

SHARP WILLIAM

GREEN FIRE: A
ROMANCE

William Sharp

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BOOK FIRST

THE BIRDS OF ANGUS OGUE

Hither and thither,
And to and fro,
They thrid the Maze
Of Weal and Woe:
O winds that blow
For golden weather
Blow me the birds,
All white as snow
On the hillside heather —
Blow me the birds
That Angus know:
Blow me the birds,
Be it Weal or Woe!

CHAPTER I EUCHARIS

Then, in the violet forest, all a-bourgeon, Eucharis said to me: "It is Spring."— Arthur Rimbaud.

After the dim purple bloom of a suspended spring, a green rhythm ran from larch to thorn, from lime to sycamore; spread from meadow to meadow, from copse to copse, from hedgerow to hedgerow. The blackthorn had already snowed upon the nettle-garths. In the obvious nests among the bare boughs of ash and beech the eggs of the blackbird were blue-green as the sky that March had bequeathed to April. For days past, when the breath of the equinox had surged out of the west, the missel-thrushes had bugled from the wind-swayed topmost branches of the tallest elms. Everywhere the green rhythm ran.

In every leaf that had uncurled there was a delicate bloom, that which is upon all things in the first hours of life. The spires of the grass were washed in a green, dewy light. Out of the brown earth a myriad living things thrust tiny green shafts, arrow-heads, bulbs, spheres, clusters. Along the pregnant soil keener ears than ours would have heard the stir of new life, the innumerable whisper of the bursting seed; and, in the wind itself, shepherding the shadow-chased sunbeams, the voice of that vernal gladness which has been man's clarion since Time began.

Day by day the wind-wings lifted a more multitudinous whisper from the woodlands. The deep hyperborean note, from the invisible ocean of air, was still audible: within the concourse of bare boughs which lifted against it, that surging voice could not but have an echo of its wintry roar. In the sun-havens, however, along the southerly copses, in daisied garths of orchard-trees, amid the flowering currant and guelder and lilac bushes in quiet places where the hives were all a-murmur, the wind already sang its lilt of spring. From dawn till noon, from an hour before sundown till the breaking foam along the wild cherry flushed fugitively because of the crimson glow out of the west, there was a ceaseless chittering of birds. The starlings and the sparrows enjoyed the commune of the homestead; the larks and fieldfares and green and yellow linnets congregated in the meadows, where, too, the wild bee already roved. Among the brown ridgy fallows there was a constant flutter of black, white-gleaming, and silver-gray wings, where the stalking rooks, the jerking pewets, and the wary, uncertain gulls from the neighboring sea, feasted tirelessly from the teeming earth. Often, too, the wind-hover, that harbinger of the season of the young broods, quivered his curved wings in his arrested flight, while his lance-like gaze penetrated the whins, beneath which a new-born rabbit crawled, or discerned in the tangle of a grassy tuft the brown, watchful eyes of a nesting quail.

In the remoter woodlands the three foresters of April could be heard: the woodpecker tapping on the gnarled boles of the oaks; the wild-dove calling in low, crooning monotones to his silent mate; the cuckoo tolling his infrequent peals from skyey belfries built of sun and mist.

In the fields, where the thorns were green as rivulets of melted snow and the grass had the bloom of emerald, and the leaves of docken, clover, cinquefoil, sorrel, and a thousand plants and flowers, were wave-green, the ewes lay, idly watching with their luminous amber eyes the frisking and leaping of the close-curved, tuft-tailed, woolly-legged lambs. In corners of the hedgerows, and in hollows in the rolling meadows, the primrose, the celandine, the buttercup, the dandelion, and the daffodil spilled little eddies of the sun-flood which overbrimmed them with light. All day long the rapture of the larks filled the blue air with vanishing spirals of music, swift and passionate in the ascent, repetitive and less piercing in the narrowing downward gyres. From every whin the poignant, monotonous note of the yellow-hammer reëchoed. Each pastoral hedge was alive with robins, chaffinches, and the dusky shadows of the wild-mice darting here and there among the greening boughs.

Whenever this green fire is come upon the earth, the swift contagion spreads to the human heart. What the seedlings feel in the brown mould, what the sap feels in the trees, what the blood feels in every creature from the newt in the pool to the nesting bird – so feels the strange, remembering ichor that runs its red tides through human hearts and brains. Spring has its subtler magic for us, because of the dim mysteries of unremembering remembrance and of the vague radiances of hope. Something in us sings an ascendant song, and we expect, we know not what; something in us sings a decrescent song, and we realize vaguely the stirring of immemorial memories.

There is none who will admit that spring is fairer elsewhere than in his own land. But there are regions where the season is so hauntingly beautiful that it would seem as though Angus Ogue knew them for his chosen resting-places in his green journey.

Angus Og, Angus MacGreine, Angus the Ever Youthful, the Son of the Sun, a fair god he indeed, golden-haired and wonderful as Apollo Chrusokomes. Some say that he is Love; some, that he is Spring; some, even, that in him, Thanatos, the Hellenic Celt that was his far-off kin, is incarnate. But why seek riddles in flowing water? It may well be that Angus Ogue is Love, and Spring, and Death. The elemental gods are ever triune; and in the human heart, in whose lost Eden an ancient tree of knowledge grows wherefrom the mind has not yet gathered more than a few windfalls, it is surely sooth that Death and Love are oftentimes one and the same, and that they love to come to us in the apparel of Spring.

Sure, indeed, Angus Ogue is a name above all sweet to lovers, for is he not the god – the fair youth of the Tuatha-de-Danann, the Ancient People, with us still, though for ages seen of us no more – from the meeting of whose lips are born white birds, which fly abroad and nest in lovers' hearts till the moment come when, on the yearning lips of love, their invisible wings shall become kisses again?

Then, too, there is the old legend that Angus goes to and fro upon the world, a weaver of rainbows. He follows the spring, or is its herald. Often his rainbows are seen in the heavens; often in the rapt gaze of love. We have all perceived them in the eyes of children, and some of us have discerned them in the hearts of sorrowful women and in the dim brains of the old. Ah! for sure, if Angus Og be the lovely Weaver of Hope he is deathless comrade of the spring, and we may well pray to him to let his green fire move in our veins, whether he be but the Eternal Youth of the World, or be also Love, whose soul is youth, or even though he be likewise Death himself, Death to whom Love was wedded long, long ago.

But nowhere was spring more lovely, nowhere was the green fire of life so quick with impulsive ardors, as, one year of the years, in a seaward region to the north of the ancient forest of Broceliande, in what of old was Armorica and now is Brittany.

Here spring often comes late, but ever lingers long. Here, too, in the dim green avenues of the oak-woods of Kerival, the nightingales reach their uttermost western flight. Never has the shepherd, tending his scant flock on the upland pastures of Finistère, nor the fisherman lying a-dream amid the sandy thickets of Ushant, heard that quaint music – that primeval and ever young song of the passionate heart which Augustine might well have had in mind when he exclaimed "Sero te amavi, Pulchritudo, tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi." But, each April, in the woods of Kerival, the nightingales congregate from afar, and through May their songs make the forest like a sanctuary filled with choristers swinging incense of a delicate music.

