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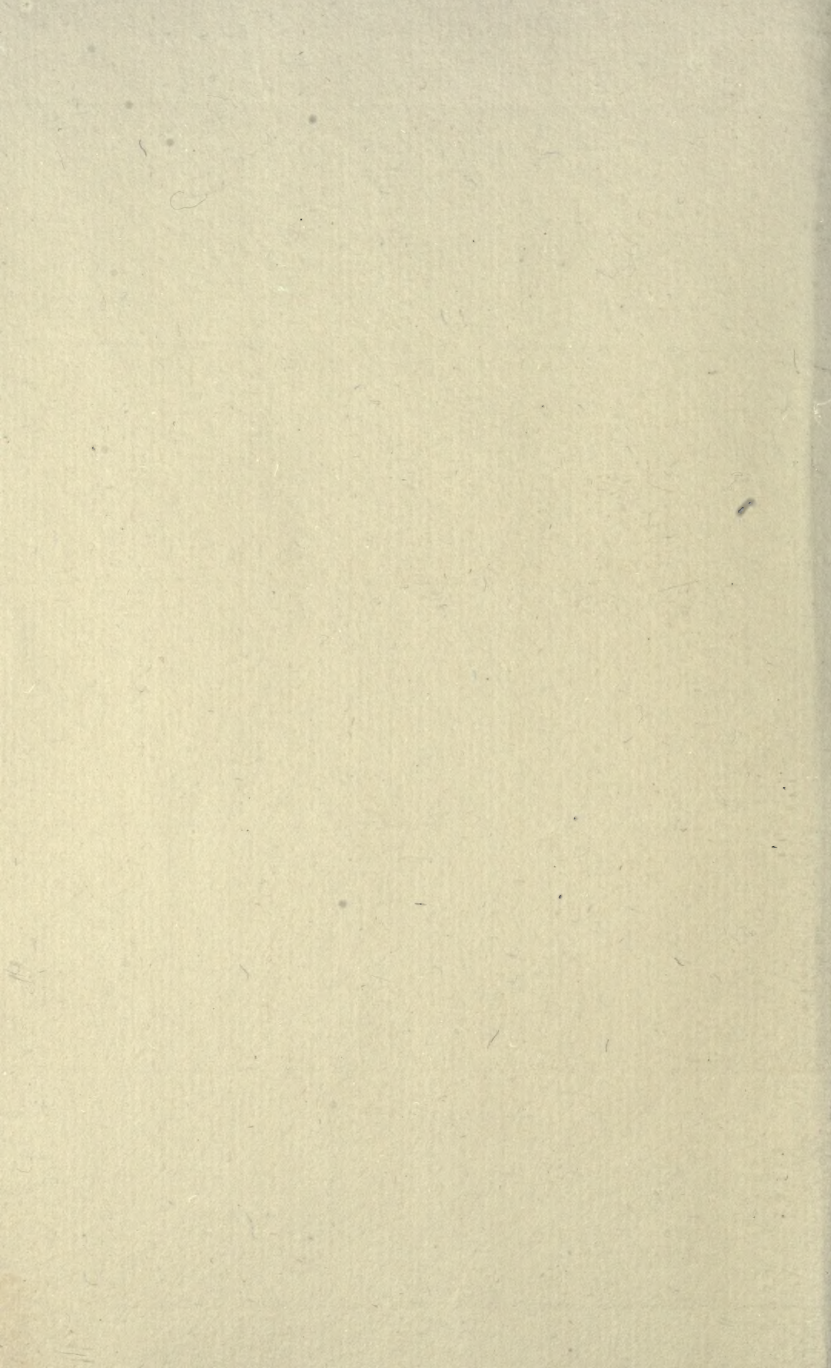
THE IMMORTAL HOUR

