After a while he awakes.)

Ah me, the weakness of the clinging frame
 The soul is doomed to wear in time and tide !
 One wondrous moment it was mine to see
 The uncreate Creatress glow and sing
 And send her archetypes on timeless tasks
 Beyond our wilderness of hues and forms ;
 And then I drooped and slept, and all was dark !
 And now I am an exile in the world.

(The ANCIENT SHEPHERD-KING appears.)

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

E'en so your soul, your regal striving Self,
 Untamed by clay, has sought reality
 Upon Atlantean hills, Chaldean plains,
 By Nile, by Ganges, by Hellenic waves,
 On western Tara's crest, by grey Stonehenge,
 In sequent lives : and still the quest endures.

AIDAN. *(Wonderingly.)*

You wake strange memories, O Shepherd-King !
 I know you, and withal I know you not.
 You've gleamed in visions ; but on toiling earth
 Where have we met, where have we fraternised ?

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

I am but one of myriad inner kings
 Who sometimes at the turning of an age
 Or at the crisis of a life beloved
 Will take an outer form. I come again

As one who was the guide and hierophant
 Of you—the real You—and kindred souls
 When other scenes and body-robes were ours,
 And ye were nearer Nature's inmost life,
 The life forgotten as ye grow in thought.
 We all are one in essence, though I reached
 Æons ere you these planetary spheres
 (For subtle planets intersect this earth)
 And am an Elder Brother of the race.

AIDAN. (*Joyously.*)

Then deep your vision of the soul of things,
 The purpose of creative Nature's course.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

No! I am æons from the secret yet,
 Though on mine inner cycle wonders wait.
 With greater growth and loftier laws I live
 Than in Lemurian or Atlantean days
 Or any stage of mine on outer earth,
 And yet my master-lore is as a child's;
 The deeps of Being still are worlds away,
 Life-in-Itself a volume seven-sealed.

AIDAN.

Oh wonder, wonder! Nigh to godhood, yet
 It hides its secrets as from us on earth!

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Godhood, the primal self-creative power,
 Knows nought of these our lower lives and planes,
 For, perfect Beauty, Good eterne aglow,
 Betwixt its nature and its thoughts and acts
 Is no distinction, and it may not brood
 On what is less or lower than itself
 Or aught that lacks perfection *sempiternæ*.
 We, shadows in its shine, how could it send
 Sense of its secrets to our consciousness?
 And how could we, all partial, grasp or bear
 The Whole that is true Being, formless Form,
 Pure Light beyond the prism of all the worlds?

AIDAN.

What weird, inscrutable ascent is ours !
From world to world, the wherefore and the *why*
Remote as climax of an endless tale.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

With every plane the sense of glory grows,
The widening knowledge is an ecstasy.
To beauty and to bliss no bounds are set,
Plane after plane, if we put by the quest
For understanding of the Ultimate Goal
And Being-in-Itself. The master-powers
Who on mine inner orbit rule—and serve—
Think that e'en Being's self is unaware
Of Being's meaning : that its destiny
Is self-unsounded self-creativity :
Ever expressive of the Word and Will,
Never abating its supernal power,
Never exhausting its own mystery—

AIDAN. (*Musingly.*)

Then foolish all the fever of my years
For vision of a sphere beyond my life !
Since plane on plane is partial as the first
It were as well to be content with Thames
And Thames-side, and the human comedy,
And all that song and science give to us,
And love-gleams and the glistening of the stars.
Why haste and hunger if eternity
Is still a glorious hunger unappeased ?

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Upon mine inner orbit more we know
And more enjoy, but hope and hunger more.
Our thought is action, and our action joy,
But never soul-feast satisfaction brings.

AIDAN.

Then kindred I, in lone and humble wise !
But much I've erred : because I yearned and dreamed
And failed to lift my life high as my dream

I had a sense of treason and of sin,
 Yea, with my draughts of bitterness I dreamed
 That all the race had failed and fallen in me.

(The SHEPHERD-KING flirs his flowered staff and a
 wondrous fragrance pervades the height. AIDAN
 feels enveloped in an extraordinary new atmosphere,
 which yet has a felicitous sense of naturalness. As he
 breathes it he seems at once ideally healthy and
 mentally concentrated to a degree he has never known
 before. Then the feeling grows that the atmosphere
 is a luminous substance around his thought-being, and
 through which he can sense a new world.)