It is a wonderful region, that which lies betwixt Ploumaliou on the east and Kerloek on the west; the oldest, remotest part of an ancient, remote land. Here the few hamlets and fewer scattered villages are, even in externals, the same as they were a hundred or three hundred years ago. In essentials, there is no difference since St. Hervé or St. Ronan preached the new faith, or indeed since Ahès the Pale rode through the forest aisles in the moonlight and heard the Nains chanting, or since King Gradlon raced his horse against the foam when his daughter let the sea in upon the fair city of Ys. The good *curés* preach the religion of Christ and of Mary to the peasants; but in the minds of most of these there lingers much of the bygone faith that reared the menhirs. Few indeed there are in whose ears is

never an echo of the old haunted world, when every wood and stream, every barren moor and granite wilderness, every sea-pasture and creek and bay had its particular presence, its spirit of good or ill, its menace, its perilous enchantment. The eyes of the peasants by these shores, these moors, these windy hill-slopes of the south, are not fixed only on the meal-chest and the fallow-field, or, on fête-days, upon the crucifix in the little church; but often dwell upon a past time, more sacred now than ever in this bitter relinquishing age. On the lips of many may be heard lines from that sad folk-song, "Ann Amzer Dremenet" (In the Long Ago):

Eur c'havel kaer karn olifant,
War-n-han tachou aour hag arc' hant.

Daelou a ver, daelou c'houero:
Neb a zo enn han zo maro!

Zo maro, zo maro pell-zo,
Hag hi luskel, o kana 'to,

Hag hi luskel, luskel ato,
Kollet ar skiand-vad gant-ho.

Ar skiand-vad ho deuz kollet;
Kollet ho deuz joaiou ar bed.

[But when they had made the cradle
Of ivory and of gold,
Their hearts were heavy still
With the sorrow of old.

And ever as they rocked, the tears
Ran down, sad tears:
Who is it lieth dead therein,
Dead all these weary years?

And still they rock that cradle there
Of ivory and gold;
For in their brains the shadow is
The Shadow of Old.

They weep, and know not what they weep;
They wait a vain rebirth:
Vanity of vanities, alas!
For there is but one birth
On the wide, green earth.]

Old sayings they have, too; who knows how old? The charcoal-burner in the woods above Kerloek will still shudder at the thought of death on the bleak, open moor, because of the carrion-crow that awaits his sightless eyes, the fox that will tear his heart out, and the toad that will swallow his soul. Long, long ago Gwenc'hlan the Bard sang thus of his foe and the foes of his people, when every battle field was a pasture for the birds and beasts of prey, and when the Spirit of Evil lurked

near every corpse in the guise of a toad. And still the shrimper, in the sands beyond Ploumalieu, will cry out against the predatory sea fowl *A gas ar Gall – a gas ar Gall!* (Chase the Franks!) and not know that, ages ago, this cry went up from the greatest of Breton kings, when Nomenoë drove the Frankish invaders beyond the Oust and the Vilaine, and lighted their flight by the flames of Nantes and Rennes.

Near the northern frontier of the remotest part of this ancient region, the Manor of Kerival was the light-house of its forest vicinage. It was and is surrounded by woods, for the most part of oak and chestnut and beech. Therein are trees of an age so great that they may have sheltered the flight of Jud Mael, when Ahès chased him on her white stallion from glade to glade, and one so venerably old that its roots may have been soaked in the blood of their child Judik, whom she forced her betrayer to slay with the sword before she thrust a dagger into his heart. Northward of the manor, however, the forest is wholly of melancholy spruce, of larch and pine. The pines extend in a desolate disarray to the interminable dunes, beyond which the Breton sea lifts its gray wave against a gray horizon. On that shore there are few rocks, though here and there fang-like reefs rise, ready to tear and devour any boat hurled upon them at full tide in days of storm. At Kerival Haven, too, there is a wilderness of granite rock; a mass of pinnacles, buttresses, and inchoate confusion, ending in long, smooth ledges of black basalt, these forever washed by the green flow of the tides.

None of the peasants knew the age of the House of Kerival, or how long the Kerival family had been there. Old Yann Hénan, the blind brother of the white-haired *curé*, Père Alain, who was the oldest man in all the countryside, was wont to say that Kerival woods had been green before ever there was a house on the banks of the Seine, and that a Kerival had been lord of the land before ever there was a king of France. All believed this, except Père Alain, and even he dissented only when Yann spoke of the seigneur's ancestor as the Marquis of Kerival; for, as he explained, there were no marquises in those far-off days. But this went for nothing; for, unfortunately, Père Alain had once in his youth preached against the popular belief in Korrigans and Nains, and had said that these supernatural beings did not exist, or at any rate were never seen of man. How, then, could much credence be placed on the testimony of a man who could be so prejudiced? Yann had but to sing a familiar snatch from the old ballad of "Aotru Nann Hag ar Gorrigan" – the fragment beginning

Ken a gavas eur waz vihan
E-kichen ti eur Gorrigan,

and ending

Met gwell eo d'in mervel breman
'Get dimizi d' eur Gorrigan! —

[The Lord Nann came to the Kelpie's Pool
And stooped to drink the water cool;

But he saw the kelpie sitting by,
Combing her long locks listlessly.

"O knight," she sang, "thou dost not fear
To draw these perilous waters near!

Wed thou me now, or on a stone
For seven years perish all alone,
Or three days hence moan your death-moan!"

"I will not wed you, nor alone
Perish with torment on a stone,
Nor three days hence draw my death-moan —

For I shall die, O Kelpie fair,
When God lets down the golden stair,
And so my soul thou shalt not share —

But, if my fate is to lie dead,
Here, with thy cold breast for my bed,
Death can be mine, I will not wed!"

When Yann sang this, or told for the hundredth time the familiar story of how Paskou-Hir the tailor was treated by the Nains when he sought to rifle the hidden treasure in the grotto, every one knew that he spoke what was authentic, what was true. As for Père Alain – well, priests are told to say many things by the good, wise Holy Father, who rules the world so well but has never been in Brittany, and so cannot know all that happens there, and has happened from time immemorial. Then, again, was there not the evidence of the alien, the strange, quiet man called Yann the Dumb, because of his silence at most times – him that was the servitor-in-chief to the Lady Lois, the beautiful paralyzed wife of the Marquis of Kerival, and that came from the far north, where the kindred of the Armorican race dwell among the misty isles and rainy hills of Scotland? Indeed Yann had been heard to say that he would sooner disbelieve in the Pope himself than in the kelpie, for in his own land he had himself heard her devilish music luring him across a lonely moor, and he had known a man who had gone fey because he had seen the face of a kelpie in a hill-tarn.

In the time of the greening, even the Korrigans are unseen of walkers in the dusk. They are busy then, some say, winding the white into the green bulbs of the water-lilies, or tinting the wings within the chrysalis of the water-fly, or weaving the bright skins for the newts; but however this may be, the season of the green flood over the brown earth is not that wherein man may fear them.