FIONA MACLEOD

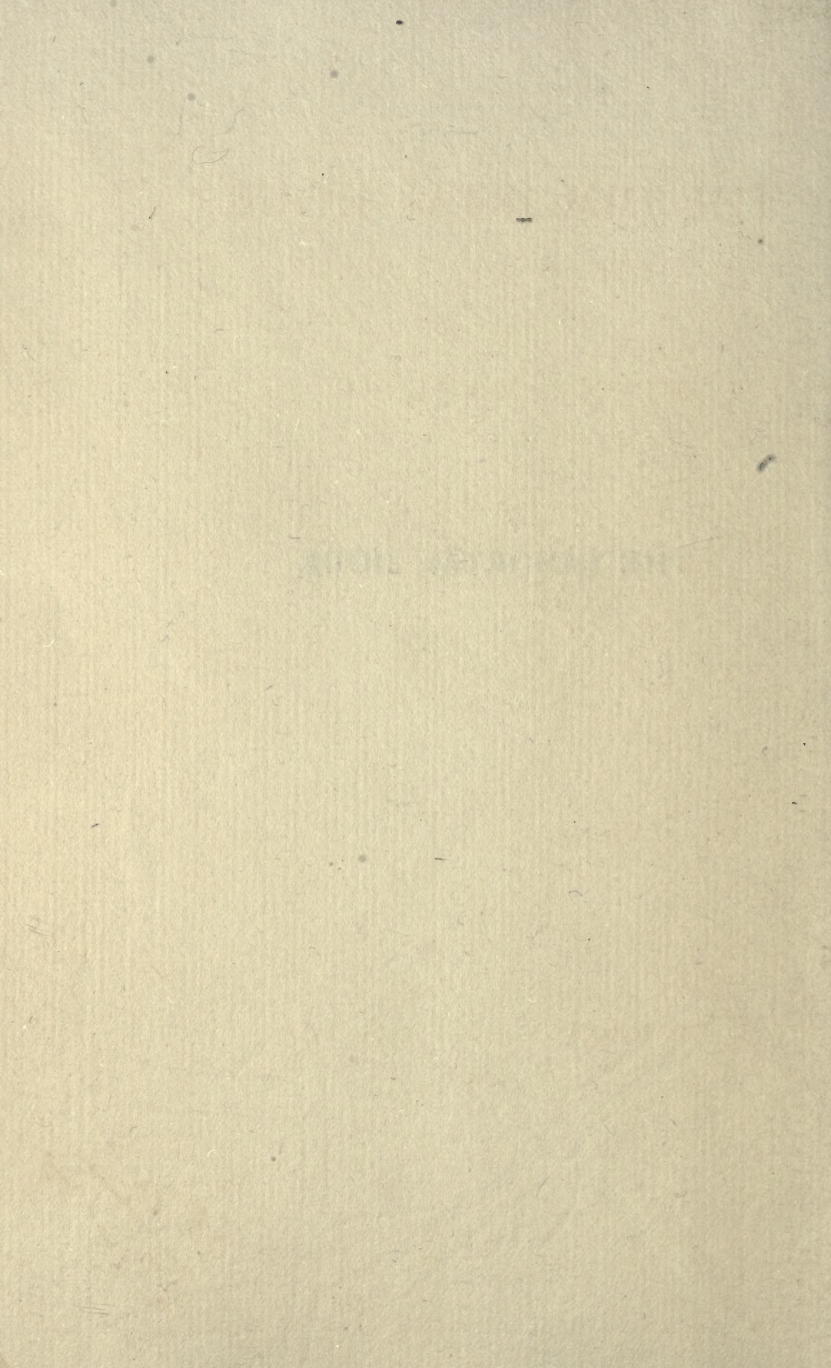








THE IMMORTAL HOUR



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THE IMMORTAL HOUR

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

BY

FIONA MACLEOD

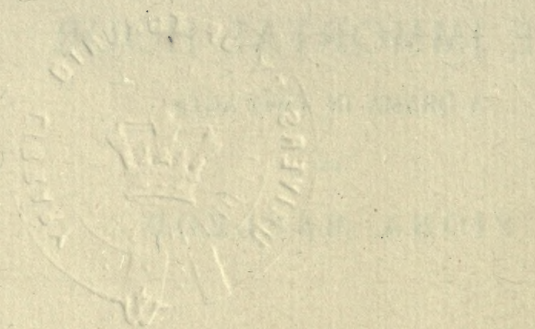


T. N. FOULIS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

1908

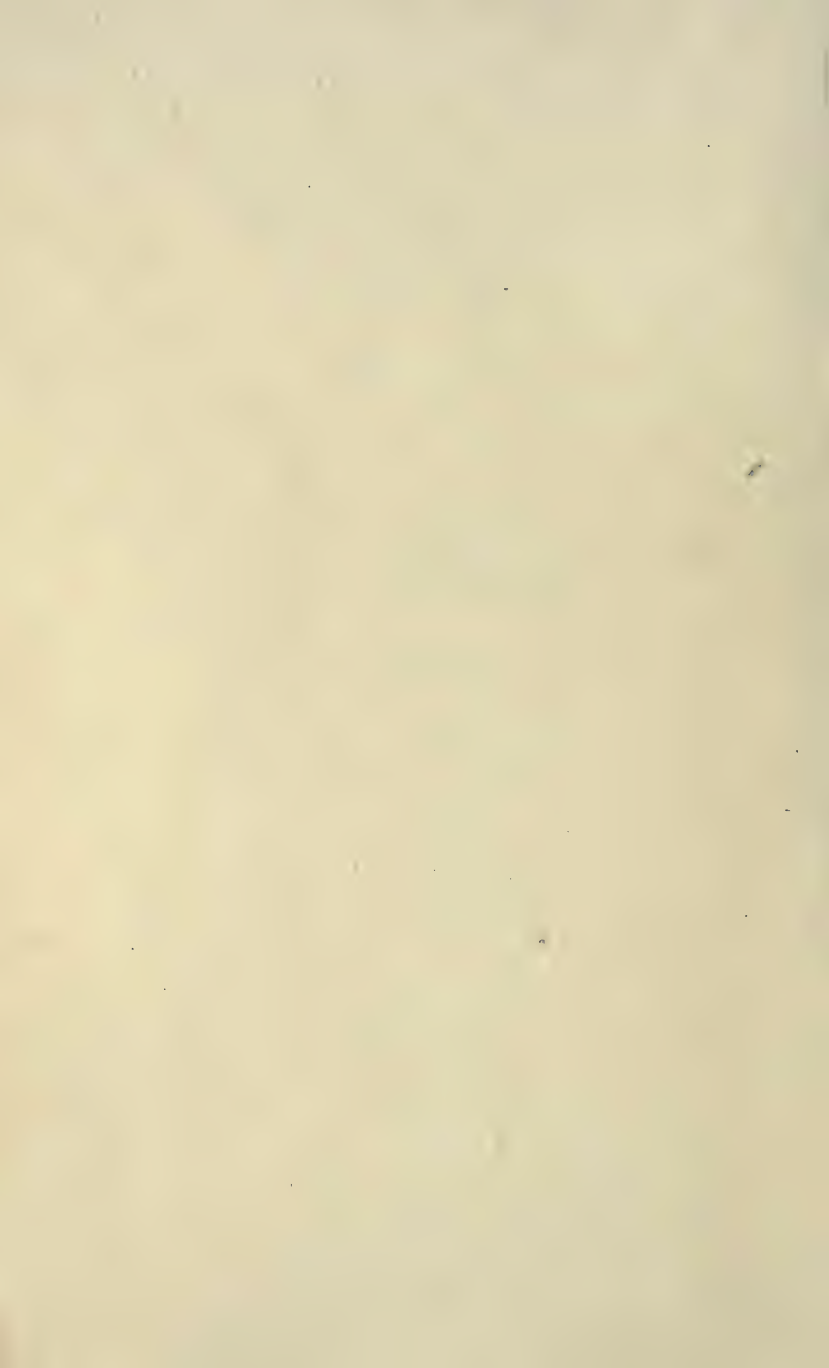
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five hundred copies
have been printed*

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TO
E. W. R.



FORENOTE

THE IMMORTAL HOUR is founded on the ancient Celtic legend of Midir and Etain (or Edane). I have no doubt that the legend, though only honey for the later Gaelic poets, had originally a deep significance, and that the Wooing to the Otherworld . . . *i.e.* to the Gaelic *Tir na'n Og*, the Land of Youth, of the Ever Living, of Love, the Land of Heart's Desire . . . of the beautiful woman Etain, wife of King Eochaidh, symbolised another wooing and another mystery than that alone of the man for the woman. It symbolised, I think, the winning of life back to the world after an enforced thraldom: the renewal of Spring: in other words, Etain is a Gaelic Eurydice, Midir a Gaelic Orpheus who penetrated the dismal realm of Eochaidh, and Eochaidh but a humanised Gaelic Dis. It is not Persephone, gathering flowers on Enna, whom legend remembers here, but the not less beautiful love

of Apollo's son, slain by the treacherous earth in the guise of a grass-hid asp as she flees from her pursuer: nor is there word of Demeter, nor yet of Aristæus. To the Gaelic mind, remembering what it had dreamed in the Vale of Tempe (or in Asian valleys, long before the Song-Charmer had a Greek muse for mother and a birthright in Hellas) the myths of Persephone and Eurydice might well be identified, so that Orpheus sought each or both-in-one, in the gloomy underworld. And the tale suffered no more than a sea-change when; by the sundown shores, it showed Eurydice-Persephone as Etain being wooed back to sunshine and glad life by the longing passion of Orpheus as Midir. For in the Gaelic mythology, Midir too is a son of light, a servant of song, a son of Apollo, being of the diviner race of Oengus the Sun-God, Lord of Life and Death. By his symbol of the Dew he is also the Restorer, the Reviver.

Of Dalua I can say but a word here.¹ He is the Amadan-Dhu, or Dark Fool, the Faery Fool, whose touch is madness or death for any mortal: whose falling shadow, even, causes bewilderment and forget-

¹ The name Dalua and Etain should be pronounced *Da-loo-a* and *Éh-tain* (short, as in *satin*). The name Eochaidh, who later wins Etain for a time, is pronounced *Yochay*; and that of Midir, *Mid'-eer* (short, as in *Mid-day*).

fulness. The Fool is at once an elder and dreadful god, a mysterious and potent spirit, avoided even of the proud immortal folk themselves: and an abstraction, 'the shadow of pale hopes, forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds.' He is too, to my imagining, madness incorporate as a living force. In several of my writings this dark presence intervenes as a shadow . . . sometimes without being named, or as an elemental force, as in the evil music of Gloom Achanna in the tale called 'The Dan-Nan-Ron,' sometimes as a spirit of evil, as in 'Dalua,' the opening tale in *The Dominion of Dreams*.

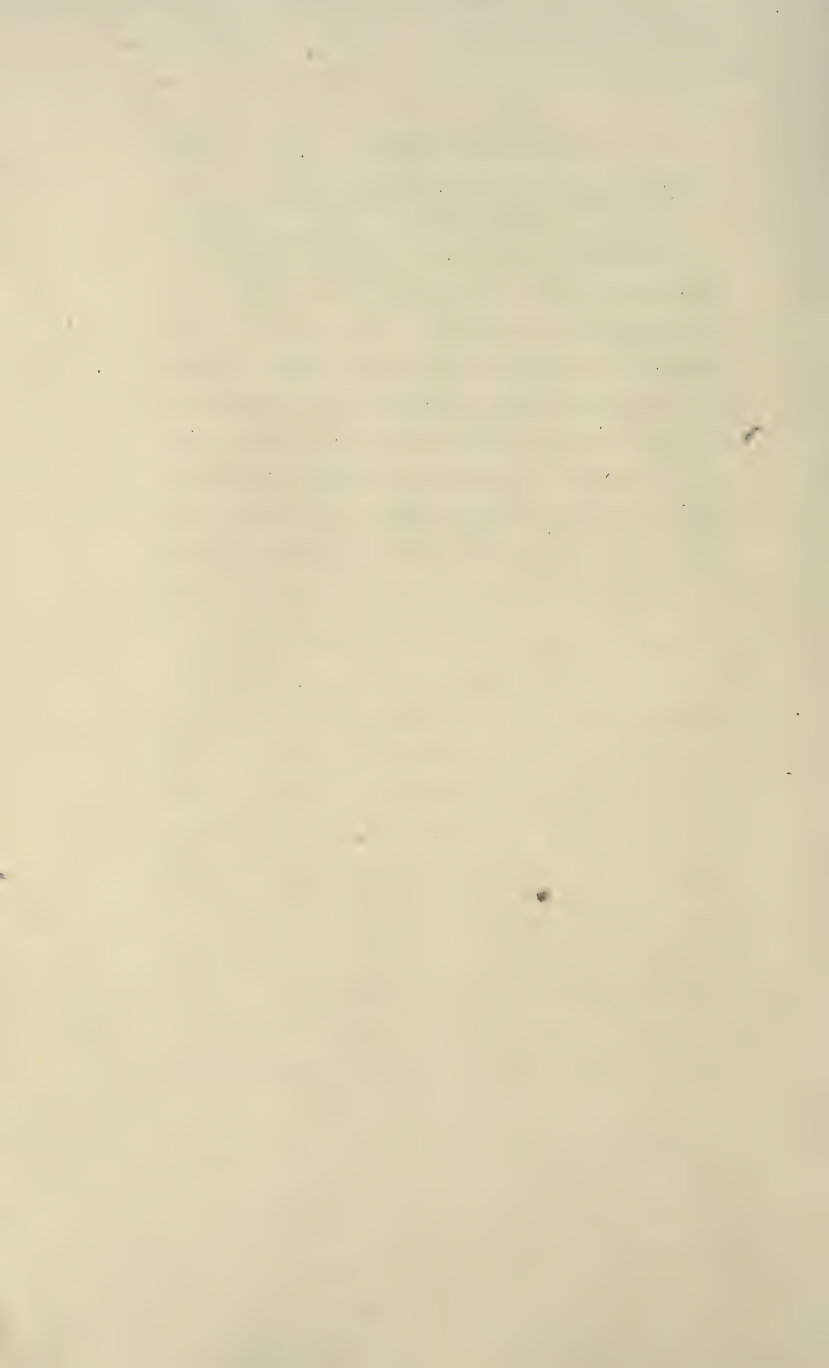
The Black Hawk (or Eagle) alluded to in first 'direction' preceding text is the *Iolair Dhu*, which on the first day of the world launched itself into the darkness and has never yet caught up with the dawn, though its rising or sinking shadow may be seen over the edge of dark at the night-dusk or morning twilight. It should be added that with the ancient Gaels (and with the few to-day who have not forgotten or do not disdain the old wisdom) the Hidden People (the *Sidh* or *Shee*; or *Shee'an* or *Sheechun* of the Isles) were great and potent, not small and insignificant beings. 'Mab' long ago was the terrible 'dark' queen, Maive (*Medb, Medbh, Mabh*):

