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VOL. 4384.

A SELECTION FROM THE POETRY
OF
W. B. YEATS.

I N O N E V O L U M E .

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Fernando Ferrer

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A SELECTION FROM THE POETRY

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IN ONE VOLUME

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LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1913

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PREFACE.

THE plays in this volume of selections that I have made for Baron Tauchnitz, are part of the repertory of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and with the exception of "The Countess Cathleen" are printed as they are played. I have left an end to "The Countess Cathleen" that is not played, because the new end, as given in the notes, was not made for dramatic or poetic reasons, but to suit audiences that, even in Dublin, know little of Irish mythology. The rest of the play, which differs from any published version, is as it has been shaped after many rehearsals and performances. I have spent so much of my time in the theatre, that what gives me displeasure there, gives me displeasure when in print, seeming as though it were something unshapely in a woman's body. It seems to me that what plays best before a worthy

audience, will read best, and with this conviction, which may be but a false light of the theatre, I have left out passages that used to please me.

If I had but music enough to make settings that had but enough music to adorn the words yet leave them natural and audible, I should have written lyrics to be sung, for it is speaking or singing before an audience that makes us tell our stories well, and put our thoughts into some lasting order and set our emotions clambering to some arduous climax, but as it is, lacking music but that of words I have chosen the lyrics not out of singers' mouths but from little books published at Stratford-on-Avon, or in London, or by my sisters at the hand-press worked by the village of Dundrum, in Ireland.

W. B. YEATS.

OCTOBER, 1912.

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EARLY POEMS.

(1885-1892)

TO IRELAND IN THE COMING TIMES.

*KNOW, that I would accounted be
True brother of that company,
Who sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong,
Ballad and story, rann and song;
Nor be I any less of them,
Because the red-rose-bordered hem
Of her, whose history began
Before God made the angelic clan,
Trails all about the written page;
For in the world's first blossoming age
The light fall of her flying feet
Made Ireland's heart begin to beat;
And still the starry candles flare
To help her light foot here and there;
And still the thoughts of Ireland brood
Upon her holy quietude.
Nor may I less be counted one
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,
Because to him, who ponders well,
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell
Of the dim wisdoms old and deep,
That God gives unto man in sleep.*

*For the elemental beings go
About my table to and fro.
In flood and fire and clay and wind,
They huddle from man's pondering mind;
Yet he who treads in austere ways
May surely meet their ancient gaze.
Man ever journeys on with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.
Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon,
A Druid land, a Druid tune!*

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

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE.

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

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

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

THE MEDITATION OF THE OLD FISHERMAN.

You waves, though you dance by my feet like children
at play,
Though you glow and you glance, though you purr and
you dart;
In the Junes that were warmer than these are, the waves
were more gay,

When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

The herring are not in the tides as they were of old;
My sorrow! for many a creak gave the creel in the cart
That carried the take to Sligo town to be sold,
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

And ah, you proud maiden, you are not so fair when
his oar
Is heard on the water, as they were, the proud and
apart,
Who paced in the eve by the nets on the pebbly shore,
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

DOWN BY THE SALLEY GARDENS.

DOWN by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the
tree;

But I, being young and foolish, with her would not
agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white
hand.

She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the
weirs;

But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

TO AN ISLE IN THE WATER.

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

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

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

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

THE FIDDLER OF DOONEY.

WHEN I play on my fiddle in Dooney,
 Folk dance like a wave of the sea;
 My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,
 My brother in Moharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin:
 They read in their books of prayer;
 I read in my book of songs
 I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,
 To Peter sitting in state,
 He will smile on the three old spirits,
 But call me first through the gate;

For the good are always the merry,
Save by an evil chance,
And the merry love the fiddle
And the merry love to dance:

And when the folk there spy me,
They will all come up to me,
With "Here is the fiddler of Dooney!"
And dance like a wave of the sea.

THE SONG OF THE OLD MOTHER.

I RISE in the dawn, and I kneel and blow
Till the seed of the fire flicker and glow;
And then I must scrub and bake and sweep
Till stars are beginning to blink and peep;
And the young lie long and dream in their bed
Of the matching of ribbons for bosom and head,
And their day goes over in idleness,
And they sigh if the wind but lift a tress:
While I must work because I am old,
And the seed of the fire gets feeble and cold.

THE MAN WHO DREAMED OF FAERYLAND.

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

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

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

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

He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;
And might have known at last unhaunted sleep
Under that cold and vapour-turbaned steep,
Now that old earth had taken man and all:
Were not the worms that spired about his bones
A-telling with their low and reedy cry,
Of how God leans His hands out of the sky,
To bless that isle with honey in His tones;
That none may feel the power of squall and wave
And no one any leaf-crowned dancer miss
Until He burn up Nature with a kiss:
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD.

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

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

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

THE ROSE OF PEACE.

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

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

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

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

THE ROSE OF BATTLE.

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

*God's bell has claimed them by the little cry
Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.*

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

THE TWO TREES.

BELOVED, gaze in thine own heart,
The holy tree is growing there;
From joy the holy branches start,
And all the trembling flowers they bear.
The changing colours of its fruit
Have dowered the stars with merry light;
The surety of its hidden root
Has planted quiet in the night;
The shaking of its leafy head
Has given the waves their melody,
And made my lips and music wed,
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.

There, through bewildered branches, go
Winged Loves borne on in gentle strife,
Tossing and tossing to and fro
The flaming circle of our life.
When looking on their shaken hair,
And dreaming how they dance and dart,
Thine eyes grow full of tender care:
Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.

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

THE WHITE BIRDS.

I WOULD that we were, my beloved, white birds on the
foam of the sea!

We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade
and flee;

And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on
the rim of the sky,

Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that
may not die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew dabbled,
the lily and rose;

Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the
meteor that goes,

Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low in
the fall of the dew:

For I would we were changed to white birds on the
wandering foam: I and you!

I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a Danaan
shore,

Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come
near us no more;

Soon far from the rose and the lily, and fret of the
flames would we be,
Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out on
the foam of the sea!

