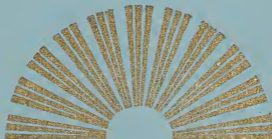




OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

A MORALITY PLAY

In One Act.



By

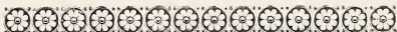
ALEX. MATHEWS.

BOHEMIAN PRESS,
MEADOW WAY,
SOMERFORD,
CHRISTCHURCH



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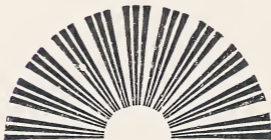
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prologue.
First Maiden.
Chief Brehon.
Second Maiden.
Flaith.
Brehon.
A Wife.
Druid.
Chief Bard.
Second Bard.
Third Bard.
Prophet.
Tuaths.
Women.

1700

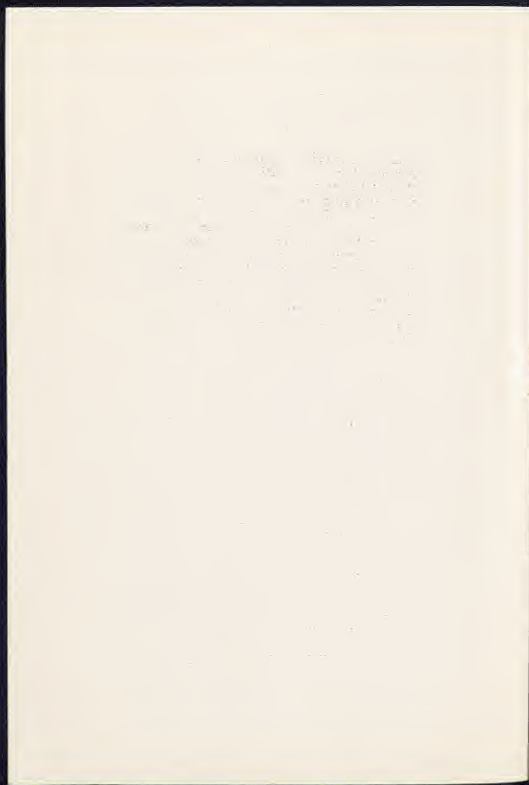
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PROLOGUE.

Shall Erin, island of a thousand years
 Athgabhail and her liberties regain?
 Who will come forth to give her right for wrong,
 Possession after losses, peace for strife;
 Order out of chaos and that mystic creed
 Descent from mists of time, (Enlightened Priests
 Of fair Atlantis) which in caverns vast
 Sleep on unsullied by the hand of time?
 Who shall peruse the antient Senchus Mor
 And find a clause to free us from distress?
 We have no son of Erin of Royal blood
 To fill the mighty office of Ard Rig.
 Our laws decree no person not of age,
 Stupid, blind, deaf, defective or deformed
 Shall hold the worthy office of the King.
 Our plight is thus; our last of antient caste
 Disqualifies by blemish on his face;
 The Feis of Tara would call this a fault.
 Therefore, the bards must find some antient clause
 Whereby a King of blood must reign again.
 For Erin now lies low beneath the heel
 Of bloody tyrants from the North and East.
 O, rise up, Bards, and let your harp strings sound
 A symphony in tune to Nature's beat,
 That will resound through forest, hill and dale
 Out—far beyond the bourn, beneath the breach,
 Into the deeps, e'en upwards to the sky,
 To dout oppression, thy spirits amort.
 To rouse the Gods and men to action quick
 And only thus to ease thy minds bestraught.
 Rise, rise, ye Bards, awaken thy lost powers,
 Stir other thoughts to pierce subconscious depths
 And in those depths perceive the light to come
 Which shall remove the shadows from thy path.
 Be patient yet, all hopes are not yet gone
 For yet another veil shall be removed
 And as the veil is lifting shall we cry
 In joyous note—Behold, the King has come.



SCENE 1.—MEETING OF THE BREHONS.