and the still more ancient Puck was not a frolicsome spirit, but a shadowy and dreadful Power.

Students of Celtic mythology will be familiar with the legend of the love of Etain or Edane (herself half divine of race), wife of Eochaidh, the High King, for a mysterious stranger who came to the King's Dûn, and played chess with the King, and won Etain away with him, he being Midir, a King in the Otherworld. Some may look upon Midir as another Orpheus, and upon Etain as a Eurydice with the significance of Proserpine: others may see also in Etain, what I see, and would convey in *The Immortal Hour*, a symbol of the wayward but home-wandering soul; and in Midir, a symbol of the Spirit; and in Eochaidh, a symbol of the mundane life, of mortal love. Others will see only the sweet vanity of the phosphorescent play of the mythopoeic Gaelic mind, or indeed not even this, but only the natural dreaming of the Gaelic imagination, ever in love with fantasy and with beauty in fantasy. But, lest the old and the new be confused, this should be added . . . That Eochaidh finds Etain in the way he does, and that Dalua comes and goes between Etain and Eochaidh as he comes and goes, and the meaning that lies in the obscure love of Dalua, and the bewildered love of Etain, and the mortal love of

Eochaidh, and the immortal love of Midir . . . this is new, perhaps: though what seems new may be the old become transparent only, the old in turn being often the new seen in reverse . . . as one may for the first time see a star in a deep water that has already immemorially mirrored it. Nor has Dalua part or mention in the antique legend. Like other ancient things, this divinity hath come secretly upon us in a forgetful time, new and strange and terrible, though his unremembered shadow crossed our way when first we set out on our long travel, in the youth of the world.

F. M.



THE IMMORTAL HOUR

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EOCHAIDH

High King of Ireland.

ETAIN

A Lost Princess, afterwards Eochaidh's Queen.

MIDIR

A Prince of the Hidden People.

DALUA

The Amadan-Dbu.

Two Peasants, MÁNUS and MAIVE.

Harpers, Warriors, etc.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A forest glade at the rising of the moon. In the background is the hazel-shadowed pool of a wide waste of water. As the moonshine falls upon an ancient oak to the right, the tall figure of DALUA is seen leaning against the bole. He is clad in black, with a small black cap from which hangs a black hawk's feather.*

DALUA (*slowly coming out of the shadow*)

BY dim moon-glimmering coasts and dim grey wastes
Of thistle-gathered shingle, and sea-murmuring woods
Trod once but now untrod . . . under grey skies
That had the grey wave sighing in their sails
And in their drooping sails the grey sea-ebb,
And with the grey wind wailing evermore
Blowing the dun leaf from the blackening trees,
I have travelled from one darkness to another.

VOICES in the Wood

Though you have travelled from one darkness to
another

Act I
Scene I

Following the dun leaf from the blackening trees
That the grey wind harries, and have trodden the
woods

Where the grey-hooded crows that once were men
Gather in multitude from the long grey wastes
Of thistled shingle by sea-murmurous coasts,
Yet you have come no further than a rood,
A little rood of ground in a circle woven.

DALUA

My lips have lost the salt of the driven foam,
Howbeit I hear no more the long dull roar,
Of the long grey beaches of the Hebrides.

VOICES

Behind the little windless leaves of the wood
The sea-wastes of the wind-worn Hebrides,
With thunderous crashes falling wave on wave,
Are but the troubled sighs of a great silence.

DALUA

To the world's end I have come, to the world's end.

VOICES

You have come but a little way who think so far
The long uncounted leagues to the world's end:
And now you are mazed because you stand at the
edge
Where the last tangled slope leans over the abyss.

DALUA

You know not who I am, sombre and ancient voices.

[*Silence.*]

THE IMMORTAL HOUR 3

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

*Act I
Scene I*

VOICES in the Wood

There is no first or last, or any end.

DALUA

I have come hither, led by dreams and visions,
And know not why I come, and to what end,
And wherefore 'mid the noise of chariot wheels
Where the swung world roars down the starry ways
The Voice I know and dread was one with me,
As the uplifted grain and wind are one.

|| who?

VOICES

Above you is the light of a wandering star . . .
O Son of the Wandering Star, we know you now!

DALUA

Like great black birds the demons haunt the
woods . . .
Hail, ye unknown who know me! . . .

A VOICE

Hail, Son of Shadow!

VOICES

Hail, Brother of the strong, immortal gods,
And of the gods who have passed into sleep

4 THE IMMORTAL HOUR

Act I
Scene I

In soundless hollows of forgotten hills,
And of the homeless, sad, bewildered gods
Who as grey wandering mists lick up of the wind
Pass slowly in the dull unfriendly light
Of the cold, curious eyes of envious men. . . .

OTHER VOICES

. . . Ai! Ai!

Who yet have that which gives their mortal clay
A light and a power and a wonder that none has
Of all the Clans of the Shee, save only those
Who are not sprung of Orchil and of Kail
The mother and father of the earth-wrought folk,
Greater than men but less than Orchil and Kail,
As they in turn are less than sky-set Lu,
Or Oengus, who is keeper of the four great
keys . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than sky-set Lu who leads the hosts of the stars . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Dagda, Lord of Thunder and of Silence,
And Ana, the ancient Mother of the gods . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Mánan of the innumerable waters . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than moon-crown'd Brigid of the undying flame . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Midir of the Dew and the Evening Star . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Oengus, keeper of the East : of Birth : of Song ;
The keeper of the South : of Passion : and of War ;
The keeper of the West : of Sorrow : of Dreams ;
The keeper of the North : of Death : of Life.

Act I
Scene I

DALUA

Yet one more ancient even than the god of the sun,
Than flame-haired Oengus, lord of Love and Death,
Holds the last dreadful key Oblivion.

VOICES

Dim ages that are dust are but the loosened laughers
Split in the youth of Oengus the Ever-Young !

DALUA

I am old, more old, more ancient than the gods,
For I am son of Shadow, eldest god
Who dreamed the passionate and terrible dreams
We have called Fire and Light, Water and Wind,
Air, Darkness, Death, Change, and Decay, and Birth
And all the infinite bitter range that is.

A VOICE

Brother and kin to all the twilit gods,
Living, forgot, long dead : sad Shadow of pale hopes,
Forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds :
Outcast among the gods, and called the Fool,
Yet dreaded even by those immortal eyes
Because thy fateful touch can wreck the mind
Or lay a frost of silence on the heart :
Dalua, hail ! . . .

Act I
Scene I

DALUA

I am but what I am.

I am no thirsty evil lapping life.

[Loud laughter from the wood.]

Laugh not, ye outcasts of the invisible world.

For Lu and Oengus laugh not, nor the gods

Safe set above the perishable stars.

[Silence.]

They laugh not, nor any in the high celestial house.

Their proud immortal eyes grow dim and clouded

When as a morning shadow I am gathered

Into their holy light, for well they know

The dreadful finger of the Nameless One,

That moves as a shadow falls. For I Dalua

Am yet the blown leaf of the unknown powers.

VOICES *(tumultuously)*

We too are the blown leaves of the unseen powers.