No fear of Korrigan or Nain, or any other woodland creature or haunter of pool or stream, disturbed two who walked in the green-gloom of a deep avenue in the midst of the forest beyond the Manor of Kerival. They were young, and there was green fire in their hearts; for they moved slow, hand claspt in hand, and with their eyes dwelling often on the face of each other. And whenever Ynys de Kerival looked at her cousin Alan she thought him the fairest and comeliest of the sons of men; and whenever Alan turned the longing of his eyes upon Ynys he wondered if anywhere upon the green earth moved aught so sweet and winsome, if anywhere in the green world was another woman so beautiful in body, mind, and spirit, as Ynys – Ynys the Dark, as the peasants called her, though Ynys of the dusky hair and the hazel-green eyes would have been truer of her whom Alan de Kerival loved. Of a truth, she was fair to see. Tall she was, and lithe; in her slim, svelt body there was something of the swift movement of the hill-deer, something of the agile abandon of the leopard. She was of that small clan, the true daughters of the sun. Her tanned face and hands showed that she loved the open air, though indeed her every movement proved this. The sun-life was even in that shadowy hair of hers, which had a sheen of living light wrought into its fragrant dusk; it was in her large, deep, translucent eyes, of a soft, dewy twilight-gray often filled with green light, as of the forest-aisles or as the heart of a sea-wave as it billows over sunlit sand; it was in the heart and in the brain of this daughter of an ancient race – and the nostalgia of the green world was hers. For in her veins ran the blood not only of her Armorican ancestors but of another Celtic strain, that of the Gael of the Isles, Through her mother, Lois Macdonald, of the remote south isles of the Outer Hebrides, the daughter of a line as ancient as that of Tristan de Kerival, she inherited even more than her share of the gloom,

the mystery, the sea-passion, the vivid oneness with nature which have disclosed to so many of her fellow-Celts secret sources of peace.

Everywhere in that region the peasant poets sang of Ynys the Dark or of her sister Annaik. They were the two beautiful women of the world, there. But, walking in the fragrant green-gloom of the beeches, Alan smiled when he thought of Annaik, for all her milk-white skin and her wonderful tawny hair, for all her strange, shadowy amber-brown eyes – eyes often like dark hill-crystals aflame with stormy light. She was beautiful, and tall too, and with an even wilder grace than Ynys; yet – there was but one woman in the world, but one Dream, and her name was Ynys.

It was then that he remembered the line of the unfortunate boy-poet of the Paris that has not forgotten him; and looking at Ynys, who seemed to him the very spirit of the green life all around him, muttered: "Then in the violet forest, all a-bourgeon, Eucharis said to me: 'It is Spring.'"

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF KERIVAL

It was with a sudden beating of the heart that, midway in Easter, Alan de Kerival received in Paris two letters: one from the Marquis de Kerival, and the other from his cousin Ynys, whom he loved.

At all times he was ill at ease in the great city; or at all times save when he was alone in his little study in the Tour de l'Ile, or in the great circular room where the master astronomer, Daniel Darc, wrought unceasingly. On rare occasions, golden afternoons these, he escaped to the green places near Paris – to Rambouillet or St. Germain, or even to Fontainebleau. There, under the leafless trees of winter or at the first purpling of spring, he was wont to walk for hours, dreaming his dream. For Alan was a poet, and to dream was his birthright.

And for dream, what had he? There was Ynys above all, Ynys whom he loved with ever deepening joy and wonder. More and more she had become to him his real life; he lived in her, for her, because of her. More and more, too, he realized that she was his strength, his inspiration. But besides this abiding delight, which made his heart leap whenever he saw a Breton name above a shop or on a volume on the bookstalls, he was ever occupied by that wonderful past of his race which was to him a living reality. It was perhaps because he so keenly perceived the romance of the present – the romance of the general hour, of the individual moment – that he turned so insatiably to the past with its deathless charm, its haunting appeal. The great astronomer whom he loved and served knew the young man well, and was wont to say that his favorite assistant was born a thousand years too late.

One day a Breton neighbor of the Marquis de Kerival questioned Daniel Darc as to who the young man's friends were. "Nomenoë, Gradlon-Maur, Gwenc'hlan, Taliésin, Merlin, and Oisin," was the reply. And it was true. Alan's mind was as irresistibly drawn to the Celtic world of the past as the swallow to the sun-way. In a word, he was not only a poet, but a Celtic poet; and not only a Celtic poet, but a dreamer of the Celtic dream.

Perhaps this was because of the double strain in his veins. Doubtless, too, it was continuously enhanced by his intimate knowledge of two of the Celtic languages, that of the Breton and that of the Gael. It is language that is the surest stimulus to the remembering nerves. We have a memory within memory, as layers of skin underlie the epidermis. With most of us this anterior remembrance remains dormant throughout life; but to some are given swift ancestral recollections. Alan de Kerival was of these few.

His aunt, the Marquise, true Gael of the Hebrid Isles as she was, loved the language of her people, and spoke it as she spoke English, even better than French. Of Breton, save a few words and phrases, she knew almost nothing – though Armorican was exclusively used throughout the whole Kerival region, was the common tongue in the Manor itself, and was habitually affected even by the Marquis de Kerival – on the few occasions when Tristran the Silent, as the old nobleman was named, cared to speak. But with two members of the household she invariably spoke in Gaelic; with her nephew Alan, the child of her sister Silis Macdonald, and her old servitor, Ian Macdonald, known among his fellows as Yann the Dumb, mainly because he seldom spoke to them, having no language but his own. Latterly, her daughter Ynys had become as familiar with the one Celtic tongue as the other.

With this double key, Alan unlocked many doors. All the wonderful romance of old Armorica and of ancient Wales was familiar to him, and he was deeply versed in the still more wonderful and magical lore of the Gaelic race. In his brain ran ever that Ossianic tide which has borne so many marvellous argosies through the troubled waters of the modern mind. Old ballads of his native isles, with their haunting Gaelic rhythms and idioms and their frequent reminiscences of the Norse viking and the Danish summer-sailor, were often in his ears. He had lived with his hero Cuchullin from the

days when the boy showed his royal blood at Emain-Macha till that sad hour when his madness came upon him and he died. He had fared forth with many a Lifting of the Sunbeam, and had followed Oisín step by step on that last melancholy journey when Malvina led the blind old man along the lonely shores of Arran. He had watched the *crann-tara* flare from glen to glen, and at the bidding of that fiery cross he had seen the whirling of swords, the dusky flight of arrow-rain, and, from the isles, the leaping forth of the war *birlinns* to meet the viking galleys. How often, too, he had followed Nial of the Nine Hostages, and had seen the Irish Charlemagne ride victor through Saxon London, or across the Norman plains, or with onward sword direct his army against the white walls of the Alps! How often he had been with the great king Nomonoë, when he with his Armoricans chased the Frankish wolves away from Breton soil, or had raced with Gradlon-Maur from the drowning seas which overwhelmed Ys, where the king's daughter had at the same moment put her hands on the Gates of Love and Death! How often he had heard Merlin and Taliésin speak of the secret things of the ancient wisdom, or Gwenc'hlan chant upon his wild harp, or the fugitive song of Vivien in the green woods of Broceliande, where the enchanted seer sleeps his long sleep and dreams his dream of eternal youth.