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

No failure yours, no treason, and no sin.
 You were but hungry for the food long lost.
 The magic earth-ambrosia, spirit's kin.
 It breathes the deeper essence of all globes,
 A finer ether, full of wizardry,
 Whose making is a secret of the gods.
 All early races, lightly linked to flesh,
 In young evolving years have breathed it,
 While conscious thought is faint and dreamful yet.
 But globes and bodies grow in density,
 And changeful fates ensue for flowering souls ;
 Brain is evolved and thought-life takes its course.
 This other secret life escapes the race,
 This intimate magic of its primal age ;
 All need it, but few win it in your world.

AIDAN.

Then, thought and art are loss no less than gain.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

Men grow and gain, and yet they shrink and lose,
 Old powers discard, exulting in the new.
 Thought is but part of man's divine array,
 Even as love ; each should be hallowed, turned
 To lighting and to lifting of the folk—
 Thinkers and lovers like evangelists.

But other glorious gifts sleep in the Self.
 And 'tis your part, along with Thought and Love
 To waken these, for service of your kin.
 Love! You have feared the flame that burns divine
 When beautified and freed of all desire.
 But now comes insight, and the life you face
 Will be your deepest since Atlantean days
 (The zenith days when hosts had mastery
 Of laws and energies that made them lords
 Of what to-day would seem an Eden-earth—
 The zenith days ere power abused brought doom).
 I know from light that in your aura gleams
 Your spirit brings to birth an epic Song
 That will illumine for hosts who toil and dream
 The gods beyond the prisoners in themselves.
 Full many a life of labour and of sighs
 That seemed to you of all fruition void
 Was yet spring sowing for this harvest store
 That to your golden sickle falls betimes.

AIDAN.

Ah, that were destiny beyond my dreams,
 Showing sweet meaning in all aches and falls.
 A hundred trial-lives I'd serve with joy
 To glean the gift of one such human Song
 That kith and kin would hold within their hearts.

THE SHEPHERD-KING.

No life hath start or ending in itself
 Or rounded meaning. 'Tis one outer day
 In the unplumbed, illimitable Life
 Of pilgrim Spirit, linked with all the worlds.

(He inclines his staff towards AIDAN, and the latter puts forth his right hand and holds it therein.)

AIDAN is conscious of unearthly fragrance, radiance and music, and seems suddenly borne backward to another planetary world, all light and song. Scarcely has he realised his place and part among the beings who work therein when the scene mysteriously changes to the

earth, but an earth entirely different from the one he has known. It is molten and enveloped in fire-mist. It and he and the other beings thereon pass through change after change—interior and outer. The beings at first are all but ethereal; they have a dream-like consciousness; then—after what seem ages—a vivid picture-sense; far later they grow more human-like in form, though the frame-texture is tenuous; divers further changes of form, nature, and environment ensue; eventually—in Lemurian days—they seem all will-power and work wonders therewith. Then, in early Atlantean days, a profound memory develops.

Women, among whom FELICIA appears again and again, seek to charm them to a sweet, magical, subtle life by song which seems to come from the heart of earth and Nature. The recognition of FELICIA comes through some mysterious soul-faculty, as the bodies are diverse age after age.

At a later Atlantean stage is a glimpse of a mysterious exodus. AIDAN is one of many disciples who accompany a radiant Teacher to a secluded scene far overseas. As he tries to grasp the nature of the new life therein, there comes another scene; all the disciples in turn are speeding on missions to divers regions of the world. The radiant Teacher is seen no more.

A further swift series of pictures AIDAN finds alluring and august but beyond understanding. Mystery-Temples and Grottoes, with their Initiates and neophytes, gleam like stars through heavy clouds. He has a dawning but ecstatic intuition of the relation of all the light to an interior and cosmic Light—the Christos-consciousness, whose unfolding is perennial yet ever suggests a new factor in the creative evolution of the worlds.

Suddenly the nature of the vision changes, though the sense of the new secret in the creative evolution remains. AIDAN seems upon a sea which flows in an apparently

Spiral course. It bursts at length against a mountain, which in a moment is seen to be really a part of a mighty sphere, within which is a beautiful series of other spheres, all of different and dazzling colours. Scarcely has he noticed on the outer sphere a vast garden city in which he and FELICIA are calmly at work with a host of friends—in mysterious relation also with ANGUS and his islanders—when he realises the wondrous grading of the substance and the life of the interior spheres: electrical, mental, and manifold other orders that grow ever more subtle.

The Song he is to sing becomes crystal-clear to him; he wonders he had not thought of it before, it is so manifestly the very flowering of his innermost nature. He begins a rapturous chant of the garden city which now seems world-wide, but as he gazes through inner sphere on sphere the theme and the trend of the Song undergo change after change, of intensiveness and illumination: it seems more than poetry and melody, indeed to embrace all aspects of doing and living. Deepening, ever deepening, must it be to infinity?