- 1ST MAIDEN : Come Brehons, waken from your lethargy
 And drive this Scythian dog from off our shores.
 Shall we, the women of this sacred Isle,
 Bear fruit to these usurpers or shall we
 Seek self-destruction, thus preserve our name
 From dishonour, pollution, by these sires?
- CHIEF BREHON : How well we would preserve ye from ill-fame,
 E'en to the shedding every drop of blood
 From out of each true Irish manly heart.
 But we are held fast close by tyranny,
 Outnumbered by these hordes of Scythians
 Who soon shall overrun our sacred Isle.
 We have opposed him up to every point
 Yet we have swayed by force of three to one,
 Our ranks heaped up with our honoured dead,
 And those who live with memory of the fray
 Rest torn and bleeding in their hearts and limbs.
 Would you ask twice if Irishmen did live?
 Their heated blood would surge a fury dread
 Which in its heat would take away their sense
 And leave but demons unbridled; in their lust
 Would plough a path from every hill to coast
 And leaving but red carnage in their wake.
- 2ND MAIDEN : If we no men can muster to defend,
 Then let us rouse to action every wife
 And maid, whose arm has strength to wield a sword,
 Far better that we die in Erin's cause
 Than be dishonoured by her hated foe.
- FLAITH : Alas! that we should live to see this day.
- BREHON : O Great Hyperborea, to what depths
 Thou hast sunken since the Great Opollo,
 Wandering from the East, came to our shores
 In mighty strength with Cybele to build
 Our antient Clans and Septs and Fines into
 A stalwart race of warriors and men.
- 1ST MAIDEN : Let us not through the mazes of the past
 Like folly running wild be led astray.
 But in this present find a future hope.

- We boast no King of fiery blood or sword
 But one of milk and water, young in years.
 Who then will rise and stir our people up?
 If not the King or men then it must be
 The women of our Isle. There is no clause
 In all the Brehon laws that will forbid
 A woman fighting for her country's cause.
- WOMEN : Aye truly, let us all take unto arms
 (shouting) And use them best we may and with our wits.
- CHIEF BREHON : Peace, good women, rouse not the countryside,
 The Scythian like the serpent silent moves.
 We shall your plea unto our Elders take,
 That they in greater wisdom may decide
 These weighty matters.
- 1ST MAIDEN : Take heed, Chief Brehon, there be no delay,
 We are o'erwearied with the ways of men.
 And with stern voice unsparing Justice plead
 To fight your fight against the Scythian hordes
 To wreak full vengeance till hot blood is weaned
 Or die a righteous death on bloody field.
- 2ND MAIDEN : Though sweet the smile of home, the mutual look
 Of loved one there, you see we are prepared
 To sacrifice them all to help our cause.
- A WIFE : And is there in God's world so dear a place
 As Erin? Yet we can turn our backs on't
 And face the hated foe, recall the shaft
 The Scythian's hand has sped and turn its course.
- DRUID : Let those who o'er the Sacred Rites preside
 Take wisdom for their guardian and their guide.
 Let those whose power the multitude obey
 Support by conduct their imperial sway.
 If in the swirling stream thou art fast caught
 Waste not thy strength opposing it with aught
 But calmness and a clearly thinking mind,
 'Tis only thus a refuge canst thou find.
 How graced is Erin's old historic page
 With wisdom from her venerable sage.
 Judge of the laws for Justice high approved,
 Seek then that wisdom from the Muse beloved.
- CHIEF BREHON : If then thy wish, we shall unto the Bards
 Make haste, and find them in their Sacred Groves

Where trees of oak rise high and seas wash shore.
 Perchance they can relieve our clouded minds
 And if they show no better way than this
 They cannot show a worse.

WOMEN : We shall await decision of the Bards.
 ALL : Let us seek out the Sacred Bards.

SCENE 2.—THE SACRED GROVE OF THE BARD. Time : Evening.

The Chief Bard, followed by the others, enters solemnly the Grove. The Chief Bard seats himself on a raised stone, the others sit or stand around him in a circle. They chant, and as soon as the chant is finished the Chief Brehon and others enter.

CHIEF BREHON : O worthy Bard, thou knowest our country's plight,
 We have no King, no Laws, no Antient Feis.
 Our warriors have been weakened by the foe
 And we in humbleness seek thy advice.

CHIEF BARD : What wouldst thou seek the more than we can give?

CHIEF BREHON : We seek in vain a King or mighty one
 To rouse all Erin in strong unison,
 To drive the Scythian far beyond our coast.
 Yet we are bound by antient Brehon ties
 Which do forbid the nomination of
 A king from any but the antient Caste.
 The people cry out " Let us have a King
 To lead us ; we care not for good or ill,
 But let us have a King."
 Not having King but only weakened men
 Because of war, our women-folk declare
 They shall take arms against the common foe.
 Their plea is self-destruction in the place
 Of dishonour by the scurvy Scythian,

CHIEF BARD : Shall Tara's Halls lie crumbled in the dust,
 (To the people) And her proud Tuaths in that dust kneel low
 On sturdy knees in humbleness like serfs
 Be broached to a conquering tyrant's brawl?

Alas! that Dermot witness to the Feis
Of Tara, should the antient Sage lament;
Whilst Capricornis shadowed in pale light
In measured cadents sank from mortal sight.