It was all this marvellous life of old which wrought upon Alan de Kerival's life as by a spell. Often he recalled the words of a Gaelic *sian* he had heard Yann croon in his soft, monotonous voice – words which made a light shoreward eddy of the present and were solemn with the deep-sea sound of the past, that is with us even as we speak.

He was himself, too, a poet, and loved to tell anew, in Breton, to the peasants of Kerival, some of the wild north tales, or to relate in Gaelic to his aunt and to Ynys the beautiful folk-ballads of Brittany, which Annaik knew by heart and chanted with the strange, wailing music of the forest-wind.

In that old Manor, moreover, another shadow put a gloom into his mind – this was another shadow than that which made the house so silent and chill, the inviolate isolation of the paralyzed but still beautiful Marquise Lois from her invalid husband, limb-useless from his thighs because of a hurt done in the war into which he had gone brown-haired and strong, and whence he had come broken in hope, shattered in health, and gray with premature age. And this other shadow was the mystery of his birth.

It was in vain he had tried to learn the name of his father. Only three people knew it: the Marquis Tristran, the Marquise Lois, and Yann the Dumb. From none of these could he elicit more than what he had long known. All was to be made clear on his twenty-fifth birthday; till then he had to be content with the knowledge that he was Alan de Kerival by courtesy only; that he was the son of Silis Macdonald, of an ancient family whose ancestral home was in one of the isles of the Southern Hebrides, of Silis, the dead sister of Lois de Kerival; and that he was the adopted child of the Marquis and Marquise who bore that old Armorican name.

That there was tragedy inwrought with his story he knew well. From fugitive words, too, he had gained the idea that his father, in common with the Marquis Tristran, had been a soldier in the French army; though as to whether this unknown parent was Scottish or Breton or French, or as to whether he was alive or dead, there was no homing clew.

To all his enquiries of the Marquise he received no answer, or was told simply that he must wait. The Marquis he rarely saw, and never spoke with. If ever he encountered the stern, white-haired man as he was wheeled through the garden ways or down one of the green alleys, or along the corridors of the vast, rambling château, they passed in silence. Sometimes the invalid would look at him with the fierce, unwavering eyes of a hawk; but for the most part the icy, steel-blue eyes ignored the young man altogether.

Yann, too, could not, or would not confide any thing more than Alan had already learned from the Marquise. The gaunt old Hebridean – whose sole recreation, when not sitting pipe in mouth before the flaming logs, was to wander along the melancholy dunes by the melancholy gray sea, and mutter continuously to himself in his soft island-Gaelic – would talk slowly by the hour on old legends, and

ballad-lore, and on seanachas of every kind. When, however, Alan asked him about the sisters Lois and Silis Macdonald, or how Lois came to marry a Breton, and as to the man Silis loved, and what the name was of the isle whereon they lived, – or even as to whether Ian himself had kith or kin living, – Yann would justify his name. He took no trouble in evasion: he simply became dumb.

Sometimes Alan asked the old man if he cared to see the Isles again. At that, a look ever came into Ian Macdonald's eyes which made his young clansman love him.

"It will never, never be forgetting my own place I will be," he replied once, "no, never. I would rather be hearing the sea on the shores there than all the hymns of heaven, and I would rather be having the canna and the heather over my head than be under the altar of the great church at Kerloek. No, no, it is the pain I have for my own place, and the isle where my blood has been for hundreds of years, and where for sure my heart is, Alan Mac – "

With eager ears Alan had hoped for the name whereat the old man had stopped short. It would have told him much. "Alan, son of – !" Even that baptismal name would probably have told him if his father were a Gael or a Breton, an Englishman or a Frenchman. But Yann said no more, then or later.

Alan had hoped, too, that when he came back, after his first long absence from Kerival, his aunt would be more explicit with him. A vain hope, for when once more he was at the château he found the Marquise even less communicative than was her wont. Her husband was more than ever taciturn, and a gloom seemed to have descended upon the house. For the first time he noticed a change in the attitude of Annaik. Her great, scornful, wild-bird eyes looked at him often strangely. She sought him, and then was silent. If he did not speak, she became morose; if he spoke, she relapsed into her old scornful quiescence. Sometimes, when they were alone, she unbent, and was his beautiful cousin and comrade again; but in the presence of Ynys she bewildered him by her sudden ennui or bitterness or even shadowy hostility. As for Ynys, she was unhappy, save in Alan's love – a love that neither her father nor mother knew, and of which she never spoke to Annaik.

If Alan were a dreamer, Ynys was even more so. Then, too, she had what Annaik had not, though she lacked what her sister had. For she was mystical as that young saint of the Bretons who saw Christ walking by night upon the hills, and believed that he met there a new Endymion, his Bride of the Church come to him in the moonshine. Ynys believed in St. Guennik, as she believed in Jeanne d'Arc, and no legend fascinated her more than that strange one she had heard from Yann, of how Arthur the Celtic hero would come again out of Flath-innis, and redeem his lost, receding peoples. But, unlike Annaik, she had little of the barbaric passion, little of that insatiate nostalgia for the life of the open moor and the windy sea, though these she loved not less whole-heartedly than did her sister. The two both loved Nature as few women love her; but to Annaik the forest and the moorland were home, while to Ynys they were rather sanctuaries or realms of natural romance. This change to an unwelcome taciturnity had been noted by Alan on his home visit at Christmas. Still, he had thought little of it after his return to Paris, for the Noël-tide had been sweetened by the word given to him by Ynys.

Then Easter had come, and with it the two letters of such import. That from the Marquise was short and in the tongue he and she loved best: but even thus it was written guardedly. The purport was that, now his twenty-fifth birthday was at hand, he would soon learn what he had so long wished to know.

That from Ynys puzzled him. Why should dispeace have arisen between Ynys and Annaik? Why should an already gloomy house have been made still more sombre?

One day, Ynys wrote, she had come upon Annaik riding Sultan, the black stallion, and thrashing the horse till the foam flew from the champed bit. When she had cried to Annaik to be merciful, and asked her why she punished Sultan so, her sister had cried mockingly, "It is my love! *Addio, Amore! Addio! Addio! Addio!*" – and at each *addio* had brought her whip so fiercely upon the stallion's quivering flanks that he had reared, and all but thrown her, till she swung him round as on a pivot and went at a wild gallop down a long beech-alley that led into the heart of the forest.

Well, these things would be better understood soon. In another week he would be out of Paris, possibly never to return. And then ... Brittany – Kerival – Ynys!

Nevertheless his heart was not wholly away from his work. The great astronomer had known and loved Hersart de Kerival, the younger brother of Tristran, and it was for his sake that he had taken the young man into his observatory. Soon he had discovered that the youth loved the beautiful science, and was apt, eager, and yet patient to learn. In the five years which Alan spent – with brief Brittany intervals – in the observatory of the Tour de l'Ile, he had come to delight in the profession which he had chosen, and of which the Marquise had approved.