THE WANDERINGS OF USHEEN.

BOOK III.

(1889)

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BOOK III.

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

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

Were we days long or hours long in riding, when rolled
in a grisly peace,
An isle lay level before us, with dripping hazel and
oak?
And we stood on a sea's edge we saw not; for whiter
than new-washed fleece
Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering
and milky smoke.

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

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

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

Till the horse gave a whinny; for, cumbrous with stems
of the hazel and oak,
A valley flowed down from his hoofs, and there in the
long grass lay,

Under the starlight and shadow, a monstrous slumber-
ing folk,
Their naked and gleaming bodies poured out and heaped
in the way.

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

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

The wood was so spacious above them, that He who
had stars for His flocks
Could fondle the leaves with His fingers, nor go from
His dew-cumbered skies;
So long were they sleeping, the owls had builded their
nests in their locks,
Filling the fibrous dimness with long generations of eyes.

And over the limbs and the valley the slow owls wandered
and came,

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

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

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

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

Laid hands on the bell-branch and swayed it, and fed
of unhuman sleep.

Snatching the horn of Niam, I blew a lingering note;
Came sound from those monstrous sleepers, a sound
like the stirring of flies.

He, shaking the fold of his lips, and heaving the pillar
of his throat,
Watched me with mournful wonder out of the wells of
his eyes.

I cried, "Come out of the shadow, king of the nails of
gold!

"And tell of your goodly household and the goodly
works of your hands,

"That we may muse in the starlight and talk of the
battles of old;

"Your questioner, Usheen, is worthy, he comes from the
Fenian lands."

Half open his eyes were, and held me, dull with the
smoke of their dreams;

His lips moved slowly in answer, no answer out of them
came;

Then he swayed in his fingers the bell-branch, slow
dropping a sound in faint streams

Softer than snow-flakes in April and piercing the marrow
like flame.

Wrapt in the wave of that music, with weariness more
than of earth,

The moil of my centuries filled me; and gone like a
sea-covered stone

Were the memories of the whole of my sorrow and the
memories of the whole of my mirth,
And a softness came from the starlight and filled me
full to the bone.

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

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

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

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

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

And by me, in soft red raiment, the Fenians moved in
loud streams,
And Grania, walking and smiling, sewed with her needle
of bone,
So lived I and lived not, so wrought I and wrought not,
with creatures of dreams,
In a long iron sleep, as a fish in the water goes dumb
as a stone.

At times our slumber was lightened. When the sun
was on silver or gold;
When brushed with the wings of the owls, in the dim-
ness they love going by;

When a glow-worm was green on a grass leaf, lured
from his lair in the mould;
Half wakening, we lifted our eyelids, and gazed on the
grass with a sigh.

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

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

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

I cried, "O Niam! O white one! if only a twelve-
houred day,

"I must gaze on the beard of Finn, and move where
the old men and young

"In the Fenians' dwellings of wattle lean on the
chessboards and play,

"Ah, sweet to me now were even bald Conan's
slanderous tongue!

"Like me were some galley forsaken far off in Meridian
isle.

"Remembering its long-oared companions, sails turning
to thread-bare rags;

"No more to crawl on the seas with long oars mile
after mile,

"But to be amid shooting of flies and flowering of
rushes and flags."

Their motionless eyeballs of spirits grown mild with
mysterious thought

Watched her those seamless faces from the valley's
glimmering girth;

As she murmured, "O wandering Usheen, the strength
of the bell-branch is naught,

"For there moves alive in your fingers the fluttering
sadness of earth.

"Then go through the lands in the saddle and see
what the mortals do,

"And softly come to your Niam over the tops of the
tide;

“But weep for your Niam, O Usheen, weep; for if only
your shoe

“Brush lightly as haymouse earth’s pebbles, you will
come no more to my side.

“O flaming lion of the world, O when will you turn to
your rest?”

I saw from a distant saddle; from the earth she made
her moan;

“I would die like a small withered leaf in the autumn,
for breast unto breast

“We shall mingle no more, nor our gazes empty their
sweetness lone

“In the isles of the farthest seas where only the spirits
come.

“Were the winds less soft than the breath of a pigeon
who sleeps on her nest,

“Nor lost in the star-fires and odours the sound of the
sea’s vague drum?

“O flaming lion of the world, O when will you turn to
your rest?”

The wailing grew distant; I rode by the woods of the
wrinkling bark,

Where ever is murmurous dropping, old silence and
that one sound;

For no live creatures live there, no weasels move in the
dark;

In a reverie forgetful of all things, over the bubbling
ground.

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

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

Long fled the foam-flakes around me, the winds fled
out of the vast,
Snatching the bird in secret; nor knew I, embosomed
apart,
When they froze the cloth on my body like armour
riveted fast,
For Remembrance, lifting her leanness, keened in the
gates of my heart.

Till fattening the winds of the morning, an odour of
new-mown hay
Came, and my forehead fell low, and my tears like
berries fell down;

Later a sound came, half lost in the sound of a shore
far away,

From the great grass-barnacle calling, and later the
shore-weeds brown.

If I were as I once was, the strong hoofs crushing the
sand and the shells,

Coming out of the sea as the dawn comes, a chaunt of
love on my lips,

Not coughing, my head on my knees, and praying, and
wroth with the bells,

I would leave no saint's head on his body from Rachlin
to Bera of ships.

Making way from the kindling surges, I rode on a
bridle-path

Much wondering to see upon all hands, of wattles and
woodwork made,

Your bell-mounted churches, and guardless the sacred
cairn and the rath,

And a small and a feeble populace stooping with
mattock and spade.

Or weeding or ploughing with faces a-shining with
much-toil wet;

While in this place and that place, with bodies un-
glorious, their chieftains stood,

Awaiting in patience the straw-death, croziered one,
caught in your net:

Went the laughter of scorn from my mouth like the
roaring of wind in a wood.