DALUA

Demons and Dreams and Shadows, and all ye

Invisible folk who haunt the darkling ways,

I am grown weary, who have stooped and lain

Over the green edge o' the shaken world

And seen beneath the whirling maze of stars

Infinite gulfs of silence, and the obscure

Abysmal wastes where Time hath never trod.

VOICES

We too are weary : we are Weariness.

THE IMMORTAL HOUR

7

DALUA

Voices of shadowy things, be still!

Act I
Scene 1

[*Listening intently.*

I hear

The feet of one who wanders through the wood.

VOICES

We who are the children of the broken way,
The wandered wind, the idle wave, blown leaves,
The wild distempèred hour and swiriling dust,
Hail thee, Dalua, Herdsman of fallen stars,
Shepherd of Shadows! Lord of the Hidden Way!

DALUA (*going back to the oak*)

Voices, be still! The woods are suddenly troubled.
I hear the footfall of predestined things.

[*Enter ETAIN, in a coiled robe of pale green, with mistletoe intertwined in her long, dark, unloosened hair. She comes slowly forward, and stands silent, looking at the moonshine on the water.*

ETAIN (*singing to a slow, monotonous air*)

Fair is the moonlight
And fair the wood,
But not so fair
As the place I come from.

Why did I leave it,
The beautiful Country,
Where Death is only
A drifting shadow?

Act I
Scene I

O face of Love,
Of Dream and Longing,
There is sorrow upon me
That I am here.

I will go back
To the Country of the Young,
And see again
The lances of the Shee,

As they keep their hosting
With laughing cries
In pale places
Under the moon.

[ETAIN turns, and walks slowly forward. She starts as she hears a peculiar cry from the wood. 50

ETAIN

None made that cry who has not known the Shee.

DALUA

(coming forward and bowing low with fantastic grace)
Hail, daughter of kings, and star among the dreams
Which are the lives and souls of whom have won
The Country of the Young!

ETAIN

I know you not:
But though I have not seen your face before,
I think you are of those who have not kept

The bitter honey of mortality,
But are among the deathless folk who dwell
In hollow hills, or isles far off, or where
Flatheanas lies, or cold Ifurin is.

DALUA

I have come far, led here by dreams and visions.

ETAIN

By dreams and visions led I too have come
But know not whence or by what devious way,
Nor to what end I am come through these dim
 woods
To this grey lonely loch.

DALUA

(touching her lightly with the shadow of his hand)

Have you forgot

The delicate smiling land beneath the arcs
Which day and night and momentarily are wove
Between its peaceful shores and the vast gulf
Of dreadful silence and the unpathwayed dark?

ETAIN

If somewhat I remember, more is lost.
Have I come here to meet with you, fair sir,
Whose name I do not know, whose face is strange?

DALUA

Can you remember . . .

Act I
Scene I

ETAIN

I have forgotten all . . .

I can remember nothing : no, not this
The little song I sang ev'n now, or what sweet
thought,

What ache of longing lay behind the song.
All is forgot. And this has come to me
The wind-way of the leaf. But now my thoughts
Ran leaping through the green ways of my mind
Like fawns at play : but now I know no more
Than this : that I am Etain White o' the Wave,
Etain come hither from the lovely land
Where the immortal Shee fill up their lives
As flowers with honey brewed of summer airs,
Flame of the sun, dawn-rains, and evening dews.

DALUA (*sombrely*)

How knew you not that once, where the unsetting
moon

The grassy elfmounds fills with drowsy gold,
I kissed your shadowy lips beneath the thorn
Heavy with old foam of changeless blossom ?

ETAIN (*leaning forward and looking into his face*)

You loved me once ? I have no memory
Of this : if once you loved me, have you lost
The subtle breath of love, the sudden fire ?
For you are cold as are your shadowy eyes.

DALUA (*unstirring*)

When, at the last, amid the o'erwearied Shee—

Weary of long delight and deathless joys—
 One you shall love may fade before your eyes,
 Before your eyes may fade, and be as mist
 Caught in the sunny hollow of Lu's hand,
 Lord of the Day . . .

*Act I
 Scene I*

ETAIN

(eagerly, with her left hand pressed against her heart)
 What then?

DALUA

It may be then, white dove,
 Your eyes may dwell on one on whom falls not
 The first chill breath blown from the Unknown Land,
 Of which the tender poets of the Shee
 Sing in the dewy eyes when the wild deer
 Are milked, and 'neath the evening-star moths rise
 Grey-gold against a wave-uplifted moon.

ETAIN

Well?

DALUA

Then I, Dalua, in that fateful hour,
 Shall know the star-song of supreme desire,
 And placing hand upon the perfect fruit
 Shall taste and die . . . [A pause.
 . . . or, if I do not die,
 Shall know the sweet fruit mine, then see it slip
 Down through dim branches into the abyss
 Where all sweet fruit that is, the souls of men,

Act I
Scene I

The joyous Shee, old gods, all beautiful words,
Song, music, dreams, desires, shall in the end
Sway like blown moths against the rosewhite flame
That is the fiery plume upon the brows
Of Him called Silence.

ETAIN

I do not understand :
Your love shall fall about me like sweet rain
In drouth of death : so much I hear and know :
But how can death o'ertake the immortal folk
With whom I dwell? And if you love me thus,
Why is there neither word nor smile nor glance
Of love, nor any little sign that love
Shakes like a windy reed within your heart?

DALUA (*sombrely*)
I am Dalua.

ETAIN

I have heard lips whisper
Of one Dalua, but with sucked-in breath,
As though the lips were fearful of the word.
No more than this I know, no more recall.

DALUA

I cannot give you word of love, or kiss,
Sweet love, for in my fatal breath there lies
The subtle air of madness : from my hand
Death shoots an arrowy tongue, if I but touch
The unsuspecting clay with bitter heed,

Act I
Scene I

With hate darkling as the swift winter hail,
Or sudden malice such as lifts and falls
A dreadful shadow of ill within my mind.
Nor could I if I would. We are sheep led
By an unknown Shepherd, we who are the Shee,
For all we dream we are as gods, and far
Ungathered from the little woes of men.

ETAIN

Then why this meeting, here in this old wood,
By moonlight, by this melancholy water?

DALUA

I knew not: now I know. A king of men
Has wooed the Immortal Hour. He seeks to know
The joy that is more great than joy
The beauty of the old green earth can give.
He has known dreams, and because bitter dreams
Have sweeter been than honey he has sought
The open road that lies 'mid shadowy things.
He hath sought and found and called upon the Shee
To lead his love to one more beautiful
Than any mortal maid, so fair that he
Shall know a joy beyond all mortal joy,
And stand silent and rapt beside the gate,
The rainbow gate of her whom none may find,
The Beauty of all Beauty.

ETAIN

Can this be?

Act I
Scene I

DALUA

Nay, but he doth not know the end. There is
But one way to that Gate: it is not Love
Aflame with all desire, but Love at peace.

ETAIN

Who is this poet, this king?

DALUA

Led here by dreams,

By dreams and visions led as you and I,
His feet are nearing us. When you are won
By love and adoration, Star of Dreams,
And take sweet mortal clay, and have forgot
The love-sweet whisper of the King of the Shee,
And, even as now, hear Midir's name unmov'd;
When you are won thus, Etain, and none know,
Not any of your kindred, whence unknown
As all unknowing you have come, for you
The wayward thistledown of fate shall blow
On the same idle wind—the doom of him
Who blindfold seeks you.

ETAIN

But he may not love?

DALUA

Yes, he shall love. Upon him I shall lay
My touch, the touch of him men dread and call
The Amadan-Dhu, the Dark One, Faery Fool.
He shall have madness even as he wills,

And think it wisdom. I shall be his thought—
A dream within a dream, the flame wherein
The white moths of his thought shall rise and die.

*Act I
Scene I*

[A blast of a horn is heard.]

DALUA (*abruptly*)

Farewell.

*[Touches her lightly with the shadow of his hand,
and whispers in her ear.]*

Now go. The huntsman's lodge is near.
I have told all that need be told, and given
Bewilderment and dreams, but dreams that are
The fruit of that sweet clay of which I spoke.

*[ETAIN slowly goes, putting her hand to her head
bewilderedly. Before she passes into and out of
sight in the wood, she sings plaintively.]*

*I would go back
To the Country of the Young,
And see again
The lances of the Shee,*

*As they keep their hosting
With laughing cries
In pale places
Under the moon.*

Act I
Scene 11

SCENE II.—*The same.* DALUA stands, waiting the coming of EOCHAIDH the king. The king is clad in a leathern hunting dress, with a cleft helmet surmounted by a dragon in pale findruiney.