He was none the less close and eager a student because that he brought to this enthralling science that spirit of the poetry of the past, which was the habitual atmosphere wherein his mind dwelt. Even the most eloquent dissertations of Daniel Darc failed to move him so much as some ancient strain wherein the stars of heaven were hailed as kindred of men; and never had any exposition of the lunar mystery so exquisitely troubled him as that wonderful cry of Ossian which opens the poem of "Darthula":

"Daughter of heaven, fair art thou! the silence of thy face is pleasant. Thou comest forth in loveliness; the stars attend thy blue steps in the east. The clouds rejoice in thy presence, O moon, and brighten their dark-brown sides. Who is like thee in heaven, daughter of the night? The stars are ashamed in thy presence, and turn aside their green sparkling eyes. Whither dost thou retire from thy course, when the darkness of thy countenance grows? Hast thou thy hall like Ossian? Dwellest thou in the shadow of grief? Have thy sisters fallen from heaven? Are they who rejoiced with thee, at night, no more? – Yes! – They have fallen, fair light! and thou dost often retire to mourn. But thou thyself shalt fail, one night; and leave thy blue path in heaven. The stars will then lift their green heads; they, who were ashamed in thy presence, will rejoice."

CHAPTER III

STORM

Yes, he was glad to leave Paris, although that home of lost causes – thus designate in a far truer sense than is the fair city by the Isis – had a spell for him. But not Paris, not even what, night after night, he beheld from the Tour de l'Ile, held him under a spell comparable with that which drew him back to the ancient land where his heart was.

In truth, it was with relief at last that he saw the city recede from his gaze, and merge into the green alleys north-westward. With a sigh of content, he admitted that it was indeed well to escape from that fevered life – a life that, to him, even in his lightest mood, seemed far more phantasmal than that which formed the background to all his thoughts and visions. Long before the cherry orchards above Rouen came into view he realized how glad he was even to be away from the bare, gaunt room where so many of his happiest hours had been spent; that windy crow's-nest of a room at the top of the Tour de l'Ile, whence nightly he had watched the procession of the stars, and nightly had opened the dreamland of his imagination to an even more alluring procession out of the past.

His one regret was in having to part from Daniel Darc, that strange and impressive personality who had so fascinated him, and the spell of whose sombre intellect, with its dauntless range and scope, had startled the thought of Europe, and even given dreams to many to whom all dreams had become the very Fata Morgana of human life.

Absorbed as he was, Daniel Darc realized that Alan was an astronomer primarily because he was a poet rather than an astronomer by inevitable bias. He saw clearly into the young man's mind, and certainly did not resent that his favorite pupil loved to dwell with Merlin rather than with Kepler, and that even Newton or his own master Arago had no such influence over him as the far-off, nigh inaudible music of the harp of Aneurin.

And, in truth, below all Alan's passion for science – of that science which is at once the oldest, the noblest, and the most momentous; the science of the innumerable concourse of dead, dying, and flaming adolescent worlds, dust about the threshold of an unfathomable and immeasurable universe, wherein this Earth of ours is no more than a mere whirling grain of sand – below all this living devotion lay a deeper passion still.

Truly, his soul must have lived a thousand years ago. In him, at least, the old Celtic brain was reborn with a vivid intensity which none guessed, and none except Ynys knew – if even she, for Alan himself only vaguely surmised the extent and depth of this obsession. In heart and brain that old world lived anew. Himself a poet, all that was fair and tragically beautiful was forever undergoing in his mind a marvellous transformation – a magical resurrection rather, wherein what was remote and bygone, and crowned with oblivious dust, became alive again with intense and beautiful life.

It did not harmonize ill with Alan's mood that, on the afternoon of the day he left Rouen, great, bulbous storm-clouds soared out of the west and cast a gloom upon the landscape.

That is a strange sophistry which registers passion according to its nearness to the blithe weal symbolized in fair weather. Deep passion instinctively moves toward the shadow rather than toward the golden noons of light. Passion hears what love at the most dreams of; passion sees what love mayhap dimly discerns in a glass darkly. A million of our fellows are "in love" at any or every moment; and for these the shadowy way is intolerable. But for the few, in whom love is, the eyes are circumspect against the dark hour which comes when heart and brain and blood are aflame with the paramount ecstasy of life.

Deep passion is always in love with death. The temperate solitudes of affection know not this perverse emotion, which is simply the darker shadow inevitable to a deeper joy – as the profundity of an Alpine lake is to be measured by the height of the remote summits which rise sheer from its marge.

When Alan saw this gloom slowly absorb the sunlight, and heard below the soft spring cadences of the wind the moan of coming tempest, his melancholy lightened. Soon he would see the storm crushing through the woods of Kerival; soon feel the fierce rain come sweeping inland from Ploumaliou; soon hear, confusedly obscure, the noise of the Breton Sea along the reef-set sands. Already he felt the lips of Ynys pressed against his own.

The sound of the sea called through the dusk, now with the muffled under roar of famished lions, now with a loud, continuous baying like that of eager hounds.

Seaward, the deepening shadows passed intricately from wave to wave. The bays and sheltered waters were full of a tumult as of baffled flight, of fugitives jostling each other in a wild and fruitless evasion. Along the interminable reach of the Dunes of Kerival the sea's lips writhed and curled; while out of the heart of the turbulent waste beyond issued a shrill, intermittent crying, followed by stifled laughter. Ever and again tons of whirling water, meeting, disparted with a hoarse thunder. This ever-growing and tempestuous violence was reiterated in a myriad raucous, clamant voices along the sands and among the reefs and rocks and weed-covered wave-hollowed crags.

Above the shore a ridge of tamarisk-fringed dune suspended, hanging there dark and dishevelled, like a gigantic eyebrow on the forehead of a sombre and mysterious being. Beyond this, again, lay a stretch of barren moor, caught and clasped a mile away by a dark belt of pines, amid which the incessant volume of the wind passed with a shrill whistling. Further in among the trees were oases of a solemn silence, filled only at intervals with a single flute-like wind-eddy, falling there as the song of a child lost and baffled in a waste place.

Over and above the noise of the sea was a hoarse cry thridding it as a flying shuttle in a gigantic loom. This was the wind, which continuously swept from wave to wave – shrewd, salt, bitter with the sterile breath of the wilderness whereon it roamed, crying and moaning, baying, howling, insatiate.

The sea-fowl, congregating from afar, had swarmed inland. Their wailing cries filled the spray-wet obscurities. The blackness that comes before the deepest dark lay in the hollow of the great wings of the tempest. Peace nowhere prevailed, for in those abysmal depths where the wind was not even a whisper, there was listless gloom only, because no strife is there, and no dream lives amid those silent apathies.

Neither upon the waters nor on the land was there sign of human life. In that remote region, solitude was not a dream but a reality. An ancient land, this loneliest corner of sea-washed Brittany; an ancient land, with ever upon it the light of olden dreams, the gloom of indefinable tragedy, the mystery of a destiny long ago begun and never fulfilled.