And because I went by them so huge and so speedy
with eyes so bright,

Came after the hard gaze of youth, or an old man
lifted his head:

And I rode and I rode, and I cried out, "The Fenians
hunt wolves in the night,

"So sleep thee by daytime." A voice cried, "The
Fenians a long time are dead."

A whitebeard stood hushed on the pathway, the flesh
of his face as dried grass,

And in folds round his eyes and his mouth, he sad as
a child without milk;

And the dreams of the islands were gone, and I knew
how men sorrow and pass,

And their hound, and their horse, and their love, and
their eyes that glimmer like silk.

And wrapping my face in my hair, I murmured, "In old
age they ceased";

And my tears were larger than berries, and I murmured,
"Where white clouds lie spread

"On Crevroe or broad Knockfein, with many of old
they feast

"On the floors of the gods." He cried, "No, the gods
a long time are dead."

And lonely and longing for Niam, I shivered and turned
me about,

The heart in me longing to leap like a grasshopper
into her heart;

I turned and rode to the westward, and followed the
 sea's old shout
Till I saw where Maeve lies sleeping till starlight and
 midnight part.

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

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

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

S. PATRIC.

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

USHEEN.

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

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

We will tear out the flaming stones, and batter the
gateway of brass
And enter, and none sayeth "No" when there enters
the strongly armed guest;

Make clean as a broom cleans, and march on as oxen
 move over young grass;
 Then feast, making converse of wars, and of old wounds,
 and turn to our rest.

S. PATRIC.

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

USHEEN.

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

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

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN.

(1892-1912)

“The sorrowful are dumb for thee”

Lament of Morion Shehone for Miss Mary Bourke.

TO
MAUD GONNE.

SHEMUS RUA, *a Peasant.*

MARY, *his Wife.*

TEIG, *his Son.*

ALEEL, *a Poet.*

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN.

OONA, *her Foster Mother.*

Two Demons disguised as Merchants, Peasants, Servants, Angelical
Beings, Spirits.

The Scene is laid in Ireland and in old times.

SCENE I.

SCENE.—*A room with lighted fire, and a door into the open air at one side, and there may be a window at back through which one sees, the trees of a wood, and these trees should be painted in flat colour upon a gold or diapered sky. The walls are of one colour. The scene should have the effect of missal painting.*
MARY, *a woman of forty years or so, is grinding a quern.*

MARY.

What can have made the grey hen flutter so?

TEIG, *a boy of fourteen, is coming in with turf, which he lays beside the hearth.*

TEIG.

They say that now the land is famine struck
The graves are walking.

MARY.

There is something that the hen hears.

TEIG.

And that is not the worst; at Tubber-vanach
A woman met a man with ears spread out,
And they moved up and down like a bat's wing.

MARY.

What can have kept your father all this while?

TEIG.

Two nights ago, at Carrick-orus churchyard,
A herdsman met a man who had no mouth,
Nor eyes, nor ears; his face a wall of flesh;
He saw him plainly by the light of the moon.

MARY.

Look out, and tell me if your father's coming.

TEIG goes to door.

TEIG.

Mother!

MARY.

What is it?

TEIG.

In the bush beyond,
There are two birds—if you can call them birds—
I could not see them rightly for the leaves.
But they've the shape and colour of horned owls
And I'm half certain they've a human face.

MARY.

Mother of God, defend us!

TEIG.

They're looking at me.

What is the good of praying? father says.
God and the Mother of God have dropped asleep.
What do they care, he says, though the whole land
Squeal like a rabbit under a weasel's tooth?

MARY.

You'll bring misfortune with your blasphemies
Upon your father, or yourself, or me.

I would to God he were home—ah, there he is.

[SHEMUS *comes in.*

What was it kept you in the wood? You know
I cannot get all sorts of accidents
Out of my mind till you are home again.

SHEMUS.

I'm in no mood to listen to your clatter.
Although I tramped the woods for half a day,
I've taken nothing, for the very rats,
Badgers, and hedgehogs seem to have died of drought,
And there was scarce a wind in the parched leaves.

TEIG.

Then you have brought no dinner.

SHEMUS.

After that

I sat among the beggars at the cross-roads,
And held a hollow hand among the others.

MARY.

What, did you beg?

SHEMUS.

I had no chance to beg,
For when the beggars saw me they cried out
They would not have another share their alms,
And hunted me away with sticks and stones.

TEIG.

You said that you would bring us food or money.

SHEMUS.

What's in the house?

TEIG.

A bit of mouldy bread.

MARY.

There's flour enough to make another loaf.

TEIG.

And when that's gone?

MARY.

There is the hen in the coop.

SHEMUS.

My curse upon the beggars, my curse upon them!

TEIG.

And the last penny gone.

SHEMUS.

When the hen's gone,

What can we do but live on sorrel and dock,

And dandelion, till our mouths are green?

MARY.

God, that to this hour's found bit and sup,

Will cater for us still.

SHEMUS.

His kitchen's bare.

There were five doors that I looked through this day

And saw the dead and not a soul to wake them.

MARY.

Maybe He'd have us die because He knows,

When the ear is stopped and when the eye is stopped,

That every wicked sight is hid from the eye,

And all fool talk from the ear.

SHEMUS.

Who's passing there?

And mocking us with music?

A stringed instrument without.

TEIG.

A young man plays it,
There's an old woman and a lady with him.

SHEMUS.

What is the trouble of the poor to her?
Nothing at all or a harsh radishy sauce
For the day's meat.

MARY.

God's pity on the rich.
Had we been through as many doors, and seen
The dishes standing on the polished wood
In the wax candle light, we'd be as hard,
And there's the needle's eye at the end of all.

SHEMUS.

My curse upon the rich.

TEIG.

They're coming here.

SHEMUS.

Then down upon that stool, down quick, I say,
And call up a whey face and a whining voice,
And let your head be bowed upon your knees.

MARY.

Had I but time to put the place to rights.

CATHLEEN, OONA, *and* ALEEL *enter*.