He feels something slipping from his hand. Ah, the staff of the SHEPHERD-KING! The music lowers to a murmur, to nought. . . . The fragrance slowly escapes. . . . The radiance fades. . . . He is alone on the height.

AIDAN.

Upon my little plot of conscious life
 How vexed, how vain, how glad, how gloomed I've
 been,
 As if it were the potent universe!
 A little has the veil been raised for me,
 And now I know the myriad destinies,
 From eld to futures that o'erwhelm my thought,
 With which, a pilgrim atom, I am linked
 (A pilgrim atom, kindred to the stars).
 Now anywhere is well to work and grow,
 Though 'twere a prison or a waste, for all

Are in the joyance of the Life-that-is,
Are in the marching of Infinity.
Now I could be a dewdrop or a bud
And feel high-fated and magnificent,
And, laughing, look along the centuries,
Along the æons, for the Sure-to-be,
The coming of my commerce with the gods,
The flowering of my purpose in their scheme.

But I am more evolved than bud or dew !
I am a soul with all its regal state ;
Lives are my grand experimental tours,
In strange disguises tilling untilled fields
For mystic harvest gatherings afar.

And now again I to my tilling turn.
My friends shall wonder at my joyful calm,
How one to me the shadow and the shine,
The large, the little, and the comedy
I'll find whene'er I sense the fool-ghost Fame.
If haply kings are flurried, thinkers grave,
And poets' selves dream of no golden age,
I, dreaming not but waking, shall be thrilled
Not at the thought of one but myriads.
And when I sing my secrets they shall dream,
And from their dreams shape deeds of fire and gold.
(*He descends the hill.*)

AN ALIEN'S EXIT

FELICIA slowly awakes on the sward. She has a sense of indescribable exhilaration, yet at the same time feels as if she were just recovering from extreme physical weakness. All around her are soft, wreathing clouds of a strange, vapoury substance of varied tints : orange, grey, green, deep red, yellow, with traces of pink and blue—so far as they suggest normal colours. In the wreathing mass there are many shadings for which she has no name. She is conscious of a curious

kinship with it all, but gradually there comes a feeling of mingled antipathy and coldness. Yet she gazes for a while in a kind of fascination.

FELICIA.

Lo, 'tis myself, and yet no more myself !
 By some strange sorcery—O Shepherd-King,
 What magic on the mountain did you weave ?—
 Mind that I long have suffered is out-drawn,
 And leads a spectral life apart from me.
 I know this stratum of old mood and thought :
 My own essential nature oft it seemed.
 Yet now I see it as a thing apart.
 I know it for an alien as it goes.
 How did my real Self such load endure ?
 My spirit's garden such a waste of weeds ?
 (Though some are fragrant, some enchantment
 breathe).

Now, parted from them, I am cleansed and free,
 My soul is like a sister of the sun,
 Arising in the morning of the world.
 Did Eden-beings call me to their tasks,
 Now were I worthy, I were one with them
 Ere the first music of the call had died.

(The wreathing cloud-mass spreads farther away from her.)

AIDAN comes down the hill. He is startled and yet attracted by the floating, many-tinted mass, which hides from him FELICIA herself. For a while he gazes fascinated, then turns and hastens down the slope into the wood that leads to the Castle. FELICIA, who has not seen him, watches her old mind and moods and feelings glide farther and farther away, in their fantastic wreathing and drifting. Gradually they are lost.

She remains for a little while in a happy reverie, then starts to her feet and descends the slope with the air of one whose joyous day's work is waiting.)

EPILOGUE

DONAL MACALPINE, MARK ALLCUP, and KENNETH KINROSS *over their glasses at the club.*

DONAL.

Scarce two o'clock, and yet the club grows lone !
We fall upon a drab domestic age.
Scribes who were once Ideas' warriors
Now leave us for their villas and their wives.

MARK.

Worse sorrow smites dear inlands of my soul :
Imagination like a grocer grows.
My ghosts cling lazily to gloomy graves ;
Ale woos them not. And oft the scoffing moon
Beholds a plodding tramcar bear me home,
I who rode dragons in the proud old nights !

DONAL.

We all come down to earth on weary feet ;
E'en did we know the way we've lost the will
To walk in any dawn toward wonderland.

KENNETH.