Lost like a rock in a forest, a weather-worn, ivy-grown château stood within sound, though not within sight, of this tempestuous sea. All about it was the deep, sonorous echo of wind and wave, transmuted into a myriad cries among the wailing pines and oaks and vast beeches of the woods of Kerival. Wind and wave, too, made themselves audible amid the gables and in the huge chimneys of the old manor-house; even in the draughty corridors an echo of the sea could be heard.

The pathways of the forest were dank with sodden leaves, the *débris* of autumn which the snows of winter had saved from the whirling gales of January. Underneath the brushwood and the lower boughs these lay in brown, clotted masses, emitting a fugitive, indefinite odor, as though the ghost of a dead year passed in that damp and lifeless effluence. But along the frontiers of the woods there was an eddying dust of leaves and small twigs, and part at least of the indeterminate rumor which filled the air was caused by this frail lapping as of innumerable minute wings.

In one of those leaf-quiet alleys, shrouded in a black-green darkness save where in one spot the gloom was illumined into a vivid brown, because of a wandering beam of light from a turret in the château, a man stood. The head was forwardly inclined, the whole figure intent as a listening animal. He and his shadow were as those flowers of darkness whose nocturnal bloom may be seen of none save in the shadowy land of dream.

When for a moment the wind-wavered beam of light fell athwart his face – so dark and wild that he might well have been taken for a nameless creature of the woods – he moved.

With a sudden gesture he flung his arms above his head. His shadow sprang to one side with fantastic speed, leaping like a diver into the gulf of darkness.

"Annaik," he cried, "Annaik, Annaik!"

The moan of the wind out of the sea, the confused noise of the wind's wings baffling through the woods; no other answer than these, no other sound.

"Annaik, Annaik!"

There was pain as of a wounded beast in the harsh cry of this haunter of the dark; but the next moment it was as though the lost shadow had leapt back, for a darkness came about the man, and he lapsed into the obscurity as a wave sinks into a wave.

But, later, out of the silence came a voice.

"Ah, Annaik!" it cried, "ah, Annaik, forsooth! It is Annaik of Kerival you are, and I the dust upon the land of your fathers – but, by the blood of Ronan, it is only a woman you are; and, if I had you here it is a fall of my fist you would be having – aye, the stroke and the blow, for all that I love you as I do, white woman, aye, and curse you and yours for that loving!"

Then, once again, there was silence. Only the screeching of the wind among the leaves and tortured branches; only the deep roar of the tempest at the heart of the forest; only the thunder of the sea throbbing pulse-like through the night. Nor when, a brief while later, a white owl, swifter but not less silent than a drift of vapor, swooped that way, was there living creature in that solitary place.

The red-yellow beam still turned into brown the black-green of that windy alley; but the man, and the shadow of him, and the pain of the beast that was in him, and the cry of the baffled soul, the cry that none might know or even guess – of all this sorrow of the night, nothing remained save the red light lifting and falling through the shadowy hair of what the poets of old called The Dark Woman ... Night.

Only, who may know if, in that warmth and glow within the House of Kerival, some sudden menace from the outside world of life did not knock at the heart of Annaik, where she, tall and beautiful in her cream-white youth and with her mass of tawny hair, stood by Ynys, whose dusky loveliness was not less than her own – both radiant in the fire-light, with laughter upon the lips and light within their eyes.

Oh, flame that burns where fires of home are lit! and oh, flame that burns in the heart to whom life has not said, Awake! and oh, flame that smoulders from death to life, and from life to death, in the dumb lives of those to whom the primrose way is closed! Everywhere the burning of the burning, the flame of the flame; pain and the shadow of pain, joy and the rapt breath of joy, flame of the flame that, burning, destroyeth not till the flame is no more!

It was the night of the home-coming of Alan. So long had Ynys and Annaik looked forward to this hour, that now hardly could they believe the witness of their eyes when with eager glances they scrutinized the new-comer – their Alanik of old.

He stood before the great fire of logs. Upon his face the sharp, damp breath of the storm still lingered, but in his eyes was a light brighter than any dancing flame would cause, and in his blood a pulse that leapt because of another reason than that swift ride through the stormy woods of Kerival.

At the red and stormy break of that day Ynys had awaked with a song of joy in her heart that from hour to hour had found expression in bird-like carollings, little words and fugitive phrases which rippled from her lips, the sunshine-spray from the fount of life whereon her heart swam as a nenuphar on an upwelling pool. Annaik also had waked at that dawn of storm. She had risen in silence, and in silence had remained all day; giving no sign that the flame within her frayed the nerves of her heart.

Throughout the long hours of tempest, and into that dusk wherein the voice of the sea moved, moaning, across the land, laughter and dream had alternated with Ynys. Annaik looked at her strangely at times, but said nothing. Once, standing in the twilight of the dark-raftered room, Ynys

clasped her hands across her bosom and murmured, "Oh, heart be still! My heaven is come." And in that hour, and in that place, she who was twin to her – strange irony of motherhood, that should give birth in one hour to Day and Night, for even as day and night were these twain, so unlike in all things – in that hour and in that place Annaik also clasped her hands across her bosom, and the words that died across the shadow of her lips were, "Oh, heart be still! My hell is near."

And now he for whom both had waited stood, flooded in the red fire glow which leaped from panel to panel, and from rafter to rafter, while, without, the howling of the wind rose and fell in prolonged, monotonous cadences, – anathemas, rather, – whirled through a darkness full of bewilderment and terror.

As for Alan, it was indeed for joy to him to stand there, home once more, with not only the savagery of the tempest behind him, but also left behind, that unspeakably far-off, bewilderingly remote city of Paris whence he had so swiftly come.

It is said of an ancient poet of the Druid days that he had the power to see the lives of the living, and these as though they were phantoms, separate from the body. Was there not a young king of Albainn who, in a perilous hour, discovered this secret of old time, and knew how a life may be hidden away from the body so that none may know of it, save the wind that whispers all things, and the tides of day and night that bear all things upon their dark flood?

King of Albainn, poet of the old time, not alone three youthful dreamers would you have seen, there, in that storm-beset room. For there you would have seen six figures standing side by side. Three of these would have been Alan de Kerival, and Ynys the Dark, and Annaik the Fair; and of the other three, one would be of a dusky-haired woman with starry, luminous eyes; and one a pale woman with a wealth of tawny hair, with eyes aflame, meteors in a desert place; and one a man, young and strong and fair to see as Alan de Kerival, but round about him a gloom, and through that gloom his eyes as stars seen among the melancholy hills.

Happy laughter of the world that is always young – happy, in that we are not all seers of old or kings of Albainn! For who, looking into the mirrors of Life and seeing all that is to be seen, would look again, save those few to whom Life and Death have come sisterly and whispered the secret that some have discerned, how these twain are one and the same.

Nevertheless, in that happy hour for him, Alan saw nothing of what Ynys feared. Annaik had abruptly yielded to a strange gayety, and her swift laugh and gypsy smile made his heart glad.

Never had he seen, even in Paris, women more beautiful. Deep-set as his heart was in the beauty of Ynys, he found himself admiring that of Annaik with new eyes. Truly, she was just such a woman as he had often imagined when Ian had recited to him the ballad of the Sons of Usna or that of how Dermid and Graine fled from the wrath of Fionn.