CATHLEEN.

God save all here. There is a certain house,
An old grey castle with a kitchen-garden,
A cider orchard and a plot for flowers,
Somewhere among these woods.

MARY.

We know it, lady.

A place that's set among impassable walls
As though world's trouble could not find it out.

CATHLEEN.

It may be that we are that trouble, for we—
Although we've wandered in the wood this hour—
Have lost it too, yet I should know my way,
For I lived all my childhood in that house.

MARY.

Then you are Countess Cathleen?

CATHLEEN.

And this woman,

Oona, my nurse, should have remembered it,
For we were happy for a long time there.

OONA.

The paths are overgrown with thickets now,
Or else some change has come upon my sight.

CATHLEEN.

And this young man, that should have known the
woods—

Because we met him on their border but now,
Wandering and singing like a wave of the sea—
Is so wrapped up in dreams of terrors to come
That he can give no help.

MARY.

You have still some way,

But I can put you on the trodden path
Your servants take when they are marketing.
But first sit down and rest yourself awhile,

For my old fathers served your fathers, lady,
 Longer than books can tell—and it were strange
 If you and yours should not be welcome here.

CATHLEEN.

And it were stranger still were I ungrateful
 For such kind welcome—but I must be gone,
 For the night's gathering in.

SHEMUS.

It is a long while
 Since I've set eyes on bread or on what buys it.

CATHLEEN.

So you are starving even in this wood,
 Where I had thought I would find nothing changed.
 But that's a dream, for the old worm o' the world
 Can eat its way into what place it pleases.

She gives money.

TEIG.

Beautiful lady, give me something too;
 I fell but now, being weak with hunger and thirst,
 And lay upon the threshold like a log.

CATHLEEN.

I gave for all and that was all I had.
 Look, my purse is empty. I have passed
 By starving men and women all this day,
 And they have had the rest; but take the purse,
 The silver clasps on't may be worth a trifle.
 But if you'll come to-morrow to my house
 You shall have twice the sum. [ALEEL *begins to play.*

SHEMUS (*muttering*).

What, music, music!

CATHLEEN.

Ah, do not blame the finger on the string;
The doctors bid me fly the unlucky times
And find distraction for my thoughts, or else
Pine to my grave.

SHEMUS.

I have said nothing, lady.
Why should the like of us complain?

OONA.

Have done.

Sorrows that she's but read of in a book
Weigh on her mind as if they had been her own.

OONA, MARY, and CATHLEEN go out. ALEEL looks
defiantly at SHEMUS.

ALEEL (*singing*).

Were I but crazy for love's sake
I know who'd measure out his length,
I know the head that I should break
For crazy men have double strength.
There! all's out now to leave or take,
And who mocks music mocks at love.
And when I am crazy for love's sake
I'll not go far to choose.

[*Snapping his fingers in SHEMUS' face.*

Enough!

I know the head that I shall break.

[*He takes a step towards the door and then turns again.*

Shut to the door before the night has fallen,
For who can say what walks, or in what shape
Some devilish creature flies in the air; but now
Two grey-horned owls hooted above our heads.

He goes out, his singing dies away. MARY comes in. SHEMUS has been counting the money.

SHEMUS.

So that fool's gone.

TEIG.

He's seen the horned owls too
There's no good luck in owls, but it may be
That the ill luck's to fall upon his head.

MARY.

You never thanked her ladyship.

SHEMUS.

Thank her,
For seven halfpence and a silver bit?

TEIG.

But for this empty purse?

SHEMUS.

What's that for thanks,
Or what's the double of it that she promised?
With bread and flesh and every sort of food
Up to a price no man has heard the like of
And rising every day.

MARY.

We have all she had;
She emptied out the purse before our eyes.

SHEMUS (*to MARY, who has gone to close the door*).
Leave that door open.

MARY.

When those that have read books,
And seen the seven wonders of the world,

Fear what's above or what's below the ground,
It's time that poverty should bolt the door.

SHEMUS.

I'll have no bolts, for there is not a thing
That walks above the ground or under it
I had not rather welcome to this house
Than any more of mankind, rich or poor.

TEIG.

So that they brought us money.

SHEMUS.

I've heard say
There's something that appears like a white bird,
A pigeon or a seagull or the like,
But if you hit it with a stone or a stick
It clangs as though it had been made of brass;
And that if you dig down where it was scratching
You'll find a crock of gold.

TEIG.

But dream of gold
For three nights running, and there's always gold.

SHEMUS.

You might be starved before you've dug it out.

TEIG.

But maybe if you called, something would come,
They have been seen of late.

MARY.

Is it call devils?
Call devils from the wood, call them in here?

SHEMUS.

So you'd stand up against me, and you'd say

Who or what I am to welcome here. [*He hits her.*
That is to show who's master.

TEIG.

Call them in.

MARY.

God help us all!

SHEMUS.

Pray, if you have a mind to.
It's little that the sleepy ears above
Care for your words; but I'll call what I please.

TEIG.

There is many a one, they say, had money from them.

SHEMUS (*at door*).

Whatever you are that walk the woods at night,
So be it that you have not shouldered up
Out of a grave—for I'll have nothing human—
And have free hands, a friendly trick of speech,
I welcome you. Come, sit beside the fire.
What matter if your head's below your arms
Or you've a horse's tail to whip your flank,
Feathers instead of hair, that's but a straw,
Come, share what bread and meat is in the house,
And stretch your heels and warm them in the ashes.
And after that, let's share and share alike
And curse all men and women. Come in, come in.
What, is there no one there? [*Turning from door.*

And yet they say

They are as common as the grass, and ride
Even upon the book in the priest's hand.

TEIG *lifts one arm slowly and points toward the*

door and begins moving backward. SHEMUS turns, he also sees something and begins moving backward. MARY does the same. A man dressed as an Eastern merchant comes in carrying a small carpet. He unrolls it and sits cross-legged at one end of it. Another man dressed in the same way follows, and sits at the other end. This is done slowly and deliberately. When they are seated they take money out of embroidered purses at their girdles and begin arranging it on the carpet.