EOCHAIDH (*stopping abruptly*)

Sir, I am glad. I had not thought to see
One here.

DALUA (*taking off his cap and sweeping it low*)
The king is welcome here.

EOCHAIDH

The king?

How know you that the king is here? Far off
The war-horns bray about my threatened Dún.
None knows that I am here.

DALUA

And why, O king?

EOCHAIDH

For I am weary of wars and idle strife,
Who have no joy in all these little things
Men break their lives upon. But in my dreams,
In dreams I have seen that which climbs the stars
And sings upon me through my lonely hours
And will not let me be.

DALUA

What song is that?

EOCHAIDH

The song . . . but who is he who knows the king

THE IMMORTAL HOUR

17

Act I
Scene II

Here in this dim, remote, forgotten wood,
Where led by dreams and visions I have come?

DALUA

Those led by dreams shall be misled, O king!

EOCHAIDH

You are no druid: no knight in arms: none
Whom I have seen.

DALUA

I have known camps of men,
The minds and souls of men, and I have heard
Eochaidh the king sighing out his soul in sighs.

EOCHAIDH

Tell me your name.

DALUA

I am called Dalua.

EOCHAIDH (*ponderingly*)

I have not heard that name, and yet in dreams
I have known one who waved a shadowy plume
And smiling said, 'I am Dalua.' Speak:
Are you this same Dalua?

So is
we fix
Dalua

DALUA

I have come
To this lone wood and to this lonely mere
To drink from out the Fountain of all dreams,
The Shadowy Fount of Beauty.

B

Act I
Scene II

EOCHAIDH (*eagerly*)

At last!

The Fount of Beauty, Fountain of all dreams!
Now am I come upon my long desire!
The days have trampled me like armed men
Thrusting their spears as ever on they go,
And I am weary of all things save the stars,
The wind, shadows, and moonrise, and strange dreams.
If you can show me this immortal Fount,
Whatso you will is yours.

DALUA (*touching him lightly*)

You are the king,

And know, now, whence you came, and to what end?

EOCHAIDH (*confusedly*)

The king? ~~The king?~~ What king?

DALUA

You are the king?

EOCHAIDH

A king of shadows, I! I am no king.

DALUA

And whither now, and whence?

EOCHAIDH

I am not come

From any place I know of, and I go
Where dreams and visions lead me.

THE IMMORTAL HOUR 19

[Suddenly a fountain rises in the mere, the spray rising high in the moonshine. *Act I
Scene II*]

DALUA

Look, O king!

EOCHAIDH (*staring eagerly, with hand above his eyes*)
I cannot see what you would have me see.

DALUA

(*plucking a branch from a mountain-ash, and waving it before the king's face*)

Look!

EOCHAIDH

I see a Fountain, and within its shadow
A great fish swims, and on the moveless wave
The scarlet berries float: dim 'mid the depths
The face of One I see, most calm and great,
August, with mournful eyes.

DALUA

Ask what you will.

EOCHAIDH

The word of wisdom, O thou hidden God:
Show me my star of dreams, show me the way!

A VOICE (*solemnly*)

Return, O Eochaidh Airemh, wandering king.

EOCHAIDH

That shall not be. No backward way is mine.
If I indeed be king, then kingly I

Act I
Scene II

Shall cleave my way through shadows, as through
men.

A VOICE

Return!

EOCHAIDH

Nay, by the Sun and Moon, I swear
I will not turn my feet.

A VOICE

Return! Return!

EOCHAIDH

*(hesitating, turns to look at DALUA, who has swiftly
and silently withdrawn into the wood)*

There is no backward way for such as I! [*Silence.*
Howbeit—for I am shaken with old dreams,
And as an idle wave tossed to and fro—
I will go hence: I will go back to where
The quiet moonlight spills from the black brow
Of the great hill that towers above the lands
Wherein men hail me king.

[DALUA's laughter comes from the wood.]

DALUA

Follow, O follow, king of dreams and shadows!

EOCHAIDH

I follow . . .

[Exit.]

SCENE III.—*The rude interior of the cabin of the buntsman, MÁNUS. He is sitting, clad in deerskin, with strapped sandals, before a fire of pine-logs. Long, unkempt, black hair falls about his face. His wife, MAIVE, a worn woman with a scared look, stands at the back, plucking feathers from a dead cockerel. At the other side of the hearth, ETAIN sits.*

MÁNUS

I've seen that man before who came to-night.

[He has addressed no one, and no one answers.]

I say I have seen that man before.

MAIVE

Hush, Mánus ;

Beware of what you say ; how can we tell

Who comes, who goes ? And too, good man, you've had

Three golden pieces.

MÁNUS

Ay, they are put by,

That comforts me : for gold is ever gold.

MAIVE

One was for her who stays with us to-night

And shares our scanty fare.

[Making a curtsy.]

Right welcome, too :

The other was for any who might come,

22 THE IMMORTAL HOUR

*Act I
Scene III*

Asking for bite or sup, for fireside warmth.
The third . . .

MÁNUS

Yes, woman, yes, I know: for silence. Hush!
There comes the rain. [*A moan of wind is heard.*]

ETAIN

*(rising and going to the left doorway, pulls back
the hide. Shuddering, she thrusts it crosswise
again, and returns)*

It was so beautiful,
So still, with not a breath of wind, and now
The hill-wind moans, the night is filled with tears
Of bitter rain. Good people, have you seen
Such quiet eves fall into stormy nights
Before?

MÁNUS

Who knows the wild way of the wind:
The wild way of the rain? They come, and go:
We stay. We wait. We listen. Not for us
To ask, to wonder.

MAIVE

They're more great than we.
They are so old, the wind and rain, so old,
They know all things, Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes!

ETAIN

Who? . . . Who? . . .

THE IMMORTAL HOUR 23

MÁNUS

*Act I
Scene III*

. . . The woman speaks of Wind and Rain :
Blind Eyes, the dreadful one whom none has seen,
Whose voice we hear : Grey Feathers, his pale love,
Who flies before or follows, grey in rains,
Fierce blue in hail, death-white in whirling snows.

ETAIN

Does any ever come to you by night ?
. . . Lost woodlander, stray wayfarer from the hills,
Merchant or warrior from the far-off plains ?

MÁNUS

None.

MAIVE

We are so far away : so far, I think
Sometimes, we must be close upon the edge
Of the green earth, there where the old tales say
The bramble-bushes and the heather make
A hollow tangle over the abyss.

ETAIN

But sometimes . . . sometimes . . . Tell me : have
you heard,
By dusk or moonset have you never heard
Sweet voices, delicate music ? . . . never seen
The passage of the lordly beautiful ones
Men call the Shee ?

MÁNUS (*rising abruptly*)

We do not speak of them.

Act I
Scene III MAIVE
Hark!

[*A stronger blast strikes the house. MÁNUS throws more logs on the fire.*

Hark! a second time I've heard a cry!

[*All listen. Suddenly a loud knock is heard. MAIVE covers her head, and cowers beside the fire, behind ETAIN, who rises. MÁNUS seizes a spear, and stands waiting. The heavy knock is repeated.*

A VOICE
Open, good folk!

MÁNUS

There is no door to ope:
Thrust back the skins from off the post.

[*The ox-fell is thrust aside, and EOCHAIDH enters. He stops at the threshold, staring at ETAIN.*

EOCHAIDH

I give you greeting. Good folk,
[*A pause.*

Lady, I bow my knee.

[*ETAIN bows slowly in return. EOCHAIDH comes a few steps forward, stops, and looks fixedly at ETAIN. He says slowly—*

You have great beauty. [*A pause.*

I have never seen
Beauty so great, so wonderful. In dreams,
In dreams alone such beauty have I seen,
A star above my dusk.

*Act I
Scene III*

ETAÍN

Sir, I pray you
Draw near the fire. This bitter wind and rain
Must sure have chilled you.

*[She points to her vacant three-legged stool. As
EOCHAIDH slowly passes her, MÁNUS slides his
hand over his shoulder and back.]*

MÁNUS *(with a strange look at MAIVE)*
He is not wet. The driving rains have left
No single drop!

MAIVE *(piteously)*

Good sir! brave lord! good sir!
Have pity on us: sir, have pity!
We are poor, and all alone, and have no wile
To save ourselves from great ones, or from those
Who dwell in secret places on the hills
Or wander where they will in shadow clothed.

MÁNUS

Hush, woman! Name no names: and speak no
word
Of them who come unbidden and unknown.
Good sir, you are most welcome. I am Mánus,
And this poor woman is Maive, my childless wife,

Act I
Scene III

And this is a great lady of the land
Who shelters here to-night. Her name is Etain.