Well did the Tarnist, Fiaiths and Brehons groan
With thought of Ollamh. Fodhla and the Feis
Which he in such propitious reign brought forth
To season truth and ancient rights decree.

And lo! when at the feast of Belltaine came
The roaring Bull in anger, eyes aflame.
No Bard could tune his strings or render note
To cool his ire, for mighty was his wrath.

O woe this day, for prophecy was dumb,
For like a sorrowful wind whose plaintive sound
Strikes dread unto the weary traveller's ear,
So did the prophets their false wisdom speak.

The Banshee wailed, was heard from plain to peak,
As Taurus with his nostrils breathing fire,
Obscured himself behind an angry cloud,
No more to contemplate the ancient Rites.

For truth was dead, and all the records lost
Which proved that Erin, jewel of the sea,
Was consecrated ground and on whose plots
Had walked the Gods with angels and with men.

Fair Tara now lies slumbering in the past.
What champion comes forth to build her up?
Is there no Goban Saer, Philitis' son,
To raise fair halls like antient Iran's Towers?

2ND BARD :

'Tis said a mighty one comes from the East,
Endowed with wondrous wisdom, who speaks truth;
Who will our antient laws and mystic rites
Restore, when Southern signs show more advance

3RD BARD :

Such have we heard, wise Chief, there's truth in it,
Let us take heed and watch the Zodiac well;
For Nature is unvarying by her wont,
She'll ne'er prevail against us nor disturb.

PROPHET :

I crave a word, wise Chief, wilt thou lend ear?
For I in nightly vigil oft have seen
A strangeness in the Southern sky o'ercast,
Bespeaking changes of peculiar kind.

- CHIEF BARD : Speak on, O Prophet, let thy word be truth.
- PROPHET : Last night, and many a night before, when the moon
With her enchanting beams enveloped this
consecrated
Isle, Twelve Lights I saw effulgent with a
Phosphorescent gleam and when I would a closer
Look take on, behold! the twelfth light, like a
Snuffed candle, to my amaze went out.
- TUATHS : The light was snuffed out, what woe.
- PROPHET : Stay ye, I have not ended yet.
- TUATHS : Speak on, O Prophet, let us hear the end.
- PROPHET : And when I saw this sight my heart stood still,
Methought 'twas an omen, evil in intent.
Then lo! The Light again appeared, proudly
Lit the sky o'er yonder hill, and Tara
Was ensconced. My eyes grew dim amid this
Dazzling light, Tara was as day, and I
Forgot the night. Then from the hallowed oak
On Tara's Hill, proud seat of mighty Kings,
There came a voice which spoke these wondrous
words :
" In Erin there is passage through two gates,
The Eastern one to men an exit gives.
The Southern one is entry, untrod path,
And though bestrewn with thorns it is divine.
Along that path a Holy One shall come
When subtle Light is seen on Erin's shore."
Then verily 'tis true a Great One comes.
- TUATHS :
- CHIEF BARD : Knowest, O Prophet, meaning of those words?
- PROPHET : This much I know, for nigh a dozen nights
In dreams I've seen things that are passing strange.
But giving meditation and right pause
To them, their meaning now I can unfold.
From Eastern Gate we have good cause to know
There came invaders to our sacred shore,
Whose hand of tyranny has kept us low
And robbed us of our land, our rights, our peace.
These bloody tyrants having had their fill
Of all the good and fair that Erin yields
Wax fat; no longer wield the sword with skill

- And soon must through the Eastern Gate return,
impelled by force more subtle than the sword.
- TUATHS : A Force more subtle than the sword, pray tell
How that can be. What son of Erin can
Drive out this strong invader from our land?
- PROPHET : How 'twill be done I cannot truly tell
But this. From Southern shores and soon, there
comes
One who with wisdom profound, Radiant Light
Which emanates from out the Zodiac Twelve,
Shall bind all men in greater peace, goodwill.
Unite us all in one great clan and lead
Us from the Known unto the Great Unknown.
E'en open up the pathway, narrow, straight,
Which leads beyond to great Valhalla's Veil.
- TUATHS : To Valhalla, O what bliss ! Hasten Thee,
Great One.
- CHIEF BARD : Then let us don the Philibeg and Ruff,
On each our heads a helmet rightly place,
We shall give homage to the Enlightened One
And to our Goddess Nature loud give praise.
*(They don the Philibeg and Ruff whilst the chant
is being given).*

THE CHANT OF PRAISE,

O let our breath be loud and high
Or come in sorrow's lengthy sigh.
Our Goddess Nature takes it up
In her whirlwind's mighty luff.

Like Will-o-the-wisp wild and free
She takes it o'er the mounts and sea,
Down in the depths or up to heights
The Goddess takes her boundless flights.