TEIG.

You speak to them.

SHEMUS.

No, you.

TEIG.

'Twas you that called them.

SHEMUS (*coming nearer.*)

I'd make so bold, if you would pardon it,
To ask if there's a thing you'd have of us.
Although we are but poor people, if there is,
Why, if there is——

FIRST MERCHANT.

We've travelled a long road,
For we are merchants that must tramp the world,
And now we look for supper and a fire
And a safe corner to count money in.

SHEMUS.

I thought you were . . . but that's no matter now—
There had been words between my wife and me

Because I said I would be master here,
 And ask in what I pleased or who I pleased
 And so . . . but that is nothing to the point,
 Because it's certain that you are but merchants.

FIRST MERCHANT.

We travel for the Master of all merchants.
 Yet if you were that I had thought but now
 I'd welcome you no less. Be what you please
 And you'll have supper at the market rate,
 That means that what was sold for but a penny
 Is now worth fifty.

MERCHANTS *begin putting money on carpet.*

FIRST MERCHANT.

Our Master bids us pay
 So good a price, that all who deal with us
 Shall eat, drink, and be merry.

SHEMUS (*to MARY.*)

Bestir yourself,
 Go kill and draw the fowl, while Teig' and I
 Lay out the plates and make a better fire.

MARY.

I will not cook for you.

SHEMUS.

Not cook! not cook!
 Do not be angry. She wants to pay me back
 Because I struck her in that argument.
 But she'll get sense again. Since the dearth came
 We rattle one on another as though we were
 Knives thrown into a basket to be cleaned.

MARY.

I will not cook for you, because I know
In what unlucky shape you sat but now
Outside this door.

TEIG.

It's this, your honours:
Because of some wild words my father said
She thinks you are not of those who cast a shadow.

SHEMUS.

I said I'd make the devils of the wood
Welcome, if they'd a mind to eat and drink;
But it is certain that you are men like us.

FIRST MERCHANT.

It's strange that she should think we cast no shadow,
For there is nothing on the ridge of the world
That's more substantial than the merchants are
That buy and sell you.

MARY.

If you are not demons,
And seeing what great wealth is spread out there,
Give food or money to the starving poor.

FIRST MERCHANT.

If we knew how to find deserving poor
We'd do our share.

MARY.

But seek them patiently.

FIRST MERCHANT.

We know the evils of mere charity.

MARY.

Those scruples may befit a common time.

I had thought there was a pushing to and fro,
At times like this, that overset the scale
And trampled measure down.

FIRST MERCHANT.

But if already
We'd thought of a more prudent way than that?

SECOND MERCHANT.

If each one brings a bit of merchandise,
We'll give him such a price he never dreamt of.

MARY.

Where shall the starving come at merchandise?

FIRST MERCHANT.

We will ask nothing but what all men have.

MARY.

Their swine and cattle, fields and implements
Are sold and gone.

FIRST MERCHANT.

They have not sold all yet.
For there's a vaporous thing—that may be nothing,
But that's the buyer's risk—a second self,
They call immortal for a story's sake.

SHEMUS.

They come to buy our souls.

TEIG.

I'll barter mine.
Why should we starve for what may be but nothing?

MARY.

Teig and Shemus——

SHEMUS.

What can it be but nothing?
What has God poured out of His bag but famine?
Satan gives money.

TEIG.

Yet no thunder stirs.

FIRST MERCHANT.

There is a heap for each.

[SHEMUS goes to take money.

But no, not yet,

For there's a work I have to set you to.

SHEMUS.

So then you're as deceitful as the rest,
And all that talk of buying what's but a vapour
Is fancy bread. I might have known as much,
Because that's how the trick-o'-the-loop man talks.

FIRST MERCHANT.

That's for the work, each has its separate price;
But neither price is paid till the work's done.

TEIG.

The same for me.

MARY.

Oh, God, why are you still?

FIRST MERCHANT.

You've but to cry aloud at every cross-road,
At every house door, that we buy men's souls,
And give so good a price that all may live
In mirth and comfort till the famine's done,
Because we are Christian men.

SHEMUS.

Come, let's away.

TEIG.

I shall keep running till I've earned the price.

SECOND MERCHANT (*who has risen and gone towards
fire*).

Stop. What could you do without a proof?

Here is your entertainment on the road.

Live as you please; our Master's generous.

He throws a bag of money on the ground.

TEIG and SHEMUS have stopped. TEIG takes the
money. They go out.

MARY.

Destroyers of souls, God will destroy you quickly.

You shall at last dry like dry leaves and hang

Nailed like dead vermin to the doors of God.

SECOND MERCHANT.

Curse to your fill, for saints will have their dreams.

FIRST MERCHANT.

Though we're but vermin that our Master sent

To overrun the world, he at the end

Shall pull apart the pale ribs of the moon

And quench the stars in the ancestral night.

MARY.

God is all powerful.

SECOND MERCHANT.

Pray, for you shall need Him.

You shall eat dock and grass, and dandelion,

Till that low threshold there becomes a wall,

And when your hands can scarcely drag your body
 We shall be near you. [MARY faints.]

The FIRST MERCHANT takes up the carpet, spreads it before the fire and stands in front of it warming his hands.

FIRST MERCHANT.

Our faces go unscratched,
 Wring the neck o' that fowl, scatter the flour
 And look if there is bread upon the shelves.
 We'll turn the fowl upon the spit and roast it,
 And eat the supper we were bidden to,
 Now that the house is quiet, praise our master,
 And stretch and warm our heels among the ashes.

SCENE II.

FRONT SCENE.—*A wood with perhaps distant view of turreted house at one side, but all in flat colour, without light and shade and against a diapered or gold background.*

COUNTESS CATHLEEN comes in leaning upon ALEEL'S arm.
 OONA follows them.

CATHLEEN (*stopping*).