Not so, good brother ! We have teachers yet
Who see all faces set to wonderland,
Who know, whate'er the trials of the race,
It toward enchantment ever hews its way,
And can avoid its lustrous destiny
No more than the high firmament can fall,
For in its nature's core it is elect.
All day—reviewers have their festal times—
I feasted on Professor Delvin's book,
His latest, and his noblest, where he links
New science and eternal mystic fact,
Till science poesy and evangel seems,
And still he hints—it may be metaphor—
The book is only prelude to a Song.

H

DONAL.

Dear Aidan ! What a trial-ground he had
 Ere turning home to academic peace !
 A caterpillar turns to butterfly,
 But who could dream an "owl" would grow such
 wings ?

MARK.

He should have stayed an owl, deep drinking life ;
 Among us he was human as his songs.
 His books are far above my head as stars,
 And pallid starshine is his life, I ween.

KENNETH.

No, he was blithe with boyish zest and play
 When last we all were guests at Beechenmere.
 He told me he had started life at last
 And hoped to be full-grown in twenty years,
 And *then* Achievement might reward his toil.

DONAL.

Our airy hostess had a kindred tale :
 "I wish," she told me, not in jesting wise,
 "Two decades more were nicely rounded off ;
 Then I might sense the settled pulse of life.
 These growing years are April-tinted o'er.
 True, schemes I nurture like a mind adult ;
 Well shapes my garden city out of dream.
 Yet this withal is but an action-bud,
 As Aidan calls it. Still, I'll show him yet,
 For all his genial doubts, that Beechenmere
 Is more than doll's house far from College halls :
 Back of my brain I, too, sense Books and Deeds."
 Thus fair Felicia plays life's game of charm
 As gaily as a child culls meadow flowers.

KENNETH.

They baffle time, those twain ; they treat the years
 As leaves in some delightful picture book
 That ne'er can fade. They breathe content ; they
 toil

For thought and others. Lovers, yet they've smiled
Passion away.

MARK.

'Tis flouting Nature's will,
And cheating owls, who Happy Endings crave.

DONAL.

They had their storms, and now it seems they've grown
Too calm for drama save the kind that runs
Too sweetly, deep within the soul, to show
A sign the story-thirsty world can seize.

MARK.

Why, that's like filling glasses with a dream !

KENNETH.

I think them charming, and I know their peace
Is not a phase, the stepping of the spring
Above the hot volcanoes of the heart.

DONAL.

No, all their passion is for selfless ends,
And life holds no volcanoes for such souls.
The thirst of service and of sacrifice
Ever unquenched is yet their warming mead,
Ay, Life's Elixir in their bowl at last.

MARK.

Cold ending of a drama's fire and flow
From old Atlantis to the banks of Thames !

KENNETH.

E'en from Atlantis to these days by Thames
Is but a little arc of destiny,
Phase of one planet's urgent growing-time,
Span in the sequent life-march, globe on globe
O'er the vast cycle of our solar fate,
Itself but Prelude !

Well, oh well, for those
Who turn so early passion-selves to gold
And give their selfless service to the Self.
Unknown such souls befriend and bless the race,

Enrich all days the Commonwealth of mind,
Not least by sweet, all-loving thought of theirs
Broadcast in mystic wise adown the world.
They touch our secret natures, sounding notes
That tune us toward the Life elect, afar,
Whose daylight is the Master manifest,
Whose evolution ends in ecstasy.

*Behind phenomena God-regent you.
And when I speak of 'simple' flowers you smile
'Yea, simple is Eternity!' you say.*

*"You seem a guardian of my buried soul;
You woo me from the waste of daily life
To potencies august, rare inner lands:
A globe that is pure being, thought and joy,
Where bide those wonder-workers of the Light,
Our all-illuminated understanding Selves,
Infinities that tower as gods above
Their crude embodiments on outer paths.
Oh, through those dreams we know as 'nights' and
'days'*

*I play at trifles alien to the soul.
My songs are bubbles born of laughing waves,
The sport of fellow-children of an hour.
Yet I am sailor on eternal seas,
Who in my folly will not bend and face
The inspiration of their depths divine."*

AIDAN. (*In a tone of wonder as he lays down the writing.*)
Is this the deeper sequence of my thought?
Have I—the inner Watcher—woven it
The while the weary brain and body slept?
Tired, haunted by the mystery of myself,
Which like a tide returns when toil is o'er,
Infrequently I bring my thought to form.
And lo! the Self brings it to birth in sleep—
Is sleep a wondrous waking of the Self?

He examines the writing again. He broods over the concluding passage, on the waste of daily life, the neglect of deep sources of inspiration—

*"I play at trifles alien to the soul.
My songs are bubbles born of laughing waves."*

Disturbed and chastened he turns off the electric lights and goes out.