O take our modulated breath,
Unto the abode where there's no death.
Unto the Immortals take our prayer,
We ask of them a peace to share.

With every mortal of what clan,
 O make us worthy of Danaan.
 Let twinkling stars that gleam at night,
 Guide us all to do the right.
 And crested moon o'er Tara's Hill,
 Her mystic beams inspire us still;
 Through woody glen and forest glade,
 Oh let our peace in them be made.
 In swirling rivers, rambling streams,
 In any place where sunlight gleams;
 On, on to spheres both high and low,
 Oh let our inspiration go.

- CHIEF BARD : Whoe'er thou art, Enlightened One,
 We look to the South for thy coming.
- WATCHER ON
 TOWER : O Chief, the sun falls swiftly in the West,
 A murmuring wind blows softly from the South.
 A Silver Light trips gently o'er the sea,
 And coracle with single sail comes nigh.
- TUATHS : A coracle comes nigh, 'tis the Enlightened One.
 He comes with night but shall make day.
- CHIEF BARD : Watcher in the Tower, look you well, is't He?
- WATCHER : The coracle comes swiftly but the sail
 Obscures my sight from anyone within.
 But now I see a Light, it brighter grows
 It is the Twelfth Light and I know 'tis He.
- PROPHET : If 'tis He, dreams become realities.
- TUATHS : Let us advance to meet him.
- CHIEF BARD : Stay ye, be not presumptuous; to the great
 Be humble. For I shall myself go forth
 To meet Him and in bending low He sees the
 Greatest of us all do Him homage.
- WATCHER : The coracle touches the shore. He will land.
- CHIEF BARD : I now go forth to do Him salutation.
- TUATHS : Our Chief goes forth to do Him salutation.
- 2ND BARD : 'Twere better that the Chief goes thus to do
 Him homage.

- 3RD BARD : Thinkest thou that the Enlightened One is garbed
In gold?
- 2ND BARD : Methinks silver would be more fitting to the night.
- PROPHET : I have strange thoughts to which no meaning
Comes, as though in coming he comes not.
- 1ST BARD : What mean you?
- PROPHET : I know not what I mean but let us wait.
- 2ND BARD : See, our Chief has reached the shore,
He soon shall bend the knee.
- 3RD BARD : So shall we all when sight of Him who comes
Is permitted to unworthy eyes.
- 1ST BARD : What is amiss? The Chief has started back
As though to hide some fearful scene.
- 2ND BARD : Indeed he does; 'tis passing strange.
- 3RD BARD : Shall we go forth to see if aught's amiss?
- PROPHET : Stay. Stay. Some subtle power did call our Chief
To go alone. I pray you stay.
- 2ND BARD : Our Chief stands transfixed and shades his eyes,
As though a blinding Light his eyelids glare.
- 1ST BARD : Now look, he moves his hand across his brow.
- 2ND BARD : As though he'd just recovered from a swoon.
- 3RD BARD : To the coracle he stoops and bends he low.
- WATCHER : And with his hands is lifting something up.
- TUATHS : The Chief returns alone. There's something wrong.
What is it that he carries in his arms?
- PROPHET : 'Tis a thing of Light and blinding too,
O wild and enigmatic thoughts, be still!
- 1ST BARD : A cross he carries, O wondrous sight!
- 2ND BARD : I am fraught with fear of something I know not.
- 3RD BARD : What strange power is this that holds me still?
- WATCHER : The coracle has vanished, I know not where.
And but a moment since it I did see.
- PROPHET : Perplexing symbol, it robbeth me of thought,
That selfsame glowing Light for nights I've seen.
It spells some weighty secret we shall know
Of much that is beyond our present ken.

TUATHS : What power is this that makes us fraught with fear,
 See how the Chief's face glows with dazzling Light.

CHIEF BARD : O time, the loved, the hated and despised,
 To thee this precious moment I give thanks ;
 Sweet precious moment, minute eternity,
 To have lived and felt and known a miracle.

 Strange wonder is this jewelled piece of tree,
 Not cut from sturdy oak or beach or pine ;
 An unknown piece so masterly in cut,
 An empery, imbued with light and power.

 In antient Tara here an exigent
 Which doth express a marvel to behold ;
 See how it scintillates with heav'nly Light.
 Oh bounteous gift ! We, the unworthy, take
 This Cross of subtle meaning and of life.

 Let every harp in Tara swell its soul
 Of music, in true concord with a song
 Not heard before by any mortal ear,
 That we may forge a link on endless chain.

F I N I S .



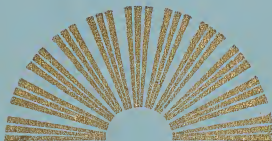




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