Surely this leafy corner, where one smells
 The wild bee's honey, has a story too?

OONA.

There is the house at last.

ALEEL.

A man, they say,
Loved Maeve the Queen of all the invisible host,
And died of his love nine centuries ago.
And now, when the moon's riding at the full,
She leaves her dancers lonely and lies there
Upon that level place, and for three days
Stretches and sighs and wets her long pale cheeks.

CATHLEEN.

So she loves truly.

ALEEL.

No, but wets her cheeks,
Lady, because she has forgot his name.

CATHLEEN.

She'd sleep that trouble away—though it must be
A heavy trouble to forget his name—
If she had better sense.

OONA.

Your own house, lady.

ALEEL.

She sleeps high up on wintry Knock-na-rea
In an old cairn of stones; while her poor women
Must lie and jog in the wave if they would sleep—
Being water born—yet if she cry their names
They run up on the land and dance in the moon
Till they are giddy and would love as men do,
And be as patient and as pitiful.
But there is nothing that will stop in their heads,
They've such poor memories, though they weep for it.
Oh, yes, they weep; that's when the moon is full.

CATHLEEN.

Is it because they have short memories
They live so long?

ALEEL.

What's memory but the ash
That chokes our fires that have begun to sink?
And they've a dizzy, everlasting fire.

OONA.

There is your own house, lady.

CATHLEEN.

Why, that's true,
And we'd have passed it without noticing.

ALEEL.

A curse upon it for a meddling house!
Had it but stayed away I would have known
What Queen Maeve thinks on when the moon is
 pinched;
And whether now—as in the old days—the dancers
Set their brief love on men.

OONA.

Rest on my arm.
These are no thoughts for any Christian ear.

ALEEL.

I am younger, she would be too heavy for you.

*He begins taking his lute out of the bag, CATH-
LEEN, who has turned towards OONA, turns back
to him.*

This hollow box remembers every foot
That danced upon the level grass of the world,
And will tell secrets if I whisper to it.

(Sings.)

“Lift up the white knee;”
Hear what they sing,
Those young dancers
That in a ring
Raved but now
Of the hearts that brake
Long, long ago
For their sake.

OONA.

New friends are sweet.

ALEEL.

But the dance changes.
“Lift up the gown,
All that sorrow
Is trodden down.”

OONA.

The empty rattle-pate! Lean on this arm,
That I can tell you is a christened arm,
And not like some, if we are to judge by speech.
But as you please. It is time I was forgot.
Maybe it is not on this arm you slumbered
When you were as helpless as a worm.

ALEEL.

Stay with me till we come to your own house.

CATHLEEN (*sitting down*).

When I am rested I will need no help.

ALEEL.

I thought to have kept her from remembering

The evil of the times for full ten minutes;
But now when seven are out you come between.

OONA.

Talk on; what does it matter what you say,
For you have not been christened?

ALEEL.

Old woman, old woman,
You robbed her of three minutes peace of mind,
And though you live unto a hundred years,
And wash the feet of beggars and give alms,
And climb Croaghpatrick, you shall not be pardoned.

OONA.

How does a man who never was baptised
Know what Heaven pardons?

ALEEL.

You are a sinful woman.

OONA.

I care no more than if a pig had grunted.

(Enter CATHLEEN'S Steward.)

STEWARD.

I am not to blame, for I had locked the gate,
The forester's to blame. The men climbed in
At the east corner where the elm-tree is.

CATHLEEN.

I do not understand you, who has climbed?

STEWARD.

Then God be thanked, I am the first to tell you.
I was afraid some other of the servants—
Though I've been on the watch—had been the first
And mixed up truth and lies, your ladyship.

CATHLEEN (*rising*).

Has some misfortune happened?

STEWARD.

Yes, indeed.

The forester that let the branches lie
Against the wall's to blame for everything,
For that is how the rogues got into the garden.

CATHLEEN.

I thought to have escaped misfortune here.
Has anyone been killed?

STEWARD.

Oh, no, not killed.

They have stolen half a cart-load of green cabbage.

CATHLEEN.

But maybe they were starving.

STEWARD.

That is certain.

To rob or starve, that was the choice they had.

CATHLEEN.

A learned theologian has laid down
That starving men may take what's necessary,
And yet be sinless.

OONA.

Sinless and a thief!

There should be broken bottles on the wall.

CATHLEEN.

And if it be a sin, while faith's unbroken
God cannot help but pardon. There is no soul
But it's unlike all others in the world,
Nor one but lifts a strangeness to God's love

Till that's grown infinite, and therefore none
Whose loss were less than irremediable
Although it were the wickedest in the world.

(*Enter TEIG and SHEMUS.*)

STEWARD.

What are you running for? Pull off your cap,
Do you not see who's there?

SHEMUS.

I cannot wait.

I am running to the world with the best news
That has been brought it for a thousand years.

STEWARD.

Then get your breath and speak.

SHEMUS.

If you'd my news

You'd run as fast and be as out of breath.

TEIG.

Such news, we shall be carried on men's shoulders.

SHEMUS.

There's something every man has carried with him
And thought no more about than if it were
A mouthful of the wind; and now it's grown
A marketable thing!

TEIG.

And yet it seemed

As useless as the paring of one's nails.

SHEMUS.

What sets me laughing when I think of it,
Is that a rogue who's lain in lousy straw,
If he but sell it, may set up his coach.

TEIG (*laughing*).

There are two gentlemen who buy men's souls.

CATHLEEN.

O God!

TEIG.

And maybe there's no soul at all.

STEWARD.

They're drunk or mad.

TEIG.

Look at the price they give.

Showing money.

SHEMUS (*tossing up money*).

"Go cry it all about the world," they said.

"Money for souls, good money for a soul."

CATHLEEN.

Give twice and thrice and twenty times their money,
And get your souls again. I will pay all.

SHEMUS.

Not we! not we! For souls—if there are souls—
But keep the flesh out of its merriment.
I shall be drunk and merry.

TEIG.