EOCHAIDH

Tell me, good Mánus: who else is here, or whom
You may expect?

MÁNUS

No one, fair lord. The wild,
Grey stormy seas are doors that shut the world
From us poor island-folk . . .

MAIVE

We are alone,
We're all alone, fair sir: there is none here
But whom you see. Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes
Are all we know without.

EOCHAIDH

Who are these others?

MÁNUS

The woman speaks, sir, of the Wind and Rain.
These unknown gods are as all gods that are,
And do not love to have their sacred names
Used lightly: so we speak of him who lifts
A ceaseless wing across all lands and seas,
Moaning or glad, and flieth all unseeing
From darkness into darkness, as Blind Eyes:
And her, his lovely bride, for he is deaf and so
Veers this way and that for ever, seeing not
His love who breaks in tears beneath his wings

Or falls in snows before his frosty breath—
Her we name thus, Grey Feathers.

Act I
Scene III

MAIVE

As for us,

We are poor lonely folk, and mean no wrong.
Sir, sir, if you are of the nameless ones,
The noble nameless ones, do us no ill!

EOCHAIDH

Good folk, I mean no ill. Nor am I made
Of other clay than yours. I am a man.
Let me have shelter here to-night: to-morrow
I will go hence.

MÁNUS

You are most welcome, sir.

EOCHAIDH

And you, fair Etain, is it with your will
That I be sheltered from the wind and rain?

ETAIN

How could I grudge you that ungrudged to me?

[MÁNUS and MAIVE withdraw into the background.

The light wanes, as the logs give less flame.

EOCHAIDH speaks in a low, strained voice.

EOCHAIDH

Etain, fair beautiful love, at last I know
Why dreams have led me hither. All these years
These eyes like stars have led me: all these years

Act I
Scene III

This love that dwells like moonlight in your face
Has been the wind that moved my idle wave.
Forgive presumptuous words. I mean no ill.
I am a king, and kingly. Ard Ree, I am,
Ard-Righ of Eiré.

ETAIN

And your name, fair lord?

EOCHAIDH

Eochaidh Airemh.

ETAIN

And I am Etain called,
Daughter of lordly ones, of princely line.
But more I cannot say, for on my mind
A strange forgetful cloud bewilders me,
And I have memory only of those things
Of which I cannot speak, being under bond
To keep the silence of my lordly folk.
How I came here, or to what end, or why
I am left here, I know not.

EOCHAIDH

Truly, I

Now know full well.

[Taking her hand.

Etain, dear love, my dreams
Come true. I have seen this dim pale face in dreams
For days and months and years: till at the last
Too great a spell of beauty held my hours.
My kingdom was no more to me than sand,

Act I
Scene III

Or a green palace built of August leaves
 Already yellowing, waiting for the wind
 To scatter them to north and south and east.
 I have forgotten all that men hold dear,
 And given my kinghood to the wheeling crows,
 The trampling desert hinds, the snarling fox.
 I have no thought, no dream, no hope, but this—
 [Kissing her upon the brow.]
 To call you Love, to take you hence, my Queen—
 Queen of my Heart, my Queen, my Dream, my Queen!

ETAÍN (*looking into his face, with thrown-back head*)
 I too, I too am lifted with the breath
 Of a tumultuous wind. My Lord and King,
 I too am lit with fire, which fills my heart,
 And lifts it like a flame to burn with thine,
 To pass and be at one and flame in thine,
 My Lord, my King! My Lord, my Lord, my King!

EOCHAIDH

The years, the bitter years of all the world
 Are now no more. We have gained that which stands
 Above the trampling feet of hurrying years.

[A brief burst of mocking laughter is heard.]

EOCHAIDH

*(turning angrily, and looking into the shadowy
 background where are MÁNUS and MAIVE)*
 Who laughed? What means that laughter?

Act I
Scene III

MÁNUS (*sullenly*)

No one laughed.

EOCHAIDH

Who laughed? Who laughed?

MAIVE

Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes.

ETAIN (*wearily*)

None laughed. It was the hooting of an owl.

Dear lord, sit here. I am weary.

[MÁNUS and MAIVE *withdraw, and lie down.*

EOCHAIDH and ETAIN *sit before the smouldering fire. The room darkens. Suddenly EOCHAIDH leans forward and whispers.*

EOCHAIDH

Etain!

Etain, dear love!

ETAIN

(*not looking at him, and slowly swaying as she sings*)

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,
And their breath is wind
That blows over grass
Filled with dewy clover.

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine :
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

*Act I
Scene III*

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible :
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,
How beautiful
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

*[Darkness, save for the red flame in
the heart of the fire.]*

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I.—*A year later. In the hall of the Royal Dún at Tara. The walls covered with skins, stags' heads and boars' heads, weapons: at intervals great torches. At the lower end, a company of warriors, for the most part in bratta of red and green, or red and green and blue, like tartan, but in long, broad lines or curves, and not in squares, deerskin leggings and sandals. Also harpers and others, and white-clad druids and bards. On a dais sits EOCHAIDH the High King. Beside him sits ETAIN, his Queen. Behind her is a group of white-robed women.*

[HARPERS strike a loud clanging music from their harps.

CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!
Hail, Eochaidh the High King of Eiré, hail!
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS and MINSTRELS

Hail!

*Act II
Scene I*

DRUIDS

Hail!

WARRIORS

Hail!

EOCHAIDH

Drink from the great shells and horns! . . . for I am
glad

That on this night which rounds my year of joy,

In amity and all glad fellowship

We feast together.

EOCHAIDH (*turning to ETAIN*)

Etain, speak, my Queen.

ETAIN (*rising*)

Warriors and druids, bards, harpers, friends

Of high and low degree, I who am queen

Do also thank you. But I am weary now,

And weary too with strange, perplexing dreams

Thrice dreamed: and so I bid you all farewell.

[*Bows low. Turning to the king, adds—*

To you, dear love, my lord and king, I too

Will bid farewell to-night.

EOCHAIDH (*lovingly*)

Say not farewell:

Say not farewell, dear love, for we shall meet

When the last starry dews are gathered up

And loud in the green woods the throistles call.

34 THE IMMORTAL HOUR

Act II
Scene I

ETAIN

Dear, I am tired . . . Farewell!

EOCHAIDH

No, no, my fawn—

My fawn of love: this night, this night I pray
Leave me not here alone: for under all
This outer tide of joy I am sore wrought
By dreams and premonitions. For three nights
I have heard sudden laughers in the dark,
Where nothing was; and in the first false dawn
Have seen phantasmal shapes, and on the grass
A host of shadows marching, bent one way
As when green leagues of reed become one reed
Blown slantwise by the wind.

ETAIN

I too have heard

Strange delicate music, subtle murmurings,
A little lovely noise of myriad leaves,
As though the greenness on the wind o' the south
Came travelling to bare woods on one still night:

[*A pause.*]

I too have heard sweet laughter at the dawn,
Amid the twilight fern; but when I leaned
To see the unknown friends, no more than this
I saw—great delicate shadows on the grass,
Grey shadows on the fern, the flowers, the leaves,
Swift flitting, like foam-shadows o'er a wave,
Before the grey wave of the coming day.

[*A pause: then suddenly—*]

But I am weary. Eochaidh, Love and King,
Sweet sleep and sweeter dreams!

[ETAIN leans and kisses the king. He stoops, and takes her right hand, and lifts it to his lips. Warriors raise their swords and spears, as ETAIN leaves, followed by her women.

WARRIORS and Others

The Queen! The Queen!
[HARPERS strike a loud clanging music from their harps.

CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!
Hail, Eochaidh Ard-Righ of Eiré, hail! hail!
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS and MINSTRELS

Hail!

DRUIDS

Hail!

WARRIORS

Hail!

EOCHAIDH

(raising a white hazel-wand, till absolute silence falls)

Now go in peace. To one and all, good-night.

[The warriors, bards and minstrels troop out, leaving only the harpers and a few druids, who do not follow, but stand uncertain as a stranger passes through their midst and confronts the king. He is young, princely, fair to see: clad all in green, with a gold belt, a gold torque round his neck, gold armlets on his bare arms, and two gold

*Act II
Scene I*

torques round his bare ankles. On his long, curling dark hair, falling over his shoulders, is a green cap from which trails a peacock feather. To his left side is slung a small clarsach or harp.

MIDIR

Hail, Eochaidh, King of Eiré.

EOCHAIDH

(standing motionless, and looking fixedly at the stranger)

Hail, fair sir!

MIDIR *(with light grace)*

Sorrow upon me that I am so late
For this great feasting: but I come from far,
And winds and rains delayed me. Yet full glad
I am to stand before the king to-night
And claim a boon!