And they, too, looking at their tall cousin, with his wavy brown hair, broad, low brows, gray-blue eyes, and erect carriage, thought him the comeliest man to be seen in France; and each in her own way was proud and glad, though one, also, with killing pain.

CHAPTER IV

THE DREAM AND THE DREAMERS

Soon after supper Annaik withdrew. Ynys and Alan were glad to be alone, and yet Annaik's absence perturbed them. In going she bade good-night to her cousin, but took no notice of her sister.

At first the lovers were silent though they had much to say, and in particular Alan was anxious to know what it was that Ynys had alluded to in her letter when she warned him that unforeseen difficulties were about their way.

It was pleasant to sit in that low-roofed, dark old room, and feel the world fallen away from them. Hand in hand they looked at each other lovingly, or dreamed into the burning logs, seeing there all manner of beautiful visions. Outside, the wind still moaned and howled, though with less of savage violence, and the rain had ceased.

For a time Ynys would have no talk of Kerival; Alan was to tell all he could concerning his life in Paris, what he had done, what he had dreamed of, and what he hoped for now. But at last he laughingly refused to speak more of himself, and pressed her to reveal what had been a source of anxiety.

"You know, dear," she said, as she rose and leaned against the mantel-piece, her tall figure and dusky hair catching a warm glow from the fire – "you know how pitiable is this feud between my father and mother – how for years they have seen next to nothing of each other; how they live in the same house and yet are strangers? You know, too, how more than ever unfortunate this is, for themselves, and for Annaik and me, on account of our mother being an invalid, and of our father being hardly less frail. Well, I have discovered that the chief, if not indeed the only abiding source of misunderstanding is *you*, dear Alan!"

"But why, Ynys?"

"Ah, why? That is, of course, what I cannot tell you. Have you no suspicion, no idea?"

"None. All I know is that M. de Kerival allows me to bear his name, but that he dislikes, if, indeed, he does not actually hate me."

"There is some reason. I came upon him talking to my mother a short time ago. She had told him of your imminent return.

"I never wish to see his face," my father cried, with fierce vehemence; then, seeing me, he refrained."

"Well, I shall know all the day after to-morrow. Meanwhile, Ynys, we have the night to ourselves. Dear, I want to learn one thing. What does Annaik know? Does she know that we love each other? Does she know that we have told each other of this love, and that we are secretly betrothed?"

"She *must* know that I love you; and sometimes I think she knows that you love me. But ... oh, Allan! I am so unhappy about it ... I fear that Annaik loves you also, and that this will come between us all. It has already frozen her to me and me to her."

Alan looked at Ynys with startled eyes. He knew Annaik better than any one did; and he dreaded the insurgent bitterness of that wild and wayward nature. Moreover, in a sense he loved her, and it was for sorrow to him that she should suffer in a way wherein he could be of no help.

At that moment the door opened, and Matieu, a white-haired old servant, bowing ceremoniously, remarked that M. le Marquis desired to see Mamzelle Ynys immediately.

Ynys glanced round, told Matieu that she would follow, and then turned to Alan. How beautiful she was! he thought; more and more beautiful every time he saw her. Ah! fair mystery of love, which puts a glory about the one loved; a glory that is no phantasmal light, but the realized beauty evoked by seeing eyes and calling heart. On her face was a wonderful color, a delicate flush that came and went. Again and again she made a characteristic gesture, putting her right hand to her forehead and then through the shadowy, wavy hair which Alan loved so well and ever thought of as the fragrant

dusk. How glad he was that she was tall and lithe, graceful as a young birch; that she was strong and kissed brown and sweet of sun and wind; that her beauty was old as the world, and fresh as every dawn, and new as each recurrent spring! No wonder he was a poet, since Ynys was the living poem who inspired all that was best in his life, all that was fervent in his brain.

Thought, kindred to this, kept him a long while by the fire in deep revery, after Ynys had thrilled him by her parting kisses and had gone to her father. He realized, then, how it was she gave him the sense of womanhood as no other woman had done. In her, he recognized the symbol as well as the individual. All women shared in his homage because of her. His deep love for her, his ever growing passion, could evoke from him a courtesy, a chivalry, toward all women which only the callous or the coarse failed to note. She was his magic. The light of their love was upon every thing: everywhere he found synonyms and analogues of "Ynys." Deeply as he loved beauty, he had learned to love it far more keenly and understandingly, because of her. He saw now through the accidental, and everywhere discerned the eternal beauty, the echoes of whose wandering are in every heart and brain, though few discern the white vision or hear the haunting voice.

And with his love had come knowledge of many things hidden from him before. Sequences were revealed, where he had perceived only blind inconsequence. Nature became for him a scroll, a palimpsest with daily mutations. With each change he found a word, a clue, leading to the fuller elucidation of that primeval knowledge which, fragmentarily, from age to age has been painfully lost, regained, and lost again, though never yet wholly irrecoverable.

Through this new knowledge, too, he had come to understand the supreme wonder and promise, the supreme hope of our human life in the mystery of motherhood. All this and much more he owed to Ynys, and to his love for her. She was all that a woman can be to a man. In her he found the divine abstractions which are the beacons of the human soul in its obscure wayfaring – Romance, Love, Beauty. It was not enough that she gave him romance, that she gave him love, that she was the most beautiful of women in his eyes. When he thought of the one, it was to see the starry eyes and to hear the charmed voice of Romance herself, in the voice and in the eyes of Ynys: when he thought of Love it was to hear Ynys's heart beating, to listen to the secret rhythms in Ynys's brain, to feel the life-giving sun-flood that was in her pure but intense and glowing passion.

Thus it was that she had for him that immutable attraction which a few women have for a few men; an appeal, a charm, that atmosphere of romance, that air of ideal beauty, wherein lies the secret of all passionate art. The world without wonder, the world without mystery! That, indeed, is the rainbow without colors, the sunrise without living gold, the noon void of light.

To him, moreover, there was but one woman. In Ynys he had found her. This exquisite prototype was at once a child of nature, a beautiful pagan, a daughter of the sun; was at once this and a soul alive with the spiritual life, intent upon the deep meanings lurking everywhere, wrought to wonder even by the common habitudes of life, to mystery even by the familiar and the explicable. Indeed, the mysticism which was part of the spiritual inheritance come with her northern strain was one of the deep bonds which united them.

What if both at times were wrought too deeply by this beautiful dream? What if the inner life triumphed now and then, and each forgot the deepest instinct of life, that here the body is overlord and the soul but a divine consort? There are three races of man. There is the myriad race which loses all, through (not bestiality, for the brute world is clean and sane) perverted animalism; and there is the myriad race which denounces humanity, and pins all its faith and joy to a life the very conditions of whose existence are incompatible with the law to which we are subject – the sole law, the law of Nature. Then there is that small untoward clan, which knows the divine call of the spirit through the brain, and the secret whisper of the soul in the heart, and forever perceives the veils of mystery and the rainbows of hope upon our human horizons; which hears and sees, and yet turns wisely, meanwhile, to the life of the green earth, of which we are part; to the common kindred of living things, with which

we are at one – is content, in a word, to live, because of the dream that makes living so mysteriously sweet and poignant; and to dream, because of the commanding immediacy of life.