Come, let's away.

He goes.

CATHLEEN.

But there's a world to come.

SHEMUS.

And if there is,
I'd rather trust myself into the hands
That can pay money down than to the hands

That have but shaken famine from the bag.

He goes out.

(Lilting.)

“There’s money for a soul, sweet yellow money.
There’s money for men’s souls, good money, money.”

CATHLEEN *(to ALEEL)*.

Go call them here again, bring them by force,
Beseech them, bribe, do anything you like;

[ALEEL goes.

And you too follow, add your prayers to his.

[OONA, who has been praying, goes out.

Steward, you know the secrets of my house.
How much have I?

STEWARD.

A hundred kegs of gold.

CATHLEEN.

How much have I in castles?

STEWARD.

As much more.

CATHLEEN.

How much have I in pasture?

STEWARD.

As much more.

CATHLEEN.

How much have I in forests?

STEWARD.

As much more.

CATHLEEN.

Keeping this house alone, sell all I have,

Go barter where you please, but come again
With herds of cattle and with ships of meal.

STEWARD.

God's blessing light upon your ladyship.
You will have saved the land.

CATHLEEN.

Make no delay.

He goes L.

(ALEEL and OONA return.)

CATHLEEN.

They have not come; speak quickly.

ALEEL.

One drew his knife
And said that he would kill the man or woman
That stopped his way; and when I would have stopped
him
He made this stroke at me; but it is nothing.

CATHLEEN.

You shall be tended. From this day for ever
I'll have no joy or sorrow of my own.

OONA.

Their eyes shone like the eyes of birds of prey.

CATHLEEN.

Come, follow me, for the earth burns my feet
Till I have changed my house to such a refuge
That the old and ailing, and all weak of heart,
May escape from beak and claw; all, all, shall come
Till the walls burst and the roof fall on us.
From this day out I have nothing of my own.

She goes.

OONA (*taking ALEEL by the arm and as she speaks bandaging his wound*).

She has found something now to put her hand to,
And you and I are of no more account
Than flies upon a window-pane in the winter.

They go out.

SCENE III.

SCENE.—*Hall in the house of COUNTESS CATHLEEN. At the Left an oratory with steps leading up to it. At the Right a tapestried wall, more or less repeating the form of the oratory. In the Centre are two or more arches through which one can see dimly the trees of the garden. CATHLEEN is kneeling in front of the altar in the oratory; there is a hanging lighted lamp over the altar. ALEEL enters.*

ALEEL.

I have come to bid you leave this castle and fly
Out of these woods.

CATHLEEN.

What evil is there here?
That is not everywhere from this to the sea?

ALEEL.

They who have sent me walk invisible.

CATHLEEN.

So it is true what I have heard men say,
That you have seen and heard what others cannot.

ALEEL.

I was asleep in my bed, and while I slept
My dream became a fire; and in the fire
One walked and he had birds about his head.

CATHLEEN.

I have heard that one of the old gods walked so.

ALEEL.

It may be that he is angelical;
And, lady, he bids me call you from these woods.
And you must bring but your old foster-mother,
And some few serving men, and live in the hills,
Among the sounds of music and the light
Of waters, till the evil days are done.
For here some terrible death is waiting you,
Some unimagined evil, some great darkness
That fable has not dreamt of, nor sun nor moon
Scattered.

CATHLEEN.

No, not angelical.

ALEEL.

This house
You are to leave with some old trusty man,
And bid him shelter all that starve or wander
While there is food and house room.

CATHLEEN.

He bids me go
Where none of mortal creatures but the swan
Dabbles, and there you would pluck the harp, when the
trees
Had made a heavy shadow about our door,

And talk among the rustling of the reeds,
 When night hunted the foolish sun away
 With stillness and pale tapers. No—no—no!
 I cannot. Although I weep, I do not weep
 Because that life would be most happy, and here
 I find no way, no end. Nor do I weep
 Because I had longed to look upon your face,
 But that a night of prayer has made me weary.

ALEEL (*prostrating himself before her*).
 Let Him that made mankind, the angels and devils
 And death and plenty, mend what He has made,
 For when we labour in vain and eye still sees
 Heart breaks in vain.

CATHLEEN.

How would that quiet end?

ALEEL.

How but in healing?

CATHLEEN.

You have seen my tears
 And I can see your hand shake on the floor.

ALEEL (*faltering*).

I thought but of healing. He was angelical.

CATHLEEN (*turning away from him*).

No, not angelical, but of the old gods,
 Who wander about the world to waken the heart—
 The passionate, proud heart—that all the angels,
 Leaving nine heavens empty, would rock to sleep.

*She goes to chapel door; ALEEL holds his clasped
 hands towards her for a moment hesitatingly,
 and then lets them fall beside him.*

CATHLEEN.

Do not hold out to me beseeching hands.
 This heart shall never waken on earth. I have sworn,
 By her whose heart the seven sorrows have pierced,
 To pray before this altar until my heart
 Has grown to Heaven like a tree, and there
 Rustled its leaves, till Heaven has saved my people.

ALEEL (*who has risen*).

When one so great has spoken of love to one
 So little as I, though to deny him love,
 What can he but hold out beseeching hands,
 Then let them fall beside him, knowing how greatly
 They have overdared?

*He goes towards the door of the hall. The COUN-
 TESS CATHLEEN takes a few steps towards him.*

CATHLEEN.

If the old tales are true,
 Queens have wed shepherds and kings beggar-maids;
 God's procreant waters flowing about your mind
 Have made you more than kings or queens; and not you
 But I am the empty pitcher.

ALEEL.

Being silent,
 I have said all, yet let me stay beside you.

CATHLEEN.

No, no, not while my heart is shaken. No,
 But you shall hear wind cry and water cry,
 And curlew cry, and have the peace I longed for.

ALEEL.

Give me your hand to kiss.

CATHLEEN.

I kiss your forehead.