EOCHAIDH

No stranger claims in vain
Here in my Dún, a boon if that boon be
Such I may grant without a loss of fame,
Honour, or common weal. But first, fair sir,
I ask the name and rank of him who craves,
To all unknown?

MIDIR

I am a king's first son:
My kingdom lies beyond your lordly realms,
O king, and yet upon our mist-white shores
The Three Great Waves of Eiré rise in foam.

But I am under *geasa*, sacred bonds,
 To tell to no one, even to the king,
 My name and lineage. King, I wish you well :
 Lordship and peace and all your heart's desire.

Act II
Scene I

EOCHAIDH

Fair lord, my thanks I give. Lordship I have,
 And peace a little while, though one brief year
 Has seen its birth and life : my heart's desire—
 Ah, unknown lord, give me my heart's desire—
 And I will give you lordship of these lands,
 Kingship of Eiré, riches, greatness, power,
 All, all, for but the little infinite thing
 That is my heart's desire !

MIDIR

And that, O king ?

EOCHAIDH

It is to know there is no twilight hour
 Upon my day of joy : no starless night
 Wherein my swimming love may reach in vain
 For any shore, wherein great love shall drown
 And be a lifeless weed, which the pale shapes
 Of ghastly things shall look at and pass by
 With idle fin.

MIDIR

Have not the poets sung
 Great love survives the night, and climbs the stars,
 And lives th' immortal hour along the brows

38 THE IMMORTAL HOUR

Act II
Scene I

Of that infinitude called Youth, whom men
Name Oengus, Sunrise?

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I too have been

A poet.

MIDIR

Within the Country of the Young,
Whence I have come, our life is full of joy,
For there the poet's dreams alone are true.

EOCHAIDH

Dreams . . . dreams . . .

[A pause: then abruptly—

But tell me now, fair lord, the boon

You crave.

MIDIR

I have heard rumour say that there is none
Can win the crown at chess from this crowned king
Called Eochaidh.

EOCHAIDH

Well?

MIDIR

And I would win that crown:
For none in all the lands that I have been
Has led me to the maze wherein the pawns
Are lost or go awry.

EOCHAIDH

Sir, it is late,

But if I play with you, and I should win,
What is the guerdon?

Act II
Scene I

MIDIR

That—your heart's desire.

[*A pause.*]

And what, O king, my guerdon if I win?

EOCHAIDH

What you shall ask.

MIDIR

Then be it so, O king.

EOCHAIDH

Yet why not on the morrow, my fair lord?
To-night the hour is late: the queen is gone:
The chessboard lies upon a fawnskin couch
Beside the queen. She is weary, asleep.
To-morrow then . . .

MIDIR

*(drawing from his green vest a small chessboard
of ivory, and then a handful of gold pawns)*

Not so, Ard-Righ, for see

I have a chessboard here, fit for a king—
For it is made of yellow ivory
That in dim days of old was white as cream
When Dana, mother of the ancient gods,
Withdrew it from her thigh, with golden shapes
Of unborn gods and kings to be her pawns.

Act II
Scene I

EOCHAIDH (*leaning forward curiously*)
Lay it upon the dais. In all my years
I have seen none so fair, so wonderful.

[*Both lie upon the dais, and move the pawns upon
the ivory board. HARPERS play a delicate music.*]

A YOUNG MINSTREL (*sings slowly*)

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

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

SCENE II.—*The same*

EOCHAIDH

(*rising abruptly, followed by MIDIR more slowly*)

So, you have won! For the first time the king
Has known one subtler than himself. Fair sir,
Your boon?

MIDIR

O king, it is a little thing.
All that I ask is this, that I may touch
With my own lips the white hand of the queen:
And that sweet Etain whom you love so well

Should listen to the distant shell-sweet song,
 A little echoing song that I have made
 Down by the foam on sea-drown'd shores to please
 Her lovelier beauty.

*Act II
 Scene II*

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I would that boon
 Were other than it is : for the queen sleeps
 Grown sad with weariness and many dreams :
 But as you have my kingly word, so be it.

[Calls to the young minstrel.

Go, boy, to where the women sleep, and call
 Etain the Queen.

*[The minstrel goes to the left. HARPERS play
 a low, delicate music.*

*Enter ETAIN, in a robe of pale green, with mistletoe
 intertwined in her long loose hair.*

EOCHAIDH

Welcome, fair lovely queen.
 But Etain, whom I love as the dark wave
 Loves the white star within its travelling breast,
 Why do you come thus clad in green, with hair
 Entangled with the mystic mistletoe, as when
 I saw you first, in that dim, lonely wood
 Down by forgotten shores, where the last clouds
 Slip through grey branches into the grey wave ?

ETAIN

I could not sleep. My dreams came close to me

Act II
Scene II

And whispered in my ears. And someone played
A vague perplexing air without my room.
I was as dim and silent as the grass,
Till a faint wind moved over me, and dew
Gathered, and in the myriad little bells
I saw a myriad stars.

ECHTAIDH

This nameless lord
Has won a boon from me. It is to touch
The whiteness of this hand with his hot lips,
For he is fevered with a secret trouble,
From rumour of that beauty which too well
I know a burning flame. And he would sing
A song of echoes caught from out the foam
Of sea-drown'd shores, a song that he has made,
Dreaming a foolish idle dream, an idle dream.

ETAIN

*(looking long and lingeringly at MIDIR, slowly
gives him her hand. When he has raised it to
his lips, bowing, and let it go, she starts, puts
it to her brow bewilderingly, and again looks
fixedly at MIDIR)*

Fair nameless lord, I pray you sing that song.

MIDIR *(slowly chanting and looking steadfastly at ETAIN)*

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,
And their breath is wind
That stirs amid grasses
Filled with white clover.

*Act II
Scene II*

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine :
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible ;
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,
How beautiful,
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

*[Silence. ETAIN again puts her hand to her
brow bewilderedly.]*

ETAIN (*dreamily*)

I have heard . . . I have dreamed . . . I too have
heard,
Have sung . . . that song : O lordly ones that
dwell

In secret places in the hollow hills,
Who have put moonlit dreams into my mind
And filled my noons with visions, from afar

Act II
Scene II

I hear sweet dewfall voices, and the clink,
The delicate silvery spring and clink
Of faery lances underneath the moon.

MIDIR

I am a song
In the Land of the Young,
A sweet song :
I am Love.

I am a bird
With white wings
And a breast of flame,
Singing, singing.

The wind sways me
On the quicken bough :
Hark ! Hark !
I hear laughter.

Among the nuts
On the hazel-tree
I sing to the Salmon
In the faery pool.

What is the dream
The Salmon dreams,
In the Pool of Connla
Under the hazels ?

It is : There is no death,
Midir, with thee,
In the honeysweet land
Of Heart's Desire.

Act II
Scene II

It is a name wonderful,
Midir, Love :
It was born on the lips
Of Oengus Òg.

Go, look for it :
Lost name, beautiful :
Strayed from the honeysweet
Land of Youth.

I am Midir, Love :
But where is my secret
Name in the land of
Heart's Desire ?

I am a bird
With white wings
And a breast of flame
Singing, singing :

The Salmon of knowledge
Hears, whispers :
Look for it, Midir,
In the heart of Etain :

Act II
Scene II

Etain, Etain,
My Heart's Desire:
Love, love, love,
Sorrow, Sorrow!

ETAIN

(ETAIN moves a little nearer, then stops. She puts both hands before her eyes, then withdraws them)

I am a small green leaf in a great wood,
And you, the wind o' the South!

[Silence. EOCHAIDH, as though spellbound, cannot advance, but stretches his arms towards

ETAIN.

EOCHAIDH

Etain, speak!

What is this song the harper sings, what tongue
Is this he speaks? for in no Gaelic lands
Is speech like this upon the lips of men.
No word of all these honey-dripping words
Is known to me. Beware, beware the words
Brewed in the moonshine under ancient oaks
White with pale banners of the mistletoe
Twined round them in their slow and stately death.
It is the Feast of Sáveen.¹

¹ *Samhain*. The Celtic Festivals of Summer-end, Hallowe'en.

ETAIN

All is dark

*Act II
Scene II*

That has been light.

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back, O love that slips away !

ETAIN

I cannot hear your voice so far away :
So far away in that dim lonely dark
Whence I have come. The light is gone. Farewell !

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back ! It is a dream that calls,
A wild and empty dream ! There is no light
Within that black and terrible abyss
Whereon you stand. Etain, come back, come back,
I give you life and love.

ETAIN

I cannot hear
Your strange forgotten words, already dumb
And empty sounds of dim defeated shows.
I go from dark to light.