As yet, of course, Alan and Ynys had known little of the vicissitudes of aroused life. What they did know, foresee, was due rather to the second-sight of the imagination than to the keen knowledge of experience.

In Alan Ynys found all that her heart craved. She discovered this nearly too late. A year before this last home-coming of her cousin, she had been formally betrothed to Andrik de Morvan, the friend of her childhood and for whom she had a true affection, and in that betrothal had been quietly glad. When, one midwinter day, she and Alan walked through an upland wood and looked across the snowy pastures and the white slopes beyond, all aglow with sunlight, and then suddenly turned toward each other, and saw in the eyes of each a wonderful light, and the next moment were heart to heart, it was all a revelation.

For long she did not realize what it meant. On that unforgettable day, when they had left the forest ridge and were near Kerival again, she had sat for a time on one of the rude cattle-gates which are frequent in these woodlands, while Alan had leant beside her, looking up with eyes too eloquent, and speaking of what he dreamed, with sweet stammering speech of new found love.

How she had struggled, mentally, with her duty, as she conceived it, toward Andrik. She was betrothed to him; he loved her; she loved him too, although even already she realized that there is a love which is not only invincible and indestructible but that comes unsought, has no need for human conventions, is neither moral nor immoral but simply all-potent and thenceforth sovereign. To yield to that may be wrong; but, if so, it is wrong to yield to the call of hunger, the cry of thirst, the whisper of sleep, the breath of ill, the summons of death. It comes, and that is all. The green earth may be another Endymion, and may dream that the cold moonshine is all in all; but when the sun rises, and a new heat and glory and passion of life are come, then Endymion simply awakes.

It had been a sadness to her to have to tell Andrik she no longer loved him as he was fain to be loved. He would have no finality, then; he held her to the bond – and in Brittany there is a pledge akin to the "hand-fast" of the north, which makes a betrothal almost as binding as marriage.

Andrik de Morvan had gone to the Marquis de Kerival, and told him what Ynys had said.

"She is but a girl," the seigneur remarked coldly. "And you are wrong in thinking she can be in love with any one else. There is no one for whom she can care so much as for you; no one whom she has met with whom she could mate; no one with whom I would allow her to mate."

"But that matters little, if she will not marry me!" the young man had urged.

"My daughter is my daughter, De Morvan. I cannot compel her to marry you. I know her well enough to be sure that she would ignore any command of this kind. But women are fools; and one can get them to do what one wants, in one way if not in another. Let her be a while."

"But the betrothal!"

"Let it stand. But do not press it. Indeed, go away for a year. You are heir to your mother's estates in Touraine. Go there, work, learn all you can. Meanwhile, write occasionally to Ynys. Do not address her as your betrothed, but at the same time let her see that it is the lover who writes. Then, after a few months, confide that your absence is due solely to her, that you cannot live without her; and that, after a vain exile, you write to ask if you may come and see her. They are all the same. It is the same thing with my mares, for which Kerival is so famous. Some are wild, some are docile, some skittish, some vicious, some good, a few flawless – but... Well, they are all mares. One knows. A mare is not a sphinx. These complexities of which we hear so much, what are they? Spindrift. The sea is simply the sea, all the same. The tide ebbs, though the poets reverse nature. Ebb and flow, the lifting wind, the lifted wave; we know the way of it all. It has its mystery, its beauty; but we don't really expect to see a nereid in the hollow of the wave, or to catch the echo of a triton in the call of the wind. As for Venus Anadyomene, the foam of which she was made is the froth in poets' brains. Believe me, Annaik, my friend, women are simply women; creatures not yet wholly tamed,

but tractable in the main, delightful, valuable often, but certainly not worth the tribute of passion and pain they obtain from foolish men like yourself."

With this worldly wisdom Andrik de Morvan had gone home, unconvinced. He loved Ynys; and sophistries were an ineffectual balm.

But as for Ynys, she had long made up her mind. Betrothal or no betrothal, she belonged now only to one man, and that man, Alan de Kerival. She was his and his alone, by every natural right. How could she help the accident by which she had cared for Andrik before she loved Alan? Now, indeed, it would be sacrilege to be other than wholly Alan's. Was her heart not his, and her life with her heart, and with both her deathless devotion?

Alan, she knew, trusted her absolutely. Before he went back to Paris, after their love was no longer a secret, he had never once asked her to forfeit any thing of her intimacy with Andrik, nor had he even urged the open cancelling of the betrothal. But she was well aware his own absolute loyalty involved for him a like loyalty from her; and she knew that forgiveness does not belong to those natures which stake all upon a single die.

And so the matter stood thus still. Ynys and Andrik de Morvan were nominally betrothed; and not only the Marquis and the Marquise de Kerival, but Andrik himself, looked upon the bond as absolute.

Perhaps Lois de Kerival was not without some suspicion as to how matters were between the betrothed pair. Certainly she knew that Ynys was not one who would give up any real or imagined happiness because of a conventional arrangement or on account of any conventional duty.

In Alan, Ynys found all that he found in her. When she looked at him, she wondered how she could ever have dreamed of Andrik as a lover, for Alan was all that Andrik was not. How proud and glad she felt because of his great height and strength, his vivid features with their gray-blue eyes and spiritual expression, his wavy brown hair, a very type of youthful and beautiful manhood! Still more she revered and loved the inner Alan whom she knew so well, and recognized with a proud humility that this lover of hers, whom the great Daniel Darc had spoken of as a man of genius, was not only her knight, but her comrade, her mate, her ideal.

Often the peasants of Kerival had speculated if the young seigneur would join hands with her or with Annaik. Some hoped the one, some the other; but those who knew Alan otherwise than merely by sight felt certain that Ynys was the future bride.

"They are made for each other," old Jeanne Mael, the village authority, was wont to exclaim; "and the good God will bring them together soon or late. 'Tis a fair, sweet couple they are; none so handsome anywhere. That tall, dark lass will be a good mother when her hour comes; an' the child o' him an' her should be the bonniest in the whole wide world."

With that all who saw them together agreed.

CHAPTER V

THE WALKER IN THE NIGHT

It was an hour from midnight when Alan rose, opened a window, and looked out. The storm was over. He could see the stars glistening like silver fruit among the upper branches of the elms. Behind the great cypress known as the Fate of Kerival there was a golden radiance, as though a disk of radiant bronze were being slowly wheeled round and round, invisible itself but casting a quivering gleam upon the fibrous undersides of the cypress spires. Soon the moon would lift upward, and her paling gold become foam-white along the wide reaches of the forest.

The wind had suddenly fallen. In this abrupt lapse into silence there was something mysterious. After so much violence, after that wild, tempestuous cry, such stillness! There was no more than a faint rustling sound, as though invisible feet were stealthily flying along the pathway of the upper boughs and through the dim defiles in the dense coverts of oak and beech in the very heart of the woods. Only, from hitherward of the unseen dunes floated a melancholy, sighing refrain, the echo of the eddying sea-breath among the pines. Beyond the last sands, the deep, hollow boom of the sea itself.

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