And yet I send you from me. Do not speak;
 There have been women that bid men to rob
 Crowns from the Country-under-Wave or apples
 Upon a dragon-guarded hill, and all
 That they might sift men's hearts and wills,
 And trembled as they bid it, as I tremble
 That lay a hard task on you, that you go,
 And silently, and do not turn your head;
 Good-bye; but do not turn your head and look;
 Above all else, I would not have you look. [ALEEL goes.
 I never spoke to him of his wounded hand,
 And now he is gone. (*She looks out.*)
 I cannot see him, for all is dark outside.
 Would my imagination and my heart
 Were as little shaken as this holy flame!

She goes slowly into the chapel.

*The distant sound of an alarm bell. The two
 MERCHANTS enter hurriedly.*

SECOND MERCHANT.

They are ringing the alarm and in a moment
 They'll be upon us.

FIRST MERCHANT (*going to a door at the side*).

Here is the treasury,
 You'd my commands to put them all to sleep.

SECOND MERCHANT.

Some angel or else her prayers protected them.

*Goes into the treasury and returns with bags of
 treasure. FIRST MERCHANT has been listening at
 the oratory door.*

FIRST MERCHANT.

She has fallen asleep.

SECOND MERCHANT *goes out through one of the arches at the back and stands listening. The bags are at his feet.*

SECOND MERCHANT.

We've all the treasure now.
So let's away before they've tracked us out.

FIRST MERCHANT.

I have a plan to win her.

SECOND MERCHANT.

You have time enough,
If you would kill her and bear off her soul,
Before they are upon us with their prayers;
They search the western tower.

FIRST MERCHANT.

That may not be.
We cannot face the heavenly host in arms.
Her soul must come to us of its own will,
But being of the ninth and mightiest hell
Where all are kings, I have a plan to win it.
Lady, we've news that's crying out for speech.

CATHLEEN *wakes and comes to door of the chapel.*

CATHLEEN.

Who calls?

FIRST MERCHANT.

We have brought news.

CATHLEEN.

What are you?

FIRST MERCHANT.

We are merchants, and we know the book of the world
Because we have walked upon its leaves; and there
Have read of late matters that much concern you;
And noticing the castle door stand open,
Came in to find an ear.

CATHLEEN.

The door stands open,
That no one who is famished or afraid,
Despair of help or of a welcome with it.
But you have news, you say.

FIRST MERCHANT.

We saw a man,
Heavy with sickness in the bog of Allen,
Whom you had bid buy cattle. Near Fair Head
We saw your grain ships lying all becalmed
In the dark night; and not less still than they,
Burned all their mirrored lanthorns in the sea.

CATHLEEN.

My thanks to God, to Mary and the angels,
That I have money in my treasury,
And can buy grain from those who have stored it up
To prosper on the hunger of the poor.
But you've been far and know the signs of things,
When will the famine end?

FIRST MERCHANT.

Day copies day,
And there's no sign of change nor can it change
With the wheat withered and the cattle dead.

CATHLEEN.

And heard you of the demons who buy souls?

FIRST MERCHANT.

There are some men who hold they have wolves' heads,
And say their limbs—dried by the infinite flame—
Have all the speed of storms; others, again,
Say they are gross and little; while a few
Will have it they seem much as mortals are,
But tall and brown and travelled—like us—lady,
Yet all agree a power is in their looks
That makes men bow, and flings a casting-net
About their souls, and that all men would go
And barter those poor vapours, were it not
You bribe them with the safety of your gold.

CATHLEEN.

Praise be to God, to Mary, and the angels
That I am wealthy! Wherefore do they sell?

FIRST MERCHANT.

As we came in at the great door we saw
Your porter sleeping in his niche—a soul
Too little to be worth a hundred pence,
And yet they buy it for a hundred crowns.
But for a soul like yours, I heard them say,
They'd give five hundred thousand crowns and more.

CATHLEEN.

How can a heap of crowns pay for a soul?
Is the green grave so terrible a thing?

FIRST MERCHANT.

Some sell because the money gleams, and some
Because they are in terror of the grave,

And some because their neighbours sold before,
 And some because there is a kind of joy
 In casting hope away, in losing joy,
 In ceasing all resistance, in at last
 Opening one's arms to the eternal flames,
 In casting all sails out upon the wind;
 To this—full of the gaiety of the lost—
 Would all folk hurry if your gold were gone.

CATHLEEN.

There is a something, Merchant, in your voice
 That makes me fear. When you were telling how
 A man may lose his soul and lose his God
 Your eyes were lighted up, and when you told
 How my poor money serves the people, both—
 Merchants, forgive me—seemed to smile.

FIRST MERCHANT.

I laugh

To think that all these people should be swung
 As on a lady's shoe-string,—under them
 The glowing leagues of never-ending flame.

CATHLEEN.

There is a something in you that I fear;
 A something not of us; were you not born
 In some most distant corner of the world?

*The SECOND MERCHANT, who has been listening
 beyond the arches, comes forward, and as he comes
 a sound of voices and feet is heard.*

SECOND MERCHANT.

Away now—they are in the garden—hurry,
 For they will know us, and freeze up our hearts

With Ave Marys, and burn all our skin
With holy water.

FIRST MERCHANT.

Farewell; for we must ride
Many a mile before the morning come;
Our horses beat the ground impatiently.

*They go out by a door at one side. A number of
PEASANTS enter.*

FIRST PEASANT.

Forgive us, lady, but we heard a noise.

SECOND PEASANT.

We sat by the fireside telling vanities.

FIRST PEASANT.

We heard a noise, but though we have searched the
house
We have found nobody.

CATHLEEN.

You are too timid.
For now you are safe from all the evil times.
There is no evil that can find you here.

OONA (*entering hurriedly*).

Ochone! Ochone! The treasure room is broken in,
The door stands open, and the gold is gone.

(PEASANTS *raise a lamentable cry.*)

CATHLEEN.

Be silent. (*The cry ceases.*) Have you seen nobody?

OONA.

Ochone!
That my good mistress should lose all this money.