MIDIR (*slowly whispering*)

From dark to light.

EOCHAIDH

O do not leave me, Star of my Desire !
My love, my hope, my dream : for now I know
That you are part of me, and I the clay,

Act II
Scene II

The idle mortal clay that longed to gain,
To keep, to hold, the starry Danann fire,
The little spark that lives and does not die.

ETAIN

Old, dim, wind-wandered lichens on a stone
Grown grey with ancient age : as these thy words,
Forgotten symbols. So, farewell : farewell !

MIDIR

Hasten, lost love, found love ! Come, Etain, come !

ETAIN

What are those sounds I hear ? The wild deer call
From the hill-hollows : and in the hollows sing,
'Mid waving birchen boughs, brown wandering
streams :

And through the rainbow'd spray flit azure birds
Whose song is faint, is faint and far with love :
O home-sweet, hearth-sweet, cradle-sweet it is,
The song I hear !

MIDIR (*slowly moving backward*)

Come, Etain, come ! Afar

The hillside maids are milking the wild deer ;
The elf-horns blow : green harpers on the shores
Play a wild music out across the foam,
Rose-flusht on one long wave's pale golden front :
The moon of faery hangs, low on that wave.
Come ! When the vast full yellow flower is swung
High o'er the ancient woods wherein old gods,

Ancient as they, dream their eternal dreams
That in the faery dawns as shadows rise
And float into the lives and minds of men
And are the tragic pulses of the world,
Then shall we two stoop by the Secret Pool
And drink, and salve our sudden eyes with dew
Gathered from foxglove and the moonlit fern,
And see . . .

*Act II
Scene 11*

*[Slowly chanting and looking steadfastly
at ETAIN.]*

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,
And their breath is wind
That stirs amid grasses
Filled with white clover.

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine :
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible :
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

Act II
Scene II

How beautiful they are,
How beautiful,
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

ETAIN

Hush! Hush!

Who laughed?

MIDIR

None laughed. All here are in a spell
Of frozen silence.

ETAIN

Sure, sure, one laughed.
Tell me, sweet Voice, which one among the Shee
Is he who plays with shadows, and whose laugh
Moves like a bat through silent haunted woods?

MIDIR

He is not here : so fear him not : Dalua.
It is the mortal name of him whose age
Was idle laughing youth when Time was born.
He is not here : but come with me, and where
The falling stars spray down the dark Abyss,
There, on a quicken, growing from mid-earth
And hanging like a spar across the depths,
Dalua sits : and sometimes through the dusk
Of immemorial congregated time,
His laughter rings : and then he listens long,
And when the echo swims up from the deeps
He springs from crag to crag, for he is mad,
And like a lost lamb crieth to his ewe,

That ancient dreadful Mother of the Gods
Whom men call Fear.

Act II
Scene II

When he has wandered thence,
Whether among the troubled lives of men or 'mid
The sacred Danann ways, dim wolflike shapes
Of furtive shadow follow him and leap
The windway of his thought : or sometimes dwarfed,
more dread,
The stealthy moonwhite weasels of life and death
Glide hither and thither. Even the high gods
Who laugh and mock the lonely Faery Fool
When in his mortal guise he haunts the earth,
Shrink from the Amadan-Dhu when in their ways
He moves, silent, unsmiling, wearing a dark star
Above his foamwhite brows and midnight eyes.
Come, Etain, come : and have no fear, wild fawn,
For I am Midir, Love, who loved you well
Before this mortal veil withheld you here.
Come !

In the Land of Youth
There are pleasant places,
Green meadows, woods,
Swift grey-blue waters.

There is no age there
Nor any sorrow :
As the stars in heaven
Are the cattle in the valleys.

Act II
Scene II

Great rivers wander
Through flowery plains,
Streams of milk, of mead,
Streams of strong ale.

There is no hunger
And no thirst
In the Hollow Land,
In the Land of Youth.

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They play with lances
And are proud and terrible,
Marching in the moonlight
With fierce blue eyes.

They love and are loved :
There is no sin there :
But slaying without death,
And loving without shame.

Every day a bird sings :
It is the Desire of the Heart.
What the bird sings,
That is it that one has.

Come, longing heart,
 Come, Etain, come!
 Wild Fawn, I am calling
 Across the fern!

*Act II
 Scene II*

[*Slowly* ETAIN, *clasping his hand, moves away with* MIDIR. *They pass the spellbound guards, and disappear. A sudden darkness falls. Out of the shadow* DALUA *moves rapidly to the side of* EOCHAIDH, *who starts, and peers into the face of the stranger.*

EOCHAIDH

It is the same Dalua whom I met
 Long since, in that grey shadowy wood
 About the verge of the old broken earth
 Where at the last moss-clad it hangs in cloud.

DALUA

I am come.

EOCHAIDH

My dreams! my dreams! Give me my dreams!

DALUA

There is none left but this—

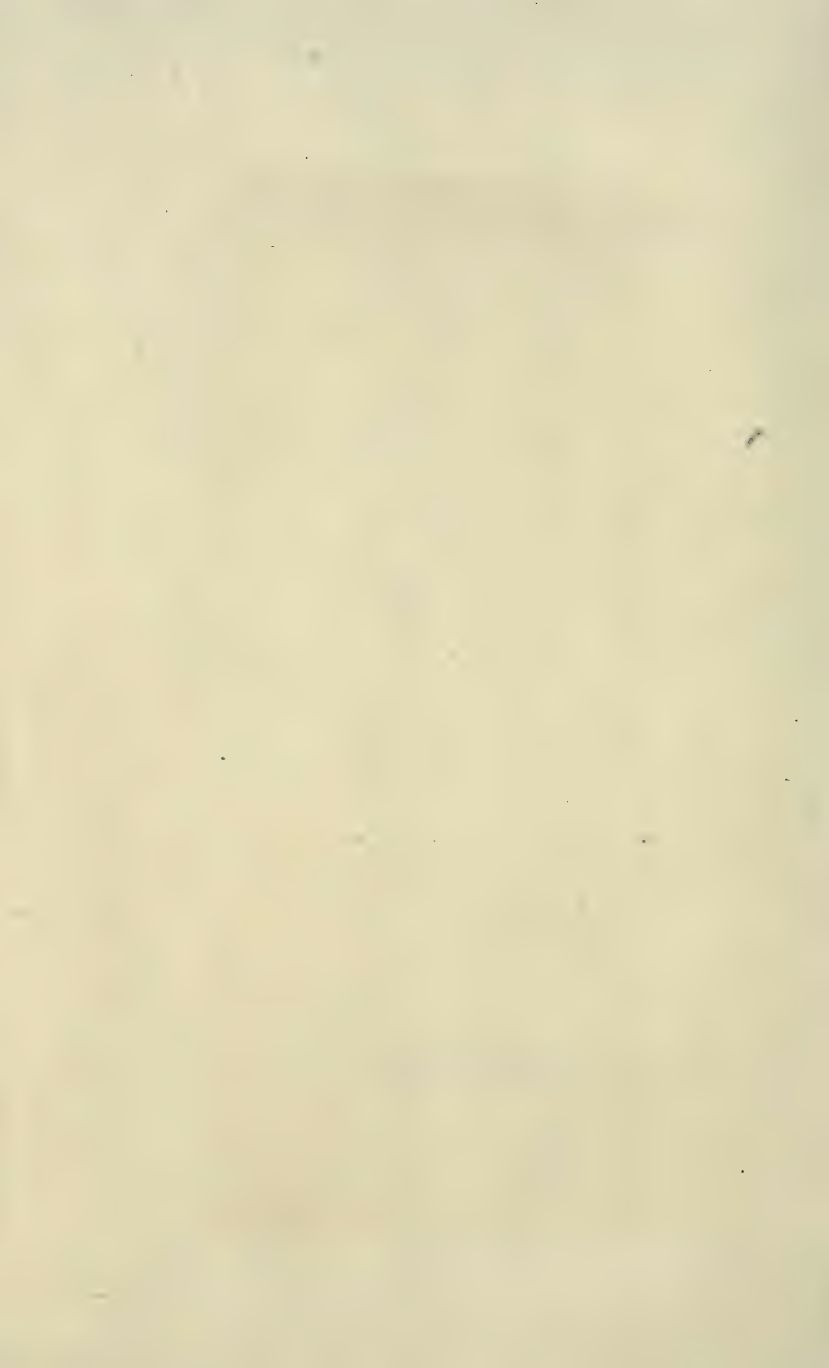
[*Touches the king, who stands stiff and erect, sways and falls to the ground.*

DALUA

. . . The dream of Death.

THE END

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Sharp, William
The immortal hour

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